

Ping Pong Rules Quick Reference

Official ITTF rules
Laws of Table Tennis, 2026
Law numbers in orange

The official rules of table tennis on one page. Settle the argument and get back to the game.

1 SCORING

- **Games go to 11.** You must win by 2; from 10-10 play on until someone leads by 2. **2.11.1**
- A match is the **best of 3, 5 or 7 games.** **2.12.1**
- **Every rally scores**, whoever served.
- Call the server's score first.

2 WHO SERVES

- **2 serves each**, then switch. From **10-10**, 1 serve each. **2.13.3**
- First serve is decided by lot (coin toss). **2.13.1**
- Whoever served first in a game receives first in the next. **2.13.6**
- **Games to 21 with 5 serves?** That's the pre-2001 format, now only a house rule.

3 A LEGAL SERVE

1. Ball rests on a **flat, open palm**, hand still. **2.6.1**
2. Toss it **nearly straight up, at least 16 cm (6 in)**, with no spin. **2.6.2**
3. Hit it **as it falls.** **2.6.3**
4. Keep it **behind your end line and above table height.** **2.6.4**
5. **Never hide the ball** from the receiver; move your free arm away. **2.6.4–2.6.5**
6. It bounces **once on your side, then once on theirs.** **2.6.3**
7. **Singles:** land anywhere. No need to serve diagonally. **2.6.3**
8. **Doubles:** right half to right half. The center line counts as in. **2.6.3, 2.1.6**

4 IT'S A LET (REPLAY)

- A serve **touches the net** and still lands correctly. No limit on lets. **2.9.1.1**
- You serve before the receiver is ready, and they don't try to return. **2.9.1.2**
- Play is disturbed, such as by a ball from another table. **2.9.1.3**
- **"Three lets and you lose the point"?** Not a real rule. Lets are always replayed.
- **No second serve.** A faulty serve loses the point straight away.

5 YOU LOSE THE POINT IF YOU...

- Miss a legal serve or fail to return the ball onto their side. **2.10.1.1–2**
- **Volley:** touch the ball before it bounces while it's over or heading to the table. **2.10.1.6**
- Hit it **twice on purpose.** **2.10.1.7**
- Move the table or touch the net. **2.10.1.9–10**
- Touch the table with your **free hand.** **2.10.1.11**

6 SETTLE THE ARGUMENTS

- **Net in a rally?** Play on. Only serves are lets.
- **Edge ball?** Top edge is in; the side is out.
- **Ball off your fingers?** Fine on your paddle hand below the wrist. **2.5**
- **Around the net post?** Allowed if it lands on their side.
- **Ball already past your end line?** Catching it isn't a volley. You win the point.

7 DOUBLES & ENDS

- Partners **alternate hits**; out of turn loses the point. **2.8.2**
- Serving order rotates (A & B vs X & Y): **2.13.5**

A→X X→B B→Y Y→A
- Change ends after each game, and at **5 points** in the deciding game. **2.13.7**

8 OFFICIAL EQUIPMENT

Table 2.1.1	9 ft × 5 ft (2.74 × 1.525 m), playing surface 30 in (76 cm) high	Net 2.2.3	6 in (15.25 cm) high along its whole length
Ball 2.3	40 mm, 2.7 g, plastic, white or orange, matte	Paddle 2.4	Any size; at least 85% natural wood; one side black, the other a bright color