

## THE TENNIS CODE (excepts)

(by Col Nick Powel , fully published at <http://www.tennisserver.com/code.html>)

- ***Any call must be made instantaneously, otherwise it is good and still in play***
- ***Any doubt must be resolved in favour of your opponent.***
- ***If you are not sure, the ball is good***
- ***If you are not sure, no lets ( no "TAKE-TWO"s)***
- ***Prompt hand signal or call must be given, no matter how obvious it was out.***

4. One of the difficult aspects of tennis is that when a match is played without officials the players themselves have the responsibility for making decisions, particularly line calls; but there is a subtle difference between their decisions and those of an umpire or a linesman. A linesman does his best to resolve impartially a problem involving a line call with the interests of both players in mind, whereas a player must be guided, in this case and in all other cases, by the unwritten law that **any doubt must be resolved in favor of his opponent.**
5. A corollary of this principle is the fact that a player in attempting to be scrupulously honest on line calls will find himself frequently keeping in play a ball that "might have been out" and that he discovers -- too late -- was out. Even so, **the game is much better played this way.**
8. The prime objective in making line calls is accuracy, and all participants in a match should cooperate to attain this objective. **When a player does not call an out ball** (with the exception of a first serve) against himself **when he clearly sees it out** -- whether he is requested to do so by his opponents or not -- **he is cheating.**
10. **Any call of "out", "let", or "fault" must be made instantaneously; otherwise, the ball is presumed good and still in play.** In this connotation "instantaneously" means that the call is made before either an opponent has hit the return or the return has gone out of play. Most important: a ball is not out until it is called out.
11. The requirement for an instantaneous call will quickly eliminate the **"two chance" option** that some players practice. To illustrate, C is advancing to the net for an easy putaway when he sees a ball from an adjoining court rolling towards him. He continues his advance and hits the shot, only to have his supposed easy putaway fly over the baseline. C then makes a claim for a let, which is obviously not valid. C could have had a let had he stopped when he first saw the ball rolling towards him, but when he saw it and then continued on to hit the easy shot he forfeited his right to a let. He took his chance to win or lose, and he is not entitled to a second one.
12. Another situation eliminated by the instantaneous call requirement is that in which a player returns the ball, at the same time yelling: "I don't know." This sort of call constitutes a puzzle which should not be thrown at any opponent.
14. **Any ball that cannot be called out is presumed to have been good,** and a player cannot claim a let on the basis that he did not see a ball. If this were not so, picture your opponent at the net ready to tap away a sitter. As he does so your back is to him. Can you ask for a replay because you didn't see where his shot landed? If you could, the perfect defence has been found against any shot that is out of reach: close your eyes before it touches the court.
15. One of tennis' most infuriating moments occurs when after a long hard rally a player makes a clean placement and hears his opponent say: "I'm not sure if it was good or out. Let's play a let." Remember that it is each player's responsibility to call all balls landing on, or aimed at, his side of the net, and if a ball can't be called out with surety, it is good. When you ask for a replay of a point because you say your opponent's shot was really out but you want to give him "a break," you are deluding yourself; you must have had some small shred of doubt and that doubt means the point should be your opponent's. **Further, telling your opponent to "take two" is usually not so generous as it might sound.**
17. In doubles when one partner calls a ball out and the other one good, the doubt that has been established means the ball must be considered to have been good. The reluctance that some doubles players have to overrule their partners is secondary to the importance of not letting your opponents suffer from a bad call. The tactful way to achieve the desired result is to tell your partner quietly that he has made a mistake and then let him overrule himself. If it comes to a showdown, **untactful honesty is preferable to tactful dishonesty**
24. **Returning a service** that is **obviously out** (accompanied by an out call) is a form of **rudeness**, and when the receiver knows that in making these returns he bothers the server it is **gamesmanship**. At the same time it must be expected that a fast service that just misses the line will frequently with justification be returned as a matter of self-protection, even though an out call is made. The speed of deliveries is such that if the receiver waited for a call before he started to make a return he would be overpowered. Probably the most difficult shot in tennis to call accurately is a hard flat service, aimed directly at the receiver, that hits within an inch of the service line in a grass court singles match.
- 40.1. To eliminate arguments about the score the server should **announce**, in a voice **audible to the players** and spectators, the set score (e.g., 5-4) prior to his first serve in each game, and the game score (e.g., thirty-forty) prior to serving each point. This is important.
- 40.2.. No matter how obvious it may be to you that your opponent's shot is out, it may not be obvious to him. He is entitled to a **prompt (!) hand signal or call**; give it to him.