



Tennis Etiquette

Having been around tennis since the days of white tennis balls, wood racquets and tucked-in collared shirts, I've seen a lot of changes over the past 40 years.

Yes, tennis is more accessible to more people—but just like how airplane flight used to be special (suits and dresses) and is now mass transit (shorts and flip-flops), tennis has also been diluted of its class and etiquette.

Here are some things that come to mind that you may want to consider next time you play:

- ▶ Be ready to open new balls. Don't wait, rummaging around in your bag, or staring at your shoes until the second somebody else opens his when you suddenly say, "Oh, I was going to open mine!" You never see people speak up as quickly as the moment AFTER the fizz of a can being opened!
- ▶ Give a good warm-up. Start gradually with moon balls and work in to nice ground strokes. Keep the ball in play. Allow your opponent to get a flow going.
- ▶ Don't come to the net to practice volleys until your opponent has

hit enough ground strokes. It's inconsiderate to come up early.

- ▶ The server should announce the score before every point.
- ▶ If you return an opponent's long serve, forcing him to leave his position to clear it, allow two serves. You shouldn't return a long serve, unless it was really a close call and you had to play it.
- ▶ When did questioning somebody else's line call become okay? Asking, "Are you sure?" is bad enough, but I've seen more and more players correcting their opponents from across the court. That's ugly in tournaments and poor form in recreational tennis.
- ▶ If a ball rolls on your court between your opponent's serve, forcing her to leave her position to clear it, allow two serves. (However, if a ball is easily returned with little disruption, an extra serve isn't necessary.)
- ▶ If your opponent hits a nice shot, say so! Give credit where credit is due.
- ▶ If you're playing doubles, don't huddle and whisper between most points. It disrupts the flow of the game. *Zzzzzz.*
- ▶ To say mixed doubles is tricky, is like saying the Empire State Building is tall. Someone once described the sport of race-walking as "Who can whisper the loudest." Mixed doubles is a bit like that: You want to win, and hitting hard at the woman may be the fastest way to do that—but at what cost? It's boorish behavior. How about the bully who intentionally and repeatedly hits hard at the woman from point-blank range and then apologizes profusely as if unaware of what could have happened?
- ▶ If you lose the match, don't start making excuses about why you lost. Chances are you didn't play well—because your opponent did play well, not allowing you to get in your groove! Congratulate him or her. (There's an opponent I've stopped playing because everytime I win, it seemed hollow due to all his excuses. And everytime he'd win, I'd hear it around the club from others for a week.)



Whether it be mixed doubles or singles—in the end, people will remember you more for your sportsmanship rather than how many games you won. What do you want your legacy to be?

I'll see you on the court. It's easy to spot me: I'm the guy with the tucked-in collared shirt.



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