

Beginners' Guide to League Table Tennis

Updated | 16 August 2010

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Introduction

We always encourage our members to consider competing in the local league and aim to give every person who comes through our doors that opportunity by providing coaching to help them reach the required level.

On-the-table skills are obviously vital to be able to play in the league, but just as important is the knowledge about how league table tennis operates and the rules, customs and etiquette that is in place, which is second nature to the seasoned campaigners, but can be downright confusing to the newcomer.

This guide has been put together to help new players and team secretaries (who may not play themselves but take care of a team during a match) get an idea of how things work before turning up to their first game.

We hope this proves useful and the committee would welcome any comments from you, our members, if you think that some tiny caveat that you wish you'd known when you started should be included.

League Format

There are two league competitions which run in the Leamington & District League: 3-a-side and 2-a-side. Beginners are generally asked to play in the 2-a-side league. Despite its name, the club usually organises teams of three and these players play on a rota basis.

It is the task of the team secretary to organise who will play in which match and they will usually draw up a rota before the start of the season to let the players know who will be playing against which team, on what date and where the match will be played.

In the 2-a-side league, a total of five individual games make up the overall match score. In the Leamington League, every point scored counts to your league points total, so all individual games are played, even if one side wins the first games. If you lose the match 2-3, your team will still pick up two points towards their league total.

Two players each play two singles against the opposing singles players, with a doubles making up the fifth and final game in the match. The third member of the squad may play in the doubles, but once a player has played one singles game, they must play the other. Even if a player is injured after playing one game, a third player

who is there for the doubles is not permitted to play and the game the player would have played will be conceded to the opposition as a walk-over.

League matches officially begin at 7.15pm, but as a club we always try to be ready to start at 7pm if the opposition are there in time. Players should arrive **before** 7pm in order to put up the tables. Tables **must** be put away afterwards.

League Handbook – Fixture Chart

In the league handbook, which is given to all players before the start of the season, is a chart from which fixtures can be worked out. Team secretaries will need to use this chart to determine when and where their team will be playing their matches. An example and explanation of the chart is reproduced on the next page.

FIXTURE CHARTS

In the League Index each team has been allotted a number, found along the top of this chart in bold, and its matches listed in the column below.

e.g. **6 Team Chart** - Team No. 1 is at home to Team No. 6 in the opening match and second week is away to Team No. 5.

12 Team Chart - Team No.1 is at home to Team No.12 in the opening match and second week is away to Team No.11

Postponed matches in the 2 aside Autumn competition MUST be played by 28th December

Note new divisions will be formed in the 2 a side divisions only during week beginning December 28th and communicated to all team secretaries.

Postponed matches in the 2 aside Spring Competition and 3 aside (whole competition) MUST be played by 30 April

6 TEAM DIVISIONS – 2-Aside - Div A, B, C, D, E						
WEEK COMM.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 21 SEPTEMBER	6	5	4	3a	2a	1a
2 28 SEPTEMBER	5a	4a	6a	2	1	3
3 5 OCTOBER	4	3	2a	1a	6a	5
4 12 OCTOBER	3a	6	1	5	4a	2a
19 OCTOBER	CATCHING UP WEEK					
5 26 OCTOBER	2	1a	5a	6a	3	4
6 2 NOVEMBER	6a	5a	4a	3	2	1
7 9 NOVEMBER	5	4	6	2a	1a	3a
8 16 NOVEMBER	4a	3a	2	1	6	5a
9 23 NOVEMBER	3	6a	1a	5a	4	2
10 30 NOVEMBER	2a	1	5	6	3a	4a
11 7 DECEMBER	CATCHING UP WEEK					
14 DECEMBER	CATCHING UP WEEK					
21 DECEMBER	CATCHING UP WEEK					
28 DECEMBER	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK					
12 4 JANUARY	6a	5a	4a	3	2	1
13 11 JANUARY	5	4	6	2a	1a	3a
14 18 JANUARY	4a	3a	2	1	6	5a
15 24 JANUARY	3	6a	1a	5a	4	2
16 1 FEBRUARY	2a	1	5	6	3a	4a
8 FEBRUARY	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK					
17 15 FEBRUARY	6	5	4	3a	2a	1a
18 22 FEBRUARY	5a	4a	6a	2	1	3
19 1 MARCH	4	3	2a	1a	6a	5
8 MARCH	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK					
20 15 MARCH	3a	6	1	5	4a	2a
21 22 MARCH	2	1a	5a	6a	3	4
22 29 MARCH	CATCHING UP WEEK					
5 APRIL	CUP SEMI FINALS / CATCHING UP WEEK					
12 APRIL	CUP FINALS / CATCHING UP WEEK					

12 TEAM DIVISIONS – 3-Aside - Div 1, 2, 3, 4												
WEEK COMM.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 21 SEPTEMBER	12	11	10	9	8	7	6a	5a	4a	3a	2a	1a
2 28 SEPTEMBER	11a	10a	9a	8a	7a	12a	5	4	3	2	1	6
3 5 OCTOBER	10	9	8	7	6	5a	4a	3a	2a	1a	12a	11
4 12 OCTOBER	9a	8a	7a	6a	12	4	3	2	1	11	10a	5a
19 OCTOBER	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK											
5 26 OCTOBER	8	7	6	5	4a	3a	2a	1a	11a	12a	9	10
6 2 NOVEMBER	7a	6a	5a	12	3	2	1	11	10	9a	8a	4a
7 9 NOVEMBER	6	5	4	3a	2a	1a	11a	10a	12a	8	7	9
8 16 NOVEMBER	5a	4a	12	2	1	11	10	9	8a	7a	6a	3a
9 23 NOVEMBER	4	3	2a	1a	11a	10a	9a	12a	7	6	5	8
10 30 NOVEMBER	3a	12	1	11	10	9	8	7a	6a	5a	4a	2a
11 7 DECEMBER	2	1a	11a	10a	9a	8a	12a	6	5	4	3	7
14 DECEMBER	CATCHING UP WEEK											
21 DECEMBER	CATCHING UP WEEK											
28 DECEMBER	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK											
12 4 JANUARY	12a	11a	10a	9a	8a	7a	6	5	4	3	2	1
13 11 JANUARY	11	10	9	8	7	12	5a	4a	3a	2a	1a	6a
14 18 JANUARY	10a	9a	8a	7a	6a	5	4	3	2	1	12	11a
15 24 JANUARY	9	8	7	6	12a	4a	3a	2a	1a	11a	10	5
16 1 FEBRUARY	8a	7a	6a	5a	4	3	2	1	11	12	9a	10a
8 FEBRUARY	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK											
17 15 FEBRUARY	7	6	5	12a	3a	2a	1a	11a	10a	9	8	4
18 22 FEBRUARY	6a	5a	4a	3	2	1	11	10	12	8a	7a	9a
19 1 MARCH	5	4	12a	2a	1a	11a	10a	9a	8	7	6	3
8 MARCH	CUP/CATCHING UP WEEK											
20 15 MARCH	4a	3a	2	1	11	10	9	12	7a	6a	5a	8a
21 22 MARCH	3	12a	1a	11a	10a	9a	8a	7	6	5	4	2
22 29 MARCH	2a	1	11	10	9	8	12	6a	5a	4a	3a	7a
5 APRIL	CUP SEMI FINALS / CATCHING UP WEEK											
12 APRIL	CUP FINALS / CATCHING UP WEEK											

Equipment

Please take care when moving the tables as they are heavy and, especially where youngsters are concerned, there should always be two people handling each half and they should be capable of moving the table safely. Please also take care of the table and net. If equipment is not looked after properly, it can be very expensive for the club to replace it.

Tables should **always** be stored with the two halves together and the playing surfaces facing each other to avoid scratching. The tables have wheels, which should be used to make moving the tables easier – if you find any wheels are broken then please inform a member of the committee.

If you get a net out of a box, please return it to that box when finished. Do not slide the posts across the table surface as they can cause scratches and unscrew them rather than pulling them off. Fold or roll the net carefully as if it is thrown into a box it can become snagged and tear when the next person gets it out.

Match Format

Before a match starts, each team should be allowed time to practise on the match table. Typically, it is the home side's responsibility to arrive early enough to have their practice in time to allow the opposition to arrive and practise so the match can still start at 7.15pm

Before the commencement of each game in the match, the players involved are allowed a two-minute practice before starting the game.

When a game is in progress, players are entitled to a rest of one minute between legs. Players are also permitted a brief pause to 'towel down' every six points.

In order to start the match, the home team captain or secretary will toss a coin and ask the away team captain or secretary to call for 'first choice'. There is not hard and fast rule as to who should be captain – if you ask the opponents who is going to call, someone will usually step forward! The person who wins the toss has two options. First, they can choose to make the first call, in which case they will nominate the player they wish to play in the first game of the match; the opponents then decide who they want to play against that player. The second option is that the person winning the toss can ask the opponents to make the first call, in which case

the opponents will nominate a player before the person winning the toss then chooses who to play against them.

Once the first call has been made the call alternates, so if the home team nominate their player for the first game, the away team will nominate a player for the second. Matches are numbered on the card, but can be played in any order. The doubles may be called by any team, at any time. The side calling the doubles nominates which two players will be playing, then the other side makes their choice.

It is usual for the home team to umpire the first game of the match, after which teams alternate umpiring.

Match Cards

Team secretaries will be provided with a number of match cards before the start of the season. The home team should provide the match card and it is their responsibility to ensure that it is returned to the appropriate person (details may vary from season to season, but will be printed on the back of the card) within ten days from the completion of the match.

An example copy and explanation of the match card follows:

In this match, the home side, Free Church Y tossed for first call, which Free Church Z lost. Y then chose to make first call and put on John Smith. Z chose Bob Jones to play John. Bob won three straight legs by scores of 11-4, 11-4 and 11-9. The scores are filled in and the legs which weren't contested are struck through. In the match progress box at the top of the card, the match number of John v Bob (2) is filled in and the running score filled in as 0 points to the home side, 1 to the away.

The away side, Z, then call the doubles. They choose to play Bob and a member of their squad who isn't involved in the singles, Sam. Y then respond by choosing John and Jane to play. The players are filled in on the match card. Y win the first leg, lose the next two, then win the last two to win in five legs. In the match progress box, the match number (5) is filled in and the running score now becomes 1 point to each side.

The match ends as a 4-1 win to the home side, which is noted in the two score boxes next to the team names. The two captains then sign the match card.

When filling in the match card, please make sure to include the division the match is being played in, the week number of the match, which is noted in the match chart and the date the match is being played on.

Additionally, if you wish to write any comments about the match please feel free to do so on the reverse of the card. The card is sent to the League Secretary who forwards the results and comments on to the Press Officer. The Press Officer always welcomes comments on matches to assist with report writing.

LEAMINGTON & DISTRICT TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

MATCH No	2	5	3	1	4
HOME TEAM	0	1	2	3	4
AWAY TEAM	1	1	1	1	1

who has called? → (H) (A) (H) (A) (H)

Score	MATCH RESULT		Score
4	HOME TEAM	DIVISION <u>E</u> WEEK NO. <u>1</u> VISITING TEAM	1
	<u>FREE CHURCH Y</u> v <u>FREE CHURCH Z</u>		

VISITING TEAM		X	FRED BLOGGS					Y	BOB JONES				
HOME TEAM													
A	JOHN SMITH	1	2	2	11	11	7	2	11	11	11	/	/
			11	11	9	9	11		4	4	9	/	/
B	JANE BROWN	3	5	11	4	2	/	4	9	9	9	/	/
			11	9	11	11	/		11	11	11	/	/

DOUBLES

5	A + B	8	11	11	2	12	Y + SAM DAVIS
		11	4	11	14		

Signed:

HOME TEAM CAPTAIN



Date: 30-09-2010

VISITING TEAM CAPTAIN



THE LENGTH OF THIS CARD IS SIX INCHES AND REPRESENTS THE HEIGHT OF THE NET

Postponements

According to the rules of the Leamington & District Table Tennis Association, a match may only be postponed if both teams agree to the postponement. If a match is postponed, the secretary of the team who cannot make the match should notify the League Secretary (details will be in the handbook) as soon as possible.

Sometimes, circumstances dictate that last minute cancellations are necessary. If you have to cancel at the last minute, please make sure that you contact your opposing team secretary to explain. In the past, sometimes teams have arrived to find no opposition, which causes a wasted journey and can lead to claiming of games. Please note that the League Committee does not consider a text or voice message that goes unanswered to be adequate when informing an opponent of a cancellation and insists that you ensure your opponent has received any message.

Cancellations can be frustrating and arranging times to play those matches can be difficult. We would suggest that if an opponent wishes to cancel, you allow them to do so as one day you may be in a similar situation and be reliant on the good will of others. It is advisable to arrange to play the cancelled match as soon as possible as a build up of unplayed games at the end of the season can cause problems.

You may also, with the agreement of your opponents, bring a match forward if it cannot be played on the scheduled date.

Games

All games (singles and the doubles) are played best of five legs, with each leg being played up to eleven points. The first player to win three legs wins the game and will score one point towards the match total for their team.

Each player has two serves each until the score reaches 10-10. At this point, players alternate serving and to win the leg must win by two clear points. You cannot win the leg 11-10, or 14-13, but you can win the leg 12-10, 14-12 etc.

After each leg, the players must swap ends. If the game goes to the fifth and deciding leg, when one player has scored five points in that leg the players must swap ends again.

Doubles

There are a few points worth noting where doubles are concerned, as the playing order can sometimes be confusing to beginners.

First, when serving in doubles, the server must always serve diagonally from the right hand court on their side. If the serve bounces in the left hand court of the server's side, or the right hand court (from the server's perspective) on the receivers side, the serve is a fault and the serving team loses the point. Please note – there is no second serve in table tennis!

In a game of doubles, players on each team must take it in turns to serve. Each player must serve two serves as they would in singles. In a game where A and B play against Y and Z, If A is serving to Y, when A has had two serves, Y will then serve to B. B will then serve to Z and Z will serve to A.

If A is serving to Y in the first leg of a game, in the second leg, A must serve to Z, leading to Z serving to B, B serving to Y and Y serving to A. A third leg would see A serving to Z, a fourth A to Y and a fifth A to Z again.

If player A or B serves first in the first leg, then either player Y or Z must serve first in the second and either player A or B in the third and so on. The team who is serving first can choose which player serves first.

If the doubles goes to the fifth and deciding leg, when one pair scores five points the teams swap ends and also swap receivers. So if A was serving to Y in the fifth leg, once one team has scored five points A will then serve to Z for the rest of the game.

If a doubles leg goes to 10-10, players have one serve each, as in singles and the leg must be won by two clear points.

Etiquette

All players should be aware of any other matches taking place at the same venue. During breaks in play in your match, please be aware that another match may be still be in progress and take care to keep conversation quiet. Equally, if your match finishes before another, please do not put your table away in the middle of someone else's game. Wait for the game to finish and check with the teams in the other match as to when you can put your table away without disturbing them.

Before the game starts the umpire will toss a coin, asking the player who doesn't play for their team to make the call. If you win the toss you can either choose to serve, choose to receive, choose which end to start at, or ask your opponent to make the choice. When one player has made that first choice, if they chose to serve or

receive the other player may choose which end to start at. If they choose which end to start at, the other player may choose to serve or receive.

When umpiring, the umpire should wait for both players to be at the table before calling the score so both players are aware of which way a point has been awarded. Umpires should always call the server's score first, so if the server is 5-3 up and wins both points the score would be called "6-3", then "7-3", then "3-7" when the service changes. In a deciding leg, the umpire shall announce "change ends" when one player reaches five points. If this is forgotten, the change of ends should happen as soon as the oversight is noted, but any points already played stand.

If there is a dispute regarding a point, the umpire may ask others there for assistance (perhaps if there is a debate over an edge that the umpire couldn't see clearly). However, the umpire's decision is final and should be accepted at all times.

Once the score has been called and another point played, the score stands. However, if an obvious mistake has been made normally the players involved will agree to correct it.

During a game, we expect our club members to show a determined yet respectful attitude. Please try to keep any frustrations you may be feeling inside. We also ask members to ensure that they try for every point. Giving

up and making no effort is just as disrespectful to your opponent as using colourful language. Many a seemingly lost cause can be turned around if you keep on trying, so don't give up!

If you win a point by good fortune, you should acknowledge that and apologise to your opponent. It is not considered good form to celebrate a point won by hitting the edge of the table or the net. Equally, it is not in the spirit of the game for those on the side lines to applaud a point won in such a manner.

Coaching or advising players is allowed between each leg in a game. As a club, we encourage team captains, secretaries and players to offer help to the player from their team who is playing. Even if you feel you cannot offer any technical or tactical insights, often a calming or kind word can have just as positive an effect, especially on a youngster new to league table tennis. Please try to be positive when offering advice – even if you are pointing out something negative, try to encourage your player rather than demoralise. It is very rare that overly negative advice leads to an improved performance by a youngster.

Please note, though, that coaching or advising is **not** permitted between points, or at the change of ends in a deciding leg. However hard it may be if you can see something that can turn a game in your player's favour, wait until the appropriate time.

After the game has finished, you should **always** shake the hand of your opponent in good grace, no matter if you have won or lost, and also shake the hand of the umpire.

Dress Code

A sports shirt, shorts or skirt and trainers should be worn, with a tracksuit to wear on top if it is cold. Players are not allowed to wear clothing which is predominantly the same colour as the ball, as this can make it difficult for your opponent to pick the ball up. This means that **no white shirts** should be worn, as you will find the vast majority of teams will be playing with white balls. You may also find some teams using orange balls, so predominantly orange shirts are probably best avoided too.

Jeans and other non-sports clothing are **not** appropriate and as a club we insist that all of our players representing us wear the correct clothing.

The club colours are a red shirt, with black shorts or skirt. The club shirt with our logo printed on the back is available and can be purchased through the club. You can find details about the latest club shirt by visiting <http://www.lillingontt.co.uk/club-information/equipment-a-club-shirts.html>

As the club selects a table tennis shirt from a specialist table tennis equipment manufacturer, prices can be more expensive than just buying a red t-shirt. As such, we don't insist that you buy the official shirt – any red one will do although we are delighted to see so many of our members taking the “official” option.

Service and Other Rules

The rules which the Leamington & District Table Tennis Association have in place, including their Code of Conduct, can be found in the league handbook, which all registered league players will receive before the start of the season. They can also be found online at <http://www.ldtta.co.uk>

One rule which is important players and team secretaries are aware of is the service rule. You can read about this in more depth in the league handbook, players should be aware of the following points:

- The ball must be held on the flat palm of the hand, **not** in the fingers.
- The ball must be thrown up **at least** 15cm (6in).
- The ball must start **behind** the end white line of the table and its imaginary infinite extension in both directions.

- The ball must be hit **behind** the end white line of the table and its imaginary infinite extension in both directions.
- The ball must not be hidden and should be visible to the receiver from the moment it leaves the palm until the moment it is struck.
- If the ball hits the net and goes over, the point is called as a “let” and replayed.
- If the ball hits the net and hits the server’s side a second time (spin may subsequently take the ball back over) then the server loses the point.
- If the ball hits the net and the receiver hits the ball before it bounces on the receiver’s side then the umpire must decide whether the ball was struck over the table or behind the table. If the ball is struck over the table, a let should be played. If the ball is struck behind the table, the server loses the point.

We expect any member playing in the league to know these rules and to be able to serve legally. However, especially with youngsters, those new to the game can sometimes lapse into bad habits, or simply forget during pressure situations.

If someone involved in your match is serving illegally, we would suggest using a common sense approach. According to the letter of the law, the umpire may, **but is not obliged to**, give a warning for the first foul serve and should then award the point to the receiver for each subsequent foul serve.

We feel that, although all players should be serving legally, a strict approach to this in the lower divisions of the league can be counterproductive. Rather than docking the point when a youngster is serving illegally and upsetting them, consider having a quiet word with them at the end of the leg or game, especially if they are not gaining an advantage from their serve. Make sure you explain why their serve is illegal and advise them how to correct it. Please try to be constructive rather than destructive.

Not all umpires, of course, will apply this approach and if they do dock a point for an illegal serve, then they are quite within their rights to do so – the best way to avoid this is for team secretaries to make sure all their players understand how to serve legally and do their best to do so.

A volley is not allowed in table tennis. If the ball is volleyed over the table, the player who volleys it will lose the point, regardless of whether the ball would have hit the table or not. If the ball is volleyed away from the table such that it is clear the ball would not have hit the table, the player who volleys would get the point as normal. The best advice we can give is to avoid any confusion by not volleying the ball at all!

If the ball strikes the **edge** of the table is not returned, then the player who could not return it loses the point. If the ball hits the **side** of the table, then the player who struck the ball on to the side loses the point. It can sometimes be tricky to determine whether it hit the edge or the side, but two things can help you decide:

1. Look at where the shot was played from. If it was played within the width of the table then it is impossible for the ball to hit the side and any contact must have been an edge.
2. If the ball is played from outside the width of the table, look at the path of the ball after contact. If the ball drops down, the chances are it hit the side; if it pops up it was probably an edge.

Venues

We have two main venues that the club plays matches at which are Lillington Free Church Youth Centre and Bishop's Tachbrook Primary School. If an opponent needs directions, you can direct them to our website which has details of all our venues at <http://www.lillingontt.co.uk/club-information/locations.html> .

Details of all team venues from all clubs in the league are in the league handbook and also available at <http://www.ldtta.co.uk>

Lillington Free Church Youth Centre

Please note that the floor can sweat when the temperature fluctuates. Fire doors can be opened to alleviate this problem, but **must** be securely closed before you leave.

In winter, opening the fire doors is not always a good idea due to the cold weather. To try and avoid the floor sweating, it helps to try and keep a constant temperature. If you arrive and make sure the heating is on from the start, it can help. If the temperature keeps rising and falling the floor is more likely to sweat.

The heating is controlled from the kitchen. As you enter the kitchen, on the far end wall, to the left, is the heating control unit. To put the heating on, you should press **Extend**. To turn the heating off, press **Crop**.

Using extend will only put the heating on for a limited time, so you may have to extend it again if the match goes on for a long time. You should **not** use any other controls than extend and crop as it can alter the timer settings.

We have use of the kitchen for providing refreshments. There is a labelled cupboard which is for our use and contains some crockery. Please make sure that you wash up after yourself and return any items to the cupboard. It should be noted that you will need to provide your own food and drink – although there is a fridge and there may be bottles of drink or food around, they belong to the Church group and are not for us!

Please make sure that you switch all lights off before leaving, including the switches by the door. There are two switches by the door, which control lights above the door – one inside and one out. Please make sure that both door lights are off before leaving.

Please can you check the toilets to make sure they are flushed and in a state that you would wish to find them in before leaving.

Please leave the venue in a tidy state, returning chairs and tables to the end of the room (underneath the notice board area) and putting any rubbish in the bins provided.

Bishop's Tachbrook Primary School

As a club, we have access to the toilets and the water cooler in the hall. We are **not** allowed to wander the school in any circumstances and team secretaries or parents should make sure that their players and opponents remain in the hall at all times.

Please take care when returning the tables to the storage area at the end of the match, storing them with playing surfaces facing each other and keeping the two halves together.

Please take care to avoid scratching the hall floor and make sure any rubbish is taken with you and the hall left in a clean and tidy state.

At the end of the match, please contact the caretakers – Pam and John Thain.

Useful Contact Numbers

If you have any problems or emergencies at one of our venues, please call one of the following:

Lillington Free Church Youth Centre

Phil John	See print version
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Linda Reidy	See print version
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Leamington Police Station	01926 451111
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Bishop's Tachbrook Primary School

Pam and John Thain (Caretakers)	See print version
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