

## ITF RETURN TO INTERNATIONAL TENNIS PROTOCOLS PRACTICE AND MATCH PROTOCOLS, INCLUDING TOWEL POLICY

*Note: this protocol is subject to change, without notice. Last updated – 22 January 2021.*

Practice and match protocols are designed to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19, by ensuring that all relevant hygiene precautions are taken and, where possible, physical distancing is maintained.

*Note: On-court personnel are not required under these protocols to wear masks, face coverings or gloves (unless required by tournament organisers or local authorities). Physical distancing and hygiene requirements are mandatory at all times. For the avoidance of doubt, ball persons are permitted on-court. Players should not use tennis balls to cover their mouths when talking to their doubles partner.*

Where masks are required during practice and/or matches, the following guidance<sup>1</sup> is given:

- Do choose a mask that
  - Has two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric
  - Completely covers the nose and mouth
  - Fits snugly against the sides of the face and doesn't have gaps
- Do not choose a mask that
  - Is made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe (for example, vinyl)
  - Has exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape
  - Is intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators or surgical masks, where those masks are in short supply

COMMON PROTOCOLS	COMMENT
<b>General</b>	
Players should arrive at the venue as close to their allotted starting time as is reasonable, unless the locker rooms are in use and physical distancing can be maintained.	
Players should depart as soon as reasonably possible after his/her match, unless <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Locker rooms are in use and physical distancing can be maintained;</li><li>- The player is competing in another match on the same day;</li></ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html> on 22 January 2021.

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- The player is part of a team.

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All on-court personnel (particularly players) should avoid raising their voices when facing each other.

*Covid-19 droplets are likely to be propelled further when voices are raised.*

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Physical distancing shall be maintained by all on-court personnel at all times.

*The only exceptions to this are (a) incidental and unavoidable contact during doubles, (b) court calls for medical assistance and (c) to assist wheelchair players (such assistance to be limited to player support personnel).*

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All personal items must be removed from the court, following use.

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Where a tournament provides disposable (e.g. drinks) or single-use (e.g. towels) items, designated locations to discard these following use must be provided.

*Tournaments should be prepared for an increased demand for disposable items and towels.*

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No shared-use items should be provided.

*This would include drinks coolers, unless hands-free access is provided.*

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## **Physical distancing**

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Maintain physical distancing throughout.

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## Personal hygiene

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Players shall not share any equipment.

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Players may mark and divide the balls in use, to allow use of separate balls when serving;

*Balls are shared equipment. Players should avoid handling the balls to the greatest reasonable extent.*

*Where fewer than 6 balls are being used at any time, this protocol may be impractical and need not be considered.*

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Sanitiser, disinfecting wipes and tissues should be available for all on-court personnel.

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## Court hygiene

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Disinfect all court fixtures between every practice/match.

*This includes players' and officials' chairs, chair umpires' scoring devices, towel holders and drinks coolers, coolers, ball box, net posts and strap, and team and ITF seating. Ball persons' cushions should be replaced with new ones.*

*NAs must ensure that they have enough cleaning staff employed to undertake the cleaning in the minimum time required, and no longer than ten minutes when there is another match due on court*

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Provide hygiene notices for players, officials and spectators.

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Where on-court supplies (drinks, ice, towels, etc.) are provided, these should be replaced or disinfected before and after matches.

*All on-court food and drink must be removed and replenished after every match.*

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PRACTICE PROTOCOLS	COMMENT
<b>General</b>	
Only remote bookings (online or telephone) are permitted.	
MATCH PROTOCOLS	COMMENT
<b>General</b>	
Adjoining courts may be used simultaneously for practice and match play, providing that physical distancing requirements are met at all times.	<i>Entry and exit points should permit physical distancing. Court equipment and seating on adjacent courts should not be placed back-to-back.</i>
	<i>One person should be responsible for ball changes and should wash or sanitise their hands before and after doing so. Disinfecting the ball cans prior to opening is recommended.</i>
Ball numbers and changes shall be maintained as set out in the relevant regulations.	<i>Until there is evidence of a significant threat to the transmission of Covid-19 via tennis balls, repeated use of balls is not prohibited, although single use is recommended. Where balls are used repeatedly and a 'rest period' between successive uses is adopted, a minimum period of 72 hours is recommended.</i>
All on-court and post-match activities (including opening and closing ceremonies, trophy presentations and interviews) must comply with physical distancing requirements.	

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On-court officials are not required to wear gloves or face coverings, but must maintain personal hygiene at all times.

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## Physical distancing

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### Pre-match

- Provide a pre-match holding area that permits physical distancing (where necessary);
  - No player should escort ball persons or other individual onto court;
  - During the pre-match coin toss;
  - By avoiding a pre-match handshake;
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The fewest number of on-court officials (including ball persons) required to provide the appropriate level of officiating must be used (as per ITF Officiating Requirements).

*Any request to depart from the ITF Officiating Requirements must be approved in advance by the ITF. Accommodation that permits physical distancing must be provided for the use of officials between assignments.*

*For Davis Cup (DC) and Billie Jean King Cup (BJKC), the required number of on-court officials, unless agreed otherwise by the ITF, is:*

- *Qualifier ties, DC & BJKC Play-Offs and DC Group I: 7;*
- *DC Group II ties: 5*
- *BJKC Regional Group Events: 5*
- *DC Regional Group Events: 3*

*The number of ball persons to be used in DC and BJKC events will depend on the court size and the level of the tie or event. The number that the NA is asked to provide will be advised by the ITF no later than ten weeks ahead of the ties / events.*

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### During the match

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- During changeovers, avoid crossing the net at the same time and ideally should cross on different sides;
  - Ball persons do not hold umbrellas or provide other services for players during changeovers;
  - Players' chairs should be separated from the Chair Umpire by a minimum of 2 metres;
  - Players and Chair Umpires should remain separated by a horizontal distance of 2 metres at all time;
  - Where on-court coaching is permitted, the coach and player(s) should maintain physical separation at all times;
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#### After the match

- Avoid a post-match handshake with the opponent or Chair Umpire;
  - Do not take selfies with spectators or sign autographs or throw/give any personal items to spectators.
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### Personal hygiene

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The ITF Towel policy shall be implemented.

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#### ITF TOWEL POLICY

1. Players must handle their own towels exclusively, i.e. do not request towels from, or give their towels to, ball persons at any point during the match.
  2. Ball persons (and officials) are instructed to not handle players' towels at any time during a match.
  3. Players are solely responsible for their towels during changeover (to be enforced by the Chair Umpire).
  4. Designated locations for towels should be identified on each court, making certain that each player is using a different location for their towel at each end of the court.
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5. Following every match, the towel area must be disinfected.
6. Where tournaments provide towels, a central location in which used towels can be discarded must be provided. Do not shake towels.
7. All towels provided by the tournament must be laundered after each match/practice at the highest appropriate temperature and dry thoroughly before further use.