

How To Play Racquetball

The Serve

Play begins with the server standing in the 'Service Zone' and serving the ball to his/her opponent(s). To serve, the server must first bounce the ball on the floor and then strike it with the racquet before it bounces twice. The ball must contact the 'Front Wall' first and then pass over the short line into the rear half of the court. In it's flight, the ball may strike one side wall, but no more. If it hits three surfaces including the ceiling or back wall before bouncing the serve is not good (called one fault) and the ball is not in play. Also, a serve that does not carry beyond the 'Short Line' of the 'Service Zone' is also not good (fault). The server is given two opportunities to put the ball into play. If the server hits two faults in a row, the player returning serve takes over in the service zone and the original server assumes the return of serve position. Additionally, the ball cannot hit a side wall, floor or ceiling before the 'Front Wall' when attempting to serve. If this occurs, whether its on the first serve or second serve, the result is a loss of serve or side out fault.

During outdoor play, the serve must be executed the same way and the ball must land on the court over the short line within the boundary lines. If the serve is long (hits beyond back line), the result is one fault serve, but if the ball is wide the server automatically loses the serve.

Serve Types - Drive serve, Lob serve and Z serve.

The Return of Serve

To return a serve, stand in the middle of the court (equal distance between each sidewall or court sideline) approximately one arm and racquets length away from the backwall or end line. Return the serve by striking the ball before the second bounce. The ball must travel to the 'Front Wall' without touching the floor for it to be a good return of serve. The ball may hit ANY surface while traveling to the front wall except the floor.

The Rally

Once the ball is in play, each player alternates hitting the ball until one player cannot return a shot after one bounce or hits an illegal shot. Players try to earn points or win the serve by putting an end to a rally. Often this is done when a player's shot hits the front wall at its lowest point, causing the ball to roll out (called a killshot or rollout), rather than bounce back into the playing area. Points are also earned when rallies end with an error, or a "Skip Ball"; i.e. when the ball makes contact with the floor before reaching the 'Front Wall'. Once the ball is in play, the walls and ceiling can be used for shot variations. Points are scored when after serving the ball, the server wins the rally. If the player returning serve wins the rally, the result is a side out. No points are scored for either player and the player who won the rally gets to serve. Whoever wins the rally always serves next.

Hinders (aka Replay)

Play is stopped and a hinder is called when players get too close to each other during play and safety is compromised. It is your responsibility to give your opponent enough room to hit the shot they want to hit. You must give them a straight shot to the front wall as well as the angle, which would result in a crosscourt shot to the opposite back corner. The result of a hinder is a replay of the point. The only time a point or side out occurs is when a player obstructs his opponents view or shot on purpose. This is called a penalty or avoidable hinder. Typical replay hinder examples are:

- A ball striking any part of the court, which results in an erratic rebound (fan vents, door knob, lights, etc.)
- Accidentally hitting opponent with the ball as it is heading toward the front wall.
- Unintentionally contacting opponent while attempting to make a play on the ball.
- Screening opponent's view of the ball or having the ball pass between one's legs.

Basics to remember once you have started playing a game are:

1. Only the server scores points.
2. The ball can only bounce once on the floor before it must be hit.
3. The ball must always hit the front wall before touching the floor in order for a serve or shot to be good.
4. Matches are typically two games to 15 points and a tiebreaker to 11 if needed, all win by one point.

More detailed rules of the game are available at www.usra.org and www.WorldOutdoorRacquetball.net