

PROCEDURES FOR BALL KIDS

These are the approved procedures for Ball Kids, produced by ITF Officiating. Ball Kids are an important part of the on-court team and can really help in the success of a tournament.

Number of Ball Kids

Ideally, there should be six Ball Kids on-court. These Ball Kids are positioned as follows:

- Two Ball Kids at the back of the left end of the court (one in each corner)
- Two Ball Kids at the back of the right end of the court (one in each corner)
- Two Ball Kids at the net

If there are only five Ball Kids on-court, one Ball Kid is positioned at the back of the court at the receiver's end. One Ball Kid runs from one end of the court to the other, when the server's end changes.

If there are only four Ball Kids on-court, one Ball Kid is positioned at the back of each end of the court.

Ball Kids should be scheduled so that they have sufficient rest during the matches.

Working with the Chair Umpire

One of the most important aspects of working as a Ball Kid is the teamwork with the Chair Umpire. Ball Kids must always listen to, and look at, the Chair Umpire when he is communicating with the Ball Kid (either with his/her voice, or with signs). Ball Kids must carry out the instructions of the Chair Umpire.

Sometimes, the Chair Umpire will be trying to make sure that no balls are lost and will point to the Ball Kids at the back of the court. This means they should show the Chair Umpire how many balls they have.

If a Ball Kid knows that a ball has been lost, he/she should inform the Chair Umpire.

Ball Kids are not on-court officials. They should never give an opinion about a decision made by the Chair Umpire, or a Line Umpire, or about a disputed net cord.

Golden Rules!

There are some golden rules which must be remembered by all Ball Kids:

- You need to work as a team, and concentrate, to be a good Ball Kid.
- Never roll the ball to another Ball Kid between first and second serves
- The balls should always be at the server's end of the court. Therefore, the balls remain at the same end of the court for two successive games.
- The Service Line Umpire always sits at the receiver's end of the court. If a Ball Kid is unsure who is serving, he/she should look at where the Service Line Umpire is and send the balls to the opposite end of the court.
- When moving around the court, run quickly.
- Never bounce balls or pass balls to another Ball Kid during the point.
- Never bring your mobile phone on-court!

Ball Kids at the back of the court

The Ball Kid stands in his/her corner, by the back wall or fence, not obstructing the Line Umpire, scoreboard or banners. He/she should be standing with feet slightly apart, hands behind back.

Between points, the Ball Kids at the server's end should hold their arms high above their head, ready to give the player a ball if required. If the Ball Kid does not have any tennis balls in his/her hands, the Ball Kid should indicate this by showing the player and other Ball Kids that their hands are empty (hands at the side of the body below the waist, palms facing the player).

If there are two Ball Kids at the server's end of the court, they should share the balls between them (by rolling them across the back of the court) so that we avoid one Ball Kid having all the balls, with the other Ball Kid having none.

When the player wants a ball, he/she will nod to, or look at, the Ball Kid. The Ball Kid should throw the player the ball, making sure it bounces between them. The player may request several balls, so the Ball Kid should be ready for this. Never throw the player the ball that was in play just before. Some players only request one ball to serve, but will need another ball if their first serve is a fault – so Ball Kids must also be ready for this situation.

When the player has the balls he/she wants and turns to face the court, the Ball Kid can return to the rest position (hands behind back).

Ball Kids at the receiver's end who have balls should roll the ball, between points, to one of the Ball Kids at the net.

If a ball is out of play and is behind the base line, the Ball Kid on that side of the court should pick up the ball.

Ball Kids at the net

The Ball Kids at the net should crouch down either side of the net by the net post (and in doubles matches, outside the net post).

If a ball is out of play and is on the court, the Ball Kid on that side of the net should pick up the ball. After picking up the ball, the Ball Kid should return to the nearest correct position at the net (either on the Umpire's chair side of the court, or the opposite side) or at the back of the court. It is not necessary for the other Ball Kid at the net to run at the same time.

At the end of every point, the Ball Kids at the net must roll any balls they have to the server's end of the court. Also, they should check that the Ball Kids at the receiver's end of the court have rolled any balls that they have to the Ball Kids at the net.

Ball Kids at the net must take care not to touch any part of the net, the net cord, the net posts or the cables of the net machine (if applicable).

During the changeovers and set breaks, Ball Kids at the net should also help the players with any requests (for drinks, towels etc).

Tie-Breaks

This is a time where we need the most concentration from the Ball Kids on-court. The server's end changes after the first point and then every two points. In addition, the players change ends after every six points.

Ball Kids should be aware of who is serving the next point and send the balls to that end of the court. By looking at the Service Line Umpire (and/or Chair Umpire), you can make sure which end is the server's end.

When six balls are in play, the Ball Kids at the net should always have two balls in total. This means that unnecessary rolling of balls is avoided.

At the end of the tie-break, the Ball Kids should ask the Chair Umpire which end the balls should go to. Don't ask the Chair Umpire as soon as the set is finished, wait for some time until the players have sat down in their chairs.

Ball Changes

Ball changes are different, depending on the tournament, but are normally based on a numerical system (e.g. 7/9). 7/9 means that we change the balls after the first seven games and then every nine games.

The Chair Umpire will always announce "Ball Change" or "New Balls Please" when it is time to change the balls. All the Ball Kids at the back of the court should roll any balls they have to the Ball Kids at the net. The Ball Kids at the net then put all the old balls away and take out new balls, which they roll to the server's end of the court. One of the Line Umpires should assist the Ball Kids at the net with the ball change.

Every Ball Kid needs to be quick when the Chair Umpire has announced that it is time to change the balls, especially if the players are not sitting down.

Ball Changes never take place at the beginning of a tie-break.

Suspensions & End of the Match

If a match is suspended (because of bad light, or rain) the Chair Umpire will announce "Play is suspended" and all the Ball Kids should run to the chair and give the Chair Umpire the match balls. This is very important.

At the end of the match, all the Ball Kids should also return the balls to the Chair Umpire.