



# BRITISH TENNIS START COMPETING PARENTS GUIDE

FAIR  
PLAY

LTA  
BRITISH  
TENNIS



As well as being a lot of fun, children can learn a lot from competing. So if your child is looking to start competing, or you're looking to encourage them to, this guide will show you how it's done.

## BRITISH TENNIS MEMBERSHIP

Before your child can compete in any British Tennis competitions they will need a British Tennis Rating which you can get by signing them up to British Tennis Membership.

There are a number of membership options depending on your child's age and where they play.

Child Membership, for any child aged 4-10 years. Benefits include a British Tennis Rating and discounts on equipment and clothing.

Lite Membership, for juniors aged 11-17 years and who belong to a LTA Registered Venue. This is a free basic benefits package which contains a British Tennis Rating, access to the British Tennis Wimbledon Ballot and a monthly newsletter.

Team Membership, for any junior aged 11-17 years. Team Membership costs just £10 and includes a number of great benefits such as a personalised welcome pack with free gifts, priority tickets to major events and Davis Cup and Fed Cup, up to 90% off on equipment and clothing plus amazing money can't buy experiences to be won.

# FIND THE RIGHT TYPE OF COMPETITION FOR YOUR CHILD

Thousands of tennis competitions are held throughout the year across the country allowing players of all ages and abilities the opportunity to compete at an appropriate level. To help players identify suitable competitive opportunities these competitions are graded from 7-1, progressing from local club level to county, regional, and finally national level competitions.

There are also two measures to determine playing standard; British Tennis Ratings and British Tennis Rankings. To help you understand and monitor your child's playing standard visit the British Tennis Ratings and Rankings webpages for further information

## RECREATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Recreational competitions are a great place for your child to start as they are ungraded and can be found near to where you live. They provide a fantastic opportunity to take part in an informal competition through themed tennis festivals, team competitions and fun tournaments. The emphasis is on introducing players to competition as well as having lots of fun.

Please visit [www.lta.org.uk/competitions](http://www.lta.org.uk/competitions) for more information or ask your coach at your local club.

**Grade 7** - Local competitions such as club box leagues and ladders, club closed tournaments and competition in your coaching programme.

**Grade 6** - These are usually matchplays or team based competitions. Matchplays are run throughout the year and offer players in all age groups the chance to develop their competitive tennis. They will often specify a particular ratings band to help you determine the playing standard.

**Grade 5** - These competitions take place at local clubs and are open to players of all ages and abilities. They might be for specific age groups, team based or have multiple events within one tournament to cater for different age groups.

**Grade 4** - These are county level competitions. They include a series of one day tournaments run throughout the year and a large number of LTA approved

competitions that run in the school holiday periods.

**Grade 3** - These are regional level competitions. In the winter (September – March) there are LTA Staged Winter Regional Tour competitions which take place at the weekend. During school holidays there are a number of grade 3 week-long competitions that take place across the country.

**Grade 2** - These are national level competitions. There are two series of grade 2 tournaments a year for juniors, the Winter National Tour and the Summer National Tour. In the open (adult) age group there is a series of grade 2 tournaments called the Aegon British Tour which run throughout the year.

**Grade 1** - This is the top level of national competition (Nike Junior National Championships, Aegon British Tour Tier 1 events and the Aegon British Tour Masters).

# AGE GROUPS

All junior age groups from 8 & Under through to 18 & Under are aligned with the competition seasons. The competition season dates are: The competition season dates are:

- Winter season: 1 September – 31 March
- Summer season: 1 April – 31 August

Your child's age on the last date of the current competition season will determine which age group they will compete in for that season. There are 3 stages of LTA Mini Tennis; Red (for players 8U), Orange (for players 9U) and Green (for players 10U), each with their own court size and type of ball. This tailored approach enables players to develop vital skills and techniques at an early age. Players aged 12U and above compete with a Yellow Ball on a full sized tennis court.

For more information please visit:

[www.lta.org.uk/competitionagegroups](http://www.lta.org.uk/competitionagegroups)      [www.minitennis.org](http://www.minitennis.org)

# HOW TO FIND A COMPETITION

## COMPETITION SEARCH

To find suitable competitions for your child in your area, go to [www.LTA.org.uk/Competitions/Search](http://www.LTA.org.uk/Competitions/Search) and simply select the type of competition you are looking for i.e. mini, boys, girls, men's or women's. Then use the filters on the right hand side to find events that are right for your child.

You can save your search criteria by logging in and clicking the save icon.

If you find the closing date has passed you may wish to contact the tournament organiser to request a late entry however this may not always be possible and is dependent on whether there is space.

If you are looking to enter your child into a Grade 7 event we would suggest you contact your local club coach or someone at your venue who should be able to suggest an appropriate competition. Once you've found a suitable competition you can enter your child online by adding the competition to your basket and follow the checkout process.

After completing the payment process you will receive an email from British Tennis to confirm the entry has been received. The competition will also appear in your child's competition calendar in their Members Area, which can be found at [www.lta.org.uk/Competitions/Calendar/](http://www.lta.org.uk/Competitions/Calendar/).

# HELPFUL ADVICE

- Apply early. All competitions have published closing deadlines and many tournaments will insist on receiving your application and payment prior to this deadline. Check the LTA website for further information on the entry method as this may vary. You can normally pay using PayPal or a credit/debit card.
- Please note, some competitions do not accept payment online and for these you will be asked to pay on the day or send money before.
- Read the available tournament information, including fact sheets. They're there to help avoid any misunderstandings and should be your first point of call if you have any questions.
- Ensure your child is available for the duration of the tournament. Some tournaments advertise a morning/afternoon event, although this won't necessarily be the case for all events and you will be expected to keep the whole day free. In lower graded competitions (grade 6 and 7) we would expect the tournament to last a few hours, however as your child progresses, the competition may last the whole day.
- Check with the tournament organiser or referee if there is anything that you are not sure about- they are there to help you.
- Check the withdrawal deadlines. You should not expect a refund if your child is unable to play after the withdrawal deadline has passed and you will also receive withdrawal penalty points from the LTA. You will be given the option to challenge against the points awarded but please be aware points are only removed in exceptional circumstances. If you withdraw before the published withdrawal deadline then you will receive a full refund, usually once the event has finished.
- Keep a record of the competitions you have entered your child into. Remember, it is your responsibility to check whether they have been accepted and the date and time they are needed to sign in to play.
- Avoid entering more than one competition which could require your child to play on the same day. Your child is likely to be penalised if you do this. Please refer to our LTA Competition Regulations on Overlapping Events for further clarification or check with the organisers before the withdrawal deadline.

# PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR A TOURNAMENT

- The tournament referee will email all players to notify them of their first match time, so you know when you need to arrive by.
- Ensure your child has all their equipment including racket, suitable clothing (shorts, t-shirts, hat, tracksuits if they are playing outside) and non-marking trainers. Make sure they also have enough food and drink with them as not all venues will have refreshments available.
- Allow enough time for your journey including allowances for delays. If you are going to be delayed let the Tournament Referee know as soon as possible.
- Always arrive by the time your child has been asked to sign in. Many tournaments require players to sign in each day at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled match time and your child should do this in person.
- Talk to your child about the importance of Fair Play, enjoyment, ensuring they try their best and to focus on any goals they have worked on with their coach in training sessions.
- Remember that tennis matches vary in length, so be prepared for a wait, particularly if a tournament has been affected by bad weather. In most cases there is no expectation for tournaments to provide indoor court backup. They may include this on the factsheet so check prior to entering if you are expecting to play inside.
- Remember to check the rules of the host club/venue, including any special clothing requirements. A small number of clubs have an all-white rule and if you turn up with non-compliant clothing your child may not be allowed to play.
- Don't expect the tournament to wait for you if you are running late. Depending on the tournament schedule the referee may or may not be able to delay the match.
- We are aware some withdrawals can't be avoided so where possible please avoid leaving your child's withdrawal until the last minute. The later the withdrawal is, the more disruptive it is to the tournament and other players.
- Your child should avoid playing if they are injured or ill. It's important for them to give their body time to recover properly from injury or illness.

# BEFORE THE MATCH

- Help your child to stay calm and relaxed before a match.
- Check that they take everything that they need onto the court. They should not leave the court for any reason during a match other than to seek the services of the referee.
- A toilet break should only be taken at the end of a set and is not to be used to fill up a water bottle, so make sure your child has plenty of water before they go onto court to play.
- Players should avoid walking across the back of other courts whilst play is in progress and should wait until a suitable break in play.
- Warm-ups shouldn't exceed the five minute period allowed. In a busy tournament this will delay other people waiting to play.
- Make sure your child knows what scoring format they are playing. If in doubt make sure that they ask the referee or court supervisor before the match starts.

# DURING THE MATCH

- Make sure they enjoy playing tennis! It's a great game and whilst there has to be a winner and a loser, they can learn something from every match that they play.
- If your child is serving make sure they know to call the score after every point. They are responsible for calling all out-balls on their side of the net clearly and fairly even if it costs them the point. Such calls must be clearly audible. They are also responsible for calling "not-up" when they fail to hit the ball before it has bounced twice (if their match is umpired then they will take care of all calls and scoring).
- Teach your child to always treat their opponent with respect. Good sportsmanship and honesty is extremely important regardless of whether they win or lose.
- Please ensure your child avoids swearing or throwing their rackets/balls in temper or behaving in an unsportsmanlike manner. This is discourteous and can result in them being penalised.
- Remember that if your child has a problem during the match the referee (or assistant) is there to help. Encourage them to raise their racket and the referee will come to help.
- Avoid communicating with your child during their match, it is against the rules and it will encourage them to learn to play the match without any involvement from the sidelines. However, do show your support by smiling and clapping.
- If you can, make sure you watch their whole match regardless of their performance.

# AFTER THE MATCH

- Make sure your child shakes their opponent's hand even if they have had a difficult match.
- Check that your child reports their result to the referee even if they lost the match.
- Make sure your child finds out when they're playing next. In some circumstances the match losers take part in consolation rounds, which are sometimes compulsory and an important part of the tournament. If in doubt – check with the referee.
- Be prepared to wait between matches and be patient with the tournament referee who will always try and get matches on court as soon as possible.
- Make sure they respect the level of ability of some of the other children in the tournament, every match and opponent brings a new challenge.
- Never worry if your child has lost a match, this is something they can work on with their coach afterwards.
- Try and encourage consistent behaviour from your child regardless of the result.
- Remember to thank the tournament officials. They are hardworking, dedicated people and many are volunteers.
- Please complete the LTA Tournament Satisfaction Survey to provide your feedback about the competition (you will receive this by email shortly after the results have been loaded).



For more information on any of the above, please visit the LTA website [www.lta.org.uk](http://www.lta.org.uk) or contact our British Tennis Services Team on 0208 487 7000 / info@lta.org.uk