

Table tennis



Table tennis is a sport in which two or four players hit a lightweight, ball back and forth with rackets. The game takes place on a hard table divided by a net. Except for the initial serve, players must allow a ball played toward them only one bounce on their side of the table and must return it so that it bounces on the opposite side. Points are scored when a player fails to return the ball within the rules. Play is fast and demands quick reactions.

The game is controlled by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), founded in 1926. Since 1988, table tennis has been an Olympic sport which includes four events. From 1988 until 2004, the events were men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles and women's doubles. Since 2008 the doubles have been replaced by the team events (Beijing was the first time where table tennis had an Olympic team event).

General description

The game is played on a table. The International Table Tennis Federation requires a total playing area not less than 14 m long, 7 m wide and 5 m high for competitions. No limitations in size or shape are specified.

Modern rackets are usually covered with a thin layer of rubber on the racket's striking surface.

The ball used in table tennis has a diameter of 40 mm is made of celluloid, and is hollow.

The winner is the first to score 11 points or more while being ahead by 2 points or more. Players alternate serves every two points. At 10-10 the players alternate with every serve; the winner is then the first person to gain a two point advantage over his opponent.



Starting a game

In top-flight competition, service is decided by a coin toss. At lower levels it is common for one player to hide the ball in one or the other hand (usually hidden under the table), allowing the other player to guess which hand the ball is in. The correct or incorrect guess gives the "winner" the option to choose to serve, receive, or to choose which side of the table to use.

Competitive table tennis is popular in Asia and Europe and has been gaining attention in the United States. The most important international competitions are World Cup, World Championship, the Olympics and the ITTF Pro Tour, as well as continental competitions like European Championship, Euro Top-12, Asian Championship and Asian Games.

A Chinese player has won the men's World Championship 60% of the time since 1959; in the women's competition, a Chinese player has won all but two of the World Championships since 1971.

