

T&RA Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do clubs have to obey all the guidelines in order to reopen?

No. Clubs should perform a risk assessment and then apply the guidelines to their own circumstances. Clubs should follow the guidelines as much as possible, but cost/time/practical constraints may be valid reasons for not following some. Clubs may also add additional measures.

2. Which guidelines are mandatory, and what is the minimum level of compliance clubs must achieve?

This will depend on the detailed government advice yet to come, but clubs will have to take their own advice if they wish to not follow guidelines without good reason. The T&RA advice is, as set out in point 1 above, that all guidelines should be followed unless reasonable constraints exist and attempts have been made to mitigate the fact guidelines are not being followed (including consideration of additional measures).

3. Do clubs have to do a risk assessment before reopening? Are clubs insured if they follow the guidelines?

Government guidelines state that clubs “must make sure that the risk assessment for your business and/or organisation addresses the risks of COVID-19. Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law.

Clubs are responsible for their own insurance, and so compliance with the guidelines is no guarantee that insurance remains valid.

4. Why is the T&RA recommending more stringent guidelines than other countries?

Different laws exist in the different real tennis playing countries. The T&RA advice is aimed solely at enabling UK clubs to reopen in a compliant and safe manner.

5. Why do clubs have to lose money by leaving gaps between courts, and why is it 15 minutes?

Risk of indoor transmission is reduced by more time and more ventilation. Gaps between courts are essential to reduce the risk. The 15 minutes is a compromise and is not scientifically calculated. Clubs should leave more time between courts where possible.

6. Why not clean all the surfaces in between each match?

It is important that Professionals minimise their time on court, accepting that they will give lessons and need to clean the court. We recommend cleaning the surfaces once a day, as more frequent cleaning may expose the Professionals unnecessarily. Clubs may choose to make it possible for players themselves to wipe down surfaces between games.

7. Why can't people play doubles, especially if they maintain social distancing?

The nature of doubles is such that T&RA do not believe it is possible to ensure social distancing, even if players agree to try to restrict their movement. T&RA will continue to review this advice in line with changes in national infection rates.

8. Who decides if clubs are allowed to reopen? Will the T&RA be checking up on clubs?

This is a decision for each club. The T&RA's role is to advise on considerations to consider in reaching that decision. T&RA will not audit whether clubs are following guidelines, but is glad to offer advice on specific questions.

9. What happens if clubs open before the government says they can?

Under current legislation, the persons responsible might be liable to fines. It is very likely that clubs' insurance policies would be invalidated. There would be potential for adverse publicity for all real tennis clubs due to the action of a minority.

10. Will T&RA issue further guidance?

Yes. The T&RA Risk Assessment and Play Safe Guidelines are living documents. As and when further government advice is issued or if there are other changes impacting the guidelines, T&RA will update clubs.

11. Has the government given a timetable of future relaxations?

No, it has not.

12. Can clubs amend the timings of the booking slots on T&RA Online Booking to whatever time slots they like? How do they do it?

Yes, time slots can be amended, although it does not happen immediately. Clubs should contact Chris Davies, CEO at the T&RA.

13. Can people hire racquets from Professionals?

Where possible, players should use their own equipment. If hiring is essential then the equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after use. If possible, use each item no more than once a day.

14. Why can't players use the changing rooms and showers?

The amount of cleaning required to keep these spaces reasonably safe at the moment is considered too high. If done by Professionals it would expose them to too much time in high risk areas, and if outsourced to cleaners, the adverse publicity risk of infections is considered too great at the moment.

15. Which court surfaces need to be cleaned each day?

Reachable (i.e. with no equipment) surfaces, with particular attention to those surfaces with which the players come into frequent contact. This should include the floor. Clubs should decide whether it should include the main wall.

16. Can Professionals still do the 10-minute mark and mark club matches?

Clubs should decide based on what other measures are in place, whether adequate social distancing is possible, and factors including overall Professional time spent in high risk areas. Where social distancing is not possible, as will usually be the case if marking from the deans or net, T&RA recommend against marking.

17. What should clubs do if members or Professionals become infected?

The Covid Compliance Officer must be informed immediately and implement the club specific protocol regarding tracing and communicating to members. The T&RA may ask for data from clubs periodically.

18. What are the rules on competitions?

The T&RA is drafting a set of guidelines for competitions. Until that is issued, any competitions should follow the guidelines issued for general play.

19. If clubs only have one set of balls, so can't rotate them, what should they do?

Either wipe the set clean at the end of each day, or split the set into two and rotate daily. Consider spraying or wiping balls after use with alcohol-based sanitiser.

20. Should clubs keep a record of people attending the premises?

Yes, T&RA recommend this. It may need to be bespoke if the clubs's existing booking system doesn't already record the information clearly, or if non-playing visitors need to be incorporated. This is important for tracing in the event of infection.

21. What is the benefit of wearing a glove on the non-playing hand?

The glove would serve as a barrier in the first instance, between ball/surfaces and body. It may also serve as a physical reminder not to touch your own face. However, this is not a perfect solution as a glove could still touch your face.

22. Has there been any research as to how long the virus will survive on a Real Tennis ball as there has with cricket balls?

Nothing has been conducted on ball cloth although related research on cotton suggests it to be a poor vector, with contamination lasting considerably less time than on a hard surface. This is most probably attributed to the surface roughness and the fact that wool is rougher than cotton. The contamination danger time depends on the concentration of infection, so it isn't possible to relate the figures. Snooker authorities, whose baize is of similar fabrication, also have no answers; the T&RA remains in communication. Although not entirely scientific, experts suggested the ball is not the top priority.

As the risk from the ball cannot be dismissed, we have therefore suggested other measures to mitigate potential contamination, including washing hands, avoiding touching your face, a glove on a non-playing hand (a barrier), etc. Like everything else, there is no perfect solution other than to reduce the risk.

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