



BEING A USTA LEAGUE CAPTAIN

A HOW TO GUIDE



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Thank you for being a USTA League Captain. Together you form our largest group of volunteers across the country to lead the largest adult recreational tennis program in the country. Being a captain is undoubtedly a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun—a rewarding commitment that serves both your team and tennis as a whole. And please, always remember that your dedication to your team, your league and our sport is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of the booklet is to provide basic information to serve as an aid in your role as captain. Since USTA League is a national program with local rules and regulations, the information in this booklet may be applied differently from local league to local league; if you have any questions, please reach out to your Local or District League Coordinator or USTA section/district staff member for additional assistance.



YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

USTA League has dedicated staff and volunteers on the local, district/state, section and national levels who can assist with any question you might have. In most areas you, as captain, will work closely with a Local or District League Coordinator, who is responsible for organizing the league. Your league coordinator will put together the schedule, implement local rules and regulations, help players find teams and organize local championship events.

FORMING A TEAM

As the season goes along you will have players who can't be available for every match. So it is better to stock your team with enough players that you are able to adjust the weekly lineup as conflicts occur. Recruiting players can be as easy as asking other players at the local tennis facility to join you. Ask your friends to recommend their friends. Ask a local pro for referrals. Your league coordinator may also have a list of players looking to join a team.

Finding the right team size is essential for team success and morale, and it is possible to have too many players on a team. Players will need to play in at least two matches to advance to championship competition. If you have too many players, it may be difficult to get them enough match time to qualify for advancement. Also, tennis players are competitive and want to be a part of the team—and that means playing.

Also, some local leagues have a maximum roster size for teams, so make sure you check with your league coordinator before finalizing your roster. Also, in many leagues players can be added during the season; again, check your local rules to see how the roster is managed in your area.

NTRP

The NTRP system ensures that players enjoy the game by providing a method of classifying skill levels for more compatible matches, group lessons, league play, tournaments and other programs.

Players who have never previously played in USTA League can self-rate by going to tennislink.usta.com/leagues. If they have played league tennis before, then their last rating (if not expired) will be used for entry on to a team at that level.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

Any person age 18 and older is eligible to play in USTA League provided they have a USTA Membership that will be active throughout the league season.

If a teammate has to renew or purchase a membership, the online system at usta.com/membership is the fastest and easiest way to process a membership request.

PRESEASON

You've got your players lined up. Now what?
Here is a preseason checklist to follow as you get ready for the season:

☐ **ATTEND A CAPTAINS' MEETING**

Most league coordinators host a captains' meeting during the preseason. This is a great opportunity to meet other captains and learn about the local league rules and regulations as well as complete any last-minute paperwork. During these meetings, the league coordinator will also cover section and national regulations to ensure everyone is on the same page heading into the season.

☐ **MAKE SURE YOUR PLAYERS ARE REGISTERED**

Now is the time to ensure that all of your players have all registered online using the USTA's TennisLink registration system. TennisLink has several new and enhanced features to help you stay in contact with your team, review player records, get match directions and much more.

Also, each player needs to have a membership that remains active throughout the entire season. USTA Membership can be purchased and/or renewed online at USTA.com.

☐ **MATCH LOCATION**

Do you have a favorite court at a local park or facility? Are you undefeated on your local high school courts? Does your team like certain courts because there is a great restaurant one block away? Whatever your reason, identify and secure the best location for your matches.

☐ **HOLD A TEAM MEETING**

The two primary reasons players join USTA League teams are because they love tennis and love the camaraderie of playing on a team. Team meetings are a way to get everyone together in a social setting and build team unity and cohesiveness.

Team meetings are also the ideal time to tackle the nuts and bolts of the league season, so take the time to distribute the schedule, and review team rules and expectations.

It is also important that your teammates understand the overall philosophy for the team. Is your goal to win a national championship? Is winning fun but not the most important thing? Whatever the philosophy is, remember to have fun and give your players an opportunity to do what they signed up for—play tennis.

☐ **SCHEDULE PRACTICES**

This is one of those non-mandatory things that many captains do. Getting the team together to play more tennis builds team chemistry and sharpens your skills as a captain, coach and talent evaluator.

The racquet has been restrung, you've broken in your tennis shoes and your preseason practices have you and your team in midseason form. It's time to play, and here's a reminder of things to do in the lead-up to your match:

ONE WEEK PRIOR

You will need to contact the opposing team's captain/s to confirm a few match logistics, including:

- Day and time of the match
- Location,
- Court surface
- Court fees

You may also need to reconfirm the court reservations for your home matches.

And remember, while it's important to involve everyone on your team, make sure you play yourself as well. And when you do crack the lineup, appoint an acting captain to take care of your game-day duties.

DAY BEFORE

Last-minute changes are inevitable, so make sure to verify your lineup with your team and arrange for a few alternates in case of unforeseen cancellations. It is also important to distribute directions to the match, and plan to show up on time.

DAY OF THE MATCH

Set those pre-match butterflies aside, this is meant to be fun! As you get ready for the match, you will need to do some of the following depending on your local league regulations:

- Print a match scorecard off the TennisLink system
- Collect money from your players to cover court fees
- Provide tennis balls if it's a home match

Also, you will need to meet with the opposing captain to go over ground rules, including tie-break procedures, and review court assignments. Remember to exchange scorecard lineups before players walk onto the courts. And lastly – **HAVE FUN!**

POST-MATCH

As the captain, you are responsible for recording scores from each court and getting the opposing captain's signature on the scorecard. While either team captain can report scores, the opposing captain must confirm the scores in TennisLink.

Tennis players burn a lot of calories during a match and are sure to be hungry post match. Consider going to a local restaurant—it's a great way to refuel and build team camaraderie.





THE BASELINE

THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

Playing in USTA League is much more enjoyable when players practice good sportsmanship. As captain, we appreciate your efforts in supporting good sportsmanship in every match and throughout the season. Also, this is tennis, so have fun and enjoy playing the matches and the company of your teammates.

POSTSEASON

For many, the season ends at the completion of the local league schedule. Others will advance to district/state championship and beyond, up to the national championship events. Remember to review player eligibility rules for advancement.

We encourage you to celebrate the season—championship or not. You had fun with your team and a postseason get-together gives you an opportunity to give out team awards, share a few laughs and celebrate your success, whatever form it takes.

Thank you once again for becoming a USTA League captain. The USTA could never do it without you!