



A Practical Guide for Clubs **Returning to Play Tennis** following the Covid-19 Restrictions

**During Step 2 of the Northern Ireland Executive
Approach to Removing the Covid-19 Restrictions**





Step 2

The guidelines in this document relate to **Step 2** of Tennis Ireland's Roadmap to Reopening Tennis in Northern Ireland.

These measures are part of the **second Step** of lifting the public health restrictions that were put in place to protect us all from COVID-19. They come into effect on top of the measures in phase 1.

We are conscious that some clubs may wish to remain at Step 1 of reopening or impose increased restrictions at their own facilities. For example, clubs may wish to keep toilets closed. Such clubs are entitled to do so and should only proceed to Step 2 when all such guidelines can be implemented.

This step:

- Permits people to engage in outdoor sporting and fitness activities, involving small group team sports training (but not matches) where social distancing can be maintained and where there is no contact.

Safe every step of the way

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|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
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Tennis is a Sport for Life. We know playing tennis provides great mental and physical health benefits for our players. We therefore must ensure that Tennis is only played within a safe environment.

This practical guide, prepared by our team in consultation with the Sport Ireland Expert Group and in line with Government Guidelines, outlines the robust measures Tennis Ireland would like clubs to implement and maintain to help safeguard staff and members during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow all of us to play safely.

The measures, which relate to Step 2 of the Northern Ireland Executive Approach to Removing the Covid-19 Restrictions, cover each step of the journey from home to the club gate and back home again.

These measures should be in place until further notice.

Our measures and procedures are under constant review and updated as advice from government, health authorities and governing bodies evolves in line with the gradual lifting of social restrictions.





Clubs that feel they are not ready or will have difficulty proceeding to Step 2 should follow the Step 1 Guidelines.

Summary of Changes in this Phase

- **Toilets can reopen for players subject to appropriate cleaning protocols being in place**
- **U18's casual play only under supervision of an adult. Clubs have discretion to remove this requirement for junior players aged 16 years and over if they so choose.**
- **Coaches can utilise 2 courts with 2 players on each court subject to social distancing measures being in place**

1. Club Covid-19 Committee

Tennis Clubs should continue to operate with an assigned COVID-19 Officer and committee responsible for managing issues and queries relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. This committee should continue to:

- Ensure indoor courts are not utilised during this phase of reopening
- Check with their insurers if any amendments to their policies are required to cover Covid19 issues and to consult with them in relation to their risk assessments
- Ensure they review and that the club can comply with all of the protocols outlined in this phase
- Ensure that the club and its members adhere to NHS / Public Health advice in all cases.
- Ensure that sufficient NHS Covid-19 information Posters are in place
- Consider the operation of a court booking system that, if possible, allows for staggered play and perhaps allow 5 minutes between booking slots for players to exit and enter without interaction. If this cannot be done it would be advisable that players understand the need for social distancing while entering and exiting the courts and wait in a designated waiting area.
- Ensure that the club maintains accurate records of who is playing and when. This should include all persons on court and not just the one making the booking. This must be carried out for coaching sessions as well, and

in the case that a parent/guardian is present in the club that must also be recorded. This will help with contact tracing if necessary.

- Be responsible for informing all members of the updated Covid-19 guidelines and insist on full cooperation
- Ensure that the contact details for all members are up to date as this will assist with contact tracing should it be necessary
- Listen to feedback and contact Tennis Ireland if there are issues not covered under these protocols

2. Club Access

In this phase of a club's re-opening, access to the clubhouse should be primarily limited to staff / committee members and for emergency access. Toilets may be opened for use by players only where appropriate cleaning protocols can be put in place.

- Indoor courts should remain closed in this phase.
- Courts should only be accessed by staff and members only.
- Junior Players undertaking casual play must still be supervised by a parent/guardian, however the club does have discretion to remove this requirement for junior players aged 16 years and over if they so choose.

To access the courts in this phase of the reopening, a player must:

- Be a current member
- Not have been out of the country in the last 14 days
- Not have been around someone with symptoms of Covid-19 in the last 14 days
- Not be in a period of self-isolation and/or cocooning under the current Health Policy Rules
- Not be displaying COVID-19 symptoms or feeling unwell
- Have a pre-reserved playing time
- It is recommended that Covid 19 Training is provided for all staff / volunteers and that the club issues a letter to those working in the club that can be produced if required.



3. Booking and Arrival

- A pre reserved booking is required, preferably via a court booking system, website, app, or phone. This will assist should contact tracing be required subsequently.
- All players should ensure their club has their up-to-date contact details (phone and email).
- All players, and not just the player making the booking, should be included in the booking notes. If there is a change to who is playing, it is advisable to make sure the booking is updated.
- Players should continue to travel to the club alone, or only with members of the same household.
- Ample car parking spaces should be available to ensure social distancing. If players must park next to another car, they should wait for the other person to exit or enter before doing so themselves.
- Players should arrive at the court entrance no more than 5 minutes prior to the reserved playing time. It is important that players maintain social distancing and wait in a pre-designated waiting area that allows for social distancing
- Players should observe social distancing at all times and resist the temptation to mingle
- Changing rooms should remain closed for use other than to access toilet facilities during this phase. Players should arrive in Tennis attire and change footwear at the car or at home
- Players should sanitise their hands using dispensers provided at the entrance to the club and courts or indeed should bring their own.
- Players should head straight to their designated court unless required to check-in
- Players should ensure that they utilise toilet facilities in their own home prior to arriving at the club, however, toilet facilities may be open subject to regular cleaning protocols.
- A one in / one out system of entry should be applied in this phase.

4. Check-in and Club Shop Protocol

- Two-metre queue markers should be in place at any single-entry point whether at the clubhouse reception or at the entrance to courts
- Only one person at a time should be permitted inside the reception area
- A two-metre exclusion zone should be in place at the service desk and, if possible, a protection screen should be fitted.
- If your club has a shop for essential tennis items that are available to purchase these should be gathered by staff upon request
- Food and beverage items should not be available, and people should be encouraged to bring them from home if required
- Club vending machines should be placed out of commission during this phase
- Any Purchases should be paid for by contactless card payment only

5. Clubhouse Facilities

- Protocols for cleaning clubhouse facilities accessed by staff and members should be in place prior to opening and during operation.
- Clubhouse access for members should only be when necessary and be limited to the Club Reception if required to check in.
- Toilets can be opened in this phase but only subject to the club being able to implement regular cleaning protocols
- A one in / one out system should be implemented
- Changing rooms, restaurant, function rooms and, where relevant, the club bar should remain closed during this Phase of reopening
- Players must provide their own racquets and equipment
- Chairs should be removed from the reception area in order to prevent people congregating

6. To the Court

- Play should be restricted to singles play only in this phase of reopening. The only exception for doubles is if playing partners are from the same household. Doubles play will be considered in future phases of reopening.
- Courts that are side by side can be utilised.
- Players should enter the court one at a time



- Entrances / Gates to courts should remain open, if safe to do so, perhaps tied back to prevent use of handles
- Rubbish bins should be removed, and all items brought on court should be taken home afterwards.
- Other court furniture should be removed including scoreboards, chairs/benches and net winders.
- Shoe cleaners should be removed
- Any player(s) repeatedly not following the club directives should be asked to leave the club
- Nobody but the players should be allowed on the court. There should be no spectators present during this phase of reopening
- U18's casual play should be under supervision of an adult. Clubs have discretion to remove this requirement for junior players aged 16 years and over if they so choose.

7. On the Court - Playing

- Physical distancing should be observed throughout the period of play, particularly on change of ends and entering and exiting the court. Players should change ends at opposite sides of the net.
- Players must refrain from handshakes and high fives
- Equipment such as towels, food, and drink must not be exchanged between players. Players should be encouraged to bring their own drinks and towels.
- Players should avoid touching their face after handling a ball, racquet, or other equipment.
- Players should ideally bring a small bottle of hand sanitiser with them and keep it in their pocket or bag for use.
- While playing singles, players should use two sets of clearly marked tennis balls. These should be alternated for serving with each player only touching their individual tennis balls. It would also be good practice to sanitise hands if you inadvertently pick up a ball.
- Players should use their racquet / foot to pick up balls and hit them to their opponent and should avoid using their hands to pick up the balls.
- Players should remain apart from other players when taking a break.

- If a ball from another court comes across, players should send it back with a kick or with a racquet.
- Caution is advised for those who intend to engage in high intensity training following a recovery from Covid-19. Individuals should seek medical advice prior to a return to training.

8. On the Court - Coaching

- Coaches should prepare and present a Risk Assessment document and get approval to coach from the Covid 19 Committee
- Coaches can utilise 2 courts with 2 players on each court subject to social distancing measures being in place. Care must be taken with regards to the handling of tennis balls and drills should allow for social distancing to remain.
- Up to 4 players from the same household can be coached on 1 court
- For Red Ball activities, 4 players can play on one court provided that two red courts are marked out, one on either side of the net, subject to social distancing.
- Coaching sessions should be booked and recorded.
- Coaches should brief their students and/or their parents of the protocols that should be followed in advance of the session
- Coaching should only be provided to members during this phase of reopening.
- Coaches should ensure a player has registered their contact details with the clubs.
- As much as possible, coaches must try to remain on the same court and adjust their schedules in order to stay on-site for the minimum amount of time required.
- Exercises that require continuous play are recommended.
- Coaches should limit the number of tennis balls used and not use basket drills or feeding during this phase
- Coaches should limit the use of equipment such as cones, drop lines and targets.
- Do not let players manipulate the practice equipment. Coaches should take charge of picking up the balls.
- Players should use their racquet or their foot to push balls back



9. Getting Home Safely

- Once play has finished players should leave the premises promptly, sanitising their hands on the way out using a courtside dispenser.
- Restaurant and bars should remain closed until restrictions are eased so there should be no congregating in these areas
- Clubs should make provision for thoroughly cleaning accessible areas and ensuring that all “touch areas” are cleaned thoroughly each day
- If a player becomes unwell after playing, they should first contact their GP/NHS and then inform their club. The club should contact the NHS and follow the advice provided to them on the next steps.

The protocols for the reopening of tennis, in Step 1 and 2 are necessarily restrictive, however as we progress through the Government’s Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business, restrictions on tennis activities will also be eased.

The table below sets out an outline of the timeline for the gradual re-introduction of tennis activities. It should be noted that any change or additional guidance from Government may result in amendments to the below table.

Step	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Date	19th May	To be confirmed by Government	To be confirmed by Government
Booking	In Advance. Online or by Phone	In Advance. Online or by Phone	In Advance. Online or by Phone
Group Sizes	Singles only. Exception for doubles if partner is from the same household	Singles only. Exception for doubles if partner is from the same household.	Singles and Doubles
Type of Play	Casual play	Casual Play	Internal Club Competition (Subject to Protocols)
Who may play	Members Only U18’s only under supervision of an adult.	Members only U18’s only under supervision of an adult. Clubs have discretion to remove this requirement for junior players aged 16 years and over if it so chooses.	Members, Members Guests U18’s can play without supervision, but clubs have discretion to insist on their own requirements.
Clubhouse	Closed, except for reception (check in only) and for emergency access	Closed, except for reception and toilets (subject to cleaning protocols) and for emergency access A one in one out protocol should be implemented	Toilet facilities, changing room, shop, club restaurant may open (subject to strict cleaning protocols)
Coaching	Singles Coaching only, the exception being lessons involving members of the same household. Coach should prepare a risk assessment for approval by the Club	Coach can utilise a maximum of 2 courts with a maximum of 2 players on each court subject to social distancing Up to 4 players from the same household can be coached on 1 court For Red Ball activities, 4 players can play on one court provided that two red courts are marked out, one on either side of the net, subject to social distancing. Coach should prepare a risk assessment for approval by the Club.	Coach can utilise a maximum of 2 courts of 4 players subject to social distancing. Adequate supervision should be in place to assist and ensure social distancing is maintained. Coach should prepare a risk assessment for approval by the Club
Court Type	Outdoor Only	Outdoor Only	Outdoor Indoor (Subject to strict guidelines)



Step	Step 4	Step 5
Date	To be confirmed by Government	To be confirmed by Government
Booking	In Advance. Online or by Phone	In Advance. Online or by Phone
Group Sizes	Singles and Doubles	Singles and Doubles
Type of Play	Leagues and Open Competitions (Subject to Protocols and Restrictions)	All domestic competitions (Subject to Protocols and Restrictions)
Who may play	Members, Members Guests and Visitors. U18's can play without supervision, but clubs have discretion to insist on their own requirements.	Members, Members Guests and Visitors. U18's can play without supervision, but clubs have discretion to insist on their own requirements.
Clubhouse	Toilet facilities, changing room, shop, club restaurant may open (subject to strict guidelines)	Toilet facilities, changing room, shop, club restaurant and bar may open (subject to strict guidelines)
Coaching	Maximum of 6 players per court and subject to social distancing measures and Player coach ratio of 1:10 Adequate supervision should be in place to assist and ensure social distancing is maintained. Coach should prepare a risk assessment for approval by the Club NTC Open for Public Provincial and National Training camps as per guidelines above	Maximum of 6 players per court and subject to social distancing measures and Player coach ratio of 1:10 Adequate supervision should be in place to assist and ensure social distancing is maintained. Coach should prepare a risk assessment for approval by the Club NTC Open for Public Provincial and National Training camps as per guidelines above
Court Type	Outdoor Indoor (Subject to strict guidelines)	Outdoor Indoor (Subject to strict guidelines)



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