

**The follow text is from the current ITTF Handbook for MATCH OFFICIALS
This handbook sets out how an Official applies the laws of the game.
WE ARE LOOKING AT THE SERVICE LAW only here.**

10 SERVICE

10.1 Consistency

10.1.1 Consistent application of the service law always presents difficulties, perhaps because it has become so complicated, and there is sometimes a tendency for umpires to pay most attention to the aspects that they find easiest to check. To offset this tendency, the umpire should keep in mind the purpose of the various requirements and try to ensure that they are applied in a way that meets their objectives.

10.2 Free Hand

10.2.1 The requirement for the server's free hand to be open is intended to ensure that the ball is not gripped in any way, so that the player cannot impart spin to the ball as he or she throws it. In applying the law, the umpire should be less concerned with details such as the precise curvature of the server's free hand than with satisfying himself or herself that the ball is resting freely on the server's palm.

10.2.2 To help ensure that the ball can be seen resting freely on the palm it is required to be stationary above the level of the playing surface. The free hand may not be held stationary, dropped below the table surface and then brought upwards with a continuous sweep of the arm to throw the ball; if the hand is not brought to rest again above the level of the playing surface the service is illegal.

10.2.3 The ball, but not necessarily the whole of the free hand, must also be behind the server's end line from the start of service until it is projected upwards. Thus, a player may begin service with his or her arm and part of his or her free hand over the playing surface without being penalised, provided the ball itself is clearly behind the end line.

10.3 Throwing the Ball

10.3.1 The server is required to throw the ball "near vertically" upwards and it must rise at least 16 cm after leaving his or her hand. This means it must rise within a few degrees of the vertical, rather than within the angle of 45° that was formerly specified, and that it must rise far enough for the umpire to be sure that it is thrown upwards and not sideways or diagonally. In Diagram 10.3.1.1 services B and C are acceptable, whilst A and D are not. The height of the toss is also a factor in determining whether the toss is near vertical. In Diagram 10.3.1.2, the ball is projected from, and struck at, the same place, but service A is a fault, whilst B is acceptable.

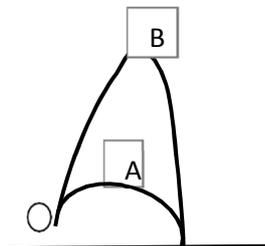
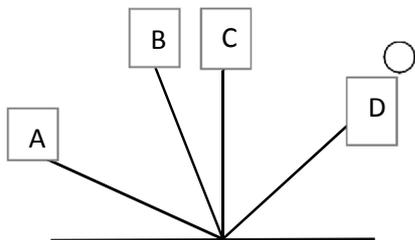


Diagram 10.3.1.1 Diagram 10.3.1.2

10.3.2 The lower limit of 16cm is just greater than the **height of the net, which provides a convenient reference**.

10.4 Striking the Ball

10.4.1 The ball must not be struck until it is falling from the highest point in its trajectory. At the moment of contact with the racket, the ball must be above the level of the playing surface and behind the end line.

10.5 Visibility

10.5.1 The primary requirement of the current service law is for the server to ensure that the receiver can see the ball throughout the service, and the umpire or assistant umpire must be satisfied that this is the case. The umpire or assistant umpire should look to see that the ball is not hidden from the receiver at any stage by any part of the body, or anything he or she or his or her doubles partner is wearing or carrying, and that the server's free arm, which includes the free hand, is not in the space between the ball and the net, once the ball has been projected upwards.

10.5.2 The ball must be above the level of the playing surface at the start of service. There is, however, no specific requirement for the receiver to be able to see the racket throughout service, and the server may quite legitimately begin service with the racket concealed, for example, behind his or her back.

10.5.3 From their positions in line with the net, especially in case of one umpire per table in the qualification stage, it may be impractical for the umpire and/or the assistant umpire to judge whether the ball is struck illegally if it is struck close to the end line or beside a player's body. It is, however, the responsibility of the player to serve so that the correctness of his or her service action can be seen and if he or she serves near the margins of illegality, he or she runs the risk of being penalised.

10.6 Warning

10.6.1 An umpire or assistant umpire, who suspects, but is not sure, that a player's service action is illegal, may call a let and warn the player without awarding a point. Either the umpire or assistant umpire can issue a service warning (see Appendix D for appropriate hand signals). Only one warning may be given during a match. If any of his or her, or his or her doubles partner's, subsequent services in that match is of doubtful legality, for the same or for any other reason, a point will be awarded to his or her opponent. A yellow card should not be used for a service warning.

10.6.2 Whether or not a formal warning is given there is no objection to a player whose service action is only marginally acceptable being advised informally, between rallies, by either the umpire or assistant umpire, that any deterioration could make it illegal. Contrary to popular belief, a player is not entitled to a warning for a first illegal service, and a clear failure to meet the requirements of the service law should always be penalised by the award of a point.

10.6.3 The umpire or assistant umpire has no power to ignore an infringement of the service law because he or she does not believe that it gives the server any advantage and there is no justification for overlooking a first offence in the hope that it was a temporary lapse. The offence may be repeated at a critical stage of the match, and a player penalised then could justly protest that he or she had been given no earlier indication that the action was illegal.

10.6 Exceptions

10.7.1 The umpire may relax the requirements for a correct service if he or she is satisfied that compliance is prevented by a physical disability. This will always be done for Class 1 and Class 2 players (refer Appendix H). The player's international classification card contains a section indicating any physical limitations that the player may have affecting compliance with the requirements of a correct service e.g. where a player with a disability is either not able to straighten his or her palm or does not have a hand, the player may serve with a curved palm or toss the ball from his or her stump.

If you go the link below you can read up on all aspects of Officiating.

<https://ittf.cdnomega.com/eu/2019/08/HMO-16th-Edition.pdf>

Thank You for reading this article. if you have any questions about the services rules please contact one of our the committee who will refer you to one of our UMPIRES.

Your club is very lucky to have International, National & State Umpires playing among us.