

Special Olympics ***Missouri***



TENNIS

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Tennis Federation (ITF) Rules for tennis found at <https://www.itftennis.com/en/about-us/governance/rules-and-regulations/> ITF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall apply.

A. Events Offered by Special Olympics Missouri

1. Individual Skills Competition
2. Singles
3. Doubles
2. Mixed Doubles
2. Unified Sports® Doubles
3. Unified Sports® Mixed Doubles
4. Short Court Tennis

B. Competition Uniforms

1. All Tennis Players shall wear the MSHSAA approved uniforms.
2. ALL individual skills competitors shall wear any short that conforms to the Competition Uniforms Rules or sweat pants, a T-shirt, tank-top, or sweatshirt, and any footwear that conform to the Competition Uniforms Rules.

C. Short Court Tennis

1. **Purpose**
Short Court tennis is designed to prepare athletes for match play competition and provide a transition to full court play while slowly introducing the logistics of the game.

2. Short Court tennis is a transition game for athletes who have been successful with Individual Skills Competition and are ready to begin competitive match play, but are not quite ready for a full court game. Short Court tennis is an excellent game to work on footwork, racquet preparation, court movement and the rules of tennis. By downsizing the tennis court boundaries, athletes can be more successful as they work on developing their game in a more compact, non-threatening environment. Adding only one variable at a time allows the athlete to make adjustments more easily.
3. Unified Sports Doubles Short Court tennis is the first transition step from Individual Skills Competition. Small court coverage reduces the movement component, while the Unified tennis partner provides a stroke model for the athlete. The partner also provides encouragement and praise for the athletes on an individual basis.
4. Unified Doubles Short Court tennis may be followed by traditional Short Court doubles (all players are Special Olympics athletes) and by Short Court singles play. This progression provides the athlete a sequential learning opportunity in the components of tennis match play necessary to proceed to full court play.
5. Short Court tennis follows the Rules of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) with the following exceptions:
 - a. Server must stand behind the service line to serve. It will be considered a foot fault if the server steps over the service line prior to contacting the tennis ball.
 - b. Only the service box area is in-bounds.
6. PTR Speedballs are used, which are larger than regulation-size tennis balls and provide a slower paced game, permitting players to work on strokes and court coverage. As the athlete progresses in skill and court movement, low-compression tennis balls may be used to provide faster ball speed.