

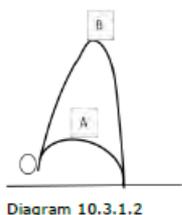
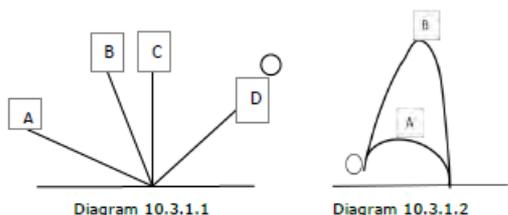
2.6 THE SERVICE

- 2.6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.
- 2.6.2 The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.
- 2.6.3 As the ball is falling the server shall strike it so that it touches first his or her court and then touches directly the receiver's court; in doubles, the ball shall touch successively the right half court of server and receiver.
- 2.6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his or her doubles partner or by anything they wear or carry.
- 2.6.5 As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net. The space between the ball and the net is defined by the ball, the net and its indefinite upward extension.
- 2.6.6 It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can be satisfied that he or she complies with the requirements of the Laws, and either may decide that a service is incorrect.
- 2.6.6.1 If either the umpire or the assistant umpire is not sure about the legality of a service he or she may, on the first occasion in a match, interrupt play and warn the server; but any subsequent service by that player or his or her doubles partner which is not clearly legal shall be considered incorrect.
- 2.6.7 Exceptionally, the umpire may relax the requirements for a correct service where he or she is satisfied that compliance is prevented by physical disability.

- 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.

- 9.5 Thus if the ball accidentally rolls off the server's hand before he or she starts to throw it his or her opponent does not score a point, because the ball was not in play. For the same reason a player may place the ball on his or her free hand and hold it stationary but then change his or her mind about the type of service he or she will make and move to another position to do so. Provided he or she has made no attempt to throw the ball, no point is scored.

- 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.

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

- 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.
- 10.5.1 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 moved from the space between the ball and the net, as soon as he or she releases the ball.
- 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 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.
- 10.6.1 An umpire or assistant umpire, who suspects, but is not sure, that a player's service action is illegal, may warn the player without awarding a point. Only one warning may be given during a match and 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 Either the umpire or assistant umpire can issue a service warning. A player can only be given one warning.
- 10.6.3 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.
- 10.6.4 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.
- 10.7.1 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.
- 11.2.3 If either the umpire or the assistant umpire believes that the ball in service touches the net the rally is a let. Even if there is only a suspicion that the ball touches the net in an otherwise good service it is better to declare a let than to allow play to continue, because there is a risk that one or more players may have the same suspicion and, as a result, will be unable to give full attention to the course of play.
- 11.2.4 A player who believes that the ball touched the net in an otherwise good service may sometimes raise his or her arm or catch the ball and ask the umpire to declare a let. Unless the umpire is certain that it did not he or she will usually concur, especially if the server agrees with his or her opponent, but he or she should make clear that he or she is under no obligation to do so and that the player should continue playing if the umpire does not declare a let.

Handsignals

The umpire or assistant umpire will first show the hand signal for illegal service. If the player question or ask for clarification, the umpire or assistant umpire will verbally communicate using the simple term i.e. “Not high enough” or “Below the playing surface”.

<p>The service does not start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of server’s stationary free hand</p>	<p>The service starts with the ball resting freely on the fingers of server’s stationary free hand</p>	<p>The ball is under the level of the playing surface from the start of service until it is struck</p>	<p>The ball does not rise at least 16 cm after leaving the palm of the free hand</p>
<p>“Palm not opened”</p>	<p>“Ball resting on the fingers”</p>	<p>“Below the playing surface”</p>	<p>“Not high enough”</p>

<p>The ball is inside the server’s end line from the start of service until it is struck or is struck inside the server’s end line</p>	<p>The ball does not project near vertically upwards</p>	<p>The ball is hidden from the receiver by the server or his or her doubles partner or by anything they wear or carry. If the player asks the reason why or where, the umpire will use his or her index finger to show it.</p>
<p>“Inside the end line”</p>	<p>“Not vertically”</p>	<p>“Hidden by ...elbow, shoulder, head or partner</p>