

**TENNIS**

**ANY**

**BODY**



**Guide to Visually Impaired Tennis**  
For Players, Coaches and Tournament Organisers

# INTRODUCTION

## What is Visually Impaired Tennis?

**The game of tennis was first adapted to be used for blind and partially sighted people in Japan in 1984 and has quickly grown in popularity, it is now played in over 30 countries.**

This version of tennis is for blind (classified as a B1 player) or partially sighted people (dependent on the level of sight loss they are classified in the spectrum between B2-B5). The game is adapted from the full court version to a smaller court, with lower nets and using an audible ball so players can hear it bounce and being hit. Depending on an individual's sight level they may have up to three bounces of the ball before they must return it back to their opponent.

VI tennis is fun to play and has a huge social aspect with many players travelling the distance of the country to play and compete.

Players have the opportunity to take part in camps/festivals, regular sessions and a range of competitions from local, regional to national level, across the UK.

As the sport is still in its infancy the pathway for players to develop is continuously being updated and more opportunities to play are becoming more widely available.

In the UK we have a Visually Impaired Tennis Advisory group which is a collaboration between the Tennis Foundation and the VI community to help drive the game forward. There has also been the formation of the International Blind Tennis Association which aims to grow the game globally.

## THIS GUIDE

In this guide you will find information on:

- How you can get involved
- Sight classifications
- Rules (including court and net dimensions and equipment)
- Coaching guidance

## GET INVOLVED

Want to get involved?

- If you would like to find your local session please visit <http://bit.ly/2cslySJ>.
- The Tennis Foundation delivers subsidised camps and taster days during the year to help blind and partially sighted people to try out the game and develop their skills. To find your nearest camp please visit <http://bit.ly/2cpyVKA>.
- Alternatively, if you are currently involved in the sport and would like to play against other players then why not take part in one of the Tennis Foundation's regional competitions. For a list of competitions and booking forms please visit <http://bit.ly/25zeg3D>.

# SIGHT CLASSIFICATIONS

The following information has been provided by British Blind Sport,\* the National Disability Sport Organisation for blind and visually impaired sport in the UK.

- **Sight classifications are important as they ensure fair and equal competition. Success at competitions should be defined by an athlete's skill and ability, not their impairment. The sight classifications should give all athletes the confidence that they are competing against others equally.**
- **For visually impaired sports in the UK, participants are graded into five sight categories, these are:**

## **B1**

This category encompasses no light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognise shapes at any distance or in any direction.

## **B2 & B3**

Both of these categories involve a low level of usable partial vision, those in the B3 category will be able to see more than those graded as B2.

## **B4**

This is a good level of partial sight, the category is specific to sport in this country but is still included in the majority of sports. Anyone with more than roughly 25% of normal vision is likely to be too sighted for this category.

## **B5**

This category used to be referred to as B4+, it has no top limit and is banned in almost all visually impaired sports, although a few sports do allow it. Tennis is one of these sports.

There is work within this area which is aiming to have a tennis specific sight classification, however this area is complex and yet to be defined.

To receive a classification please visit [www.britishblindsport.org.uk/classification](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk/classification).



A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE THROUGH SPORT

# RULES & REGULATIONS

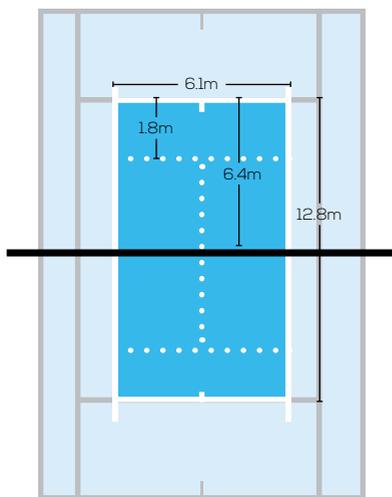
## 1. Court Dimensions and Net Height

### 1.1 Blind (B1) Court

There will be tactile markings on all lines except the service box line (highlighted by dotted lines below). The dotted lines need to be marked out by tape unless court lines are already visible. The tactile tramlines should extend past the baseline.

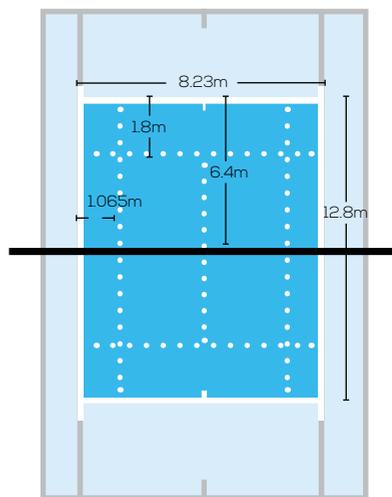
#### Singles

- 12.8m x 6.1m
- Service line = 1.8m from the baseline
- Net height = 0.83m



#### Doubles

- 12.8m x 8.23m (singles tramline)
- Service line = 1.8m from the baseline
- Net height = 0.83m

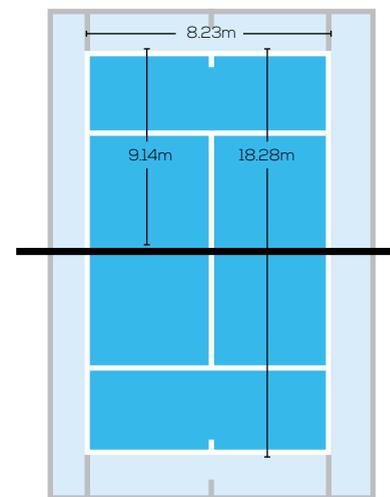


### 1.2 Visually Impaired (B2-B5) Court

It is not a requirement to apply tactile markings for the court but extra wide tape may be preferred for greater visibility if not used.

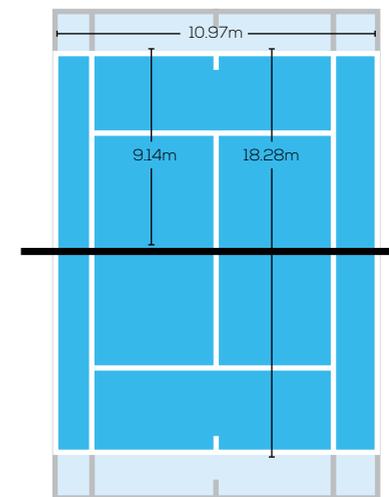
#### Singles

- 18.28m x 8.23m (singles tramline)
- Service line = same as full court
- Net height = 0.914m (3 feet)



#### Doubles

- 18.28m x 10.97m (doubles tramline)
- Service line = same as full court
- Net height = 0.914m (3 feet)



## 2. Bounces

- **Blind (B1) and B2** = Up to 3 bounces
- **B3** = Up to 2 bounces
- **B4/B5** = 1 bounce

## 3. Volleying

Volleying is permitted for all players (B1-B5).

## 4. Serve

All players must use the "ready" "yes" "play" procedure.

## 5. Equipment

- **Balls:** You can use any audible ball on the market however, currently the Tennis Foundation have sanctioned competitions to use the Japanese yellow audible ball.

Japanese ball:

Balls can be purchased directly from the supplier

Shoei: <http://bit.ly/2clhhzX> or from

Vision4Growth in the UK: [enquiries@vision4growth.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vision4growth.org.uk).

Buzz Balls:

[www.buzzballs.co.uk](http://www.buzzballs.co.uk) is a UK based manufacturer that produces a popular alternative to the Japanese ball.

- **Rackets:** Domestically any racket size can be used.

Internationally the maximum racket size is 23" (B1 court) and 25" (B2-B5 court).

- **B1 Mask:** Paralympic recognised mask to be used.

Players must not remove their mask when competing. They should signal to the umpire if they need to alter it in any way.

All rules are subject to adaptations and changes as the game is developing domestically and internationally. All rules are reviewed annually in the UK and we often trial variations to the game during the year.

All rule adaptations and changes will be published on the Tennis Foundation website <http://bit.ly/2cBhhM6>.

# COACHES' CORNER

Tennis sessions for blind and partially sighted players are a hugely rewarding aspect of tennis to get involved in, whether you are a coach or volunteer. Sessions are more effective with a strong support network of coaches and volunteers to help players feel confident moving around on court and learning tennis skills. If you would like to get involved please contact us: [info@tennisfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@tennisfoundation.org.uk).

## Coaching Considerations

When setting up your session think about an accessible venue (to see how to become an accessible venue, please read our Open Your Doors resource: <http://bit.ly/2cDLsRz>), good local transport, provision for guide dogs and a quiet environment to reduce interference for players listening to the ball. Artificial lights may affect players in different ways so check with them in advance and use tactile markers where necessary. It is preferable to play tennis indoors as it is easier to control light and noise conditions. Sound balls also work better in dry conditions without wind, so indoor tennis or badminton courts are good options.

Try to ensure there are accessible transport networks nearby as this can be a significant barrier to participation. Players may share taxis or meet at a station and travel together to the venue. Venues may also want to look into meeting players at a pre-agreed location (train station or bus stop) and the group then walks to the venue together.

Consider 'colour contrast' for players and the coach on court. For example it may be best for players to wear

lighter coloured clothing if the court background is dark or darker clothing if the background is light. Also, the Sound ball comes in different colours so it is in contrast to the colour of the court.

Depending on the participants, it may be beneficial to use assistant coaches or volunteers to help with any additional requirements. If you have blind players you will definitely need extra support so take this into consideration.

It is important when planning your sessions or competitions to take into account other visually impaired sports. Check local, regional and national calendars for clashes with sports such as goalball and blind football. A session would work better if you link in with other sports.

## MORE INFO...

More info on coaching can be found in the Tennis Foundation's **Disability Tennis Coaching Resource** found here: <http://bit.ly/2cljA61>.

## Promotion

The provision of promotional material must be in clear, large, and easy-to-read format, with simple imagery. Word documents usually work best for screen readers (software that reads text on a computer out loud) and you can find help to create accessible promotional materials on the EFDS (English Federation of Disability Sport) website - <http://bit.ly/2cWbgw8>.

Use social media to promote sessions as it's a very popular and effective communication method. Connecting with local visually impaired charities and organisations on Facebook and Twitter will help to attract a wider audience to sessions. It's also a great way for participants to stay in touch, share photos, stories, ideas and discussion.

## Coach Education Courses

The Tennis Foundation delivers a Visually Impaired Tennis CPD course which builds on the Disability Awareness Course, (part of the Level 3 coaching qualification), to provide indepth insight into coaching blind and partially sighted players. The six-hour course will improve the coach's knowledge, confidence and delivery of tennis to this audience. We host CPD courses throughout the year; to find your nearest one visit <http://bit.ly/2cWbWBS>.

# +260% PARTICIPANTS

With ambitions to become a paralympic sport in the future participation in this game is growing quickly. Participation in the sport, which is open to anyone of any age, gender or ability, has increased by over 260% since January 2014 (Tennis Foundation Participation Figures 2014-2016).

**We hope this guide will help to build on the increased popularity of the sport and encourage more players, coaches and volunteers to get involved in tennis.**

# USEFUL LINKS AND ORGANISATIONS

## British Blind Sport

W: [www.britishblindsport.org.uk](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk)  
E: [info@britishblindsport.org.uk](mailto:info@britishblindsport.org.uk)  
T: 01926 424247

 British Blind Sport

 @BritBlindSport

 A Guide to Visually Impaired Friendly Sport

- PDF: <http://bit.ly/1RGn6rx>
- Word: <http://bit.ly/2cpEP54>

## Metro Blind Sport

W: [www.metroblindsport.org](http://www.metroblindsport.org)  
E: [info@metroblindsport.org](mailto:info@metroblindsport.org)

 @metroVISports

## North East Visually Impaired Tennis Club

W: [www.nevitc.org.uk](http://www.nevitc.org.uk)  
E: [play@nevitc.org.uk](mailto:play@nevitc.org.uk)

 North East Visually Impaired Tennis Club

 @NEVITC

## Other

 VI Tennis UK

## RNIB (Royal National Institute for Blind People)

W: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
E: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)  
T: 0303 123 9999

 RNIB

 @RNIB

## Sound Tennis Sussex

W: [www.soundtennissussex.org.uk](http://www.soundtennissussex.org.uk)  
E: [paul@soundtennissussex.org.uk](mailto:paul@soundtennissussex.org.uk)

 Sound Tennis Sussex

 @SoundTennisSx

## Vision4Growth

W: [www.vision4growth.org.uk](http://www.vision4growth.org.uk)  
E: [enquiries@vision4growth.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vision4growth.org.uk)  
T: 01992 635 600

 Vision4Growth

 @vision4growth

## York Visually Impaired Tennis Club

W: [www.ydtn.org.uk](http://www.ydtn.org.uk)

 York Disability Tennis Network

 @YDTN2014



[www.tennisfoundation.org.uk](http://www.tennisfoundation.org.uk)

020 8487 7000

[info@tennisfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@tennisfoundation.org.uk)

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