

## Rally Point System

### Introduction

This document has been produced to help badminton players and spectators better understand the basics of the rally point system in badminton.

### Background

Traditionally badminton games were played to 15 points except for women's singles, which were played to 11 points. Under the rally point system, all games are played to 21 points. More significantly, the rally point system uses a new serving system for doubles and mixed doubles games.

In December 2005, the rally point system was approved for trial by the Badminton World Federation (BWF), then known as the International Badminton Federation (IBF). In May 2006, BWF members unanimously approved permanent implementation of the rally point system.

Consequently, all BWF sanctioned events which include major international competitions such as the Thomas Cup, Uber Cup, Sudirman Cup and the BWF World Championships now follow the rally point system. Uniform adoption of the system at national and regional level competitions around the world is expected to follow.

In Canada, Badminton Canada and all its provincial members, such as Badminton Alberta the Ontario Badminton Association, and the Nova Scotia Badminton Association have adopted the rally point system for their open and junior competitions.

### Reasons for Change

General opinion within the international professional badminton community is that changing to the rally point system is good for the sport of badminton for players, spectators, and media. The new system is expected to improve badminton in the following ways:

1. The length of badminton matches will be shorter and more predictable, making it easier to schedule TV coverage. This should promote more TV broadcast of badminton matches.
2. Games are generally shorter in duration, thus putting less stress on athletes and reducing injuries.
3. Spectators will find the game more exciting to watch and easier to understand.

Unlike previous attempts by the BWF to change the badminton scoring system, all of which were short-lived, the rally point system is expected to be a permanent change.

### Summary of Rules

Complete details of how the rally point system works are contained in the latest version of the [Laws of Badminton](#) published by the BWF. The BWF also published a [simplified version](#) of the rally point system.

The following summarizes the key aspects of the rally point system, some of which are quite different from the traditional 15-point system:

1. A game is played to 21 points.
2. The side which won a rally adds a point to its score, regardless of whether it was the serving side. Under the 15-point system, only the serving side can increase its score.
3. If a game is tied 20 all, the side which first wins 2 consecutive points wins that game. Unlike the 15-point system, there is no set.
4. If a game is tied at 29 all, the side which wins the next rally wins the game 30-29. Consequently, the maximum score of a game is 30.
5. Serves alternate between sides. The serving side continues to serve as long as it is winning the rallies. As soon as it loses a rally, service immediately passes over to the opposing side. Consequently there is always only one serve, even in a doubles game.
6. When the serving side wins a rally, the same server serves again but from the alternate service court. This results in the players on the serving side changing service courts and is the same as the 15-point system.
7. When the score of the serving side is even, the serving side serves from the right service court. If the score is odd, the serve is from the left service court. This means when service changes from one side to the other in doubles play, the first serve can come from the left service court, which never happens under the 15-point system.

Doubles play also abides by the following rules:

1. When the serving side wins a rally, players on the receiving side do not change service courts. This is the same as the 15-point system.
2. When the serving side loses a rally, none of the players changes service courts. This is the same as the 15-point system.
3. If players commit an error in their service court positions, the error is corrected when the mistake is discovered but the score still stands.

### Rally Point System Illustration

The BWF published a diagram to illustrate how scoring in doubles works under the rally point system. This diagram has been widely used and is reproduced below:

## Rally Point System

In a Doubles match between A & B against C & D. A & B won the toss and decided to serve. A to serve to C. A shall be the initial server while C shall be the initial receiver.

Course of action / Explanation	Score	Service from Service Court	Server & Receiver	Winner of the rally		
	Love All	Right Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is even.	A serves to C A and C are the initial server and receiver.	A & B.	C	D A B
A & B win a point. A & B will change service courts. A serves again from Left service court. C & D will stay in the same service courts.	1-0	Left Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is odd.	A serves to D	C & D.	C	D A B
C & D win a point and also right to serve. Nobody will change their respective service courts.	1-1	Left Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is odd.	D serves to A.	A & B.	C	D A B
A & B win a point and also right to serve. Nobody will change their respective service courts.	2-1	Right Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is even.	B serves to C	C & D	C	D A B
C & D win a point and also right to serve. Nobody will change their respective service courts.	2-2	Right Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is even.	C serves to B	C & D	C	D A B
C & D win a point. C & D will change service courts. C serves from Left service court. A & B will stay in the same service courts.	3-2	Left Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is odd.	C serves to A	A & B	D	C A B
A & B win a point and also right to serve. Nobody will change their respective service courts.	3-3	Left Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is odd.	A serves to C	A & B	D	C A B
A & B win a point. A & B will change service courts. A serves again from Right service court. C & D will stay in the same service courts.	4-3	Right Service Court. Being the score of the serving side is even.	A serves to D	C & D	D	C B A

Note that this means

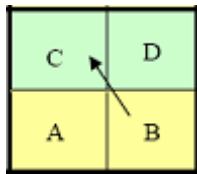
- the order of server depends on the score being odd or even (same as in singles).
- The service courts are changed by the servicing side only when a point is scored. In all other cases, the players continue to stay in their respective service court from where they played previous rally. This shall guarantee alternate server.

### Test your Understanding

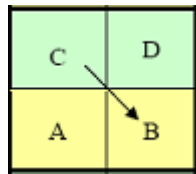
The rally point system can be a little confusing, especially to those who have been playing the 15-point system for many years. Following is a short quiz that can help reinforce your understanding of the rally point system:

1. Which of the following is not a valid final score for a game played under the rally point system?
  - a. 21-0
  - b. 28-26
  - c. 30-29
  - d. 21-20
2. For the side that started a doubles game as the receiving side, the player on the left service court is ALWAYS the player who serves first when the service first turns over to their side.
  - a. True
  - b. False

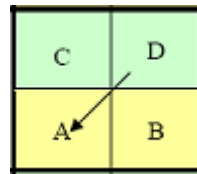
3. The score of the game is 18-16. Which of the following indicates a service court error that the serve is being made from the wrong court?



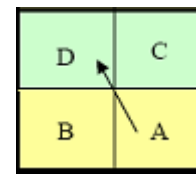
a.



b.

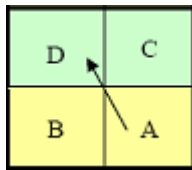


c.

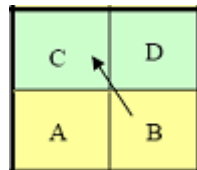


d.

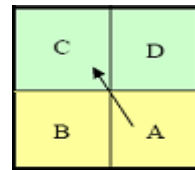
4. The game is tied 2 all. Which of the following scenario indicates a service court error that one or more of the players are serving or receiving from the wrong court?



a.



b.



c.

There is insufficient information to determine proper player court position.

d.

5. A and B of the same side was leading with a score of 14-5 when they lost the rally. Service was turned over and the C-D side is now serving at the score of 6-14. C was the player who served last on their side. C now stands in the right service court and proceeds to serve.
  - a. D should be serving instead of C
  - b. C should be in the left service court
  - c. If C served, it would be a service court error
  - d. All of the above

Answers

1. d. 21-20

If a game is tied 20 all, the side which first won two consecutive points wins the game. This means playing to a score of at least 22-20. Therefore, a score of 21-20 cannot be a game final score unless the game terminated unexpectedly, such as a player retiring due to injury prior to the game being completed.

2. a. True

For doubles play under the rally point system, the player starting on the left service court of the receiving side will ALWAYS make the first serve for the receiving side. This is exactly opposite to what happens in the 15-point system.

3. c.

Just like the 15-point system, service is always from the right service court when the score is even. In c, the service was from the left service court.

4. d. There is insufficient information to determine proper player court position.

Under the 15-point system, one can always determine the players' correct court position by looking at the score and remembering who were the starting server and receiver of the game. For the rally point system, one cannot determine where players should stand by simply looking at the score. For example, simply knowing the score is 2 all is not enough to tell where players should stand.

Confusion on court position often happens when service is turned over to the receiving side after the serving side has won a few, long rallies. To determine proper court position in this case, one must correctly remember who served last on the receiving side. That person's partner should now be serving from the right service court if their current score is even.

Assuming that A and B is the serving side and the score is 10-3. A-B lost the rally. C and D is now serving at a current score of 4-10. So if C served last, then D should now be serving from the right service court because their current score is even.

5. d. All of the above.

a. is correct. C was the last player who served on their side. So when service is turned over from A-B to C-D, D should now be serving. If followed properly, the rally point system will guarantee that players on the same side serve alternately.

b. is correct. D is serving at a score of 6-14. Because the score is even, D should be serving from the right service court. Hence C should be in the left service court.

c. is correct. D is the player who should be serving. If C served instead, C would have served out of turn, which constitutes a service court error.