

How to look after your Badminton Racket and Strings

As an experienced badminton player and racket stringer I see a lot of badminton rackets, some of which are not in great condition.

Here are my suggestions on what you can do to extend the life of your racket and its strings.

1. Don't scrape it on the ground!

We all do it. Especially when picking up shuttles or returning them to an opponent when we've lost a point. On most brands of racket, the strings are exposed on the outside of the frame at the top edges and especially near to where the "cross" strings are tied off. By scraping the racket on the ground you WILL damage these strings and reduce their life. I estimate that up to one third of the rackets that come to me for re-stringing have string damage caused by careless scraping on the ground.

It's a bad habit and can even be considered rude to your opponent if done carelessly.

Don't do it! Pick up the shuttle by hand, be kind to your opponent and save yourself the cost of an early re-string.

2. Don't clash with your partner.

Badminton racket frames are delicate. The slightest clash with another hard object (Racket or Body Part) will very often lead to immediate irreparable damage to the racket. It won't just cost you a new set of strings – you will need a new racket.

If in doubt, pull out of a shot that two players may be chasing. Better to lose a point than two rackets.

The laws of physics say that the momentum of a colliding object transfers to the receiving object. It will usually be the player on the receiving end of a clash who suffers the worst damage.

3. Get your racket strung by an experienced stringer

Be selective in your choice of racket stringer. A cheap stringing machine can cost about £100 but I guarantee it will damage your racket or at least not string it correctly and to a consistent tension.

Expect your stringer to use a floor mounted, six-point mount, electronic stringing machine. This will protect the racket frame from the unusual stresses of the stringing process and ensure correct and accurate tensioning.

A reliable machine will cost in excess of £4,000.

Make sure your stringer is a paid-up member of the UK Racket Stringing Association.

4. Get your racket strung correctly

Most Badminton rackets are intended to be strung with two pieces of string. Some manufacturers insist on this for warranty. By using one piece of string, a lazy stringer can save a bit of time and about 50 cm of string. Request your stringer to do a re-string "two piece".

Do not exceed the recommended maximum tension for your racket. This will void any warranty and make the racket extremely vulnerable to early breakage.

5. Do not rely on Factory or Shop Strings on a new racket.

You might think a new racket would come with a good quality string and be properly strung. Especially if you've paid the supplier to upgrade to a better string.

The truth is that all new rackets come poorly strung. For all you know the strings may have sat in it for over a year. In any case, manufacturers and retailers don't want you returning shortly after buying the racket complaining the strings have broken. They therefore tend to use thick gauge strings and low tension for durability. Even if you have paid for an upgrade and specified a tension, this is unlikely to have been done accurately. Get someone to test the tension if you don't believe me.

In reality, experienced players know that when buying a new racket, it is best to get it un-strung if possible, or with the cheapest option of default strings. Then expect your preferred stringer to replace these strings immediately with your own preference and to your specified tension.

6. Don't buy Fake Rackets

- This is surely obvious for any number of reasons. If you are buying a racket from a non-authorized seller, it will almost certainly be a fake. These fakes are out there in huge numbers and mostly come into the country from India and China. There is presently a vendor on Amazon selling fake Yonex rackets in the UK from an "address" in Punjab. (alongside video games and posters).
- The Fakes may look good and may even work, but they are cheap replicas and they will break prematurely. If it seems like a bargain, it is almost certainly a fake.

7. Store your racket carefully

Ideally store your rackets in a thermally insulated bag. Try to avoid the rackets clashing inside the bag and be careful not to rub the outside of the frame when getting it in or out of the bag.

Do not keep your rackets in the boot of a car whether inside a bag or not. The extremes of heat or cold, or just changes in temperature can affect the strings. The same applies at home. Keep rackets well away from heaters and radiators.

8. Get Your Racket Re-Strung regularly.

"String creep" starts from the moment a racket is strung and is often most significant in the first 48 hours. A good stringer will "pre-tension" the string to remove some of the elasticity. Depending on how often you play and your style of play the strings may wear out over a short period of time, or just lose tension.

Examine your strings regularly. When they start to fray (hopefully in the middle of the string bed) it is time to get a re-string. Best not to wait until the string breaks – it will always happen just when you don't need it!

If you are playing in a tournament, get a re-string before the tournament. Do not rely on tournament stringing services which are often operated under severe time pressure to turn jobs round. Tournament stringers know they will probably never meet their customers again!

9. When you do break a string

Cut through the strings (mains and crosses) in the middle of the racket to release tension on the frame and avoid it getting distorted out of shape.

Take a moment to ask yourself why it broke. Don't assume it is the fault of the stringer!

- Check for signs of it having been scraped on the ground
- Did you have a Mishit ? - especially near the top of the racket where the racket head moves most quickly through the air.
- If the racket has been newly strung, did you take care to knock up with it gently for a while until the string has had a chance to bed down?
- Is there evidence of wear? – Check where the strings cross each other in the middle of the racket.
- Is there evidence of the grommets being damaged. If so, ask your stringer to replace the grommets while re-stringing it.
- Is there evidence of damage to the frame? – if so, it may not be worth getting it re-strung at all
- Ask yourself whether you requested too high a tension or the most appropriate type of string? Too many players ask for string tension and thickness that is inappropriate to their ability. Be honest with yourself about your ability and choose the right string and tension to match it. If in doubt ask for advice.