USTA
SOUTHWEST
SOUTHERN ARIZONA

SAZ LEAGUE RULES
2026-2027 Local Rules and Regulations

(Important highlights are in red)

USTA LEAGUES

All USTA Southern Arizona Leagues including USTA SAZ Adult and Mixed Leagues are governed by the USTA National League Regulations, the USTA Southwest League Regulations, these USTA SAZ League Rules and The Code of Conduct contained in Friend at Court.

These SAZ League Rules are developed to supplement the USTA National and Southwest Section Rules and Regulations. The SWS office has approved these Local Rules and Regulations.

All players, as a condition of their participation in the USTA League Tennis Program, agree to abide by the league rules, the standards of good conduct, fair play and good sportsmanship. **Team captains shall be responsible for knowing the National, Southwest and SAZ League Rules.**

Team captains shall inform all team members of their obligation to be bound by these rules. Failure to comply with any league rule shall not be excused on the grounds that one was misinformed by a USTA staff member or volunteer.

The National and Southwest League Regulations are available on the USTA Southwest website www.usta.com and/or www.saz.usta.com/rules_and_regulations/

LOCAL LEAGUE ADMINISTRATION

-The local League Coordinator shall establish the method and deadline for team registration. The coordinator may also allow teams to register after the deadline at his/her discretion.

- Coordinator will determine eligibility for all rescheduled matches, If captains cannot agree on a new date.

- 18+ and 40+ roster limit is 18 players.

- 55+, 65+, and ALL mixed roster limit is 16 players.

- Tri-Level- roster changed to 18 players (Sectional and National rule).

- 2027 championship year for 55&Over will be straight level (e.g., 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5).

- A local league with 13 or more registered teams will be split into (2) flights.

- Team Withdrawal. If a team withdraws from a league after the team registration deadline, all players forfeit their entry fees. Further penalties may apply.

- Fees. A league registration fee shall be established and approved by USTA Southwest Board of Directors. League registration fees may increase periodically.

- **Refunds** will be processed for these reasons only:

1. If a league or flight is canceled.

2. An individual has an unforeseen injury and the individual has not yet played any matches for that team (players with a medical excuse may submit a request to the League Coordinator).

3. Credits will be processed for players who withdraw but only if they have not played any matches.

All withdrawals during the league season without the above said conditions will forfeit their registration fee.

When a player is given a "credit", the corresponding registration is moved to a holding area. The player MUST contact league coordinator at Fink@Southwest.usta.com to have the credit (prior registration) applied to a new team within the championship year.

If the registration ("credit") is NOT used within the championship year, the credit will become null and void.

“Credits” can only be used for the registered player and cannot be transferred to another player for their use.

ELIGIBILITY

Each player must be a current USTA member and reach the required age for each league type prior to or during the calendar year.

- 18 years old prior to/or during the calendar year for 18&Over Adult and Mixed. (Players must have already reached 18 years of age to register and play in a match).
- 40 years old prior to/or during the calendar year for 40&Over Adult and Mixed.
- 55 years old prior to/or during the calendar year for 55&Over Adult and Mixed.
- 65 years old prior to/or during the calendar year for 65&Over Adults.

All players must be registered prior to their first league match. The match played by a non-registered player will be an invalid match.

PARTICIPATION

Examples:

> *A 4.0 rated player may play on one 4.0 team and may also play on a 4.5 team.*
>
> *A 3.5 rated player may play on a 3.5 team in Tucson and a 4.0 team in Tucson or he/she can play on a 3.5 team in Tucson and a 3.5 team in Phoenix.*

A player can play on two teams such as a 3.5 and 4.0 team, each in the Adult 18 and over and Adult 40 and over League at the same time but may not play on a team that is two NTRP levels up.

If there is a day division and a night division with a play-off to determine the local league winner, the player can either play on a day team or a night team, not both.

Women's 3.5 and 4.0 players may play in the Day Flight and the Weekend/Evening Flight. If you advance to flight playoffs with both teams, the player decides and communicates with their captain and the league coordinator which team they will play for. This is also the responsibility of the captain to understand which players are shared and communicate as early as possible before playoffs to ensure there are enough eligible players for championship advancement (e.g., flight playoffs, district playoffs, sectionals, nationals).

***Players are allowed to attend sectionals with either team, as long as they played the required number of matches. For example, if you are on both teams at flight playoffs and you played for team A, but team B won the playoffs, you can still advance with team B as long as you have the required number of matches to advance. It is up to the captain to decide if they will allow the player to participate at sectionals.**

Players who play on two teams must notify their captains.

In all matches in which ineligible players participate, the team using ineligible players shall be penalized by forfeiting all individual matches played by such players.

A player shall not play a league match under another player's name and/or falsify their age. Any player who does so, the team captain, and any team member who plays in the same match with knowledge of the impersonation or false information, may be suspended from all USTA sanctioned activities up to a year.

The Local League Coordinator in agreement with the USTA Southwest Committee or Regional committee has the right to suspend playing privileges of a captain, player, or team whose behavior has been disruptive and found not in compliance with regulations.

RATINGS

Players with a rating on file in Tennislink must enter a USTA League Tennis division at that rating or next higher level. You must play 'at level' or one level up. No more than 1.0 rating (level) may separate the rating of the partners in each individual doubles team. New players without a NTRP rating must self-rate on the USTA Website.

All Self-Rated and Computer Rated Appealed Down players must complete 3 local league matches with no defaults counting to advance to **any** Championship.

Players who have moved up at Year End Ratings Publication and participate in an Early Start League may finish their local league season but MAY NOT participate in any playoffs including flight playoffs or District Championships for that particular team due to NTRP ineligibility.

Computer Rated Players are required to play at least 2 matches (1 default counting) to advance to any championship.

Team roster NTRP requirements will be 40% "at level" players for 18&Over and 40&Over.

Invitationals-

65&Over- Players who are moved up at year end rating may continue playing at their previous level throughout the current championship year, unless they have moved up to the "clearly above" or the allowed improvement threshold for that NTRP level.

65&Over- Advancing teams must play in local/district leagues to participate in Section championships. No more team waivers.

65&Over- Any teams attending Nationals will be subject to move-up, split up the following year (only 4 players are allowed to stay together, unless the team decides to play up).

Tri-Level- All rating types are allowed to participate in local/district leagues, but all advancing players must earn a computer rating by year end ratings, in order to participate in the Section and National Invitationals.

55&Over MIXED- All rating type players who get moved up at year end are eligible to compete at the level they played in the local league season, provided the player has not been dynamically disqualified (DQ).

Players are required to play a minimum of two matches during the local league season with their team and may have 1 default awarded count as an eligible match.

Teams advancing to sectionals must be able to field all lines of play with players whose combined rating are within.5 of the playing level (e.g., For 7.0 matches, the combined ratings of the players on each line must be at least 6.5.

CAPTAIN

Each team must have a captain or designated co-captain present at each match who will be the only official spokesperson for that team. All correspondence/communications, etc. will be done by the captain or designated co-captain.

Home team captain shall contact the visiting team captain at least three or more days prior to the match to confirm the following:

- Date and time of match

· Directions to tennis facilities

· Number of courts to be utilized

Team captains or their representatives at matches shall be responsible for their actions and the actions of their players. Teammates, spectators, or coaches **may not** volunteer advice on line calls, scoring, or on the conduct of the match.

It is the home team's responsibility to control the conduct of spectators during match play.

Captains must read the rules and regulations for SAZ/SWS/Nationals. They are found on the local website under 'Rules and Regulations'. The code of conduct shall be observed in all matches played without officials.
http://www.SAZ.USTA.com/Rules_and_regulations/

SCORECARDS

Match results must be reported on TennisLink by a team captain (or his/her designee) within 48 hours of the team match.

The opposing team captain or designee must log into TennisLink and confirm or dispute the reported match scores within 48 hours after they've been reported. After that time, all reported results are deemed final. Scores are entered in the winners perspective- Example; 4-6, 6-2, 1-0 (The winning team lost the first set, won the second set and also won the tiebreak). The tiebreak scores are not recorded-The number 1 represents the win and Zero (0) represents loss.

FACILITIES

Each facility hosting league matches must be an organizational member of the USTA as of January 1st of the current league year.

Facilities must have water and bathrooms available to host league matches.

COURT SURFACE

Each Captain must declare to the District League Coordinator in advance of the start of the season the court surface their team will play on for home matches. All matches for that league season must be played on the surface declared for home team matches, unless agreed upon by both Captains at least 24 hours prior to the match.

TENNIS BALLS/COURT FEES

A sanctioned USTA League tennis ball must be used. The home team furnishes the balls and pays any court fees for the match.

TWO-TEAM LEAGUES

If it is necessary to have a two team local league, a minimum of three matches must be played in the local league in order for the winning team to progress to the Section Championship. If an Adult League consists of only two teams in a level of play, each team must maintain its roster with at least 40 percent of its players at the designated NTRP level of play.

LEAGUE FORMAT

18&Over- 5 Courts (2 singles & 3 doubles).

40&Over- 4 Courts (1 singles & 3 doubles).

55&Over- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

65&Over- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

18&Over Mixed Doubles- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

40&Over Mixed Doubles- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

55&Over Mixed Doubles- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

Tri-Level- 3 Courts (3 doubles).

MIXED DOUBLES FORMAT

The Local League will consist of straight rating levels of 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, etc. The straight level rating system will be used at Mixed Section and National Championships.

Under this system the sum of the ratings of the individuals who make up each doubles position must be at or lower than the level in which they are playing. (Ex. 3.5 level - a 3.5 man and 3.0 woman or a 3.5 man and 3.5 woman are both valid combinations).

Each player's NTRP rating must be on the official scorecard at the time of line-up exchange before the team match begins.

No more than .5 rating (level) may separate the rating of the partners in each individual doubles team.

2026 Championship Year- ALL mixed doubles will be straight level (e.g., 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0). Players can still play up but the difference between partners will be .5 only (e.g., 4.0 and 3.5 can play together but a 4.0 and 3.0 WILL NOT be a viable combo).

TEAM LINEUPS

Teams are encouraged to field their team in order of strength.

WARM-UPS

The official SAZ warm-up time is 10 minutes at the match start time. (Example if match time is 9 am, exchange line ups at match time, go to assigned courts and players are allowed a ten minute warm up before starting the match. Matches should start no later than ten minutes after the match time).

Practice/Warm-ups- SAZ accommodates 30 min warm-up prior to match time for team practice. All facilities must honor the 30 min warm-up to participate in the league. IF facilities cannot offer courts for 30 min warm-up please inform your league coordinator and visiting captain(s). All captains must reach out to visiting captains at least 3 days prior to match day to organize court assignments and to confirm upcoming matches.

All warm-ups, including serves, must be taken before the match begins (before any points are played).

Warm-ups are also provided to apply sunscreen, get water, and use the bathroom. All players must begin play at match time. Anyone leaving the court after the match time will be subject to time penalty and violations.

ORDER OF PLAY

If there are not enough courts available at one time for a team match the team captains must agree in advance the starting time for each individual match. The #1 position must play before the #2 position and the #2 position must play before the #3 position. Generally, TWO (2) hours should be allotted for each match.

LOCAL LEAGUE PLAY - SCORING FORMAT

All matches will be best of two tie break sets with a match tiebreak in lieu of a third set. If both captains agree before the match begins and the facility has court availability, a third set may be played.

TIME PENALTY SYSTEM

The following penalty system will be used for lateness:

·**Under 5 minutes**: Loss of Toss + 1 game · **Up to 10 min** : Loss of Toss + 2 games

10 to 15 min - Loss of Toss + 3 games **Over 15 min** - Default

Process to start penalty clock:

- Captains exchange line up no later than match time.
- Players who are not at the facility or walk off the court at match time, the other team can choose to enforce the penalty system must declare they are starting the clock for the above time frames and show the clock with the acting captain. Only acting captains can administer the Penalty System, not players.
- In the event a team decides to play regardless of the time a late player arrives, the Penalty System cannot be used. The Penalty System needs to be used in its entirety or not at all.
- The clock stops once the player arrives at the facility and is insight, not when the player gets on the court. **All players have the right to a ten minute warm-up, even if late.**
- If players are not at facility when exchanging line up, Captains should place them at the end of the line ups to follow the Order of Play rule (above) in the event they default the court.

MATCH DELAYS

Match Delays: Matches should be played according to the published schedule.

Rescheduling of Matches: **Matches should only be rescheduled due to rain or circumstances beyond the players' control. Agreements for date and time of rescheduled matches must be submitted in writing by both captains to the Local League Coordinator, unless the coordinator reschedules the match.**

Examples of circumstances beyond the players' control are:

- No available courts at home facility during the scheduled league match day and/or time
- 4 or more players participating in league advancement matches, such as SAZ League Playoffs, Sectional or National League Championships

Delay of Matches-in-Progress*:* Completion of matches-in-progress delayed due to rain or circumstances beyond the control of the players should be scheduled as soon as possible and must be played using the original line-up cards exchanged at the originally scheduled match. Agreements for scheduled date and time of delayed matches-in-progress must be submitted in writing by both captains to the Local League Coordinator, unless the coordinator schedules the match.

FORFEITS/DEFAULTS

The No. 2 singles must be forfeited before the No. 1 singles may be forfeited. The No. 3 doubles must be forfeited before the No. 2 doubles and the No. 2 doubles must be forfeited before the No. 1 doubles.

Individual Player Forfeits: Use of an ineligible or non-registered player will result in a forfeit of the court that was played by the ineligible player. The match will be scored as a 6-0, 6-0 win for the opposing team.

Total Team Defaults- If a team does not play the minimum number of courts, then it'll be declared a Total Team Default. This will take the defaulting team out of the league standings and will no longer be eligible to advance to ANY championships. Please avoid this penalty at all costs. It is important to play the minimum number of courts so it does not affect the outcome of the league. The teams have until the end of the league season deadline to make up matches to avoid total team defaults.

Here are the minimum courts needed for each league type to be considered a valid match.

- 18&Over- 3 out of 5 courts must be played.
- 40&Over- 3 out of 4 courts must be played.
- 55&Over/ 65&Over- 2 out of 3 courts must be played.
- 18+mixed/40+mixed/55+mixed- 2 out of 3 courts must be played.

Defined by USTA National Regulation 2.03K ("Team Default"), in any local league match, the Local League Coordinator may impose further penalties on captains or players. Further, Local League Coordinator may file a grievance (pursuant to the procedures set forth in USTA National Regulation) against the captain of the team defaulting. The SW Section League Grievance Committee shall consider the circumstances of the Team Default and whether any further penalties against the captain and/or Team are appropriate depending on the circumstance.

GRIEVANCES

All complaints alleging a violation during local league competition shall be filed in writing with the Local League Coordinator having jurisdiction prior to the commencement of the next team match in that specific flight involving such individual or team, or within twenty-four hours after the end of local league play, whichever occurs first.
Send Grievance Form to Fink@southwest.usta.com.

Grievance form is located at

https://s3.amazonaws.com/ustaassets/assets/1/15/usta_league_grievance_070915.pdf