

IOWA

Recreational Services

Guide to your first USTA Tennis Tournament

Hawkeye Tennis Academy

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About tournaments

Tennis tournaments are a wonderful way to improve your game, meet new people and develop terrific life skills. Tournaments are offered all year long with a lot of them in the summer.

Kids generally play a tournament in their respective age group and can earn points to earn their way to sectional and national tournaments. This guide will show you the basic information of how to get started on your first tournament. If you go to USTA.com there is a lot of information you eventually might find helpful.

How to register

1. You will need a USTA (United States Tennis Association) membership that you can access at www.usta.com/membership. Junior Memberships are available at no cost.
2. You will next need to register for tournaments by hovering over the PLAY section at the top and when a dropdown appears, click on tournament under Find Local Tennis.
3. After you click on Tournaments you can:
 - Enter our zip code and our local tournaments pop up (there are only a few) QR
 - Click on "Search by USTA Section/District", enter in Missouri Valley for the Section and Iowa for the District. (Recommended to provide you with a longer list.)
4. Once you have entered in the tournament location you can filter:
 - **Player Category:** change to junior (18 and under)
 - **Start date:** leave as today if the tournament is coming up soon or change to the first day of the month the tournament is in
 - **End date:** make sure this is past the end date of the tournament you want to play in
 - **Options with start and end:** Without touching either the start or end date, it will automatically search for tournaments in about the next 2 months
 - **National/Sectional/Districts:** We are in a 5 state USTA Section called the Missouri Valley (Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas). This will become more important later on for kids wanting to progress to more advanced tournaments but it will not pertain to beginner players.
 - Once you have gotten your search criteria to this point go ahead and click on search.
5. A list of tournaments will pop up. Once you find the tournament you want, click on the tournament you would like to play and follow the prompts. Some deadlines will be at 11:59 p.m. After the deadlines, typically you are not allowed into the tournament.

Which tournaments should you play?

Level 7 and level 6 tournaments would be the suggested levels for players ages 11+ starting out playing tournaments. There are times where, for convenience, the “new to tournaments” kids will play a local Level 5. This is allowed and ok if the player is eager and has good perspective about competition.

The levels:

- **Level 7:** This is a new format for kids entering their first tournament and is a good option. Emphasis on participation for beginners and a guaranteed number of matches. Lasts up to a full day!
- **Level 6:** This is the next most entry level tournament, yet, more experienced players also play these tournaments. Typically only 2 days, may occasionally last 3.
- **Level 5:** These are a step up from Level 6 and typically draw the top kids in the state because they earn points to move to the next level of Missouri Valley Tournaments. Midlands in Iowa City is a Level 5. These tournaments will still have some kids who play Level 6 tournaments.
- **Level 4+:** These are open to players who have earned points in levels 5 and 6. Can be closed to your section.
- **If you are a 10U Player,** you will play Orange Ball (60 ft. court) Tournaments first and earn your way to Green Ball (full court). The Tournaments you will enter are called Junior Circuit Tournaments. Follow the same directions as other junior players to join a tournament and after you search for a tournament, scroll down on the left-hand side until you can filter by age division and select 10U.

Age Division: You should play the youngest age division for which you are eligible when starting off. Later, some kids move up an age group to get more competition. If you have a birthday the MONTH of the tournament you will need to consider yourself that age. For example, you are 12 and you turn 13 the month of the tournament, you will need to move up from 12 & unders to 14 & unders. If you are 11 and turn 12 that month, you can still play 12 & unders.

After you are registered

- Once registered, you will need to check back to the tournament site for updates and access to the draws. You can double check to confirm your registration under the participants list. Directors will tell you when the draws will be posted. The draws will show you the time and location of your match. The draws will be updated on this site as the tournament goes along. Other important info such as a weather updates will be posted. REFRESH THE DRAWS PAGE, THE UPDATES DON'T ALWAYS GO THROUGH IF YOU DON'T REFRESH. DOUBLE CHECK DRAW TIMES MORNING OF.
- Consider Doubles: Some tournaments will offer doubles. If you need a partner, ask your friends or you can also check with the tournament director if anyone else is looking for one in your age division. You can always register as a single and you might get paired with another player. Sometimes doubles registration deadline is after the singles deadline.

Day of the tournament

- Pack your racquet bag (or pack the day before☺): Take a spare racquet in case something happens to yours such as breaking a string. You cannot go off court to get another one. Other things to include: Water jug, snacks, sunscreen, hat, change of clothes if it is hot, towel for the court, extra contact lens in case of emergency, extra grip tape, extra vibration dampener, wet cooling towel for hot days etc...
- Report to the tournament desk when you arrive. You should arrive 30 minutes ahead of time at your site location (or as suggested otherwise by the tournament director). This will allow you time to get acquainted with the tournament site, go to the restroom etc...
- Once checked in, stay near the tourney desk so they don't have to search for you to get your match on. Go to the restroom before you are put on the court.
- Expect delays: The time your match is scheduled is an estimate. It is hard to schedule matches at an exact time like at a soccer or softball game due to the unknown length of a tennis match.
- Make sure when entering the court you know the format (i.e., number of sets you are playing, if you are playing ad scoring or no-ad scoring etc...). Most tournaments will play a 10 point match tie break instead of a full third set, for example.
- 10U Tournaments have consistent formats in terms of sets. You play 2 out of 3 sets to 4 games (instead of to 6) with no ad scoring and a 7 point tiebreak for the 3rd set. The number of matches and design of pool play depends on the number of participants but is pre-set by the USTA.
- Be a good sport! It is VERY important our Hawkeye Tennis Academy players exhibit their best sportsmanship regardless of the situation. In the long run, people will not remember how you did in the match in the future but they will remember how you treated them.
- Make sure you call the score out before each point when you are serving and hear the score from your opponent when they are serving. This will help prevent scoring issues.
- If you have issues during your match such as a scoring dispute or line call troubles, try to resolve those first nicely with your opponent. If problems persist, you may call over a roving official or ask the tournament director your options. Hopefully, you will not have any trouble.
- A friendly reminder: Parents and fans are not allowed to talk to the players or enter the court during your match. Therefore, please do not enlist the help of them to help resolve a scoring dispute or get coaching.
- Players are allowed to receive coaching typically between the 2nd and 3rd sets. This could be coaching from a parent or a coach.
- After the match, shake hands with your opponent at the net.
- Then, be sure to take the balls back (typically the winner takes the balls) to the tournament desk. Both players should report your score and find out the time of your next match. Some tournaments will have consolation matches so please double check the tournament format and know if the consolation exists and the format. It is your responsibility to know the time and location of your next match. Sometimes the consolation format will differ from the main draw.
- If you need to leave the site to go eat between matches, make sure it is ok with the tournament director or know exact time you need to be back. You can get defaulted if you are very late. There is a point penalty system where you can lose points if you are a few minutes late, too.
- When you are done with the tournament, thank the tournament director...tournaments take a great deal of time and planning. You also might want to check the tournament site later to make sure your scores are in accurately.

LINKS

Tournament Search: <https://playtennis.usta.com/tournaments>

Junior Membership: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/membership/individual-memberships.html>

All Juniors Pathway Information: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/play/youth-tennis/programs/missourivalley/netgeneration-junior-pathway.html>

Junior Competition information: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/play/youth-tennis/programs/missourivalley/juniors.html>