



Introduction

Officiating is an integral component of every squash player's competitive experience and should be taught and continuously practiced. Programs should treat officiating like any other skill they teach on the squash court, focusing on it with intentionality and enthusiasm. Coaches must ensure that they thoroughly understand the rules themselves, and should be thoughtful and intentional about structuring practice sessions to enable players to learn the rules and practice officiating.

Overview

Below is a summary of the points covered in this guide.

- Teach key aspects of officiating
- Instruct using both classroom and court time
- Teach scoring and court boundaries
- Teach lets / no lets / strokes
- Teach illness, injury, and bleeding rules
- Create opportunities to practice
- Teach the US Squash Officiating Clinics
- Administer the US Squash Referee Exam
- Reinforce key points with all students

Teach Key Aspects of Officiating

Below are some of the key aspects of officiating that all coaches should know and teach their players. If you as a coach are not knowledgeable and comfortable with these aspects, you need to dedicate time to learning more. For more details on any of these, see the [US Squash Rules](#).

- Scoring
- Court boundaries
- The service (who serves, where to serve from, foot faults, a "good" serve)
- Lets, no lets, and strokes (including rules related to the timing of the appeal, interference, turning, hitting an opponent with the ball, etc.)
- Responsibilities of the marker
- Responsibilities of the referee
- Warm-up time and etiquette
- Continuity of play (time between games and rallies, change of equipment)
- Conduct on court
- Injuries, illness, and bleeding



Instruct Using Both Classroom and Court Time

When teaching officiating, you need access to both classroom space and court space as some of the key points of officiating are lecture-based while other parts are more interactive and require real-life experience. Using a balance of both classroom and real-life experience will help the students learn more quickly.

Classroom

- ❑ When you present officiating in a classroom setting, use visual aids such as photos and videos. Have materials ready in advance with paper, pens, a computer (or several computers), and a projector or T.V.

Court Space

- ❑ Lead on-court demonstrations for students. Plan ahead to make sure all students will be able to see the demonstration without obstructions.
- ❑ Give students real-life practice with assistance from others. The best way for them to learn is by making mistakes and building up confidence by receiving support and constructive criticism.

Teach Scoring and Court Boundaries

Before players officiate their first matches, they should be “match-ready,” meaning they have a general understanding of serving, how scoring works, and the court boundaries. Coaches should focus initially on two specific topics to start: Scoring and Court Boundaries.

- ❑ **Basic Scoring:** Players should know how many points in a game, how many games in a match, and how to use a scoresheet.
- ❑ **Court Boundaries:** Players should know the boundaries of the courts to ensure they are properly making the correct calls when they are officiating. It is best to use a [court diagram](#) to identify the outlines or demonstrate on court the different scenarios of the ball being out of bounds.

When teaching scoring and court boundaries to new players, teach in a court setting to enable players to see different scenarios and put them into practice.

Step 1: Review scoring basics

Have two experienced players (volunteers, older students, other coaches, etc.) play a practice game on court while the students watch from outside of the court with a coach explaining and asking questions. After each point, the coach should ask students the following questions to assess their comprehension.

- ❑ Who won the point?
- ❑ How did they win the point?
- ❑ What is the score and service side? Who’s score is called first?



Step 2: Add in score sheets

As students get comfortable with scoring, introduce score sheets. Keep everyone together in a group setting viewing one match. Give each student a score sheet on a clipboard with a pen/pencil, and have the coach draw a large score sheet using markers on the glass wall or a large post-it note.

Before starting play, review these steps with the players:

- Decide who is Player A and Player B
- Write down the score and service side
- Announce the score before the next point begins
- Make sure players wait for the referee to call the score before the point begins

For the first several points, the coach should demonstrate the correct way to fill out a score sheet by writing the score on the glass wall/post-it note first, and then having students write it on their score sheets. As students gain confidence, the coach should give students several seconds to write the score on their score sheets first, and then write the score correctly on the glass wall/post-it note so students can check their work. You might also consider putting students in peer groups, where one player marks the score and the other looks on to make sure they are writing the score correctly; then have them switch roles.

Step 3: Practice scoring

Once players understand how to score, they are ready to practice scoring independently during match play. Arrange the players into small groups and have two players play one game to 11 while the other students score the match. Rotate through games to get students match experience as well as scoring experience. Pair volunteers with students to help answer any questions that arise. For learning purposes, it is fine to interrupt points to talk through the situations with the players. Emphasize that the purpose of this match play is to correctly learn how to officiate.

Teach Lets / No Lets / Strokes

Lets and strokes are a tricky concept to grasp and require additional time and follow-up for players to understand.

Guidance for beginners.

Point out, but don't spend too much time on, the difference between lets and strokes until players have mastered how to score. Briefly explain the difference between lets and strokes as examples arise during demonstrations and play. A simple way to distinguish the difference between a "let" and a "stroke" for beginning players is:



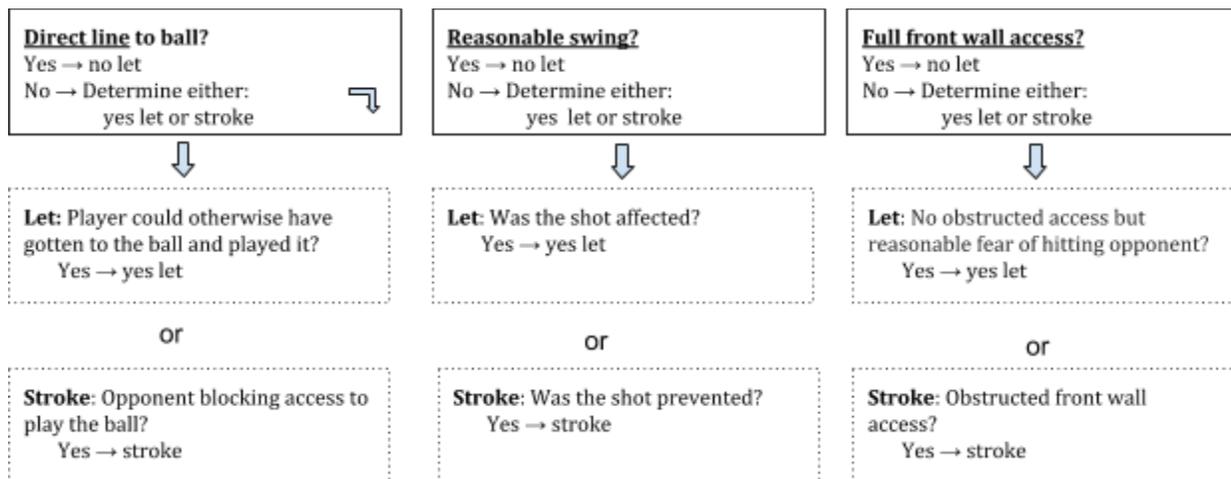
- ❑ A “let” is a replay of a point due to players getting in each other’s way while trying to get to the ball.
- ❑ A “stroke” is when you are awarded a point because your opponent prevented you from playing your shot (for example, if you would hit your opponent with your racquet or the ball were you to attempt to swing.)

Group demonstrations

Have two players compete on court and a coach outside explaining the difference between lets and strokes as they happen. Have a few key questions posted for students to ask themselves when determining if there was a let or stroke. For example, you might post the following questions for students to see and ask themselves.

- ❑ To determine a “let”, “stroke”, and “no let” a referee needs to determine if the players were allowed three freedoms:
 - 1) **Did the player have a direct line to the ball?**
If not, then the call is a “let” as long as freedoms 2 and 3 are available to the player.
 - 2) **Was there space for a reasonable swing?**
If not, then the call is a “stroke”.
 - 3) **Does the player have full access to the front wall.**
If not, then the call is a “stroke”.
- ❑ Additionally, the referee must consider the effort level of the striker in trying to move to the ball, and the effort level of the player in moving out of the way of the shot.

Here is a diagram that might help:





Use a rope triangle to demonstrate access to the front wall

Have two volunteers play a point and ask them to freeze in place after a questionable let/stroke. Using a long rope, make a triangle between the ball at the ideal point of contact with the racquet and the two front corners of the court. Bring the point of the triangle to the striker, and look to see if the non-striker is inside or outside of the triangle. If they are inside, it is a stroke. If they are outside, it is either a let or no let.

Show videos

You can find videos online or create your own to review with students. Here is a sample video from [SquashSkills](#). The US Squash Officiating clinics also have videos.

Take points away when students don't call lets

To get students used to seeing and calling lets, insist that they do it when practicing. Explain that calling lets is important for safety reasons as well as playing reasons. In condition games and matches, end the rally and take points away from players who do not call their lets.

Review confusing points

- **With referees:** Inform the students that if they are **unsure** about whether a call is a “let”, “stroke”, or “no let,” **then their call should be a “let”**. After the match, they should consult a coach or knowledgeable teammate, describe the situation, and get advice on what the correct call should have been. Learning from the situation will give them the knowledge to make the correct decision in the future.
- **With players:** Students should continue learning during their own match play.
 - **Beginners:** When students play matches, have a volunteer outside the court who understands lets and strokes. When a let or stroke arises, have the volunteer stop play and explain what happened and why.
 - **Non-beginners:** When students play matches, ask them to remember questionable lets/strokes from their match, and afterwards review the scenario to determine the right call.

Teach Illness, Injury, and Bleeding Rules

Coaches must make sure the players know there is a major difference between each category; illness and injury are not the same.

Illness



Players are given **no time** to recover for these; cramps, nausea, asthma, breathlessness, previous injuries. If a player requires time to recover they can **concede the current game** and must continue after a **90 second break**. If they are **unable to continue** they **lose** the match.

Injury

Self-inflicted: The player created the injury by themselves. For example, they ran into the opponent's swing, ran into the wall, twisted their ankle, or sprained/tore a muscle.

- ❑ The player has 3 minutes to recover and resume play.
- ❑ If they are not ready in the 3 minutes they can concede the game at hand and take a 90 second break before continuing the match. If they cannot continue they lose the match.

Contributed: Both players are involved in an accidental collision/situation. For example, one player trips over the opponent's leg, players bash heads, or players fall over each other.

- ❑ The injured player is allowed 15 minutes to recover. If extra recovery time is required, the referee can allow an additional 15 minutes to the player at their discretion
- ❑ If the player is unable to resume play after the allocated time, they lose the match

Opponent inflicted: There are two categories this is broken down into:

- ❑ Opponent accidental: the opponent caused the injury by accident. e.g. hitting the ball between rallies in frustration, excessive/dangerous swing.
 - ❑ The player is allowed 15 minutes to recover. If they cannot resume after this time, the injured player wins the match.
- ❑ Opponent deliberate: the opponent deliberately injures the opponent through dangerous action or malicious intent. e.g. hitting the ball at the opponent, sticking their foot out purposefully.
 - ❑ If the injured player requires any time to recover, they win the match immediately.

Bleeding

Bleeding is a separate category from injuries and illnesses. Play must **stop immediately** and the player must come off court to stop the bleeding.

- ❑ A **reasonable amount of time** is given to stop the bleeding. Players must stop bleeding before they step back on court.
- ❑ If bleeding re-occurs, the player will **concede the current game** and have **90 seconds** to **stop** the bleeding.



- ❑ If they don't stop the bleeding they **lose the match**.
- ❑ If a referee **visibly** sees blood through a bandage, that is considered rebleeding.
- ❑ It's important to note that if a player is bleeding on his knee, you will apply the bleeding rule. If the player then has a bleeding elbow, you will repeat the bleeding rule as a separate bleeding incident.

Create Opportunities to Practice

Train players on officiating regularly throughout the year. Regular training sessions increase the players' learning capacity as opposed to learning everything all at once. The overload of learning everything at once isn't conducive to players retaining the knowledge.

At Squash Haven, the players have a different lesson to learn each week while officiating challenge matches. When students play matches, the marker and referee get assigned tasks to focus on while they are officiating, such as counting how many times the player bumped into the other player while moving to the ball, or a peer-to-peer assessment making sure the referee is counting how many times the marker didn't call out, down or not-up and pointing it out each time it occurs. These lessons and the practice help initiate discussion among the players and they challenge each other's thinking. The specific tasks also make it easier for a player to learn one skill that's been isolated among the many things they have to focus on during any given time.

Teach the US Squash Officiating Clinics

As players gain more experience and comfort with the basic rules of squash, coaches should lead age-specific US Squash Officiating Clinics to reinforce their knowledge. The US Squash U15 and U19 US Officiating Clinic powerpoints can be found on the [SEA shared drive](#). These officiating powerpoints are a great way to introduce more of the subtle and comprehensive rules that are required to officiate squash. As you go through the power points with students, stop to ask and answer questions to ensure that the players are able to learn from you and from each other. Below are a couple ways that programs approach leading officiating clinics.

At StreetSquash, staff teach officiating clinics once a year, typically leading up to Urban Individual Nationals, with each cohort of students. Once the students have attended the officiating clinic, they take the US Squash referee exam on their US Squash profile (required by SEA for students to participate in Urban Individuals). As players take the referee exam at StreetSquash, they are welcome to ask questions. The purpose of the exam is to serve as a learning tool to ensure players are well-equipped to officiate. If a player has already passed



the referee exam for his/her age group, he/she is encouraged to retake the exam or take a higher age division referee exam.

At Squash Haven, during a school vacation week, staff arrange students into different groups and lead a 5-day officiating clinic. Below is the breakdown of the curriculum for each day. Each group spends 1-2 hours per session.

- ❑ *Day 1: US Squash Referee Powerpoint.* Staff review the US Squash Powerpoints. Even if the students have seen the powerpoint before, they still go over it again as it does a good job of laying out the most important rules and is worth revisiting.
- ❑ *Day 2: On Court Lets and Strokes session.* The students get on court and go over all of the basic Let/Stroke scenarios. Then, students can ask questions or describe scenarios that they have encountered before. If it's helpful, the students can set up the scenarios on court and determine the correct calls together.
- ❑ *Day 3: US Squash Age Specific Exams offline.* Squash Haven has all of the exams offline (see additional resources) so that the students can take the exams on paper. For the video portion of the exam, staff login into an old account to show the students the videos so that they can answer the questions. If the students took their age specific exam last year (for example a 14 year old, who took the U15 exam last year as a 13 year old), the student takes the U15 exam again to reinforce the lessons learned.
- ❑ *Day 4: Review of offline exam.* After taking the offline exam the day before, the students review the full exam together, creating opportunities for further discussion and questions.
- ❑ *Day 5: US Squash online exam.* The students log on to their US Squash accounts and take their age-specific exams online. It's best to have a lot of computers ready to go, so that the students are able to take their exam on their US Squash accounts. Each student needs to have his/her own account in order for the exam to be posted on his/her US Squash account. The students are allowed to use their offline exam as a guide when taking the online exam, and the students repeatedly take the exam until they pass.

Administer the US Squash Referee Exam

All students who compete in SEA competitions are required to have US Squash memberships and should take the online US Squash Referee Exam. Thanks to US Squash, SEA students with US Squash memberships can take the referee exam free of charge. Students who compete in Urban Individuals are required to pass the referee exam for their age group before competing. Here are some tips on how to approach and manage the exam-taking process.



Coach Preparation:

1. Coaches should review the tests themselves in advance (especially the videos) so they are prepared to answer questions students might have.
2. Make sure all students have accounts. For details on how to get or update US Squash accounts for students, see the [US Squash SEA Account Instructions](#) on the SEA Shared Drive.
3. Coaches should come to the test-taking session prepared with a list of all students' accounts and their passwords in case students do not know their login credentials.
4. Coaches should make sure there are enough computers with internet connection for all students to take the exam, or that there is a plan for rotating students on/off of the computers.

Test-taking:

1. Once students log-in to their US Squash accounts, they can access the referee exam on the bottom left corner of their profile. **Students have their date of birth entered on their US Squash account to access the correct exam.*
2. While taking the exam, players should have a pen and paper handy to record their answers for the exam in case they need to go back to those questions later. The students can take the exam as many times as they need until they pass; the order of the questions during the exam stays the same.
3. At the end of the exam, students should take note of what questions they got wrong and should talk to a coach to figure out the correct answer. The students may need to take the exam again if they did not get a score above 80%.
4. Once students pass the exam they must press the green confirm button to submit their scores to US Squash.
5. Coaches sometimes find that identifying the correct answer in the video portion of the US Squash exam is challenging. If there are videos that are confusing to you or your players, use the opportunity to have a conversation with students about what rules might apply to that situation, and why a referee might make one call or another.

Reinforce Key Points with All Students

Below are key points that coaches needs to reinforce and remind their students, no matter their skill level:

- Watch the match carefully, be attentive, and don't be distracted.
- Know your role as the Referee/Marker. These are two separate roles with distinct responsibilities.



- ❑ Make your calls confidently and promptly. There should never be a discussion among the marker and referee about a call as this delays everything further and makes them look like they don't know what they're doing or aren't confident.
- ❑ Don't be afraid to use conduct penalties in appropriate situations.
- ❑ Call the game as you see it; be firm, fair and respectful.
- ❑ The officials are in position to ensure a fair outcome and shouldn't be the reason for the outcome.

Additional Resources

- ❑ [US Squash - Rules of Squash](#)
- ❑ [Five Ways to Become a Better Referee](#)
- ❑ [Court diagram](#) with explanation of lines, by Squash for Beginners
- ❑ [SquashSkills, lets, no lets, and strokes](#) - Youtube video

SEA Shared Drive Resources

- ❑ [US Squash Officiating Powerpoints](#)
- ❑ [US Squash Referee Tests](#)

This guide was written by Edgardo Gonzalez at StreetSquash, with input from members of the 2017-2018 Squash Leadership Committee, and further updates made by Devan Currie from Squash Haven.