

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PLAYERS – 4th draft (3/18)

THE SPIRIT OF ETON FIVES

Fives depends for its unique appeal upon the players playing the game scrupulously fairly. It is a game almost invariably played without a referee, and so it is each player's responsibility to call his own shot down or out, to keep score accurately and agree it regularly, to make room for opponents to play their shots, and to be generous in offering and scrupulous in accepting lets. It is also each player's responsibility to encourage his partner to do likewise.

The Spirit of Fives involves RESPECT for:

- *your opponents (and their right to have an opinion that differs from your own)*
- *your partner*
- *the game's traditional values.*

It is against the Spirit of Fives:

- *to continue with a rally knowing that either your or your partner's return was not valid*
- *to falsify the score*
- *to deliberately obstruct your opponent or deny him room to play his shot*
- *to deny a let when there are reasonable grounds for one*
- *to accept the offer of a let when you did not have a GOOD chance of returning the ball fairly.*
- *to make excessive or prolonged noise under the guise of enthusiasm and motivation of your own pair.*
- *to make any derogatory remark about your opponents or their play.*

Infringement of these principles immediately compromises the integrity of the game and thereby the enjoyment and satisfaction of every player.

The *Spirit of Eton Fives* encapsulates the standards expected of every player, and should constantly be borne in mind when playing the game. Whenever a player falls from these standards, there is bound to be resentment, and the quality of the match is diminished. What follows is a more detailed explanation of the key points, but following the *Spirit of Eton Fives* scrupulously is a pre-requisite for an enjoyable and fair match.

1. Always try to play the game positively, fairly and giving of your best at all times. It is an insult to your opponents to lower your standards. Some matches are bound to be competitive, but taking the game too seriously, too light-heartedly or arrogantly will diminish your opponents' enjoyment.
2. Watch both your and your partner's shots carefully, and be scrupulous in declaring an invalid stroke by either immediately. It is cheating to fail to do so, hoping either that your opponents don't notice or for a let in any subsequent discussion.
3. Keep the score carefully, and agree it with your opponents regularly. It is cheating to deliberately falsify the score or to go up knowing that it is a third hand, hoping to get away with it if your opponents don't notice.
4. In a game where four players play in a confined space with hazards, it is inevitable that obstructions will occur. However it is each player's responsibility to make way to allow their opponents a clear space to play their shot. Standing still (especially near the buttress or front wall) and expecting your opponent to run or play their shot around you is unacceptable. Deliberately doing so is cheating.

However, a player has the right to keep a position whilst completing his shot, providing that he gives way immediately afterwards.

It is cheating, when you are the cutting pair, to deliberately run across the line of an opponent's shot on its way up so that it hits you, or to deliberately play the ball up in such a way that it hits you subsequently, and a let results.

Particular care should be taken to get out of the way and allow your opponents a clear opportunity to play the ball when you perform a three-wall cut. Best practice is to be well forward of the ball when it would have passed across your path.

At game ball (step), if your partner is cutting, your opponent has choice of position, so you must take a position well away from his chosen area (i.e. out of court, or on the other side of the court from his position), so that there is no chance of you being in the way of the cut if it comes through to the back step.

5. Offering, accepting and discussion about lets requires particular integrity:

If you know or suspect that your opponents have been disadvantaged by either you or your partner in their attempt to play the ball, you should always offer a let. It is acceptable to request a let if your pair has been disadvantaged and your opponents have failed to notice.

You should only accept a let if you or your partner would have had a **realistic and probable** chance of returning the ball fairly. It is unfair to accept a let if there is only a **possibility** that you would have done so.

When discussing lets or any other matter, always bear in mind that your opponents have an equal right to an opinion that is different from your own. It is unfair to impose your opinion on them, so that they feel on the defensive and obliged to give way. The natural recourse in an unresolved discussion is a let; always be self-critical of your own position to ensure that what you are arguing is reasonable.

In the unusual and undesirable situation where a discussion cannot be resolved, it is reasonable for a spectator to be asked their opinion, provided that all four players agree to abide by his judgement in advance. A Tournament Director has the right to intervene to help resolve a dispute, and in school matches, a Coach or Master may do so (please see separate notice: Code of Conduct for Masters/Coaches).

6. Try to adopt a positive and cheerful manner towards your opponents, especially when discussing matters of disagreement; they have a right to an opinion just as much as you do. It is reasonable to be firm in your opinion if you are certain of your position, but it is also important to listen to and analyse your opponents' point of view.

It is acceptable to encourage your partner with reasonable frequency and volume. However excessive frequency or volume under the guise of enthusiasm or motivation of your own pair becomes an irritation to your opponents, is bound to antagonise them and should be avoided.

Negative or personal comments on court regarding your opponents, either directly at them or to your partner, whether personal or regarding their play, should be avoided at all costs. **Positive comments are to be encouraged.** **Foul language and/or swearing should be avoided, unless it is 'under the breath' and self-recriminatory. No such language should be audible outside the court.** It is a gross violation of the standards **not to respect these conditions.**

7. When your partner's cut is going out, you have the right to catch the ball or knock it back into court, provided that you either have part of one foot in the court, or if you are in mid-air, the first foot that lands does so in court. However if you knock it back into play, you **must** allow your opponents the chance to play the ball before it bounces for a second time. Deliberate interference with the ball before this point is cheating.
8. It is acceptable to play a stroke with both hands together, however you must be scrupulous in declaring a foul stroke if the ball makes contact with both gloves either consecutively or simultaneously (i.e. it is a fair shot if the ball only strikes **one** glove).

When playing a stroke, you should ensure that it is a clean impulsive hit, and not held or carried in the hand in any way. In the latter case, a foul stroke should be declared immediately. The one exception to this is when playing a ball which is in contact with the front wall, in which case you are allowed to play the ball, which inevitably strikes your glove again immediately, and you should then allow the ball to fall, with the opposition having the option of playing the ball or taking a let.

9. Having **respect** for your partner, your opponents and the game's traditional values are an integral part of playing fives. Most serious problems result when this key requirement is ignored.
If all four players approach a game with a positive and cheerful attitude towards their partner, their opponents and the game, and maintain it throughout, then both you and your opponents will enjoy your matches.
10. A referee may be requested by either pair, either before or during a match, or may be imposed by the Tournament Director at any stage. If a referee is appointed, the players should attempt to play to the same standards as if there were no referee, and in particular, should attempt to resolve disputes themselves. The referee is there to adjudicate upon any discussions which are not resolved, and to ensure that the game is conducted according to *The Spirit of Eton Fives*. In such circumstances his opinion is final, and must be accepted by the players.

***For when the Great Recorder comes to count against your name,
He cares not that you won or lost, but how you played the Game.***

(The masculine gender is used for simplicity and economy, but any reference to it is intended to apply to both genders)

CMBW
Director of Competitions
Eton Fives Association
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