

# **Tennis Court Care and Maintenance**

*From ASBA & USTA'S Tennis Court Construction & Maintenance Manual*

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## **General Maintenance**

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A well-constructed and well-maintained tennis court will offer years of play. To maximize the useful life of any type of court, the owner should implement a regular schedule of maintenance. Regular inspection of the court and repair of minor irregularities is more cost effective than allowing the court to deteriorate to the point where it requires major repair or reconstruction. Even with regular maintenance, over time all courts will need some repair.

The most important step in maintaining all types of court surfaces is to keep them clean by removing debris immediately and by spot-cleaning spills as soon as they occur. Practice preventive maintenance by prohibiting food and beverages (except water) on the court area and by prohibiting smoking on the court. Provide wastebaskets to encourage players and spectators to keep the surface clean. Pick up stray balls, ball cans and “pop-tops,” which can damage the court surface, become a tripping hazard and make the court area unsightly.

At the end of the playing season, inspect all court equipment and order any replacement parts so that the equipment can be repaired during the off season. If new equipment is needed, the end of the season may be a good time to shop for bargains.

The amount of maintenance required by a particular tennis facility will vary depending on the geographic location, the amount and type of use, player conduct and alternative use, if any. In any case, the owner should develop an appropriate maintenance plan, ensure that maintenance is performed at timely intervals and keep records of maintenance procedures and conditions or problems noted. The need for excessive maintenance may be an indicator of more serious problems.

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## **Hard Court Maintenance**

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Hard courts include asphalt and concrete tennis courts. Most asphalt and concrete courts are surfaced with acrylic coatings.

### **Pre-Season Maintenance**

Clean the court surface of all debris. A broom or leaf blower may accomplish this, but more stubborn dirt requires a rotary pressure washer. (Always use caution with a rotary pressure washer; if the pressure is too high, it can damage the surface system on the court.)

If leaves, twigs, grass or other debris have been allowed to stand on the court surface, stains may have developed. To remove stains, start with the gentlest treatment—a soft brush and a mild cold-water detergent solution. If that doesn't work, try a rotary pressure washer. If the pressure washer is unsuccessful, contact the court contractor or surface manufacturer for a recommendation. Don't try a stronger cleaning solution without consulting the contractor or the manufacturer.

Tree sap, fruit, dead insects and bird droppings also can stain courts. They should be removed promptly. Once such debris has hardened, stain treatments can be tried, but are not likely to be successful. Prevention is the best option. Trees should not be allowed to overhang courts.

If mold, mildew or algae have appeared in shaded areas, a rotary pressure washer should remove them. Mold and mildew often grow where surfaces are contaminated by food spills, soft drinks or decaying matter, including mold or mildew that has been killed but not cleaned off. Clean acrylic coatings do not support fungus growth.

If any kind of stain has been allowed to remain on the surface for a period of time, natural bleaching of the color coating may have occurred. Unfortunately, there is no way to correct such bleaching. Do not try to touch up a stain or bleaching by dabbing on leftover surfacing material. Since all courts fade from exposure to the sun, new material applied to touch up a surface blemish will be darker than the existing court surface, leaving the court with a patchy, freckled appearance. If staining or bleaching is severe, recoating the entire court may be required.

Some wear is normal. Color coatings will tend to wear just behind the baseline and, possibly, at the net. Asphalt courts will show some divots, caused by racquets. Some chipping of the acrylic surface on asphalt courts may be evident around the footings for the net posts, center strap anchor, fence posts or light poles. This is due to the differing rates of expansion and contraction of the concrete footing and the asphalt court. Finally, some fading of color coatings may be expected. Note wear and keep track of it from year to year to aid in establishing an appropriate maintenance schedule.

Under normal use, tennis shoes will leave scuff marks on a newly surfaced court. The number and severity of these marks will decrease over time and owners should not be concerned by them. Hard-soled street shoes, however, may damage any type of surface.

## **Regular Maintenance**

To prevent staining, remove all debris that accumulates on the court as soon as possible. Sweep the court occasionally with a soft brush. Do not use a stiff bristle broom, which may damage the surface. Hose the court periodically using normal water pressure. If the court is in an area where water run-off leaves silt or dirt, hose off the residue so it won't stain or damage the surface.

Spot-clean spills as soon as they occur, following the manufacturer's recommendations.

Watch for dirt, mud, snow or water tracked onto courts. Wet spots can make walkways and court surfaces slippery and potentially hazardous. Abrasive materials, such as sand or dirt, can cause premature wear. Additionally, balls tend to skid when landing on spots where dirt has accumulated. Provide a walk-off mat at the entrance of the court to remove sand, dirt or other abrasive materials from players' shoes.

Keep track of the size of cracks in asphalt courts and note any changes. Some cracks may simply be signs of normal aging, while others may signify more serious problems. All asphalt courts crack eventually, and once a crack appears, no matter how well it is repaired, most likely it will reappear. Weeds growing through cracks will accelerate their expansion. Use an approved herbicide to prevent regrowth. Most tennis court contractors repair cracks and are experienced in determining the types of cracks and the appropriate methods of repair. Only crack-repair materials specifically designed for use on tennis courts should be used. All purpose fillers, such as those used for driveways, may soften enough during hot weather to be tracked across the court by players, damaging or marring the surface. Other crack fillers may contain polymers of silicon, which prevent the adhesion of acrylic surfacing systems.

Keep an eye out for bubbles, surface wear, peeling and flaking. Minor surface blemishes may be repaired by patching, but eventually the court will take on a speckled appearance and recoating may be required.

## **Winterizing**

Prior to closing a hard surface court for winter, remove all leaves and other debris. Oak leaves, in particular, are acidic and will stain the surface coating if left on the court. Periodically removing debris over the course of the winter will minimize staining and bleaching.

Do a walk-through of the facility and note any cracks. If possible, repair all cracks before winter sets in. If water settles in a crack and freezes, it will enlarge the crack.

In colder climates, do not shovel snow from the court or, if you must remove the snow, shovel very carefully. Shoveling may damage the surface coating. Always use a plastic shovel or broom to avoid damage. Snow left on a court will not damage a properly constructed court and, in fact, will help protect it. If ice has formed, do not apply salt or attempt to chip it off. Wait for the ice to melt naturally.

## **Maintenance of Indoor Acrylic Surfaces**

Indoor acrylic surfaces accumulate dust, ball fuzz and dirt tracked in by players. Indoor clubs should maintain a regular cleaning schedule. Courts should be cleaned by a vacuum or rotary sweeper with a soft-bristled brush once a day and cleaned either by water vacuum or water brush unit about once a month.

Indoor courts can show the formation of mold or fungus due to a combination of humidity and temperature along with water and food spills. Use a rotary pressure washer to remove the fungus. Prevent future contamination by cleaning all spills promptly.

Stained courts can be cleaned following the manufacturer's recommendations.

## **Hard Court Maintenance Equipment**

### ***Water Removal Equipment***

Since hard courts are, for the most part, non-porous, it is advisable to have equipment available to help remove surface water after cleaning or after rain. This includes rubber squeegees, foam rollers or water absorbent drums. Rubber squeegees may cause premature wear on the court surface. A foam sponge roller is preferred. Manual equipment is relatively inexpensive. Having two squeegees or rollers speeds drying of the court and extends the life of the equipment. Power blowers are sometimes used for removal of water, leaves and snow. Wet vacuums also can be used for drying courts.

### ***Cleaning Equipment***

Large-size push brooms with soft bristles are used for removing leaves and other debris from the court surface. Power blowers, wet/dry vacuums and jet spray cleaners, known as water brooms, also are used for cleaning hard courts. Power equipment will require a 110V outlet. Jet sprayers also will require a hose connection with adequate pressure and volume. Sprayers may be used for cleaning windscreens and divider curtains as well as court surfaces. Use care when using any pressure-type cleaning equipment since excessive pressure may damage court surfaces, windscreens or curtains.

# Annual Maintenance Planner

	Pre-Season	As Required
<b>Court Surfaces (outdoor):</b>		
Acrylic	Power wash, clean & fill cracks Check for birdbaths, repair as req'd.	Clean off spills and other contaminants. Check for surface cracking. Sweep or blow clean after heavy rain.
Fast-Dry	Remove dead material, scarify, topdress, roll, install lines.	Broom court and brush lines. Roll. Minor patching, as req'd.
Sand-Filled Turf	Powerbroom. Remove algae. Apply sand topdressing as req'd.	Repair as required in heavily used areas.
Grass	Roll and fertilize grass. Gradually mow to playing height.	Fill/repair divets and gouges in grass. Line courts. Apply fertilizer, soil amendments, pesticides.
<b>Court Surfaces (indoor)</b>		
Acrylic	Power wash surface. Clean and fill cracks or surface tears.	Clean off spills and other contaminants. Water vacuum or water brush surface.
Fast-Dry	Deep scarify surface crust as req'd, grade. Top dress w/surface material as req'd.	Broom court and brush lines. Fill low spots and reset lines.
Infilled Turf	Power broom court surface. Apply sand topdressing as req'd.	Replace sand as required in heavily used areas. Check for tears or loose seams.
<b>Court Accessories</b>		
Nets	Install net, adjust height and tension.	Clean headband, net and center strap.
Net Posts	Clean out sleeves if removed. Paint as req'd. Install posts and lubricate mechanisms and sleeves.	Check for cracking and repair as needed around net posts.
Fencing	Check that frame and fabric are secure and free from hazards.	Inspect frame, hardware, and footings. Repair as required or replace damaged elements. Checkgate swings, lubricate.
Windscreens	Install windscreens.	Replace damaged panels.
Irrigation-Above Surface	Turn on water supply, test system, set meters, set timer clocks. Check and replace zone valves as required.	Adjust timer clocks to changing seasonal usage water requirements.
Irrigation -Subsurface	Set level.	Monitor and adjust level. Replace metering devices.
Lights (Indoor)	Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit.	Check and record light level readings.
Lights (Outdoor)	Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit, set timer clocks. Check and record light level readings.	Check for nicks or scratches, paint as required to prevent rusting.
Court Maintenance Equipment	Clean, lubricate, tune-up, test.	Check for nicks or scratches, paint to prevent rusting.
<b>Court Buildings</b>		
Air Structures	Clean fabric, erect structure, test all systems/blower. Review emergency staff procedures.	
Metal Buildings	Check and test all HVAC systems.	Check safety padding. Clear gutters, check for any roof leakage.
Fabric Frame	Inspect metal framework, joints and fasteners.	Inspect and clean building exterior.
<b>Related Facility Concerns:</b>		
Drainage	Check systems, clear structures and pipes.	Clear tops of drains and swales. Repair damaged structures or pipes.
Landscaping	Prune back overgrowth and roots under courts, fertilize, install seasonal plantings, mulch beds.	Change seasonal plantings, fertilize or prune as required.

## Annual Maintenance Planner (cont.)

Daily	Weekly	Post Season	Long Term Planning
	Sweep or blow surface clean.	Sweep or blow surface clean. Clean and fill cracks.	Plan for resurfacing every 5-8 years.
Water (sometimes twice a day). Broom and brush court lines.	Sweep surface and clean debris. Roll court if required.	Take up lines or weight them if court subject to freeze thaw cycles.	Check surface thickness yearly. Re-leveling may be required if court has eroded. A new lift may be req'd every 5-7 years.
Sweep surface clean of debris.	Brush surface (more frequently if req'd). Check for tears or loose seams.	Clean court surface and apply algaecide and fungicide.	Plan to resurface every 12-20 years.
Water surface, mow if required. Rotate court position or let court "rest".		Aerate, dethatch, reseed, and fertilize.	
Vacuum or sweep surface.		Sweep or blow surface clean. Clean and fill cracks and surface tears.	Plan for resurfacing every 3-6 years.
Lightly hand water court as req'd. Broom and brush court lines.			
Sweep surface clean of debris.	Brush surface (more frequently if req'd).	Clean court surface.	Plan to replace surface every 10-15 years.
	Check net tension and height.	Remove nets (or loosen tension). Check cables & replace as req'd. store.	
		Remove posts, cap sleeves, lubricate mechanisms, and store or cover.	
			Replace fabric every 12-18 years.
Check that windscreens are securely fastened to fence framework.	Hose down or wash windscreens as required.	Tag locations, clean & store. Measure and order replacement panels.	Plan to replace every 3-5 years.
Check and record water usage.	Check and adjust head alignment and performance, check and clean filters.	Turn off water supply, drain and blow out system, repair equipment as req'd.	
	Add fungicide.		
		Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit minimum every 6 months if year round.	Replace lamps every 2 years indoors.
		Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit minimum every 6 months if year round.	Replace lamps every 4-5 years outdoors.
		Clean, lubricate, order replacement parts if required, repair, store. Drain gasoline or water if applicable.	
Record pressure, temperature, weather conditions, inspect for leakage.	Test emergency back-up system. Test emergency exits.	Clean fabric, take down, store, winterize mechanical equipment.	Plan for fabric replacement every 10-15 years.
		Clean HVAC filters and vents, inspect roof and insulation systems.	Plan on roof replacement 15-25 years depending on system.
	Test emergency exits.		
	Inspect courts and surroundings for drainage problems or erosion, repair.	Check systems, clear structures and pipes.	
Water plantings.	Trim grass, sweep walks, check plants for invasive insects or diseases.	Prune back overgrowth, fertilize plantings, mulch planting beds.	