

INDOOR TABLE TENNIS



INFORMATION, GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Produced by the English Table Tennis Association

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WHY CHOOSE TABLE TENNIS?

Table tennis is one of the few sports where gender, disability and age are irrelevant. Everyone can compete against each other on equal terms.

The sport is easy to pick up and play. New players can get competent quickly but mastery of the game takes longer. It compels players to improve their skills. These factors make it a sport that will make participants return time and time again if there is easy access to the playing equipment.

This guide will provide you with information about the equipment you can buy to set up indoor table tennis. It will also provide guidance about how to set up a successful, safe and enjoyable table tennis session whether it is at home or in a sports centre.

Table tennis is an adaptable sport, so whether your aim is to set up a social table tennis session or to set up a formal club, this guide will provide you with some useful information to get you started.

We have broadly described the two types of table tennis delivery here. There is no reason why your delivery cannot be a mix of the two, however it is important to ensure that the equipment being used will be appropriate to the type of table tennis you intend to play.

SOCIAL TABLE TENNIS (PING!)

Ping! is the name given to the ETTA's social table tennis delivery. Social table tennis, often known as ping pong, is on the rise. The ETTA's Ping! project that puts table tennis tables on city streets for people to use has proved a great success, with over half a million people playing during the three years the event has been running. Ping pong played in new environments, combined with music and art is taking place in many cities across England. All this demonstrates that this new type of delivery is attractive to a wide audience. It supports the current trend of making sport available in a new way, one that fits into people's daily lives, is social and inexpensive.

Social table tennis is ideal for workplaces, schools, colleges, pubs and clubs. It is played away from the sports hall and in areas such as canteens, meeting rooms or bar areas. The emphasis is on fun and informal play rather than coaching and competition. No dress code, no rules, no structure, just pick up a bat and play. Add in music, and somewhere for people to drink and eat and you have an attractive environment for people to gather and play.

Naturally some structure and competition can come out of these sessions, but what form this takes is in the hands of the participants themselves.



FORMAL TABLE TENNIS

This is table tennis played to the rules of the sport. Coaching and competition form the core content of these sessions. Typically run by table tennis clubs, play takes place in a sports hall, using full size tables. Sessions will be led by a coach and be aimed at participants who want to develop their skills and take part in competitions.

The type of table tennis offer that is suited to you will depend on the intended participants, the space



you have available, existing table tennis provision and equipment, plus what funds you have to invest into the sport.

CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

As with all sports there is a vast amount of equipment to choose from. This guide will not recommend any particular brand or make, but outline the key criteria you should look for based on what you need.

INDOOR TABLE TENNIS TABLES

It's not table tennis without a table. This is the most expensive piece of equipment you will buy, so careful consideration is needed to ensure that you choose the right model for your table tennis sessions.

The Ideal Standard

If space and budget allows we recommend that the table you purchase should meet International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) requirements which state that:

- A table should measure 2.74m long, 1.525m wide and be 76cm high.
- The ball should bounce 23cm high when dropped from a height of 30cm.
- The playing surface should be uniformly dark coloured and matt.
- We also recommend that if possible the table you purchase is wheelchair friendly. A wheelchair friendly table will have the legs set back at least 40cm away from each end.

Don't worry, you won't need to get the measuring tape out! Suppliers will indicate whether a table meets 'ITTF Specifications' and 'Wheelchair Friendly' when you browse their website or brochure.

Tables that meet this criteria will usually be called 'match' or 'competition' tables. These tables are solidly constructed and heavy so require at least two people to move the tables.

You can expect to pay between £500 to £1,500 for each table that meet the criteria set out above.

Budget Tables

This range of tables will usually be called 'recreation' or 'home' tables and are ideal for casual use. They are of lighter construction and come in a variety of sizes, from full size to mini tables. These tables are perfect for 'pop up' sessions or for use where space is limited.

Storage and Transport

All tables can be folded up for storage, however you should consider the storage space you have available and who will be performing the task.

Rollaway tables are designed to be moved easily. They fold in the middle and have large wheels for easy movement, and this can usually be done by one person. These tables require bigger storage space as a result of



this functionality.

Some of these roll away tables offer 'playback' functionality. This is where one half of the table can remain upright so that a single player can practice their returns.

Other tables, typically the heavy weight competition tables, come in two halves and have legs that fold into the frame. Each half can be rolled upright into storage using the small wheels built into the frame at the net end. Two strong people are required to put up or breakdown one of these tables. They are however more compactly stored than the rollaway tables.

We recommend the rollaway design if the tables you use will need to be moved often. Bear in mind that the complex engineering of the tables generally means that it's worth avoiding the budget versions of these tables to ensure good durability.

Net Sets

Some tables will come supplied with a net set and others do not. Its worth checking that whether you'll need a net set when you make a purchase.

INSTANT PING! PONG

An alternative to purchasing an actual table tennis table is to use the tables you already have. The Instant Ping! Pong pack contains a roll net which can clip to almost any flat surface. It takes seconds to set up. The set also contains bats and balls, plus a set of play cards to get your table tennis session started.

The versatility of the pack means that you can play table tennis almost anywhere. The pack is available to order online here:

<http://www.instantpingpong.co.uk/>

BATS

As you would expect there is a vast array of bats available to you. It is easy to get lost in technical information about spin, speed, attack and defence. These factors are important for dedicated players, and very much an individual choice. For purchasing bats for a group, you should consider the durability of a bat before all else.

Bats are relatively inexpensive and if made freely available will guarantee that the tables you purchase will be used. Ideally the bat you purchase will have a sponge layer with a rubber surface. Hard bats, which have no sponge layer are not recommended. You should look to pay between £4 to £10 for a decent beginner bat.

The one draw back with wooden bats is that people, particularly children, seem unable to resist peeling off the rubber surface. A bat made from composite materials is worth considering as an alternative. Tough and durable, these bats are ideal for use where supervision of participants is limited.



BALLS

Balls range in quality from one star practice balls to three star competition quality. The official ball colour is white or orange, but they can also be found in a range of different colours. The official ball size is 40mm, and this is the size that most balls you purchase will be, but other sizes are also available.

Balls of different sizes can change the game, for instance, jumbo balls slow the game down, are highly visible and are great for those just learning the game.

Our only recommendation is that you purchase plenty of balls. They are easily lost or broken, so having a large stock will avoid having disappointed players.

COURT SURROUNDS

Ensuring that balls are contained within the playing area and easily collected can be a problem. Court surrounds are light weight frames with a pvc cover that prevent most balls from rolling past them.



ROBOTS

Robots are attached to one end of the table and serve balls to the player at the other end. They are great for serious players to practice their technique and equally as good for setting up challenges for everyone to have a go at.

Prices for these range from £200 to over £1,000.



EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS

The ETTA has produced a list of table tennis equipment suppliers. This list is available for download here:

<http://etta.co.uk/our-sport/our-sport-subpages/equipment-guidance-our-sport/equipment-suppliers/>

PLAYING PRACTICALITIES

Table tennis is a safe sport to play indoors. It can be played within a confined space, and the ball will not break fragile objects. None the less, measures need to be taken to ensure that the activity is safe for the participants and other individuals in the proximity of the playing area. This section will be broken up into two sections; social table tennis and formal table tennis because the two variations each require a different set up.

SOCIAL TABLE TENNIS

Environment

Social table tennis should take place away from the normal sporting environment. The aim is to make the sport accessible, so that people are encouraged to play.

The tables should be placed in or near to areas where people congregate so that the tables and equipment can be seen.



Space

The recommended playing area for a full size table is 8 by 4 metres. This will allow enough space for circulation during play. The area around the table should be clear from any tripping hazards and with plenty of space for people to circulate and watch the activity.

Table Location

The ball will inevitably get hit outside of the playing area, so some steps should be taken to reduce how much disruption a loose ball and the person collecting it might cause. This could be a particular problem if the table is set up in a public area such as a common room or canteen.

Table tennis tables should therefore be sited in areas away from walkways and doors in public areas. A thorough risk assessment will need to be done before play commences.

Dress code

There is no need to change clothes to play social table tennis. Sensible footwear is recommended though!

FORMAL TABLE TENNIS

The information set out below is the minimum criteria recommended to run a formal table tennis session. For more information about formal table tennis facilities you can download our facilities guidance document here:

<http://etta.co.uk/news/facilities-guidance-note-2010-13/>



Environment

Formal table tennis should take place in a sports hall or similar venue. The ideal venue will have male and female changing rooms and accessible changing and toilet facilities. The flooring should be a wooden sports surface.

Table tennis shouldn't take place in an aerobics studio or squash court. These environments are not suitable for the sport. White or mirrored walls make tracking a table tennis ball difficult.

Space

The recommended playing space is 8 by 4 metres. Tables should be laid out in a grid system so that the available space is filled with tables. This can be marked out using barriers. Access to the tables should be wide enough to allow for wheelchair access, and kept clear from tripping hazards.

Dress Code

Participants should dress for activity and wear trainers. Ideally the shirt colour will be any colour other than white, as a white top can make tracking the ball's flight difficult.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR EQUIPMENT

TABLE CARE

Tables are designed to be hard wearing but, like everything, repeated use can result in damage being done. These tips will help extend the life of your table.

Clean the surface regularly

Even if the table is covered whilst not in use, the table will still need to be cleaned on a regular basis. This will need to be more than a dusting and wiping. Players will sweat during play and their sweat can get onto the surface of the table!

The tables should be cleaned with a non abrasive cleaner to preserve the surface colour. Diluted white vinegar is ideal for this purpose. Alternatively some suppliers sell table tennis table cleaning sprays.

Service the table

We recommend that you check the table periodically for wear and tear. The setting up and taking down of the table will stress the moving parts. It's worth ensuring that the moving parts are oiled and loose nuts tightened during the check.

Storage

Tables should always be stored face to face, i.e. the frame should be on the outside. This will help to prevent scratching of the surface.

Other considerations

Tables should be moved and set up/taken down only by individuals who are trained how to do so. Children should at all times be supervised if they are performing this task.

The tables should only be used for table tennis, not for use as a table during fetes, seating or to be climbed on.

NETS

In the rush to set up or pack away nets can sometimes be harshly treated. Net sets aren't cheap, so care should be taken with them.

Ensure that the individuals helping to set up know how the net set works and make them responsible for the condition of the net. Ideally it should be rolled up and stored in its box in the same way as it was when new, or stored in a sturdy box.

BATS AND BALLS

Bats and balls will need to be replenished regularly. As such where table tennis is played at an introductory level there is no need to buy top of the range equipment. Be wary of players picking the rubber at the edges of the bat!

Regular player should be encouraged to purchase their own bat.

FUNDING

Like most sports, the initial set up costs for table tennis can be expensive. Making use of funding and grant opportunities is a great way to fund your project. Finding the right funding opportunity can be time consuming as there are a large number available, and each has a different set of qualification criteria.

The ETTA have produced a funding guide to provide details of national funding initiatives. You can download this from here:

<http://etta.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Funding-Information-2013.pdf>

Alternatively the Funding Central website which will provide you with a list of grants and loan opportunities based upon your project and location. Their website is here:

www.fundingcentral.org.uk

Sport England also offers a number of different funding opportunities, details of which can be found here:

www.sportengland.org/funding.

HELP AND ADVICE

The following organisations can help you by supporting the development of your project.

County Sport Partnerships (CSPs) are networks of local agencies that connect national and regional organisations with an interest in sport to deliver a locally focussed strategy for increasing physical activity. They can provide you with support and advice, and help put you in touch with funding opportunities specific to your region.

There are 50 CSPs and you can find details of your local contact here:

www.cspnetwork.org/.

Local Authorities often employ someone whose responsibility is to develop sport and activity within their authority boundaries. They will be interested to hear about your project and can help to provide specific local advice.

<http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1>

ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

We will be happy to provide you with advice and guidance, as well as helping to promote your good work once the tables are in place.

For general queries and advice please visit our website for contact information or send us an email:

Website: <http://www.etta.co.uk>

Email: admin@etta.co.uk

DISCLAIMER

This guidance is intended to provide helpful data and advice and whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents, the ETTA shall not at any time, in any circumstances, be held responsible or liable to any party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from reliance placed on the guidance within it.

