

4-Square Rules

The Court:

Four Square is played on a 16' square court divided into four smaller squares that meet in the center. Squares are numbered 1 through 4. New players enter into square number 1 and the ball is served out of square number 4. Players may stand, walk or run anywhere in the court, though it is best to stay in a position to protect your own square.

The official league ball is a textured 8.5" rubber playground ball inflated to 2 lbs.

Normal Game Play:

The player in the highest rank, called four square or 'royalty,' serves the ball into the lowest ranking square, called one square. After a single bounce in one square, the player must hit the ball (return) into any other legal square before it bounces again. Each time the ball is bounced in any square, that player must hit it into any other player's square (return) to stay in the game. The game continues until a player makes an error by letting the ball bounce twice, hitting the ball out of bounds, or breaking a 'custom rule' (see below).

Serving the Ball:

The ball is always served from four square into one square. The serve is always delivered from the back corner of the square, sometimes called the 'mailbox.' Four square must call any custom rules first, drop the ball and serve from the bounce. Serves are meant to place the ball fairly into play and must be returnable by the player in square one, generally taking its first bounce near the center of square one. As they say on playgrounds, "No blood on serves."

Faults:

Faults are allowed only once for both the server or the receiver. The server can fault if the serve into one square is too high, too low, too fast or otherwise unreturnable by the receiver. The receiver may send the ball back to be served again. The receiver can fault on a return if she hits the ball out of bounds, into her own square or on to an inside court line. The receiver has a second chance for a serve.

Both the server and the receiver are allowed only one fault, referred to as "one bad". However, if a player faults a second time then they are out. You can also remember it this way: Two bad = too bad for you!

Progression of Squares:

Each time a player is knocked out, that square becomes vacant and all the players move up to a higher numbered square to make the one square available for an incoming player. Knocked out players must go to the end of the line and await their next turn in play.

The Boundaries:

The lines on the court are like the lines on a tennis or volleyball court and each has a specific rule. 'Outside lines' refer to the outermost square of the court, 'inside lines' refer to the line dividing individual squares of the court which cross in the center.

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- **Inside Out:** Bouncing the ball on the inside line is a bad play. This means that when a player returns a ball bounced in her square, she must bounce it cleanly outside of her square. If she bounces it on an inside line of her square, its not good enough and she is out.
- **Outside In:** The lines on the outside of the court are in play, always. If a player bounces the ball into another square and the ball hits the outside line, it is still in play. However, if she hits the ball too far and it bounced outside of the outside line, it is out of bounds and she is out.

Interference:

If the ball is touched by another object which is not one of the four players or the floor, this is called interference. The round is started again. Players waiting in line may not touch the ball when in play.

There are times when one *cannot* hit the ball. When a ball bounces in a square it is that player's responsibility to hit the ball into another square, and failure to do so would be a fault making her out. Other players may not interfere with a player's turn by hitting the ball and preventing her from returning it.

Specifically, if the ball lands in another player's square then other players are not allowed to touch that ball until it has been hit again. This tactic is called 'poaching' and is not allowed. However, there is nothing stopping one from hitting the ball *before* it touches a square.

The "Showdown!"

If there is a dispute that cannot be settled by the officials then the only proper way to come to work out the disagreement is through the Showdown. The Showdown is a mini-game of two square with no custom rules and the loser is knocked out of the game. In the event of a Showdown, there are no points or errors logged for the players, the winner of the showdown is simply allowed to stay in the game.

Customized Rules:

Making it into four square comes with the unique privilege of creating special rules which tailor the game play to your own style and help you to stay in four square longer. This is where most of the fun and complexity of game comes from. When in four square, the player may call specific rules which become part of the game at the beginning of each serve and last only for that round. After each round, she must call the rules again or it is considered that the rules fall back on the published Standards and no special rules apply. It is enough simply to say, "Same rules" or "Ditto" to let the other players know that the custom rules still apply to this round.

Many of the special, silly, and ridiculous rules* would make it impossible to keep score in competitive game play. As a compromise, only the following custom rules may be used:

- **Double Taps:** This means any player may hit the ball two times in the air after it has bounced once in her square. Similar to a one person volleyball team, this is an effective technique for setting yourself up for a spike.
- **Body Language:** This rule allows players to use any part of their body to hit the ball. Some players like this because of the added use of feet for emergency recoveries.
- **Black Jack:** If a player catches the ball before it lands in her square, the player who hit the ball is out. It usually forces the game to be played low and fast and creates a different dynamic.
- **Underhand:** The means that all hits are with an open hand, palm up, below the waist. This brings the game down low to the ground and makes your quads ache the next day. "Underhand" is stereotypically associated with beginners, but in four square even the best players sometimes can't survive a round of underhand.
- **One Hand only** - only one hand is allowed to strike the ball (either Right or Left is called)

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- **Land Mines** - a portion of a square is an automatic out for the player in that square, marked in some way (chalk, tape, etc.); customarily the portion increases with increasing square number
- **Anti-land Mines** - a portion of a square is out of play
- **Bobbling** - the ball can be bounced from hand to hand to change the direction of the ball in mid-flight; the number of bobbles must be specified
- **More to Come:** If you want to contribute or make suggestions, please [email Campus Rec](#) PRIOR to the captain's meeting!

*Special, silly, and ridiculous rules are encouraged during all non-league play, especially during the warm up period at the start of each game.

Score Keeping and Statistics (for league play only):

Stats from individual games are tracked for the tourney, the two lowest scores in each category are thrown out to reflect only the best play. Intramural Champs t-shirts are given to players who score the highest in average, clobber points, consistency of play, and most improved scores for the tourney. Additional prizes may be awarded for individuals.

- **Entrance:** This is the total number of times a player has entered the court. This is used as a base for counting the number of times a player has played the game.
- **Serve:** This is the total number of times a player has been in four square and served the ball.
- **Average:** The cumulative ratio of the number of Serves to the number of Entrances, how many times in four square divided by the number of games played.
- **Adjust:** The two lowest scores are dropped and the sum of the remaining Averages are divided by the number of season games minus two. This is the number which will determine the high scores of the league.
- **Clobber:** Similar to a judges sportsmanship rating. A special point added at the judges discretion for ultimately 'owning' another player on the court through great play, demonstration of skill, strategy, or display of brute force.