

## USTA OFFICIAL CERTIFIED UMPIRE CAREER GUIDE

Welcome to the United States Tennis Association (USTA) officiating family. We hope that you enjoy the sport of tennis and the camaraderie of other umpires throughout your officiating career. The information contained in this career guide will be of assistance in planning and developing your future in tennis officiating. The majority of USTA certified umpires are needed to officiate at Sectional tournaments, USTA tournaments and at the Collegiate level. We have less than 10% of the approximately 3,000 USTA certified umpires who regularly officiate at Professional Tournaments. USTA certified umpires are considered self-contractors. It is up to the individual umpire to determine which path, or paths to pursue for their own personal satisfaction.

Good luck!

### GETTING STARTED:

The USTA is the governing body for tennis in the United States. It is a member of the International Tennis Federation (ITF), which is the ultimate governing body for tennis worldwide. The USTA is comprised of 17 Sections, each representing one or more states. Some of these sections have created Districts that represent specific geographic areas within the Section. Some umpire associations may require an annual fee while others have automatic membership without fees. All certified tennis officials must be members of the USTA. No additional membership fee is required to belong to the National USTA Officials Council, of which you will become a member once you are certified.

To become certified umpire, individuals must attend an annual training course and pass an annual written test appropriate to the type of officiating you plan to pursue. The Sectional or District contact person (**you can find the list of Sectional Chairman with contact information at the end of this packet**) can tell you when training courses will be held throughout the year. You can also access this information on the USTA officials web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com).

The entry-level official is termed a Provisional Umpire. You will want to be certified as a Provisional Official as soon as possible. Provisional Umpire is the only certification that does not require prior attendance at a USTA training course. To become a Provisional Umpire, you must be a USTA member, pass the Provisional Umpire's test (which can be found on the USTA officials web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com) under the heading "Training and Education").

### RULES OF TENNIS:

All USTA certified umpires need to study the rules of tennis as well as USTA tournament and officiating regulations. The training courses that are provided are "not" designed to teach every rule or officiating technique. Only through diligent study of the rules and regulations that govern tennis can an umpire expect to attain and maintain a level of expertise and excellence that gives them the confidence to handle all the situations in which an umpire can be placed. The rules of tennis are maintained by the ITF and are contained in "Friend at Court". **Study it thoroughly!**

### CERTIFICATION

Certification cards are issued for a period from January 1 to December 31 of the current certification year. Tests, and dates of schools shall be available through the district, sectional, and national chairpersons of officials.

**Vision-** Each year, each on-court umpire shall attest to having vision of 20/20, either corrected or uncorrected. Every even year, each USTA certified on-court umpire (excluding provisional umpires) shall include with the certification application a physician's or an optometrist's statement attesting that the official has 20/20 vision, either corrected or uncorrected.

**Tests**- Each USTA certified umpire shall pass the written test for each category in which the official is certified. **Schools**- Each certified umpire shall successfully complete an approved school for each certification category. The National Chairperson of Officials has the right to approve all training schools. The Sectional Chairperson may approve schools as delegated by the National Chairperson. The USTA Officials Committee determines the school requirements for each category, and the National Chairperson of Officials shall approve all instructors.

**USTA membership and certification**- Each certified umpire shall be a USTA member. Field Referees, Roving Officials, Sectional Trainer/Evaluators and National Trainer/Evaluators shall be certified umpires.

**Number of tournaments**- Every year USTA certified umpires shall meet the certification requirements by working (at minimum), the specified number of tournaments, matches, or days.

**Code of Conduct**- All USTA certified umpires shall adhere to the standards in the Officials' Code of Conduct as set forth in Friend at Court.

## **G. Specific Certification Requirements**

**Provisional Umpire**- A provisional umpire is exempt from the school requirement but must pass the written provisional umpire exam. A person becomes a provisional umpire immediately upon passing the exam. If later during the same calendar year the umpire meets the work requirements for becoming certified as a Sectional Umpire, the official may become certified as a Sectional Umpire by passing the applicable test or tests. The umpire is excused from meeting the school requirement only during the first year as a Provisional Umpire. If an umpire advances from Provisional Umpire to a Sectional Umpire during a current year, the umpire will not be re-certified during the next year as a Sectional Umpire until he/she has passed the applicable test or tests and has successfully attended an approved school.

**Provisional Referee**- A Provisional Referee shall have attended the required school or schools conducted by an approved USTA Trainer/Evaluator and shall have passed all applicable tests required of a Referee. A Provisional Referee may serve as a Referee for tournaments below the sectional championship level. If during the same calendar year the Provisional Referee meets the work requirements for a Sectional Referee, the Provisional Referee may then become certified as a Sectional Referee.

Provisional umpires and referees are people who are looking to work just the required amount of events in a year in order to maintain a certification level. Individuals at this certification level have limited time to work as an umpire and consequently usually work within their own district.

**Sectional and USTA Officials**- Each year Sectional and USTA certified umpires must successfully complete a school and pass any written tests for the categories in which they are certified. Tests shall apply for certification in the calendar year.

**Sectional Umpire**- A Sectional Umpire shall have officiated for a total of five of the following: Line Umpire days, Chair Umpire matches, or Roving Umpire days. Chair Umpire matches used to qualify for this category may not be used to also qualify for the Sectional Chair Umpire certification level.

**Sectional Chair Umpire-** A Sectional Chair Umpire shall have served as a Chair Umpire in five matches.

**Sectional Referee-** A Sectional Referee shall have served as a Referee or as a Deputy Referee for an entire tournament.

**USTA Roving Umpire-** A USTA Roving Umpire shall have satisfied the requirements for a Sectional Umpire, shall have served as a Roving Umpire for 15 days, and shall have successfully completed the Referee certification school. Umpires who are certified in the sectional category are people who have more time to give and are comfortable to just work events within their own section.

**USTA Line Umpire-** A USTA Line Umpire shall have officiated as a Line Umpire for 10 days and shall have received satisfactory evaluation(s).

**USTA Chair Umpire-** A USTA Chair Umpire shall have officiated as a Chair Umpire in ten matches, shall have been previously certified as a Sectional Chair Umpire and shall have received satisfactory evaluation(s).

**USTA Referee-** A USTA Referee shall have served as a Referee for three entire tournaments (one of which may have been as a Deputy Referee).

**USTA Chief Umpire-** A USTA Chief Umpire shall have served as a Chief Umpire for one entire tournament. Umpires who are certified in the USTA category are people who have some time to travel and work outside their section as well as work many of the higher level events held inside of their section.

**National Line Umpire-** A National Line Umpire shall have officiated as a Line Umpire for 20 days in matches at USTA National Championships, Intercollegiate National Championships, ITF International Championships, or Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000. At least ten of these days shall have been in USTA, ITF, ATP, or WTA tournaments with prize money of at least \$50,000. A National Line Umpire shall have been certified as a USTA Line Umpire or higher line umpire certification level within the previous two years and shall have received satisfactory national evaluations.

**National Chair Umpire-** A National Chair Umpire shall have officiated in 20 matches as a Chair Umpire in matches at USTA National Championships, Intercollegiate National Championships, ITF International Championships, or Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000. No more than eight intercollegiate national championships may be considered for the minimum qualification criteria. At least twelve of these matches shall have been in USTA, ITF, ATP, or WTA tournaments with prize money of at least \$50,000. A National Chair Umpire shall have been certified as a USTA Chair Umpire or higher chair umpire certification level within the previous two years and shall have received satisfactory national evaluations.

**National Referee-** A National Referee shall have served as a Referee in four entire tournaments, two of which shall have been in USTA National Championships, ITF International Championships, Intercollegiate National Championships, or Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000.

Umpires who are certified in the National category are people who have a lot of time to travel and work outside their section. Umpires have maintained this high certification level by meeting or exceeding all high level work and evaluation requirements. The National Chairman of Officials must approve all levels of National certifications.

**Professional Line Umpire-** A Professional Line Umpire shall have officiated as a Line Umpire for 50 days in Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$50,000. Thirty of these days shall have been in USTA, ITF, ATP, or WTA tournaments with prize money of at least \$150,000. A Professional Line Umpire shall have been certified as a National Line Umpire within the previous two years. The National Chairman of Officials shall consider work record and evaluations from Tournament Supervisors/Referees in approving this certification level.

**Professional Chair Umpire-** A Professional Chair Umpire shall have officiated as a Chair Umpire in 30 matches in professional tournaments with prize money of at least \$50,000. Twenty of these matches shall have been in USTA, ITF, ATP, or WTA tournaments with prize money of at least \$150,000. A Professional Chair umpire shall have been certified as a National Chair Umpire within the previous two years. The National Chairman of Officials shall consider work record and evaluations from Tournament Supervisors/Referees in approving this certification level.

**Professional Referee-** A Professional Referee shall have served as a Referee in five tournaments, all of which shall have been USTA National Championships, ITF International Championships, Intercollegiate National Tournaments, or Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000. At least three of these tournaments shall have been USTA, ITF, ATP, or WTA tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000.

**Professional Chief Umpire-** A Professional Chief Umpire shall have served as a Chief Umpire of three USTA National Championships, ITF International Championships, Intercollegiate National Championships or Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$10,000. Two of these tournaments shall have been Professional Tournaments with prize money of at least \$150,000.

Umpires who are certified in the Professional category are people who have a lot of time to travel and work outside their section. Umpires have maintained this high certification level by meeting or exceeding all high level work and evaluation requirements. The National Chairman of Officials must approve all levels of Professional certifications.

**Intercollegiate Umpire-** An Intercollegiate umpire shall have officiated for a total of five days, which may be any combination as a Chair Umpire, Roving Umpire, or Referee for intercollegiate dual matches or tournaments. An official who has successfully completed an ITA Training School and passed all appropriate tests may be certified as a Provisional Intercollegiate Umpire.

These specific USTA umpire certification requirements along with further certification information are also contained in the USTA publication "Friend at Court". Contact your sectional or district chairman to obtain a copy of this book.

### **TRAINING SCHOOLS:**

There are four distinct USTA schools available to current or aspiring tennis umpires. Not all are available in every location and some travel may be necessary to attend schools as an umpire progresses through their career path.

### **SECTIONAL SCHOOL:**

This school is designed for umpires applying for certification as Provisional, Sectional, or USTA umpires. There are normally several schools in each section held at various times throughout the year (**check with your sectional chairman for up to date school schedule**). At least one such school in each section will be taught by a National Trainer/Evaluator. The remainder of schools will be taught by Sectional

Trainer/Evaluators that have been selected by the Sectional Chairman, approved by the National Chairman, and trained by the National Trainer/Evaluators.

Topics covered in this school include but are not limited to a comprehensive review of the basic rules of tennis, basic chair umpire, line umpire and roving procedures and techniques, the USTA National Trainer/Evaluator evaluation system etc. You can refer to the USTA officials web page (under the heading Training and Education) and find past sectional and USTA level pre-tests to help further your knowledge on just what things are going to be taught at the school you attend.

#### **REFEREE SCHOOL:**

This school is designed for referees in all certification categories. Topics covered in this school include but are not limited to a review of the basic rules of tennis, responsibilities of the referee before play begins, making the draw; scheduling matches; the point penalty system; responsibilities after the tournament, tournament regulations, and discussions on rule interpretations.

#### **ITA SCHOOL:**

This school is designed for officials who work at collegiate dual meets or tournaments and covers the rules and regulations used by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA).

#### **USTA REFRESHER SCHOOL:**

This school is designed for umpires who hold a certification level of National or Professional line umpire, chair umpire or referee. This school can also be attended by those umpires holding a USTA line umpire, chair umpire and referee certification level **“only if the individual has received a waiver from attending sectional school by his/her sectional chairman”**. These schools are held every two to three years at the discretion of the USTA National Officials committee. The school will only be taught by National Trainer/Evaluators and could be held at any time during the year.

The primary focus of these schools will be on situations captured in actual tennis matches taped at professional events around the world. Test questions will also be largely situational as well as covering some of the finer nuances of the rules of tennis. Other topics to be covered at these schools will vary from year to year. These items include but are not limited to changes in rules and regulations for the various tennis organizations (i.e., USTA, ITF, ATP (Professional Men's Tour), WTA (Professional Ladies Tour), ITA) and changes to or clarifications of officiating techniques.

### **USTA CHAIR ACADEMY AND ITF BADGE SCHOOLS:**

For active USTA certified umpires who have demonstrated great promise on the court and in the classroom over a period time (recommended 2-5 years depending on work record, evaluations etc.) more advanced schools are available to attend. These schools are primarily for active working chair umpires who seek advancement to the higher levels of the professional game. You can find more information about the USTA Chair Academy and ITF schools on the officials web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com).

The best starting point for the higher levels of the game would be to first attend a USTA Officials Department Chair Umpire Academy. This is a very intensive school for chair umpires which is taught by the USTA Director of Officials along with a handful of other experienced individuals in the officiating community. To express an interest in being considered for this school, you should contact your sectional chairman directly.

For those chair umpires who have had initial on-court experience either at the USTA Pro Circuit level or high level competition (i.e. ITF sectional level events) the next step would be to express interest in an ITF White Badge school with your sectional chairman or the USTA Officials Department. Successful completion of an ITF White Badge School signifies that the official is certified by the ITF as a “National Official”.

Additional on-court chair umpire experience at professional level events (i.e. USTA Pro Circuit events) are required for consideration to attend an ITF Bronze Badge school. Successful completion of and ITF Bronze Badge school signifies that the official is certified by the ITF as an "International Official". Truly exceptional chair umpires can progress to the ITF Silver and Gold Badge levels. To reach this level you must have demonstrated outstanding skills on-court and commit a considerable amount of your time to be available to work the highest level of professional events. You can contact the USTA Officials Department at [officiating@usta.com](mailto:officiating@usta.com) for more information about these advanced ITF certification levels.

## ON-COURT TRAINING

Anyone interested in becoming a USTA certified umpire and all less experienced certified USTA certified umpires are urged to attend one of the Line umpire or Roving umpire clinics. The Chair umpire and Trainer/Evaluator clinics are by invitation only.

The USTA will send a qualified National Trainer/Evaluator to each event to instruct and evaluate all participants.

If you are interested in more information on these clinics, please contact your Sectional Chairman or go to the umpire web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com).

## TYPES OF TENNIS OFFICIATING:

Tennis umpires may pursue officiating on the tennis court as a line umpire, rover or chair umpire. Tennis umpires may pursue officiating as a tennis tournament administrator (i.e. referee or chief umpire). Your officiating career may encompass one or more of the preceding positions. During your first year, you should strive to network yourself and officiate at as many tennis events as you possibly can.

Typical assignments for beginning officials may vary - a representative sampling is listed below:

*Roving Official:* As a roving umpire, you will be responsible for monitoring multiple courts. Roving umpires are responsible for setting up the courts (including placing singles sticks and measuring the net), maintaining proper warm-up and rest period times, resolving scoring disputes, controlling spectators and enforcing the rules of tennis (which includes calling foot-faults and administering the point-penalty system if needed).

*Solo Chair Umpire:* As a solo chair umpire, you are the "only" working umpire and therefore responsible for everything involved with the match. Prior to the player warm-up, the solo chair umpire informs the players what the chair umpire's responsibilities are to be during the match. The chair umpire responsibilities are as follows:

- The chair umpire will toss a coin and request the players to make their choice of side/serve/receive.
- The chair umpire then times the warm-up and makes a brief pre-match introduction for the benefit of both players and spectators.
- Solo Chair Umpires may make all line calls during the match or the players may call their own lines with the chair umpire overruling clear mistakes. (You will receive guidance on this from the Tournament Referee or Supervisor)
- During the match, the chair umpire calls the score and makes all other calls including, but not limited to foot faults, lets, not-ups and code violations.

*Line Umpire:* Line umpires are used at larger tournaments. As a line umpire you will call all shots directed at your assigned line. As a base line umpire you may also call foot faults. As a service line umpire you are responsible for calling the serve. As a long line umpire you are responsible for calling the sidelines. All line umpires are able to give an unsighted signal if he/she did not clearly see the ball to make a call. As a line umpire you can make corrections to your initial call and report code violations to the chair umpire.

*Referee:* As a referee, you will supervise all aspects of play (including conduct of players, coaches, parents, umpires, ball persons and administrative personnel.) The Referee, along with the tournament committee, makes the draw and substitutes players in the draw. The Referee ensures that courts are properly set-up, playable, assures that players are sent to their courts and that match scores are recorded. The Referee settles scoring disputes and enforces the point penalty system.

As your tennis officiating career advances you will want to begin to work events such as sectional tournaments, USTA run tournaments, ITA college matches and tournaments, or professional tournaments such as (USTA Pro Circuit tournaments, WTA tournaments, ATP tournaments and high level international events).

## **HOW TO BE ASSIGNED TO TENNIS TOURNAMENTS**

After you have attended the appropriate training courses and have been certified as a Provisional Umpire, you will want to begin making contact with the people in charge of assigning umpires to tournaments.

To obtain more information about working all types of tournaments in your section, you should contact your Sectional Chairman and/or District Chairman of Officials. This person will be able to provide you with all the information you need about events in your area as well as contact information for the people in charge of assigning umpires to these tournaments.

To obtain more information about working non-professional tournaments outside of your section, you should contact your Sectional Chairman of Officials. This person will be able to provide you with the contact information for the people in charge of assigning umpires to these tournaments.

To obtain more information about working professional level tournaments, you should refer to the umpire web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com). Under the heading marked "Professional Tennis Information" you will be able to find information on how to apply to work USTA Pro Circuit tournaments as well as ATP/WTA tournaments. You can always contact your Sectional Chairman of Officials as well as the USTA Director of Officials for information on these events.

## **UNIFORMS**

Umpires who are just starting out should check with their Sectional or District Chairman to find out what uniform they will need. Standard uniform for all umpires include having khaki-colored slacks and/or shorts, white socks and white sneakers.

Umpires with a Sectional Umpire level certification or higher are responsible for purchasing their own uniform. The basic approved USTA certified umpire uniform is a USTA official umpire's shirt, khaki pants or shorts, a khaki belt, USTA hat, plain white socks, and white sneakers. Information on placing clothing orders with the official USTA umpire clothing supplier can be obtained from your Sectional Chairman or the USTA umpire web page at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com).

The majority of USTA certified umpires are needed to officiate at Sectional tournaments, USTA tournaments and at the Collegiate level. We have less than 10% of the approximately 3,000 USTA certified umpires who regularly officiate at Professional Tournaments. USTA certified umpires are considered self-contractors. **It is up to the individual umpire to determine which path, or paths to pursue for their own personal satisfaction.**