Rules of Ping Pong

The official rules to Ping Pong, otherwise known as table tennis, are recognized internationally. Basic equipment includes paddles, a smooth netted table, and regulation Ping Pong balls.

Ping Pong rules say that the table must be level, with a short net across the center. For singles games, the white lines on the table have no meaning. In doubles, the serving player must serve diagonally from right to left. Paddles must have a rubber surface. No sandpaper surfaces are allowed.

A player wins a game at 11 points, though the winner must be ahead by two points. If the score of a game reaches 10-10, then the players take turns serving until one player gets two points ahead. A match could be made up of many games, such as 3 out of 5, or 4 out of 7. Players should switch sides for each new game of a match.

Flipping a coin determines which player serves first. A serve is made by tossing the ball in the air and hitting it on its way down so that it bounces once on the server's side of the net, then bounces over the net to land anywhere on the opponent's side. The first player serves two points, then the serve is traded off so the opponent serves for two points, and so on. If the serve touches the net and goes over to the other side, it is called a "let" serve, and the server re-serves the ball.

The ball may be hit back and forth many times. A point is scored by either player, for example when the opponent misses the ball, hits the ball twice in a row, hits the ball into the net (and doesn't go over), or hits the ball somewhere off the table.

A player can hold the paddle in either hand, switch between hands, or even use both hands at once. Ping Pong rules say, however, that players are not allowed to move or bump the table, or touch the table with any part of the body while the ball is in play. If the ball touches the ceiling, a wall, or a spectator's body, the ball is no longer in play, and someone has just won or lost a point.