

## Mind the foot - you could be at fault

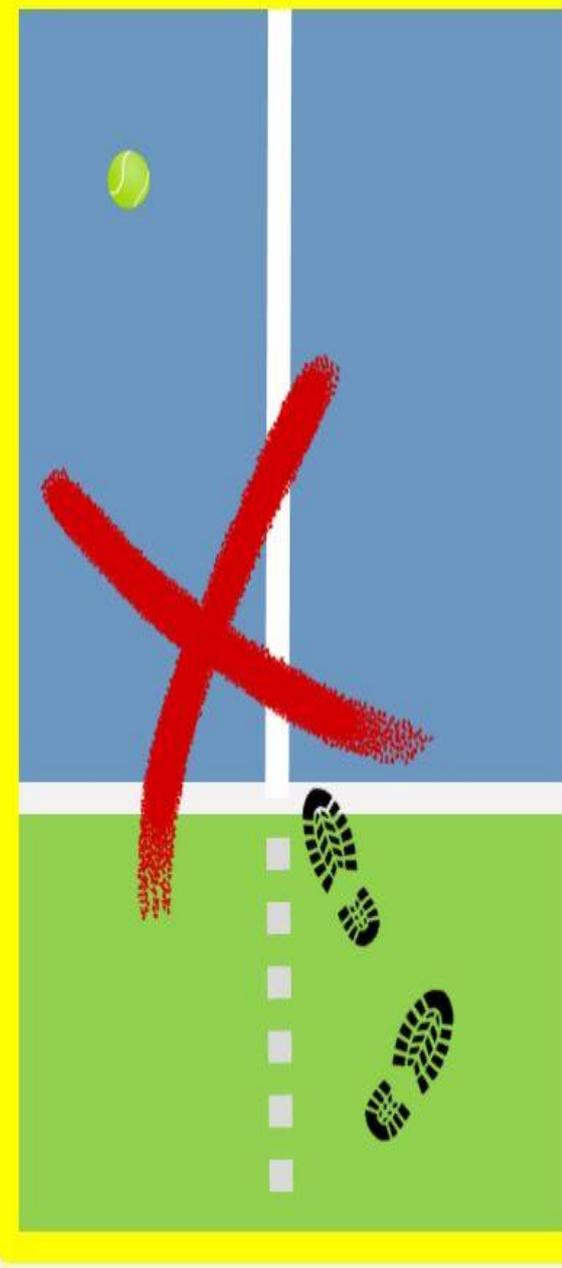


How many of us foot fault on the serve and get away with it? Does it matter? Yes, especially if you want to make the most of your serve.

Until 50 years ago, if you didn't have one foot on the ground when you served, it would have been a fault. These days, so long as you don't take a flying leap into your serve action, at least you don't have to worry about having your feet off the ground. So what is a foot fault? First, don't assume you necessarily know. British referee James Keothavong had to come down from his chair to [explain the finer points of the foot fault to Nick Kyrgios](#) at last year's Wimbledon, and of course numerous players - famously [Serena Williams in the 2009 US Open final against Kim Clijsters](#) - have been called up by officials for breaking the rule.

Essentially, you are not allowed to touch any of the

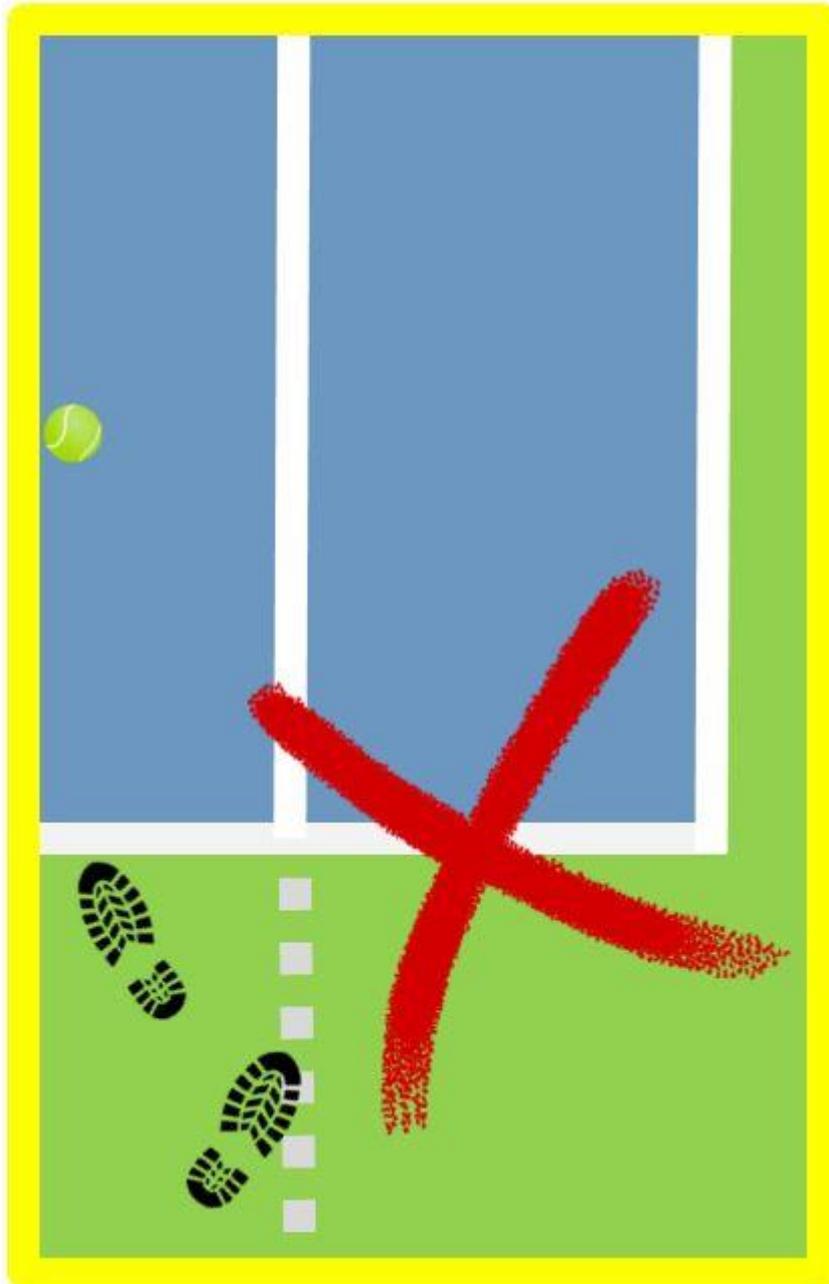
court or the lines with your foot before your racket hits the ball. This includes the centre line (and its invisible extension outside the court).

 A diagram of a tennis court showing a serve to the deuce court. A yellow tennis ball is in the air. A large green checkmark is overlaid on the court. The lead foot and trailing foot are positioned entirely within the deuce court, not touching the center line. The court is divided into blue (backcourt) and green (frontcourt) areas by a white center line. A dashed white line indicates the center line's extension.	 A diagram of a tennis court showing a serve to the deuce court. A yellow tennis ball is in the air. A large red 'X' is overlaid on the court. The lead foot is touching the center line, which is a fault. The court is divided into blue (backcourt) and green (frontcourt) areas by a white center line. A dashed white line indicates the center line's extension.
<p>SERVING TO THE DEUCE COURT: NEITHER LEAD FOOT NOR TRAILING FOOT IS TOUCHING THE LINE</p>	<p>SERVING TO THE DEUCE COURT: LEAD FOOT IS TOUCHING THE LINE - <b>FAULT</b></p>



SERVING TO THE DEUCE COURT: TRAILING FOOT IS TOUCHING THE INVISIBLE EXTENSION OF THE CENTRE LINE - **FAULT**

Should you wish to stand at the sides of the court to begin your serve, you cannot touch the sidelines or the court area between the tramlines (in doubles you can stand in the tramlines, but you can't touch the outside line or any of the court beyond it):



SERVING OUT WIDE IN SINGLES TO THE  
DEUCE COURT:  
TRAILING FOOT IS TOUCHING THE  
EXTENSION OF THE SIDELINE - **FAULT**

How to point out the error?

In a Local Tennis League match, with no referee, who calls a foot fault? In simple terms, if it is a singles match, and you think your opponent is repeatedly and flagrantly

foot-faulting, the limit of what you can expect to do is to politely point out the error (you cannot claim a point!). With luck, your opponent will realise and correct the problem. If the error continues, you will have to live with it - the chances are that your opponent won't gain an actual advantage from their indisciplined play.

## If so little can be done, why bother with the rule?

Apart of course from the problem that foot-faulting is against the rules, serving correctly is all about tennis mindfulness. Just as you should always know where you are serving to, so you should always make the effort to serve correctly and understand where you are serving from. For some pros, this can involve elaborate serving rituals, including multi-bouncing of the ball prior to the service. But for all of us, it means knowing where your feet are and not overstepping the mark.