

USTA

SOUTH CAROLINA

USTA South Carolina Officials Development Pathway

A structured journey to help newly certified officials grow with confidence, competence, and community.

What Is the Goal?

To develop well-rounded, knowledgeable, and dependable tennis officials who are confident in their role, enjoy officiating, and contribute to fair and professional tournament experiences across South Carolina.

Why Have a Pathway?

- Provides clear expectations for growth
 - Provide guidance to new officials to prepare them for a successful journey
 - Encourages ongoing learning, retention, and mentorship
 - Improve consistency and quality
 - Help assignors and tournament staff understand where officials are in their development
 - Build professionalism
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Core Officiating Disciplines

- **Roving Umpire** (recommended 1–2 years before specializing)
 - **Chair Umpire**
 - **Referee**
 - **Line Umpire** (National Pathway – optional for most local officials)
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Getting Started: Immediate Tasks After Certification

- **Attend an In-Person Roving Workshop** within 2 months of certification
 - **Attend Local Association or Section Training** (you don't know what you don't know!)
 - **Work 4–6 Lower-Level Events** (Level 7 or Level 6 tournaments)
 - **Work 2–3 Mid-Level Events** (Level 5 or Level 4)
 - **Seek Feedback** from Referees and experienced officials after each event
 - **Find a Mentor** to guide you, answer questions, and support your growth
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Stage 1: Roving Umpire (USTA Junior Circuit & Local Events)

Skills to Build Before Advancing:

- Proper **court setup**
- **Pre-match responsibilities:** coin toss, introductions, reviewing match details
- **Ball checks** and **placement of singles sticks**
- Managing **multiple courts simultaneously**
- Working with other officials
- Know when to contact the **referee**
- Understanding and applying **rules** accurately
- Understanding and applying the **PPS** correctly (**CORN technique**)
- Using proper **verbiage and phrasing** (from the *Techniques & Procedures* manual)
- Observing and **shadowing experienced officials**
- Asking for **constructive feedback**
- Developing **conflict resolution** skills
- Communicating effectively with **young players** using calm tone and positive presence

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- Facilitating matches (guiding play, not controlling it)
 - Understanding each type of timeout used (medical, bleeding, equipment)
 - Handling **scoring disputes** efficiently and fairly (USTA or ITF procedure)
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● Stage 2: Chair Umpire & ITA Roving (Years 2–3)

- **Attend an In-Person Chair Workshop within 2 years of certification**

Skills to Build:

- Solid grasp of **rules and procedures**
- Proficient use of **match verbiage**
- Learning to **see the ball** accurately for line calls
- How to use and manage a **scorecard**
- Always look at the **point loser**
- Navigating **coach interactions** appropriately
- Using **technology**: ELC, IOC, scoring devices
- Understanding **code violations** and knowing when and how to intervene
- Working with a team: pre-match coordination, timing, and assignments
- Handling **medical timeouts, bathroom breaks, and scoring disputes**

Opportunities:

- **Roving**: USTA Juniors, UTR, Intennse, ITA (NAIA, DIII, DII)
 - **Chairing**: USTA Juniors, UTR events, some collegiate matches (D1)
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● Stage 3: Referee (Years 3–4)

For officials ready to lead tournaments and uphold fairness from behind the scenes.

Prerequisites:

Before applying to become a certified Referee, you should:

- Have **2–3 years of experience** as a Roving and/or Chair Umpire
- Be confident managing match flow and resolving on-court issues
- Understand the structure of USTA tournaments, including **draw formats, match formats, and scheduling**
- Demonstrated **professionalism, reliability, and leadership** at events

Training & Certification:

- Complete the **USTA Referee Training Course** in the Officiating Development Hub
- Pass the required **Referee Exam** at the end of the training course
- Attend an **In-Person Referee Workshop**
- Attend any **section- or district-level referee workshops or trainings**
- Shadow experienced referees and **request evaluation or endorsement** from your Section or local assignor
- Familiarize yourself with **Serve Tennis** and tournament management platforms

Core Responsibilities:

As a Referee, you become the **lead rules authority** at the tournament and help ensure that matches run smoothly and fairly.

Rule Oversight:

- Interpret and apply **USTA Friend at Court** rules and *Regulations*
- Make **final decisions** on player disputes, code violations, defaults, and scoring questions
- Clarify **format issues** (e.g., 10-point tiebreaks, short sets, ad/no-ad scoring)

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Scheduling & Match Flow:

- Create and adjust **daily match schedules**
- Manage **court assignments**, player check-ins, and warm-up timing
- Ensure timely **start of play** and minimize delays

Draw & Format Management:

- Oversee **draws**, ensuring correct placement, seeding, and progression
- Confirm that consolation, round robin, and feed-in draws are run properly
- Collaborate with the Tournament Director on **withdrawals, walkovers, and retirements**

Player, Parent & Coach Communication:

- Communicate calmly and clearly with **players and parents**
- Explain rules and procedures when needed
- Use a **neutral and composed tone** in all interactions

Working with Officials:

- Assign courts to Roving or Chair Umpires
- Serve as the point of contact for **official-related issues** during the event
- Provide **feedback and mentorship** to less experienced officials
- Step in as a Roving Umpire or Chair if necessary

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Skills You Should Develop:

- Strong **organization and time management**
 - **Leadership** in a calm, solution-oriented style
 - Ability to think on your feet and handle **unexpected issues**
 - Familiarity with **USTA Tournament Formats**, Friend at Court, and the USTA Junior Tournament Structure
 - Competence with **Serve Tennis**, and possibly other tournament software (e.g., TennisLink or Match Tennis App)
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Referee Opportunities:

Once certified, you can serve as a Referee at:

- USTA Junior Circuit and USTA-sanctioned Junior tournaments (Levels 7–3)
 - Adult Open, NTRP and Age tournaments
 - Team Events (e.g., JTT, USTA League Championships, Ozaki Cup)
 - Local UTR events and community tournaments
 - Collegiate events (Referee opportunities may be limited depending on the level)
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Pathway from Here:

After successful experience as a Referee, officials can:

- Become a **Chief Umpire** for larger, multi-official events
- Take on **trainer/evaluator roles** for new officials
- Be considered for **Sectional or National-level appointments**
- Continue building your resume for Pro Circuit, ITA, or national team events