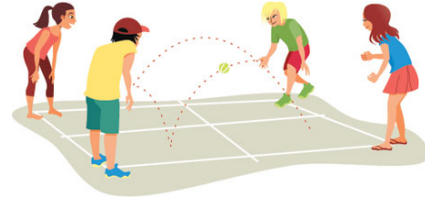


Heath School – Four Square Rules

Based on "Official Rules of Four Square" by Squarefour.org



The Object

The object of the game of four square is to eliminate players in higher squares so that you can advance to the highest square yourself. Four square is played with a rubber playground ball on a square court with four players, each occupying a quarter of the court. The ball is bounced between players in squares until someone makes an error and is eliminated. Eliminated players leave the court, all players advance to fill the empty squares, and a new player joins at the lowest ranked square.

The Ball

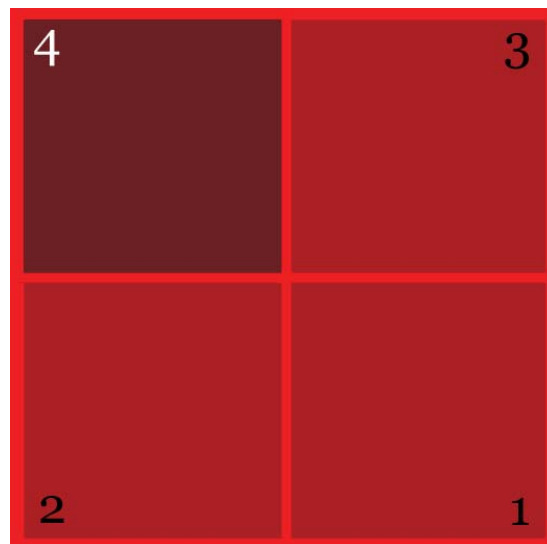
During play, **players may only hit the ball with their hands.** We describe the "hands" as any area between the player's wrists and her fingertips, including the backs of her hands. The ball may be hit with open or closed fists in the same manner as official volleyball.

Players may not catch, carry or hold the ball at any time during play. Spinning the ball is allowed as long as the hit that produces the spin is not a carry or other illegal hit. We get [a lot of questions](#) about spins. In all cases, players who strike the ball incorrectly are eliminated.

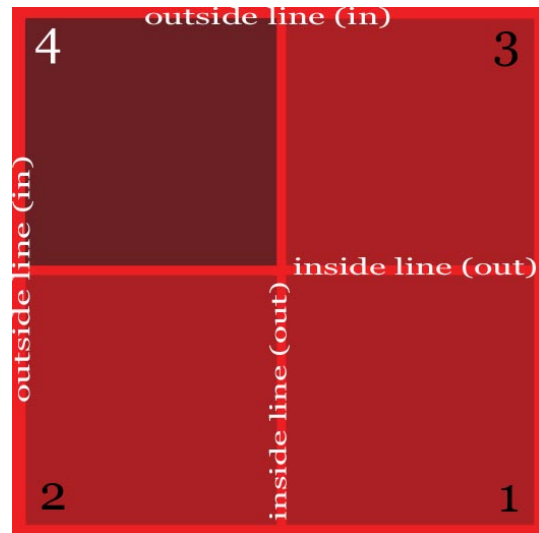
The Court

Four Square is played on an 16x16' court divided into four smaller 8x8' squares that meet in the center. Squares are ranked from highest to lowest, 1 through 4.

There are two sets of lines on the court. "Outside lines" are the outermost edges of the entire court, while "inside lines" refer to the line dividing individual squares of the court that cross in the center. All lines on the court are 1 inch wide.



- **Outside lines are in-bounds.** If a player bounces the ball onto any outside line, it is still in play. However, if the ball bounces outside of the outside line, it is out of bounds and the player that last hit it is eliminated.
- **Inside lines are out-of-bounds.** If a player hits a ball onto any inside line then that player is out. This applies to ALL inside lines, not just the lines that border her square. If a ball touches an inside line, the player that hit it last is eliminated.



Players are not required to stay in their portion of the court. They may stand, walk or run anywhere on the court, though it is best to stay in a position to protect your own square.

Serving the Ball

The ball is always served from the highest ranked square to the lowest square. Squares one and four are positioned diagonally across the court. **The server must drop the ball and serve from the bounce. The ball must be allowed to bounce once in the receiving square**, then the receiving player must hit the ball into another square of his or her choice. After the receiver touches the ball, the ball is in play.

Serves are meant to place the ball fairly into play. **Because the server must serve the ball the same way each time, it is the receiving player who controls the first play of the game.**

Faults

The receiver of the serve is allowed only one mistake on each round, we call this a fault. If the receiver of the serve hits the ball incorrectly, or fails to hit the ball inbounds, then the receiver is allowed to take a second serve. There is only one fault allowed per player per round.

We refer to a fault as "one bad", as in one bad return. However, if a player faults the second time then we call it "two bad". In other words, that is too bad for you.

Normal Game Play and Possession

Each time the ball bounces in a square, the owner of that square must hit the ball into another square. No exceptions.

Once the ball touches down in a square, ONLY the owner of the square can touch the ball next. If she does not, then she is out. If she hits it poorly or out of bounds, she is out. If another player hits the ball before she does, at any time, the other player is out.

Once that player hits the ball once then any other player may hit it next. This means it is not necessary to let the ball bounce again before another player hits it. The next player to touch the ball is subject to all the normal rules.

Elimination

Each time a player is eliminated, that player leaves the court and all players advance to the next higher numbered square. The lowest ranked square is then filled with a new player. All eliminated players leave the court and wait for their next turn to join in the lowest square.

These situations represent all the ways in which a player may be eliminated from the court. Players are eliminated for:

- Failing to hit the ball into another square
- Allowing the ball to bounce more than once in their own square
- Hitting the ball out of bounds or onto an inside line
- Hitting the ball incorrectly, such as holding, catching or carrying
- Hitting the ball with a part of the body that are not hands
- Hitting the ball out of turn (poaching)
- Violating any number of local rules that are made up on the playground

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.

Customized Rules

Advancing to 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.

When in four square, the player may invoke special rules which become part of the game for that one round. After each round, she must call the rules again or it is assumed that there are no special rules required.

The following are the special rules allowed:

- **Underhand:** This means that all hits are with an open hand, palm(s) up. 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.
- **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.
- **Black Jack:** If a player catches the ball cleanly 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. If this is played with Double Taps, you must still catch the ball on the first hit.

Rules adapted from <http://www.squarefour.org/rules>