

# **How to Play in FSA Tournaments**

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As the novice player advances in skill, the desire to test their playing ability against other players will naturally arise. Tournaments are an opportunity to test their skills in competition, as well as to meet and learn from other players. Tournament participation requires special knowledge and preparation, but a new player shouldn't hesitate to join in. All players, regardless of skill and experience, are welcome at tournaments.

Some Florida Shuffleboard Association (FSA) tournaments are completed in one day, some take two days, and some can carry over to three days when a large field of players requires it. You should reserve the scheduled tournament dates, although elimination may end your participation earlier. In many tournaments you can be eliminated after just two matches. Look for the dates of the event on the tournament schedule to see how many days it may run.

## **Tournament Schedules**

In Florida, there are two types of schedules: District and State.

The FSA publishes two State tournament schedules each season: one for Statewide Amateur tournaments and one for Statewide Open Tournaments (often referred to as Pro Tournaments). Only Amateur players are eligible to play in Statewide Amateur Tournaments. Any player of any status can play in Statewide Open Tournaments.

Florida is divided into seven FSA Districts. Each District publishes its own tournament schedule. The District schedule lists District tournaments, which are restricted to players within that District, as well as those Statewide tournaments that are hosted by one of the clubs within the District. Some Districts publish two schedules, one for their Amateur tournaments and one for their Open tournaments. Use the schedules to select your tournament by date, location and format. The location for each tournament is listed under Host Club. Be sure to check for current club location and schedule changes before traveling to the tournament. The schedules describe the format for each tournament listed:

### **Format Designations:**

- 75 pts – matches are best-of-three games to 75 points.
- 75 pts or xx frames (or rounds) – matches are best-of-three games to 75 points or xx number of frames (or rounds), whichever comes first. (frame = 1 end; round = both ends)
- X/X – each match consists of one frame game in X/X format (X number of frames then switch colors for the next X number of frames).
- 75 pts, 3<sup>rd</sup> game X/X – matches are best-of-three games; first two games to 75 points, third game X/X format.
- Doubles (Dbls) – doubles matches. You stay with the same partner the whole tournament.
- Draw Doubles – a random draw before tournament for doubles partner assignments. You stay with the same partner the whole tournament.
- Mingle-Singles; Modified – each match consists of one frame game.. Random draw each game for court and color assignment, and partner assignment if played as doubles. Can be singles or doubles.
- Singles (Sgls) – singles matches.

### Skill-Level Designations:

- Amateur (Am) – only Amateurs.
- Open – Amateurs and Pros.
- No 2 Pros – doubles for Amateurs and Pros, but partners cannot both be Pros.
- Pro – meant for Pro players, but some Districts may allow Amateurs to play as well.

### Gender Designations:

- Any – doubles partners can be any combination of genders.
- M/L; Men/Ladies – two separate Divisions, one for male players and one for female players. If doubles, your partner must be of the same gender.
- Mixed – doubles partners must be one male player and one female player.

### **Tournament Eligibility**

All players from anywhere are eligible to play in FSA tournaments. A membership in any FSA-affiliated club is required. Many communities, such as Mobile Home Parks, are already affiliated clubs, and it is easy for others to obtain an affiliate membership, allowing all community residents to be eligible for tournaments. There are also independent public clubs that are FSA affiliated, offering open membership to anyone resident in the municipality, county, state or from anywhere. Players who do not reside in Florida or in one of the affiliated-club communities need only to be a member of one of the affiliated public clubs to be eligible for FSA tournaments. If you are not already a member of an affiliated club, you can join on-site at tournament registration.

Although you can belong to more than one affiliated club, you must choose only one as your “home club”. Each affiliated club belongs to the FSA District where it is located. As a tournament player, you represent the District of your home club and are eligible for District tournaments only within that District. You are also eligible to play any Statewide tournament anywhere in Florida. You can opt to change your home club and District at any time with notification to the FSA, District and clubs.

### **Playing Your First FSA Tournament**

(Note: Mingle Singles tournaments are described in a separate section.)

The first time you play in an FSA tournament you automatically become a lifetime member of the FSA. At or after the tournament, you will be assigned a lifetime FSA membership number, which you will use each time you register for an FSA tournament.

Arrive at the tournament host club at least 15 minutes before the start time (usually 9:00am) to register. Most tournaments are doubles events, so you need a partner. Check the tournament schedule to see if the tournament is listed as doubles. You should find a partner for the tournament beforehand, or you can arrive without one to look for another player who needs one. You cannot register for a doubles tournament until you have a partner with you. Some tournaments are draw doubles, in which case every player registers individually, and then partners are assigned by random draw. There are online registries to help you find a partner (try [Partner Connect](https://courtshuffleboard.com/find-a-partner/) - <https://courtshuffleboard.com/find-a-partner/>).

Once you have paid the entry fee (\$10 per player for Statewide; up to \$10 per player for District), you will be given a registration disclaimer to fill out and sign. Hold onto your registration form until the draw begins. Shortly before the tournament start, announcements will be made including the format for the tournament. Once in a while the format will differ from the published schedule, so listen to the announcement. That will also be your chance to ask any questions you may have.

Shortly after announcements, you will draw a card for your line number and first court assignment (for doubles, only one player per team draws a card). Hand in your registration sheet to the registrar as you draw your card. The registrar will record your line number, which is the line where your name will appear on the tournament chart. Charts start with line number one at the top and increment from the top to the bottom. After the draw, you proceed directly to your court for your first match. The player/team with the lesser line number starts the match on yellow. In doubles, first the team on yellow decides which end each player will take, and the team on black can then choose their seating.

Depending on the number of entrants in the tournament, some players/teams may receive a “Bye”, which automatically advances them to the second round of play on the tournament chart. When there is an odd number of players/teams entered in the tournament, one of the draw cards will say “Bye” instead of a court number. If you draw this card, you automatically advance to the second round of play but must wait for the outcome of one of the first-round matches to play the winner. When there are more players/teams entered in the tournament than can play at the same time on all available courts, one or more of the draw cards will say “No Court”, and the players/teams that draw such cards must wait until a court becomes available for their first match court assignment. In both cases, the waiting players listen for their first court assignment to be announced by the Tournament Director (TD).

There can also be “Sub-Brackets” on a chart instead of Byes. This adds a preliminary Sub-Bracket round for some players/teams before Round One on the chart, with the line numbers in the Sub-Bracket split into A and B, e.g. Line 1 becomes Line 1A and Line 1B for two opponent players/teams. It’s really just a way to do byes without calling them byes – that is, every player/team that starts in Round One got a bye from the Sub-Bracket round. When there is an odd number of tournament entrants for a tournament that uses Sub-Brackets, one of the draw cards will say “Bye” or “No Court”, and the player/team that draws it must wait for the outcome of one of the Sub-Bracket matches to play the winner.

### **Tournament Progression**

The outcome of the first match played determines the Division for advancement of the players: the winners of the first match advance in the Main Division, the losers advance in the Consolation Division. Each Division continues as a separate pool of players competing for a separate prize pool. After the first round of play, players/teams are eliminated from the tournament when they lose a match until reaching the Semi-Finals. No player/team is eliminated without playing at least two matches.

After each match is completed, the winning player/team turns in the match scorecard to the TD. When their next opponents are available, the TD will assign and announce a court for the players to proceed with their next match. One of the players picks up the new match scorecard to bring to the court. As always, the player/team with the lesser line number starts the match on yellow.

Your lunch break usually follows your first match, unless the tournament format or speed of match completion allows a second match to be called before lunch time. You are given 20 minutes for a lunch break, but it might run longer if you are waiting on your opponents to finish their first match or their 20-minute lunch.

As the tournament progresses, there may be times you are required to wait for your next match. Sometimes other players are a round behind and need to catch up before you are matched for play. Sometimes a match goes longer than others, adding to the wait time between matches. Sometimes the byes cause a mismatch in progress, adding wait time for some players. Weather issues can also cause game delays. The TD does what he can to keep the tournament progressing, but very rarely can keep everyone playing at all times. The TD will also look for opportunities to send players home early to return to play the next day rather than wait at the courts for a

next match that is unlikely to start in time before play ends for the day. The TD is not allowed to call the start of a match after 4:00pm unless all the match players agree to it.

Matches usually run two to three hours each, although sometimes they can run longer. You are allowed to leave the court for ten minutes between games of a match. Bring a bottle of water (with electrolytes is best) or sports drink to the court to stay hydrated during the game, and refill it as needed between games. You may leave the court for a short bathroom visit during a game with permission (of the other players or TD).

The tournament chart is put on display as soon as it is prepared by the TD, shortly after the first round of play begins. You can examine the chart at any time to see the progress of the players in the tournament, and who you may face in the next match. You can ask for help reading the chart from the TD or another player. The TD will keep the chart updated as quickly as possible throughout the tournament.

When matches spill over to a second or third day, the TD will announce when players can go home at the end of the day and what time to return to resume play the next day (9:00am or 8:30am). Players must finish any ongoing match before leaving for the day. Court assignments will be announced for next matches at the start time the next morning.

### **Last Rounds of Play**

The final eight players/teams remaining in the tournament, four in the Main Division and four in the Consolation Division, will compete in their Division Semi-Finals and Finals. The two winning players/teams of the Semi-Finals compete in the Finals for first and second place in their Division; the two losing players/teams of the Semi-Finals compete in the Finals for third and fourth place in their Division. Each of the eight finalists is awarded a portion of the prize pool, divided according to ranking, first through fourth in the Main and first through fourth in Consolation.

### **Mingle Singles**

Mingle Singles tournaments have a much different format that doesn't use line numbers, scorecards or charts. Instead, for each game you will draw for your court, head (H) or foot (F), and color assignment, usually by drawing one chip from a bucket of chips that each have a court designation: number, end and color. For example, "4FY" on a chip means court number 4, foot, yellow. The player proceeds to the court assignment drawn for the game. If the tournament is played as doubles, the player who drew the same court number and color is your partner for that single game.

At the end of the game, only the winning players proceed to the tournament table to record their win on a scoresheet. Each player will have their name on a row of the scoresheet. Record your court number and your score for a game you won on the row with your name under the column for that game of the tournament.

At the end of all games of the tournament, the TD will total the number of games won and total of the recorded winning scores for each player. The tournament winners are determined first by total number of games won, followed by scores total. For example, if the tournament is paying the eight top players, and there were three players who won all six games and nine players who won five of the six games, the three players who won all six games would take the top three spots in order of highest scores total to lowest. The five players who had the highest scores total out of the eight who won five of the six games would take the remaining five spots, in order from highest scores total to lowest. Since points scored in games won count towards tournament score totals, it is important to score extra points where you can, even when your lead already assures the game win.

## **Tournament Penalties**

FSA tournaments follow a strict set of rules, including points penalties (5-off or 10-off) for rules violations. Only the TD or designee can impose penalties. Players must call the TD if they wish a penalty or warning imposed for rules violations. You will find that tournament players often don't call for a penalty, favoring instead a friendly caution to the opponent, except for violations that change the outcome of a frame (e.g. moving a live disc, shooting twice in a row, etc.). The list below is a quick synopsis of most of the rules violations subject to penalty – see the official FSA rules for details and a comprehensive list.

- Shooting opponent's disc or from opponent's side.
- Cue disc touching a line of the starting area when shot.
- Stepping or touching on or over the baseline when shooting.
- Standing or stepping on an adjoining court.
- Not remaining seated during play at the other end.
- Leaving the court during a game without permission.
- Standing in the way of or interfering with the opponent's play.
- Coaching your partner (remarks or motions).
- Shooting before your opponent's disc stops.
- Intentional stalling.
- Cue slipping from the hand and touching a live disc, or interfering with play on another court.
- Hesitation shots (pausing cue and disc in motion) or hook shots (shots must be delivered in a straight line).
- Shooting two discs in a row.
- Shot disc rebounds and touches a live disc, or interferes with a shot on another court.
- Hard shooting (which poses a danger to other players or spectators).
- Unauthorized use of a cell phone.
- Moving a disputed disc before inspection.
- Gathering live discs before inspection of a disputed disc at the end of a frame.

## **Court Equipment**

The host club provides all of the equipment needed for the tournament. Although cue sticks are readily available, it is recommended to purchase your own tournament-quality cue. You will gain better control of your shooting by using the same cue from tournament to tournament.

You will find that the discs have been waxed before the first match of the day. If you find otherwise, bring the discs to the tournament booth to request waxing. You may also request waxing of the discs of your color between games, within reasonable limits. You are not allowed to wax your own discs. The discs are supposed to be waxed after each match, although this may not always occur, depending on the availability of volunteer personnel.

If the courts are dressed with sprinkled beads, sweeping and re-beading can be requested between games. All players on the court must agree to it before the request is made to the TD. If any player objects, the TD can be asked to determine whether or not fresh beads are needed. Players are not allowed to re-bead the courts themselves.

## **Personal Supplies**

You will want to bring at least a minimum of personal supplies with you to the tournament. Here is a short list of essentials:

- Brimmed Hat or Cap
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent
- Water Bottle
- Electrolytes or Sports Drink
- Lunch
- Snacks
- Sport Towel
- Tissues
- Adhesive Bandage
- Spare Clothing

## **Tournament Points and Awards**

There are three player status levels in Florida: District Amateur, State Amateur, and Pro. At your first tournament, you start as a District Amateur (or State Amateur if you have Expert or Pro status in another state). To advance in status you need to earn Amateur Move-Up Points.

Some District tournaments and all Statewide tournaments award Move-Up Points, one point for placing first through fourth in the Main and half a point for first through third in Consolation. Each District determines which District tournaments award the points.

To advance from District Amateur to State Amateur, a player must earn 5 or more Move-Up Points within a 3-season period. To advance from State Amateur to Pro, a player must earn an additional 5 or more Move-Up Points within a new 3-season period. All advancements in status take effect the following October 1st.

Pro players earn FSA Roll of Champions (ROC) Points by placing in FSA State Open tournaments: 5-4-3-2 for the top four spots in the Main bracket of each division; 2-1-1 for the top three spots in the Consolation bracket. The FSA “Red Line” State Opens (appear in red ink on the printed schedule, usually two a year) award more ROC Points than the other tournaments to those who place: 8-6-5-3 in the Main (but reverts to 5-4-3-2 if there are fewer than 16 entrants); 2-1-1 in Consolation.

The eight Pro Men and the eight Pro Women who are the top ROC Points earners in their division during one season qualify to play in the annual FSA Masters tournament. The Pro players in ninth place in their division are Alternates for the FSA Masters tournament. The FSA Masters tournament awards cash prizes: 1st Place: \$120.00; 2nd Place: \$105.00; 3rd Place: \$90.00; 4th Place: \$85.00; 5th Place: \$75.00; 6th Place: \$70.00; 7th Place: \$65.00; 8th Place: \$55.00; Alternate \$35.00.

Earning 200 FSA ROC Points as a Pro during your lifetime qualifies you for the FSA Hall of Fame. Pro players that reach 1,000 ROC Points are awarded a special jacket to mark this milestone.

Every season there is also a race for the most FSA District Masters (DM) Points. Each FSA District (Northern, West Coast, Central, Central East Coast, Southwest Coast, Southern and Southeast Coast) has special awards for their top DM Points earners, and some Districts run a playoff tournament for the top earners each year. Districts may also have a District Hall of Fame for players who achieve DM Points milestones.

Placing in any FSA State tournament qualifies a player for the annual Tournament of Champions (TOC). Amateur players who place first in the Main bracket are qualified for the next three Amateur TOC tournaments; Pro players who place first in the Main bracket of any FSA Open are qualified for the Pro TOC for life. The other Amateur and Pro winners qualify for their respective TOC tournaments as follows: 2nd through 4th in Main qualify for the next two TOC; 1st through 4th in Consolation qualify for the next TOC. The first-place winners of the TOC in each division have their names added to their respective division trophy. Lists of the players who are currently qualified to play the annual TOC or Amateur TOC are maintained by the FSA and available on the FSA website: [http://www.fsa-shuffleboard.org/Searches/search\\_tables.htm](http://www.fsa-shuffleboard.org/Searches/search_tables.htm) .

### **Your Play**

Although tournament competition is for prizes and prestige, don't be overly concerned with your outcome. You are there for the fun and experience. Take the opportunity to learn from the wide variety of styles and strategy you encounter. While your shots might not be as accurate as you would like, always strive to make the best strategy choice for each situation you face. Don't shy away from the correct choice simply because you are afraid you will miss the shot. Over time, as you practice and play more, your shooting skills will catch up to your strategy skills. The day will come when novice players are watching your play to learn from the best!