



Grading List Information Sheet

Summary: A number of changes affecting the way the grading list operates will be brought in from January 2014. These changes were recommended in 2012 by the Grading List Advisory Group, and received broad approval from Districts following consultation. Further work has been done by the Grading List Advisory Group to refine them. The main features of the changes are:

1. A combined grading list;
2. Automatic loss of grading points for inactivity;
3. Change to F grade to sit parallel to J grades;
4. Change to the size and number of J grades; and
5. Change to the entry point of B2.

Full detail is provided throughout the remainder of this document, with Frequently Asked Questions at the end.

1. Combined Grading List

- Currently there are separate grading lists for men and women. Women wanting to play in men's competitions must gain permission to have a men's grading code from their District, and each District has differing criteria and rules.
- Based on feedback Squash New Zealand has received, many women would like a men's grading code but are unable to get one. This means that many women are unable to enter competitions (tournaments, interclub etc) that they want to. We have heard that frustration with this situation has caused some women to leave the sport.
- A combined grading list will resolve this issue. By creating a combined grading list, every graded player will have grading points that are compatible with *any other* squash player in the country (rather than only those of their gender). Points will be able to be adjusted after *any* match.
- Men and women will still have their own separate grades, as it is important to recognise the best players of both sexes. For example, a man with 2250 points might be C2, whilst a woman with 2250 points might be B2. However, the two players could play each other and have points adjusted in a simple manner (based on their points, not their grades). We are still calculating the precise transition to the combined grading list, so finer details are yet to be finalised.
- In the transition to the combined grading list, some players' grades will unavoidably change. As an example players currently at the bottom of D2 may find themselves at the top of E1. Every effort will be made to minimise these sorts of changes; however some changes will be unavoidable in transitioning to a combined grading list that is sustainable in the long term. In time 'new' grades will become the norm and comparisons with the 'old' grades will stop.
- Men's grading bands will be different to women's ones. For women, some of the traditional 300 point grading bands may change to (for example) 200 points.

- Men and women will not necessarily have to play each other in mixed competition. While Districts and clubs may offer mixed divisions in interclub and tournaments, it is recommended by Squash NZ that separate men's and women's competitions are still maintained. The goal of the combined grading list is to *create flexibility for everyone*.
- We aim to start the combined grading list in January 2014.

EXAMPLE:

Take the example of these six players:

Mark	C1	2500	Karina	B1	2450
Bill	E1	1400	Philippa	B1	2500
Shea	E1	1450	Rachael	D1	1450

For this example, 2401–2700 is a men's C1 and a women's B1. Karina has 2450 points: this makes her a B1 woman, and she has the same number of points as a C1 man. Mark has 2500 points, and is therefore a C1 man. If Karina beat Mark, she would win the same amount of points as she would for beating Philippa, who has 2500 points, and is therefore a B1 woman.

Bill has 1400 points, and is therefore an E1 man. Under the combined grading list, he could be beaten by Rachael (1450 points, D1 woman), and lose the same number of points as he would lose to Shea (1450 points, E1 man).

2. Automatic Loss of Grading Points for Inactivity

- An automatic loss of grading points for inactivity will be introduced from January 2014.
- After the first 12 months of player inactivity (where no results are sent to the grading list), 50 grading points will be automatically deducted from the player (the initial period of 12 months will begin **from January 2014**).
- For every additional month of inactivity, a further 10 points will be deducted.
- Players can be removed from the grading list at any time to avoid points deduction.

3. Change to F grade to sit Parallel to J Grades

- At present, when juniors have moved through the J grades they graduate to F grade.
- Squash NZ has received a lot of negative feedback from clubs about adult beginners who lose large amounts of grading points if they lose matches to J Graders (who are often of similar ability to F graders, but are slowly moving up the grading list).
- From January 2014, F grade will sit alongside the J Grades. Junior beginner players will start in the J grades, and adult beginners will start in F grade, and both will meet in E2 (once they've won enough matches).
- An adult in F grade might have the same amount of points as a junior in J1, or any of the other J grades. If the two players meet in competition play (tournaments or interclub), points will be adjusted as usual.
- As at present, as soon as a player reaches the threshold for E2 (the threshold will be different for men and women), he/she will go up (regardless of age).

- This is designed to 'protect' beginner players, and allow them to derive enjoyment while finding their feet in the sport.

4. Change to Size and Number of J Grades

- From January there will be fewer J grades, of larger size. The J grades will consist of J1-J4, and will for the most part be 200 point grades.
- This has been done to simplify the J grades and provide a more stable base for beginner junior players to access even competition, improve their squash, and advance through the grades.
- Squash NZ has received feedback that 100 point grading bands are too narrow. Wider bands will encompass a larger number of players than at present and facilitate the organisation of even competition matches. With the safety nets that prevent players from dropping back a grade it makes for a more meaningful achievement when they move to the next grade, and ensures they are ready for elevation.
- As with the rest of the combined grading list, boys will be able to play girls simply and easily. The common points scale will facilitate the seeding of mixed divisions, and help event organisers ensure evenly matched contests.
- As at present, beginner juniors do not necessarily need to be put on the grading list at J4: junior convenors should assess ability based on grading games.

5. Change to Entry Point of B2

- Since 2008, the entry point to B2 has been 2801 points, with C1 a 400 point grade (from 2401-2800). Prior to 2008 the entry point was 2701 points, and C1 was a 300 point grade (2401-2700).
- From January 2014 the entry point to B2 *for men* will revert to 2701 points. This is to ease the bottleneck of C1 graded players around the country (currently more than 15% of all graded players) and achieve a more even distribution of graded players.
- The exact C1 grading band for women will be decided in the near future, along with the other finer details of the combined grading list detailed in '1.' above. However it, too, is likely to be a 300 point grade.
- Points adjustments in C1 will remain at the '20/20' bracket for players graded within 100 points of each other.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COMBINED GRADING LIST:

Q: How will the Combined Grading List be set up?

A: Women and men will be on the same grading list and necessary adjustments will be made to women's points and grading bands.

Q: I am a woman but do not want to play competitive matches against men, will I still be able to play squash?

A: Yes. The aim of the combined grading list is to provide flexibility to all players to access the competition they want to. Squash NZ recommends that Districts and Clubs continue to offer men's and women's competitions, along with the introduction of mixed competitions.

Q: Will my grading points change?

A: Women with men's grading codes will automatically be transferred to the combined grading list using their current men's grading points. Grading points of women currently without a men's grading code will change. We are currently working on a formula to calculate the average translation of female players to the men's grading list at each level of the grading list. This will be used to transfer women without a men's grading code to the combined grading list. The initial transfers will be based on average correlations, so may not be 100% accurate for every player, but the grading list will soon become more accurate as matches are played.

Q: Will my grade change?

A: Most players will be the same grade on the combined grading list as they are now. However, there will be some exceptions: the slightly different grading bands may mean that some players are transferred to a higher or lower grade on the combined grading list. Every effort will be made to minimise these sorts of changes; however some changes will be unavoidable in transitioning to a combined grading list that is sustainable in the long term. As usual, any inaccuracies will soon 'come out in the wash' as matches are played and points are adjusted.

Q: Will the same formula be used to transfer a D2 woman as a B2 woman to the combined grading list?

A: No. The average translation of a woman to the men's grading list is noticeably different at different levels of the grading list. This task will be approached with as much flexibility as possible to ensure an accurate and smooth transition.

Q: Will I lose more grading points if I lose to someone of the opposite gender?

A: No. Because all players will be on a combined grading list, adjustments will be able to work based on points, and not be affected by the gender of your opponent. If you are a D1 with 1850 points, and your opponent has 1870 points, the winner will still gain 30 points and the loser will still lose 20 points regardless of gender.

Q: Where will '20/20' points adjustments begin?

A: At present '20/20' points adjustments (where the winner gains 20 points for beating a player within 100 points of him/herself) begin at C1 (2401 points). In grades C2-J5, the winner gains 30 points for beating a player within 100 points of him/herself, while the loser only loses 20 points. This means that, all things being equal, a player from C2-J5 is able to slowly rise through the grades with an equal proportion of wins to losses. From C1-A1, '20/20' points adjustments mean a player with an equal proportion of wins to losses will hold steady on the grading list (rather than rise).

It is proposed that '20/20' points adjustments will be based on an amount of points, rather than grade, so as to be simple and common to both genders. Examples are provided below to help explain this. Rather than the '20/20' threshold being a grade like C2 (which will be a different amount of points for men and women, and unnecessarily confusing and complicated), it will be an amount of points – for example 2400. This will allow women to rise to higher grades (B2 and above) more swiftly than men. This is viewed as a positive, as women are currently under-represented (relative to men) in grades B2-A1.

1. Current Grading List: Sally (3150 points, B1) plays Danielle (3100 points, B2) and wins 3/2. Sally gains 20 points and Danielle loses 20 points, because the two players are within 100 points of each other and above the '20/20' points adjustment threshold.
2. Combined Grading List: Sally (2350 points, B1) plays Danielle (2300 points, B2) and wins 3/2. Sally gains 30 points and Danielle loses 20 points, because the two players are within 100 points of each other and below the '20/20' points adjustment threshold.

Q: If a woman has the same number of grading points as a man, but has a higher grade than the man, does that mean she will lose a lot of points if she loses the match?

A: No, grading points adjustments will be calculated based on the points the opponent has rather than their grade. Two examples below illustrate how this will work (remember grades and points are just examples at this stage as the final calculations are still to be finalised).

1. Rob (2250 points, C2) plays Jane (2250 points, B2) and wins 3/1. Rob gains 30 points and Jane loses 20 points, because the two players are within 100 points of each other.
2. John (1670 points, D2) plays Dean (1750 points, D2) and wins 3/2. John gains 30 points and Dean loses 20 points, because the two players are within 100 points of each other.

These examples show that points adjustments are calculated based on grading points, not grades. So even though Jane is two half-grades higher than Rob (because she is a woman), she loses 20 points because the two players are within 100 points of each other.

Q: If I enter a tournament will I automatically be placed in a mixed division?

A: This depends on the tournament, and the conditions specified by the tournament organisers. Some tournaments may advertise mixed, men's and women's divisions and ask players to specify where they would like to be placed, whilst others may advertise mixed divisions only or men's and women's divisions only. The aim of the combined grading list is to provide flexibility to all players – not to force them to play mixed competitions.

Q: At what point will players use a double-dot ball?

A: Squash NZ will recommend the use of the double-dot ball from an amount of points (eg. 2400) rather than a grade (eg. C1). This will avoid confusion and complication where men play women.

Q: Will there still be separate national titles (eg. Superchamps teams, Champion of Champions, Men's champion, Women's champion etc)?

A: Yes. National titles will still be contested separately by men and women.

2. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AUTOMATIC LOSS OF GRADING POINTS FOR INACTIVITY:

Q: Why is this rule being introduced?

A: The rule is aimed at promoting activity (which improves the accuracy of the grading list), and ensuring that players do not retain grades that may not reflect their current abilities.

Q: What if I'm injured?

A: The rule still applies to players with injuries; for this reason a lengthy 12 month initial period has been allowed before points are deducted for inactivity. If a player has a long term injury, they can ask their club to remove them from the grading list to avoid losing points.

Q: If I haven't played since 1 May 2013, will I lose points if I don't play before 1 May 2014?

A: No. The rule will be introduced from January 2014 and no points will be deducted for inactivity until January 2015.

Q: *Will players be able to use this as a mechanism to drop points for Superchamps/Champion of Champions?*

A: The majority of players will be unlikely to do this, as in order to lose enough points to go down a grade, a player would need to sacrifice at least a full year of squash. Also, team lists and the grading list will be closely scrutinised around Superchamps and Champion of Champions time. Squash New Zealand reserves the right to alter the eligibility of players for these events where there is evidence of grading manipulation.

3. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANGE TO F GRADE:

Q: *Why is this change being introduced?*

A: The aim of this rule is to prevent senior beginner players from losing large amounts of points for losses to J grade players and provide a more level playing field for beginner players of all ages. While adult beginners often have a size and power advantage over juniors, junior players tend to have had better/more access to coaching. This means that matches between J grade and F grade players are often very evenly contested, yet the F grade player has little to gain if he/she wins, and will lose a lot of grading points if he/she loses.

Q: *How will this affect Superchamps and Champion of Champions?*

A: Superchamps and Champion of Champions will be played in a J/F grade format. This way, all players who are *below* E2 will be eligible for the J/F grade divisions.

Q: *Does this mean that J grade players cannot play competition matches against F grade players?*

A: No; it simply reduces the points difference between J grade and F grade players. Because these players are often of similar ability, more accurate points adjustments will be able to occur when J graders play F graders.

Q: *What else can be done to make squash enjoyable for beginner players?*

A: Separate tournament divisions (numbers permitting) for adult (F – E2) and junior (J4 – E2) beginners in tournaments can be a good way to enable adult beginners to find their feet in squash.

4. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANGES TO J GRADES:

Q: *Why is this change being introduced?*

A: This change is based on feedback from several years of J grades existing, and is aimed at simplifying the J grades. Along with the changes to F grade, this will provide a foundation for beginner players to access even competition, improve their squash, and advance through the grades.

Q: *Do new junior players automatically need to start at J4?*

A: No. Junior convenors should observe grading games/other activity and put new players on the grading list at the appropriate level based on each player's ability. Remember that players can be manually adjusted up or down if this initial grading proves to be inaccurate.

Q: *Will the safety nets that prevent players from dropping between grades remain in place?*

A: Yes; once a player rise from (say) J3 to J2, he/she will not be able to drop back down again. Safety nets will also remain in place to prevent players who have reached F and E2 grade from falling back down.

5. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANGE TO ENTRY POINT OF B2:

Q: Why is this change being introduced?

A: This change is aimed at reducing the number of C1 graded players (currently more than 15% of all graded squash players), and achieving a more even distribution throughout the grading list.

Q: How will this affect Superchamps and Champion of Champions?

A: Players currently at the top of C1 will become B graders from January 2014, and will be eligible to play B Grade Superchamps/Champion of Champions.

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