

Keep It
safe!



KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BIRDIE!



Badminton is one of the most popular activities in Québec. In addition to being taught in most schools, it is offered by most municipal recreation departments and sports centres. Unfortunately, badminton is one of the recreational and sporting activities that can cause eye injuries. However, such injuries can be avoided if players know and follow certain preventive measures that are inherent to the discipline. Here is some advice on how to play badminton more safely.

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1. NEVER LOOK BEHIND YOU

When playing doubles, it is dangerous to turn around to follow the shuttle's trajectory and to see your partner's shot. When the shuttle flies over the front player, it is the responsibility of the rear player to hit it. Front players should, instead, observe their opponents' reaction in order to prepare for their return shot.

2. PLAY IN SIDE-SIDE FORMATION (BEGINNER LEVEL)

When playing doubles (men's, women's and mixed), teammates must sometimes alternate their positions, from the front-back formation to the side-side formation.

However, too many teams playing at the beginner level automatically adopt the front-back formation in which the roles are not shared. The most talented player, or the player with the strongest smash, plays the back court, leaving his or her partner to return the few available shuttles within reach. The front player is more vulnerable to being hit by the shuttle, due to the short reaction time one has when playing near the net. It is preferable that beginners adopt the side-side formation until they acquire the technical prowess and tactical knowledge necessary to play front to back. In addition, this formation allows players to better defend their territory.

3. DO NOT TARGET AN OPPONENT POSITIONED NEAR THE NET

Too many players adopt this strategy because they think that the opponent playing in the front court will have little reaction time and that if the shuttle touches him or her, play will be stopped automatically. This tactic is also used by some to intimidate their opponents. If a player is positioned near the net and has a good chance to hit the shuttle, he or she has ample space to do so without hitting the opposing front player and risking causing an eye injury.

4. HOLD YOUR RACKET HIGH WHEN NEAR THE NET

The closer we are positioned to the net, the less time we have to react to a smash in our direction. Players should make a habit of holding the racket at face level when playing near the net. This not only protects the face, it also makes one a more effective player. This is particularly important following short serves or net shots, or for the front player in a *front-back* formation.

5. USE PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR

Since the shuttle and racket head can travel at speeds in excess of 150 km/h, the eyes are particularly vulnerable in case of an accident. Using protective eyewear is the most effective way to prevent an eye injury. Be sure to choose eyewear with a polycarbonate lens. It should also be noted that hingeless models are sturdier.

6. USE STANDARD-SPEED SHUTTLES

Many players use shuttles that are too fast or that become too fast after several minutes of use. After repeated hits, the skirt or feathers (conical section) of the shuttle can soften or deteriorate, providing less air resistance and thus increasing the shuttle's speed. Faster shuttles allow less reaction time and thus heighten the risk of eye injury, especially for front-court players. To offset the effects of a deformed shuttle, players should learn to test shuttle speed and to slow it down if it is deemed too fast. To make an informed decision when choosing a shuttle, consult Badminton Québec, which regularly tests the quality and durability of the shuttles available on the market.

How to test a shuttle

Although other methods may be adequate, we recommend the following procedure for testing shuttle speed: stand outside the court and place the foot opposite the hand holding the racket on the base line. Using a full underhand stroke, hit the shuttle toward the opposite base line. Its speed is standard if the shuttle flies approximately 1 metre over the net along a trajectory that is parallel to the sidelines and lands inside the court, 30 to 75 cm from the base line.

Slowing a shuttle

This principle consists in enlarging the feather section (conical section) of the shuttle to create greater air resistance. This must be done evenly around the full diameter, otherwise the shuttle's trajectory will be off. In the case of a nylon shuttle, fold the skirt back slightly toward the exterior along its full length, taking care not to tear it.

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7. OTHER SAFETY ADVICE

Establish good communication between partners

It is important that partners agree before play begins on their respective tasks in various situations, in particular, when the play is in mid-court. In case of confusion, the player who intends to hit the shuttle should say so out loud.

Do not intrude on a neighbouring court

Too often, because they are not paying attention or do not know the ethics of the game, some people cross or run too near a court while a game is under way. You must always be careful to avoid a collision or being hit by a shuttle or racket. If your shuttle lands on a neighbouring court where play is under way, it is important to wait for play to stop before retrieving it.

Respect a safe ratio

The person who is in charge of an activity should ensure that it runs smoothly, and assign the players to each court. A maximum of four players per court is recommended during training exercises or directed play in pressure situations. There should be no more than two shuttles in use on a court at a given time.

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