

Greetings everyone. We hope everyone enjoyed the “mock” MLP mini-social Pickleball at Apodaca last Friday. A couple of items to address for us all to consider and take to heart. As ambassadors of the sport, which we all are actually, we need to remember and practice some “court etiquette”. We all know how competitiveness sneaks into our playing so here are some guidelines for recreational play as well as some rules for tournament play, where it’s a bit more serious to adhere to.

Pickleball Points: Sportsmanship and court etiquette — don't be a jerk. Court etiquette happens on and off the court!!!

1. Pickleball is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy. A sense of fair-play from giving the opponent the benefit of the doubt is essential in maintaining the games underlying principles of “fun and competition”. Players should not excessively question or comment on an opponent’s call; it’s a game.
2. For tournaments, it’s much more serious. Rule 3.A.9 indicates that a player can be ejected from the game and even the venue for flagrant behavior violations. Don’t be THAT person.
3. Section 6.D of the 2023 USA Official Pickleball Rules defines the Code of Ethics for line calling, please read it. <https://usapickleball.org/docs/USA-Pickleball-Official-Rulebook-2023-v2.pdf>
4. Good sportsmanship is the rule. Yes, we love the game, but it is only a game. Respect all players.
5. If the ball is “out,” and it’s on your side, call it out. **If it’s close or you’re not 100% sure, give the benefit of the doubt to your opponent.** This is hard to do when the game is close but do it anyway. Unless the ball is really OUT, meaning the outside court is clearly visible behind the ball, play it. When the ball lands on or is close to the line, it’s difficult to really be 100% sure so play it.
6. At the end of each game, find something positive to say to the other team at the net. “Nice game” isn’t always appropriate if in spite of your efforts at sportsmanship you have won 11-0. Find something encouraging to say -- at least, “Thanks for playing with us!” is nice. But never leave a game without acknowledging the other team. Try to not slam people who are at a lower level than you, encourage them for a game or two by demonstrating proper pickleball; they’ll enjoy it more and be more encouraged to find players at their level.
7. Don’t take advantage of a person’s physical limitations when you play them socially. If someone can’t go back for a lob when they’re at the line because of physical limitations, for instance, why lob over their heads? You won’t learn anything by doing it, you’re not proving anything, and you certainly will not be respected for it.
8. NEVER yell at, swear at, or say a hostile or sarcastic word to any player in anger. Abusive language will not be tolerated on or around the courts.
9. Be sure you speak up and congratulate whoever made the shot, even if it’s your opponent and even if it means that you lost.
10. Make sure you ask players if they want tips while they play. Some players just want to have fun and are happy where they are and don’t want advice.
11. There’s nothing wrong with being competitive and passionate about pickleball. In fact, it’s encouraged. But there’s a line that shouldn’t be crossed. Try to recognize that you’re not playing for the world championship game. Your behavior has an affect on the people around you and you are responsible for that!

Respectively,

Laura Smart - Player, USA Pickleball Ambassador for Las Cruces, Certified Referee Trainer, Certified Referee, MLP Referee 2023

Mike Kennedy - Player, USA Pickleball Ambassador for Las Cruces and the Southwest Region