



INTERNATIONAL PARA PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION (IPPA)

Classification Handbook for Intellectual Disabilities and Cerebral Palsy Athletes

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(Approved and adopted in the General Body Meeting held on 15th September 2025)

INTRODUCTION TO ID & CP PARA PICKLEBALL

The International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA) recognizes the importance of creating an inclusive sporting environment where individuals of all abilities can experience the joy, health benefits, and social connection that pickleball provides. To achieve this vision, IPPA has developed dedicated formats and classifications for para pickleball players with **Intellectual Disabilities (ID)** and **Cerebral Palsy (CP)**.

Para Pickleball for players with Intellectual Disabilities focuses on adapting the game to emphasize **participation, teamwork, and enjoyment over strict competition**. Athletes are classified into levels of support Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Profound, ensuring that each player competes within a fair and supportive structure. Assistance from coaches, partners, or volunteers is encouraged, with rule modifications designed to build confidence, foster inclusion, and celebrate every effort on court.

For athletes with Cerebral Palsy, Para Pickleball emphasizes **functional ability and safe participation**. Classifications also follow a Mild-to-Profound scale, addressing the wide spectrum of motor impairments. The focus remains on ability, not limitation, with every para pickleball player given the opportunity to rally, score, and share in the spirit of the game.

Through these inclusive classifications and adapted rules, IPPA ensures that Para Pickleball becomes a platform for **personal growth, health, and social integration**. Above all, the game promotes the **Spirit of Play** celebrating effort, enjoyment, and respect for all participants.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES & CEREBRAL PALSY CLASSIFICATION

PP20 – INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- Mild (PP20-D)
- Moderate (PP20-C)
- Severe (PP20-B)
- Profound (PP20-A)

Intellectual Disabilities (PP20): *“One code, all levels, inclusive play.”*

The Intellectual Disabilities category is unified under the PP20 code, with sub-classifications to reflect levels of functional ability and support needs:

- **PP20-D – Mild:** Able to play independently with minimal support.
- **PP20-C – Moderate:** Requires occasional prompts or modifications.
- **PP20-B – Severe:** Requires consistent assistance, adaptive equipment or guided play.
- **PP20-A – Profound:** Requires full assistance and special adaptations to participate.

PP1 to PP8 – CEREBRAL PALSY

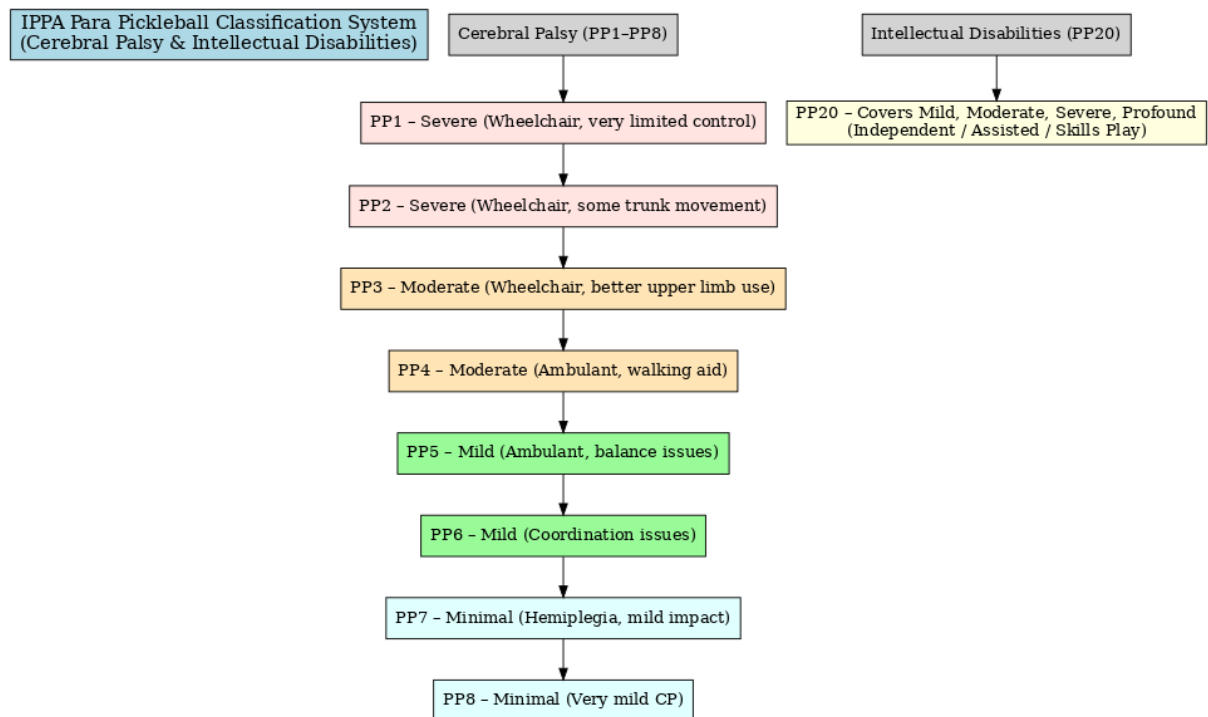
- Mild (PP5 to PP8)
- Moderate (PP3 to PP4)
- Severe (PP2)
- Profound (PP1)

Cerebral Palsy (PP1–PP8): *“From profound, severe to minimal impact.”*

The Cerebral Palsy classification is divided into eight functional levels, ranging from severe impairment to minimal impact, to ensure fair and inclusive play:

- **PP1 – Profound (Wheelchair, very limited control):** Requires continuous assistance, limited trunk and head movement.
- **PP2 – Severe (Wheelchair, some trunk control):** Limited functional reach, needs adaptive paddle support.
- **PP3 – Moderate (Wheelchair, better upper limb use):** Able to swing paddle with assistance, restricted mobility.
- **PP4 – Moderate (Ambulant with walking aid):** Some independent movement, balance issues, limited coverage.

- **PP5 – Mild (Ambulant, balance issues):** Plays independently, slower reactions and stability challenges.
- **PP6 – Mild (Coordination issues, e.g., diplegia/hemiplegia):** Functional play possible with noticeable asymmetry.
- **PP7 – Minimal (Hemiplegic, mild impact):** Slightly reduced power/control, plays independently.
- **PP8 – Minimal (Very mild CP):** Near able-bodied function, minimal impairment visible.



SPIRIT OF PLAY, INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES & CEREBRAL PALSY PARA PICKLEBALL

Para Pickleball for athletes with Intellectual Disabilities and Cerebral Palsy is guided by the belief that **every individual deserves the opportunity to participate, enjoy, and grow through sport**. Competition is welcomed, but the true essence of the game lies in:

- Encouraging **participation over perfection**
- Promoting **teamwork, friendship, and mutual respect**
- Providing **adaptations and assistance** that allow every athlete to succeed at their level
- Celebrating **effort, progress, and personal achievement** as much as results
- Ensuring a safe, supportive, and joyful playing environment

This Spirit of Play ensures that Para Pickleball becomes more than just a sport, it is a **platform for inclusion, empowerment, and dignity.**

ASSISTED CATEGORY (PROFOUND & SEVERE ID & CP)

Assisted Para Pickleball is designed to ensure that athletes with Intellectual Disabilities (PP20 D-A) and Cerebral Palsy (PP1–P2) who have Profound to Severe functional limitations can fully participate in the pickleball sport.

Area	Allowed	Not Allowed
Paddle & Grip	- Adaptive paddles with straps/handles - Velcro or elastic hand straps - Grip enlargers (foam/rubber)	- Paddles altered beyond size/weight rules (except approved adaptations) - Metal or unsafe attachments
Ball & Serve	- Ball drop by assistant - Ball holders/dispenser - Handheld ball-drop device	- Mechanical/electronic serving machines - Launching devices with propulsion
Mobility & Positioning	- Wheelchairs (manual/power) - Walkers, crutches, braces - Seat supports, safety straps	- Unauthorized external aids (scooters, motorized carts) - Barriers or fixed equipment on court
Modified Equipment	- Lightweight paddles - Low-bounce balls (skills only) - Half/mini court (development events)	- Oversized paddles outside IPPA limits - Non-pickleball balls in competition play
Personnel Assistance	- Assistant for ball drop, positioning, or verbal prompts - Courtside caregiver for support - Verbal/visual guidance during play	- Assistant physically striking the ball - Coaching during rallies (allowed only between points)
Safety & Comfort	- Non-slip gloves, wrist braces, joint supports - Rest breaks & hydration (approved by referee) - Medical/caregiver presence courtside	- Unauthorized breaks outside rules - Equipment causing safety hazards to others

DECISION CHECKLIST – ASSISTED CATEGORY (PROFOUND & SEVERE ID & CP)

Step 1 – SERVING

- Can the athlete toss or drop the ball and serve independently?

YES → Standard serve applies.

NO → Assistant may drop/place the ball for serve.

Step 2 – PADDLE GRIP

- Can the athlete hold the paddle securely?

YES → No grip assistance required.

NO → Adaptive strap, grip support, or assistant to stabilize paddle permitted.

Step 3 – MOBILITY

- Can the athlete move safely and position themselves on court?

YES → Athlete plays with or without mobility aid (wheelchair, walker, crutches).

NO → Assistant may help with positioning before each point (but not during rally).

Step 4 – RALLY PLAY

- Can the athlete rally with at least one return?

YES → Rally scoring continues as per Assisted Category rules.

NO → Skills or Target Play format may be applied instead of full match.

Step 5 – PERSONNEL ASSISTANCE

- Does the athlete require ongoing verbal or physical prompts?

YES → Assistant permitted for prompts, positioning, and encouragement.

NO → Athlete competes independently within modified rules.

Step 6 – EQUIPMENT

- Is all equipment (paddle, grip, ball, mobility aids) **declared and approved** by the Championships Director?

YES → Player cleared for competition.

NO → Equipment must be reviewed before play.

IPPA PARA PICKLEBALL CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES FOR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (ID)

(For Coaches, Referees, and Technical Officials)

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA) recognizes the diverse needs of athletes with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and has adopted a sport-specific classification system to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and safety in competition. The ID classification system is unified under **PP20**, with four sub-categories **Profound (PP20-A)**, **Severe (PP20-B)**, **Moderate (PP20-C)**, and **Mild (PP20-D)**. This framework enables referees and coaches to assign players to a functional level that reflects their cognitive ability, comprehension, and playing independence.

Unlike medical diagnosis, IPPA classification emphasizes **functional sport ability**: how an athlete understands rules, executes skills, responds to match situations, and maintains safety on the court. This ensures that classification is directly linked to the spirit of Pickleball participation, teamwork, and fun while maintaining competitive integrity.

2. THE PP20 CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

PP20-D – Mild Intellectual Disability

Functional Profile: Athletes can understand basic rules, serve, rally, and score with minimal difficulty. They may occasionally require reminders, slower-paced play, or modified instructions.

Expectations: Independent play is encouraged. Coaches should use clear, simple language and visual aids. Referees may repeat rules or instructions if confusion arises.

Game Format: Independent play with minor modifications.

PP20-C – Moderate Intellectual Disability

Functional Profile: Athletes can participate actively but may struggle with complex scoring, tactics, or multiple-step instructions. They often benefit from prompts, repetition, and structured routines.

Expectations: Coaches should break down instructions into single steps. Referees may allow extra time before serves and provide gentle reminders about rotation or positioning.

Game Format: Modified play, simplified scoring (e.g., rally scoring), and allowance for prompts.

PP20-B – SEVERE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Functional Profile: Para Pickleball Players require continuous support to engage in the game. They may struggle with ball tracking, paddle grip, or staying within court boundaries without guidance.

Expectations: Coaches may use visual cues, buddy systems, or adaptive paddles. Referees must allow assistants on-court to help with positioning, serving setup, or encouragement.

Game Format: Assisted play with adaptive equipment and support personnel, as approved by the Championship Director.

PP20-A – PROFOUND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Functional Profile: ID Para Pickleball Players need full assistance for all aspects of play. Participation focuses on inclusion, sensory experience, and enjoyment rather than competitive match play.

Expectations: Coaches and assistants take an active role in positioning, ball placement, and facilitating positive experiences. Referees ensure flexibility in rules to maximize participation and safety.

Game Format: Skills-based activities, target play, or adapted assisted games designed to maximize engagement and social interaction.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of Coaches

Preparation: Understand the classification level of each athlete before competition. Adapt warm-ups, drills, and match play accordingly.

Communication: Use simple, consistent language. Visual cues, gestures, and demonstrations are highly effective.

Safety: Ensure equipment (grip aids, paddles, balls) is appropriate for the athlete's ability. Monitor fatigue, as concentration and motor skills may decline with extended play.

Encouragement: Focus on effort, teamwork, and fun rather than winning. Celebrate participation equally across all categories.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Referees

Rule Flexibility: Apply the IPPA "Spirit of Play" principle adapt rules when necessary for fairness and inclusion. For example, allow assistants to drop a ball for serving in PP20-B or PP20-A.

Consistency: Ensure that all athletes within the same classification receive the same allowances, avoiding bias.

Assistance Oversight: Verify that any support personnel or adaptive devices have been approved by the Championship Director before play begins.

Game Management: Use clear, slow announcements. Repeat instructions if needed. Allow additional time for athletes to rotate, serve, or respond to decisions.

Safety Monitoring: Be alert for signs of distress, frustration, or unsafe movements. Stop play if necessary and allow resets.

5. ADAPTED GAME FORMATS

Skills Play (PP20-A, PP20-B): Target hitting, cooperative rallies, or guided participation rather than strict matches.

Modified Play (PP20-C): Rally scoring to simplify counting, smaller court sizes, or softer balls.

Independent Play (PP20-D): Standard Pickleball rules with minor accommodations (e.g., prompts, slower pace).

6. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR OFFICIALS

Inclusion First: Every athlete must feel valued regardless of performance level.

Spirit of Play: Fun, teamwork, and effort are celebrated above competition.

Flexibility: Adapt instructions and match formats to ensure fair engagement.

Respect: Treat all athletes with dignity; avoid over-assisting unless necessary.

Collaboration: Coaches, assistants, and referees must work together to create a safe, enjoyable environment.

7. SUMMARY

The **PP20 Intellectual Disabilities Classification System** provides a structured yet flexible approach to ensure all athletes can participate meaningfully in Para Pickleball. For coaches, it guides training and communication. For referees, it provides clarity on rules, assistance, and modifications. Ultimately, the classification system safeguards the **IPPA values of inclusion, safety, and the spirit of play**, ensuring that Intellectual Disability athletes compete and enjoy Pickleball on equal terms.

IPPA PARA PICKLEBALL CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES FOR CEREBRAL PALSY (CP)

(For Coaches, Referees, and Technical Officials)

1. INTRODUCTION

Cerebral Palsy (CP) athletes demonstrate a wide range of functional abilities, from severe mobility and coordination challenges to very mild impairments. To ensure fair and inclusive participation in Para Pickleball, the International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA) classifies CP athletes into **eight functional categories (PP1–PP8)**.

The classification is not based on medical diagnosis alone but on **observable movement, coordination, and functional ability in Pickleball-specific skills** such as serving, rallying, and safe mobility on the court. Coaches and referees must apply these classifications to ensure athletes play at an appropriate level of independence, with fair assistance where necessary, and within the IPPA spirit of participation, safety, and fun.

2. THE PP1–PP8 CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

PP1 – Profound (Wheelchair, very limited control)

Functional Profile: No trunk stability, poor head control, minimal upper limb use.

Game Format: Assisted skills activities; full support from assistants.

Coach Role: Focus on adapted play, sensory engagement, and positive reinforcement.

Referee Role: Allow maximum flexibility with rules, including ball placement and assistant involvement.

PP2 – SEVERE (WHEELCHAIR, SOME TRUNK MOVEMENT)

Functional Profile: Limited trunk stability, partial paddle grip, restricted mobility.

Game Format: Assisted play with adaptive paddle grips or ball placement.

Coach Role: Encourage safe swings, build strength, and support functional use.

Referee Role: Approve adaptive equipment; ensure consistent assistant use.

PP3 – MODERATE (WHEELCHAIR, BETTER UPPER LIMB USE)

Functional Profile: Independent upper limb movement but limited mobility.

Game Format: Assisted or modified rally play.

Coach Role: Train upper limb coordination, introduce rally practice.

Referee Role: Allow more independence while ensuring safe positioning.

PP4 – MODERATE (AMBULANT, WALKING AID)

Functional Profile: Ambulates with aid, balance challenges, limited quick movement.

Game Format: Modified play with safety considerations.

Coach Role: Emphasize controlled movements and stability exercises.

Referee Role: Allow extra time for positioning; prioritize safety on court.

PP5 – MILD (AMBULANT, BALANCE ISSUES)

Functional Profile: Walks without aid but slower, occasional instability.

Game Format: Independent play with some modifications.

Coach Role: Focus on reaction time, safe movement drills.

Referee Role: Monitor closely for falls; adjust court pace if needed.

PP6 – MILD (COORDINATION ISSUES, E.G., DIPLEGIA/HEMIPLEGIA)

Functional Profile: Plays independently with asymmetrical movement.

Game Format: Independent play, minor adaptations allowed.

Coach Role: Train coordination and balanced movement.

Referee Role: Apply rules consistently; provide brief reminders if confusion arises.

PP7 – MINIMAL (HEMIPLEGIA, MILD IMPACT)

Functional Profile: One side weaker, but fully independent in play.

Game Format: Standard play with no modifications.

Coach Role: Improve balance and power on affected side.

Referee Role: Treat as independent athletes, with safety monitoring.

PP8 – MINIMAL (VERY MILD CP)

Functional Profile: Near able-bodied ability, mild observable impairment.

Game Format: Standard Pickleball rules.

Coach Role: Develop competitive skills, strategy, and confidence.

Referee Role: Apply standard rules equally.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COACHES

Preparation: Assess the functional class of each athlete and adapt training accordingly.

Communication: Use clear demonstrations; visual and physical guidance may be required at lower classes (PP1–PP3).

Adaptation: Encourage independence wherever possible but apply adaptive aids where safety requires.

Inclusion: Ensure mixed sessions encourage teamwork, not segregation, between classes.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF REFEREES

Classification Awareness: Know the basic profile of each PP class to apply appropriate rules.

Fairness: Ensure that assistance, modifications, or adaptive equipment are applied consistently across similar classifications.

Flexibility: Allow additional time, positioning support, or assistant interventions where required in PP1–PP4.

Safety: Monitor fatigue, falls, and unsafe movements closely, especially for ambulant classes.

5. ADAPTED GAME FORMATS BY CLASS

- **PP1–PP2:** Skills-based play, heavy assistance, adaptive paddles, target games.
- **PP3–PP4:** Modified games with assistants, simplified rules, shorter matches.
- **PP5–PP6:** Independent play with safety oversight; some rule adaptations.
- **PP7–PP8:** Standard competition rules with minimal modification.

6. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR OFFICIALS

- **Inclusion over Competition:** All players should be encouraged to participate at their maximum ability.
- **Spirit of Play:** Effort, teamwork, and fun must always outweigh winning.
- **Consistency:** Apply rules fairly within each classification.

- **Collaboration:** Work closely with coaches, assistants, and medical staff.
- **Respect:** Recognize each athlete's effort and capacity, celebrating participation equally.

7. SUMMARY

The **PP1–PP8 Cerebral Palsy classification system** provides structure for para pickleball players ranging from severe wheelchair users to those with minimal impairment. For coaches, it guides training adaptations and athlete development. For referees, it ensures that athletes receive fair allowances and safe match environments. Above all, this system safeguards the IPPA principles of **safety, inclusion, and the spirit of play**, enabling athletes with Cerebral Palsy to thrive in Para Pickleball.

8: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Raghu Kumar Raghavelu is a dedicated advocate for inclusion, equality, and accessibility in sports. As the Secretary General of the International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA), he has played a pivotal role in developing Para Pickleball both nationally and internationally.

With extensive experience in organizing championships, promoting adaptive sports, and fostering collaboration across federations, Raghu Kumar's vision is to ensure that every athlete regardless of physical ability has the opportunity to participate, compete, and achieve excellence.

This Classification Handbook for Intellectual Disabilities and Cerebral Palsy is part of his continuing commitment to building a structured, fair, and globally recognized framework for Para Pickleball under IPPA standards.

Special thanks to **World Ability Sports Federation (WASF)** and **International Paralympic Committee (IPC)**

End Note

This handbook is an official publication of the International Para Pickleball Association (IPPA). All classification procedures, criteria, and class codes are governed by IPPA regulations in alignment with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Code (2021). Unauthorized reproduction or modification without written consent from IPPA is prohibited.

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