

How to self-rate your pickleball skill level

Self-rating is how most recreational players get started. It's a good first step, but here's the truth from someone who's played thousands of games with players at every level: most people think they're rated higher than they really are.

It's just human nature. We remember our best shots, not our mishits. In open play, where no one is keeping stats, it's easy to inflate your rating without realizing it.

That said, self-rating can be helpful – if you approach it with honesty and humility. There's no shame in giving yourself a 3.0 rating. It doesn't mean you're new or unskilled. It just means you're developing consistency, learning how to move with a partner, and starting to understand strategy beyond just hitting the ball over the net.

Some of the most fun, competitive games I've had were with 3.0 and 3.5 players who understood their strengths and played within them.

Here's the upside: when you're honest about where your game really is, everything gets better. The matchups, the partners, the feedback, the fun. So, here's how to self-assess more accurately.

Self rating? Ask yourself these questions

Instead of trying to guess your rating, ask yourself these five questions and match your answers to the responses below. This will give you a clearer sense of where you actually fall on the 2.5-4.5 scale.

Can I consistently keep a rally going for 5+ shots?	2.5: "Not really. I can hit a few in a row if the other player goes easy, but I often miss wide or hit the net."
	3.0: "Yes, against equal players. However, if someone speeds things up, I lose control."
	3.5: "Usually. I can handle pace and control a medium-speed rally, especially at the baseline."
	4.0: "Yes, including resets and dinks. I can stay in long rallies and keep my cool under pressure."
	4.5: "Absolutely. I can extend rallies with purpose – resetting, dinking, or countering when needed."
Do I hit a third-shot drop when I'm supposed to, or just drive it every time?	2.5: "I've heard of the drop shot, but I usually just try to get it over the net."
	3.0: "I mostly drive the third shot because I don't trust my drop yet."
	3.5: "I try to drop, but it's hit-or-miss. I'll mix in drives when I feel rushed."
	4.0: "I use the third-shot drop regularly and know when to switch between drop and drive based on the return."
	4.5: "I disguise drops and drives depending on positioning. I use both as strategic tools."

Can I dink cross-court with control, without popping it up?	2.5: "I avoid the kitchen – it feels awkward and I pop it up a lot."
	3.0: "I can dink straight ahead, but crosscourt is tough. A lot of my dinks are too high."
	3.5: "Yes, as long as I'm not rushed. I can keep a dink rally going with some control."
	4.0: "Yes, and I use depth and placement to pressure my opponent."
	4.5: "Definitely. I control tempo, create openings, and force errors in dink exchanges."
Do I know how to reset a point from the transition zone?	2.5: "I don't even try. I just run to the net and swing."
	3.0: "I've heard of resets, but I usually just block or lob if I'm stuck mid-court."
	3.5: "I'm working on resets. Sometimes I can drop it into the kitchen, but it's inconsistent."
	4.0: "Yes, I can reset with touch and control when under pressure at the kitchen line or mid-court."
	4.5: "Yes, I can reset from anywhere on the court – even in fast-paced rallies."
Do I move in sync with my partner and communicate during points?	2.5: "Not really – we both just cover our sides and hope for the best."
	3.0: "Sometimes. We call shots, but we're not switching or stacking yet."
	3.5: "We communicate and switch sometimes, but positioning still breaks down under pressure."
	4.0: "Yes, we shift together, call shots, and use stacking or poaching when needed."
	4.5: "Absolutely. We work as a team seamless switching, constant communication, strategic movement."