

Getting Started in Pickleball

Are you ready to learn a fun game, get a little exercise, and enjoy social interaction (maybe even some friendly "trash" talk)? Pickleball may be your answer. It is easy to learn and play.

WARNING - IT CAN BE ADDICTIVE

A large majority of pickleball is played as doubles. Accordingly, much of the following is written from that perspective.

1. Paddles & Balls

The main differences between paddles are: weight, grip size, and construction materials. Before buying a paddle, it is a good idea to try out a few first to see what you like. We recommend the continental grip - "V" between thumb and index finger on top of the handle. There are indoor and outdoor balls. Outdoor balls have smaller holes and there are more of them (to, hopefully, help with wind), and they are made from harder material.

2. Safety

- a. Running backwards can cause falls - don't do it! To get back, turn around, and then run.
- b. We don't want anyone stepping on a ball and twisting an ankle or falling. If your ball goes onto another court, yell "**BALL.**" Play stops on the "offended" court, and the ball is returned.
- c. Stay hydrated (bring water).

3. Etiquette

- a. Don't walk onto a court while a game is going on.
- b. Don't walk behind a court while play is in progress unless there is lots of room.
- c. **Always** announce the score prior to serving. Be sure your opponents are ready before doing so, and face them so they can hear you.
- d. After a game is completed, players approach the net and gently touch paddles as a show of sportsmanship and to congratulate and thank each other for the game (regardless of how well people played).

4. Types of Shots

- a. **Ground stroke** - hitting the ball after it bounces; either forehand or backhand.
- b. **Volley** - hitting the ball before it bounces.
- c. **Lob** - hitting the ball high (hopefully over your opponent's reach).
- d. **Dink** - a short shot landing just over the net and in the **NVZ** or **kitchen** (see 5 Below).

These are single shots. When you hit the ball back and forth, as in playing a point, the entire exchange is called a rally. For every shot keep your eye on the ball and try to watch it hit your paddle.

5. Non-Volley Zone or Kitchen

There is a line 7 feet from the net. The area between this line and the net is called the NVZ (**non-volley zone**) or **kitchen**, and the line is called the kitchen line or NVZ line. The kitchen **includes** the kitchen line and those portions of the sidelines that border the kitchen. If you volley a ball (i.e., hit the ball before it bounces) while any part of your shoe is in the kitchen, it is a fault (i.e., you lose the rally). It is permissible to volley the ball while standing outside the kitchen; however, if you do so, and your momentum carries you into the kitchen, it is a fault. You may hit the ball while standing in the kitchen if the ball bounces before you hit it. This may seem confusing at first, but it will become second nature after you have played awhile.

6. Scoring

A **fault** is any action that ends a rally, e.g., hitting the ball out of bounds, into the net, or after it bounces twice. **Only the serving team can score**, so if the receiving team faults, one point is added to the serving team's score. If the serving team faults, neither team scores. When a point is scored, the player who served will switch sides of the court with his/her partner and serve again, and continue serving until the server's team faults. That server's turn is then over, and the serve goes to another player—either the partner of the last server or a player on the other team (see 8. Serving Sequence). The game is played to 11 points, win by 2. If the score becomes 11 to 10, play continues until one team is ahead by 2 points.

7. In and Out Balls and Line Calling

- a. Balls landing on lines are good (i.e., in bounds), except for serves that land on lines boarding the kitchen (kitchen line and adjacent sidelines). A serve that lands in the kitchen is a fault. Since the kitchen line is part of the kitchen, the serve must bounce beyond the kitchen line to be good.
- b. Players are responsible for calling lines on their side of the court, i.e., calling the ball in or out. They do not call lines on their opponents' side of the court.
- c. In doubles, if the two players on the receiving team disagree on the ball being in or out, it is considered in. If neither player on the receiving team sees whether the ball was in or out, they ask their opponents. When your opponents' opinion is requested, that opinion must be respected. If neither of the opponents saw well enough to make the call so that none of the four players know, the ball is considered "in."

8. Serving Sequence

When a team's service turn is completed, the ball goes to the other team to serve. This is called a **side out**. After a side out occurs, both team members will serve before the next side out. The player who is positioned on the right-hand side of the court is server 1, that player's partner will be server 2. During a game, will you always be designated as server 1 or as server 2? Probably not due to switching sides after a score. On your first opportunity to serve you might be server 2, but on your next service turn you could be server 1.

One of the teams starts the game by being the initial serving team. Since a team can only score when that team has the serve, it doesn't seem fair that both players on the initial serving team should get to serve before the other team has the opportunity to score. Consequently, only one player on the initial serving team will serve before the first side out. Therefore, the first server of the game is designated as server 2 for that service turn.

9. Announcing the Score

Three numbers are called by the server in this order: (1) score of serving team, (2) score of receiving team, (3) server number (1 or 2). Thus, the first server of the game announces "0, 0, 2" prior to making the initial serve.

10. Useful Websites

- a. The USA Pickleball Association website a great place to get information about pickleball: usapickleball.org
- b. Three websites that have excellent videos on various aspects of pickleball play, tips, and strategies: primetimepickleball.com, pickleballkitchen.com, pickleballchannel.com
- c. The website for Pickleball Johnson County (PJC) also has lots of useful information: tinyurl.com/pjcwebsite
- d. A good place to purchase equipment online: pickleballcentral.com