

# PICKLEBALL OVERVIEW

The following is an abbreviated form of the rules to give a quick overview of how the game is played. If there is a conflict between this summary and the official rules, the official rules prevail.

Pickleball is played either as doubles (two players per team) or singles. The same size playing area and rules are used for both singles and doubles

## The Serve

- The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc when the ball is struck.
- Paddle contact with the ball must not be made above waist level.
- The head of the paddle must not be above the highest part of the wrist at contact.
- A 'drop serve' is permitted, in which case none of the elements above apply.
- At the time the ball is struck, the server's feet may not touch the court or outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline. At least one foot must remain on the ground behind the baseline.
- The serve is made diagonally crosscourt and must land within the confines of the opposite diagonal court.
- Only one serve attempt is allowed per server.

## Service Sequence

- In doubles play, both players on the serving team may serve and score points until they commit a fault (excepting the first service sequence of each new game).
  - At the beginning of each new game, only one partner on the serving team may serve before faulting, after which the service passes to the receiving team.
- The first serve of each side-out is made from the right/even court.
- If a point is scored, the server switches sides and initiates the next serve from the left/odd court.
- As subsequent points are scored, the server continues switching back and forth until a fault is committed and the first server loses the serve.
- When the first server loses the serve, the partner then serves from their correct side of the court (except for the first service sequence of the game).
- The second server continues serving until a fault is committed and loses the serve to the opposing team.
- Once the service goes to the opposition (at side out), the first serve is from the right/even court, and both players on that team have the opportunity to serve and score points until their team commits two faults.
- In singles play, the server serves from the right/even court when the score is even and from the left/odd when the score is odd.

## Scoring

- Only the serving team may score points.
- Games are typically played to 11 points, win by 2.
- Tournament games may be played to 15 or 21, win by 2.
- When the serving team's score is even, the player who was the first server in the game for that team will be in the right-side court when serving or receiving; when odd that player will be in the left-side court when serving or receiving.

### Two-Bounce Rule

- When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and the serving team must let it bounce before returning.
- After the ball has bounced once in each team's court, both teams may either volley the ball (hit the ball before it bounces) or play it off a bounce (ground stroke).
- The two-bounce rule eliminates the serve and volley advantage and extends rallies.



### Non-Volley Zone

- The non-volley zone is the court area within 7 feet of both sides of the net. It is commonly referred to as "the kitchen."
- Volleying is prohibited within the non-volley zone. This rule prevents players from executing smashes from a position within the zone.
- It is a fault if:
  - a player, when volleying, steps in the non-volley zone or on an associated non-volley zone line.
  - a player, when volleying, crosses the non-volley zone line or into the non-volley zone with any part of their body, clothing, or anything they are carrying (even if carried by momentum).
  - A player, after volleying, a player is carried by momentum into or touches the non-volley zone, even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.
- A player may legally be in the non-volley zone any time other than when volleying a ball.

## **Line Calls**

- A ball contacting any part of any line, except the non-volley zone line on a serve, is considered “in.”
- A serve contacting the non-volley zone line is considered short and a fault.

## **Faults**

- A fault is any action that stops play because of a rule violation.
- A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team.
- A fault by the serving team results in the server’s loss of serve or side out.

## **Determining Serving Team**

Any fair method may be used to determine which player or team has first choice of side, service, or receive. (Example: Write a 1 or 2 on the back of the score sheet.)

## Tips to improve your game

- Listen and accept suggestions when you've violated a rule. It's to your benefit.
- Don't try to serve hard or near the sidelines.
- Loft service returns so they go deep, giving you time to get to the non-volley line.
- Both the serve and serve return must bounce before you may hit the ball, so remain at or behind the baseline after serving to receive the third shot.
- Always get to the non-volley line as soon as you can. It's the strongest position.
- Face the player who will hit the ball, not the net. You will be better placed to volley.
- Keep your paddle high and near your chest; your reaction time will be quicker.
- Keep the ball in play - let your opponent make the mistakes. Seventy-five percent of all rallies are won or lost because of unforced errors, many of them at the baseline.
- Return your baseline shots to the center line as often as you can.
- Use your forehand for power, especially on the serve return. However, developing a good backhand will give you a more complete game.
- Placement is much more important than power; emphasize control over pace.
- Don't try to make a lot of sideline shots; they are low percentage. Hit to open areas (i.e., hit it where they aren't).
- Note if your opponent is right or left handed. Avoid hitting to an opponent's strong side.
- Don't take your partner's shots away by crowding their position. Move to the centerline when your partner moves to the sideline to return a shot.
- Learn to dink the ball proficiently, both cross court and straight across the net.
- Understand when to hit the ball hard or softly.
- Don't try to make a "kill" shot unless it's really there to make.
- Watching your opponent's paddle hit the ball let you know how fast the return will be and where it will be directed.
- Hit the ball to your opponent's feet or backhand.
- Develop a drop shot (just over the net) from the baseline. This is an important shot when your opponent(s) are at the non-volley line. Don't use it when your opponents are near the baseline; keep them deep.
- Have friends hit difficult shots to you and practice returning them.
- Look for patterns in your opponent's play that expose weaknesses. Sometimes you can observe these "tells" during pre-game warmups.
- When your opponent is about to hit the ball, stop moving and assume the ready position. It's much easier to hit the ball under control if you are stationary and balanced.