

# The Ultimate Beginner's Guide To Pickleball

A Publication of Amazin' Aces Pickleball



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## Chapter One

# Introduction

*A warm welcome and a sincere thanks from your friends at Amazin' Aces.*

# Hello Pickleballin' Friend!

Thanks for your purchase of our Amazin' Aces pickleball gear. We hope you are pleased with the products and service provided.

New to pickleball? If so, a warm welcome to this incredible sport. Prepare to become a pickleball addict! Pickleball is a wonderful blend of fitness, social interaction, and FUN. Once you play, it is easy to see why pickleball is said to be the fastest growing sport in the United States. We hope you get as much enjoyment from the game as we do.

We've created this e-book to help new players get acclimated to the game. Experience is a great teacher but it is very helpful to have a working knowledge of the rules, basic strategies, and common mistakes made by new players. This guide is also intended to help experienced players take their game to the next level by staying grounded in the fundamentals.

One of the reasons pickleball is such an awesome game is because it requires much more than athleticism to excel. Strategy, shot placement, and mastery of the fundamentals will take you far in this game and can more than equalize sheer athleticism. We hope this e-book provides you great tips that you can put to use next time you're on the court.

We want to offer our sincere thanks for being a customer. We are a small family run business with a huge passion for pickleball. Without customers like you we wouldn't be here today. THANK YOU! If anything is not quite right with your order please let us know so we can make it right. You can reach customer support at [info@amazinaces.com](mailto:info@amazinaces.com).

Lastly, please consider leaving a brief review online and also telling your friends about your experience with our company. Happy pickleballers sharing their experience with our products and service is the best compliment we can receive. We can't thank you enough for the support!

Happy Pickleballing & We'll See You On the Court!

*- Paul and the Amazin' Aces Team*

**P.S. SHARE THE LOVE:** Share a photo of you/your group having a blast with your Amazin' Aces gear! Share on Facebook or Instagram using hashtag #pickleball for a chance to win a free paddle!





## Chapter Two

# The History of Pickleball

*Learn about how this wonderful game was invented!*



# The History of Pickleball

## Pickleball in 1965

Have you ever been cooped up in a house or cabin with a handful of stir crazy kids? Have you thought of a creative solution or even invented a game to keep the kids occupied? That is exactly the situation that occurred in 1965 when pickleball first began. Three dads (Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum) encouraged their kids to go burn off some energy playing on a badminton court with some ping pong paddles. The kids had a lot of fun. The next day Barney McCallum used a band saw to create a pickleball paddle. They then lowered the net, used a wiffle type ball, and started discussing scoring and other nuances of the game. And just like that pickleball was born!

A key aspect of creating pickleball was to ensure it could be fun for all ages and ability levels. There were entire families playing the game and significant age differences between the players. Because of this, the inventors sought to ensure that the biggest or fastest players couldn't dominate the game. Balance was key in terms of the rules and the equipment selected. This is why the double bounce rule and non-volley zone was created. It was also created as a social game used for entertainment and family fun. The rules and spirit of the game remain very similar to when pickleball was first created that one fateful date in 1965.

## Why Is It Called Pickleball?

“Pickleball” is a funny and unique name that leaves lots of folks wondering where it came from. Accounts differ on the origins of the name. One such account states the game is called pickleball after the Pritchards' family dog Pickles. Pickles was said to chase after the ball and have a lot of fun while the players played the game. The name has stuck and now everyone refers to the game as pickleball.

## Pickleball Today

Pickleball has exploded in popularity since 1965. Today there are said to be over 2.5 million players in the United States. Communities and rec centers continue to add courts to support the influx of new players. The same tenants that helped launch the game in 1965 are present today. Pickleball remains a wonderful blend of social interaction, fun, and physical activity.

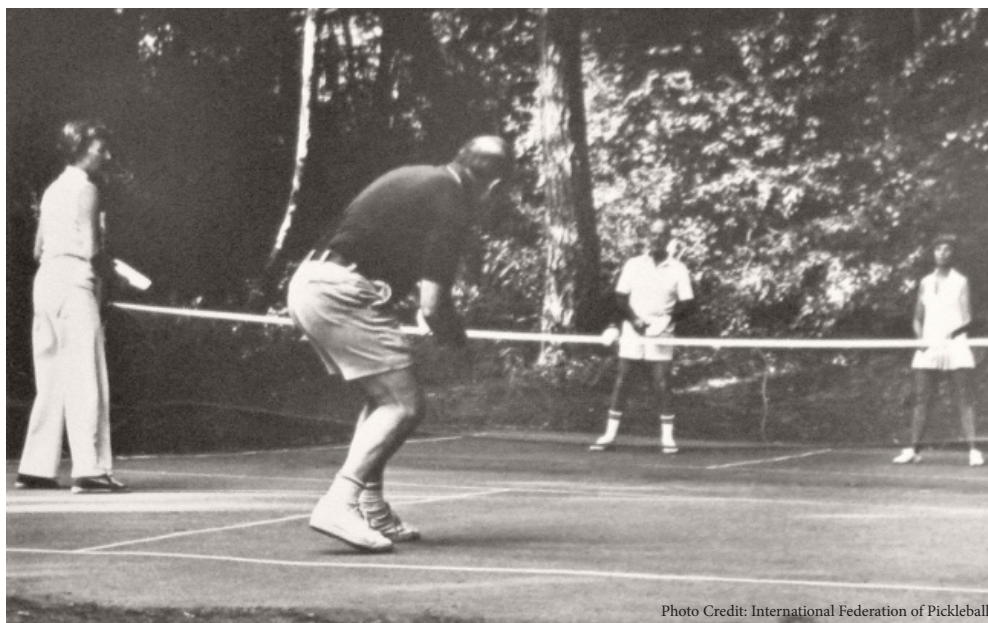


Photo Credit: International Federation of Pickleball

The very first pickleball court being used by the families on Bainbridge Island, WA.

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## Chapter Three

# Your First Time Playing Pickleball

*What to expect when you hit the court.*





# First Time Pickleballers: What To Expect

Before showing up the first time, it will be helpful if you have a basic understanding of how the game is played and set some expectations. Here are a few pointers for individuals looking to pick up a paddle for the first time.

## Rules

- It's helpful to have a basic understanding of the rules and scoring before you hit the court. That said, don't hesitate to ask other players for help. In chapter four we'll dive deeper into the rules.

## Equipment

- All you need to get started is a paddle, a pickleball, comfortable clothes and shoes, and a place to play. If you're looking for a paddle, check out chapter twelve for help selecting the right paddle for you.
- Pickleballs are specified for either indoor, outdoor, or indoor/outdoor use. You may want to purchase pickleballs before hitting the court. Many community centers already have pickleballs available.
- Pickleball gets you moving, so wear good comfortable exercise attire. It is also important to wear a supportive pair of shoes since there is a lot of lateral movement required.

## The Players

- In most situations, you'll arrive to an 'open play' scenario. This means people rotate between partners and courts. If there are more players than courts, often a system will be in place to keep track of who is up next. For instance, a few buckets may be set out with players placing their paddle in the bucket. When a court opens up, the four paddles in the next bucket up are next to play.
- Often 'open play' will specify skill levels. Stick to beginner classes or 3.0 and below classes to start. Many places offer beginner classes as well which are very helpful. Refer to chapter 13 for additional details on skill levels.

## Etiquette

- In casual play and beginner play most players' main objectives are to have fun, stay active, and to keep improving. Keep this in mind as you get started. 99% of pickleballers are good natured, easy going on the court, and happy to help.
- If you're playing with or against someone you don't know, introduce yourself before playing. Further, don't hesitate to compliment other players if they hit a nice shot. A positive and communicative environment will make the game more enjoyable.
- In casual settings, players live by the honor system and act as their own referees. Remember that if a ball lands on any part of the line, it is considered "in" and still a live ball. Call in or out verbally or with hand signals. Pointing upward indicates out and signaling with your palm facing the ground means in.
- Always be honest in your calls and respect the calls of your opponent. If you are unsure about a call, consult your partner. If it still isn't clear, the benefit of the doubt generally goes to the hitting team. If you are honest about your calls, your opponent will appreciate it and will be likely to return the favor.
- In a recreational/social doubles game it is generally considered poor form to direct the majority or all of your shots at the lesser skilled or beginner player. Doing so doesn't promote learning and improvement for any of the players.
- Lastly, when a game ends all players typically come to the net, touch paddles, and say "good game" or something similar.

Learning any new skill can sometimes feel intimidating but don't let that stop you. Get out there and start playing and we know you'll fall in love with this wonderful game!



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## Chapter Four

# The Rules of Pickleball

*Before you step onto the court, it's useful to understand the basic rules.*

# Rules of Pickleball

Whether you're an active player or you are just getting your feet wet with the sport, it's always helpful to do a review of the rules of pickleball. Visit [USAPA.org](http://USAPA.org) for the full rulebook.

## Overview

- Pickleball is similar to tennis but played on a smaller court and with different equipment.
- The game is played either as doubles (two players per team) or singles; doubles is most popular.
- The game has become very popular as it beautifully combines fitness, friendship, and FUN!

## Scoring

- Points are scored only by the serving team.
- Games are played to 11 points, win by two.
- The server calls the score before serving.
- The score is called out as three numbers: 1) serving team score 2) receiving team score, and 3) server number (one or two).
- To start a match, the score is called out as “zero-zero-two” (note on the initial serve, only one member of the serving team serves).
- For example, a score of “three-six-two” means the serving team has three points, the receiving team has six, and the server is the second server on the team.
- At the beginning of the game, the player on the right side of the court serves.
- If a point is scored, the server moves to the left side of the court and serves again. The serving team continues alternating as points are scored.
- The receiving team does not alternate sides.
- Read on for more about the service sequence.

## Service Sequence

- Both players on the serving doubles team serve and score points until they commit a fault (the only exception is noted in the next bullet point).
- At the beginning of each new game, only one partner on the serving team serves before faulting, after which the service passes to the receiving team. Subsequently, as noted above, both players serve.
- The first serve of each side-out is made from the right-hand court.
- If a point is scored, the server switches sides and the server initiates the next serve from the left-hand 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.
- The second server continues serving until his team commits a fault 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-hand court and both players on that team have the opportunity to serve and score points until their team commits two faults.

## Serving

- The serve must be made underhand.
- Paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist (belly button level).
- The serve is made diagonally cross court and must land within the confines of the opposite diagonal court.
- Only one serve attempt is allowed, except in the event of a “let” (ball touches net and lands in proper court).

## Double-Bounce Rule

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

## Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)

- This zone is also known as the “Kitchen”.
- The non-volley zone is the court area within seven feet on both sides of the net.
- 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, when volleying a ball, the player steps on the non-volley zone, including the line and/or when the player's momentum causes them to touch the non-volley zone including the associated lines.
- A player is allowed to enter the non-volley zone anytime other than when volleying the pickleball.



## Chapter Five

# The Fundamental Shots

*Check out our tips for learning and practicing the key shots: the serve, volley, dink, ground stroke, and drop.*

# Serving



Hitting a consistent serve can be a challenge for beginner pickleball players. Here are some helpful tips to help you make your serve more effective.

## Rules

- Contact between the paddle and ball **MUST** be below your waist. Again, no tennis type serves or pseudo-underhand serves where you come around the side of your body and make contact above the waist.
- Foot Faults: Both feet **MUST** be behind the baseline for the serve. Neither foot may touch the baseline or the court area until **AFTER** the ball is struck.
- Unlike tennis, you only receive one chance to get your serve in without faulting. The only exception is a 'let'; this is where the ball touches the net but lands in the service court. In this case you may take the serve again.

## Mechanics

- Do **NOT** rush your serving motion. This is a common mistake - a natural and easy motion is most effective.
- A underhand "bowling" motion is the proper motion. The motion should be smooth and natural,

transferring your weight from back to front.

- Look up and pick the spot you want to aim for on the other side of the court, mentally locking it in. From there, keep your head down focusing on the ball and paddle impact. Similar to golf, pick your spot and then keep your head down through impact.
- Drop the ball right in front of the paddle so you don't have to swing too far.
- Your lead shoulder (i.e. the left shoulder for right handed players) is where the ball will travel. So aim your shoulder in the direction of the target.

- The swing doesn't stop at impact. Instead it is important to follow through with your finish at approximately shoulder height.

## Strategies

- When you are starting out, the most important factor is simply to get your serve in. Once you get better you can focus more on velocity, spin, and placement.
- Mix up your serves (velocity and location). It makes sense to mix up your serves, but keep in mind short serves make it easier for the receiving team to come to the net. As such, the bulk of your serves should be deep. If you serve to the same location with the same velocity repeatedly you become very predictable giving an advantage to your opponent.
- Serve to the backhand of your opponents. In general, people are weaker on their backhands. A deep firm serve to your opponent's backhand is the go-to option for many players.
- As your game progresses, practice sharp angle serves, heavy spin serves, and other non-standard serves on the practice court. These often have a lower probability of going in but can be effective to mix in if you are proficient at executing them.

# Volleying

## Rules

- A volley is simply a ball hit out of the air that hasn't bounced.
- You cannot hit a volley while standing inside of, on the line of, or moving into the non-volley zone (also known as the kitchen).
- It's a fault even if you hit a volley outside the kitchen but your momentum carries you into the kitchen.

## Mechanics

- Keep your knees bent and your paddle at a ready position so you can anticipate either a backhand or forehand volley.
- Watch the ball come off the other person's paddle and watch it hit the center of your paddle as you hit.

- Think of yourself as a wall when you volley. You can push your shots with some force when you hit volleys but do not swing hard at the ball. This can lead to erratic and unnecessary shots.

## Strategies

- Once you have the opportunity, move up to the non-volley zone. It is advantageous to be positioned at the NVZ line as soon as possible.
- Primarily aim cross court with your volleys, but mix up your shots to keep your opponents on their toes.
- Try to hit your volleys low and at the toes of your opponent, forcing them to return the ball at a poor angle.
- After you hit, get back in a central and ready position to prepare for the next shot.

# Dinking

## What Is A Dink Shot?

- A soft and controlled shot that is intended to move downward shortly after it clears the net, landing in the non-volley zone (ideally at your opponents feet).
- Generally utilized when standing at or near the non-volley zone.
- This slow moving shot oftentimes forces players to hit their return at a poor upward angle.
- The dink shot is heavily utilized by many of the best pickleball players in the game.

## Mechanics

- Try not to make it all about your arms. Bend your knees and get low so you can "lift" the ball up with finesse on your swing.

- Don't swing and follow through too hard. Much like the volley, this shot does not require much follow through. It just needs enough power to clear the net and drop. Instead, use that extra time to get back in position.

## Strategies

- Remain patient. Consistent dinking can either cause an unforced error by your opponent or cause them to pop the ball up, allowing you to go for a smash.
- Go cross-court with your dink shot. Hitting cross-court has two big advantages:
  1. The shot travels a greater distance which allows for more reaction time for your next shot.
  2. It can bring your opponent out wide on the court, leaving an opening in the middle to hit a winner.

# Ground Strokes

Consistent execution of ground strokes is important in pickleball. The backhand can be especially difficult for some, but it is crucial to strengthen this weakness and work to have a backhand that is just as reliable as your forehand.

## Mechanics

- Start in the ready position when be ready to adjust to both forehand and backhand when awaiting the next shot.
- Once you recognize which side you'll need to hit from, bring your paddle back as you are moving to the ball. Doing this will cause your body to naturally shift your weight and get into a hitting position.
- Keep your eyes on the ball throughout the entire shot until you are following through.
- Initial contact with the ball should be out in front of you and parallel to your knees. Hitting too early or too late can lead to faults so work on making contact at that sweet spot.

## Utilizing Spin

- Topspin is the first type of spin you can work into your ground strokes. This shot travels lower and faster off the bounce which can keep your opponents deep. This technique is much easier on your forehand side and requires changing your swing from a flat one to one that is a low-to-high arc with your paddle face angled slightly forward to create the spin.
- Similar concepts apply for creating backspin. Angle the top of your paddle slightly back and make the arc of your swing more high-to-low. Backspin makes the ball move unexpectedly slow and could be compared to a changeup pitch in baseball. It is a good change of pace shot that can force an error by your opponent.

## Strategies

- The number one goal when you are hitting ground strokes is to keep your opponent deep in their own court. Keep this in mind and look to always hit your shots deep. If you are playing doubles, also look to hit your ground strokes down the middle, thereby splitting your opponents.

# Drop Shot

Similar to the dink, the drop shot is a soft low bouncing shot that drops into your opponent's non-volley zone. The difference between the two is that the drop shot is hit from deep in the court. This shot is often the "third shot" of choice for skilled players because if executed correctly it is very effective. It is more difficult to learn than other shots but is rewarding once you're able to use it in gameplay.

## Mechanics

- Hit the ball underhand with a soft touch out in front of your body. Try to arc your shot so the ball is at its highest point before crossing over the net. This should allow it to drop nice and shallow inside the non-volley zone. Getting the trajectory right will take many repetitions and adjustments so keep practicing.

- Stay low with your knees bent and "lift" the ball with your paddle angled up enough to get the arc you need.
- This shot requires finesse, so adjust your positioning, paddle angle, and swing to what feels comfortable and allows you to hit the best drop.

## Strategies

- Keep your drop shot relatively low, but be sure to at least clear the net. Better to have too high of a shot than one that falls into the net and ends the point.
- Move toward the net as quickly as possible after hitting the shot. A well-executed drop should give you time to move up to the non-volley line.
- Once you've moved up, look for the opportunity to hit a winner. Oftentimes this shot can force the opponent to return the ball at a high angle, allowing for an easy winner.



## Chapter Six

# Doubles Strategy

*Learn how to play smart and consistent  
doubles pickleball.*





# Doubles Strategy



Doubles is by far the most popular way to play pickleball. It is incredibly fun and highly strategic. In this section we'll review some key strategies to help you play winning doubles pickleball.

It is important to remember in doubles pickleball you always want your team to be at the net (non-volley zone line or NVZ) while keeping your opponents away from the net. This is the dominant position in pickleball!

Why is this true? You apply incredible pressure to your opponents if you are at the NVZ while they remain pinned deep. When pinned deep, it takes major skill to consistently hit properly executed drop shots into the kitchen. Often your opponent will hit the ball too high or too deep and you'll be there to smash their return or place it in a spot where they cannot reach it, so get to the net as soon as you can! Many of these tips support this strategy.

## 1. Avoid Service Faults

Pickleball points are rarely won or lost on the serve. That is why it is important to focus on consistently getting your serve in. A deep serve is better than a shallow serve as it can make it harder for your opponent to get to the net.

## 2. Return Serves Deep & Down The Middle

You do not want to return the serve short as this makes it easy for your opponents to get to the net. Instead, keep them back with a deep return. A return down the middle is a high probability shot and can cause confusion between the two players. If you are in a competitive game, you may choose to shade the service return toward the weaker player.

## 3. Charge to the NVZ After Returning The Serve

Again, winning pickleball is played from the NVZ line. Hitting a deep return of serve will give you more time to get to the net. After you make the shot, move as quickly as you can to the NVZ. You and your partner will now form an intimidating wall as your opponents try to execute the all important third shot.

## 4. Make A Smart Third Shot

The third shot is where things really start to get interesting in pickleball. If one or both opponents has not come to the net, keep them pinned back with a deep return near their feet. Most players will come to the net. In this case, the ideal third shot is a drop shot into the kitchen. Executing this shot has two benefits:

- 1) it doesn't allow your opponents to smash the ball and easily win the point
- 2) it allows you time to get to the net where you can equalize the play.

Hitting a great third shot takes practice and can be difficult for new players to master. If you're not a pro at this shot yet just do your best to hit a slow and low shot down the middle of the court. If you can get to the net after your third shot, do so!

## 5. Become A Master At The Net

The dink shot is the likely next shot if you've played a well executed third shot and charged the net. Dinking ability is very critical in pickleball. We recommend you dink conservatively and wait for your opponent to make an error. Do not give you opponent a high ball as they will likely go for a smash or body shot. Peppering your opponent with short and low dinks (especially to their backhand) will eventually cause them to hit up on the ball giving you an opportunity to put away the point. As you progress, you can work on moving your opponents around the court with the dink. For instance, you can dink cross court and out wide in hopes of opening up the middle of the court.

## 6. Stay "Linked" To Your Partner

Your opponents will always be looking for a gap between you and your partner. If a shot moves your opponent out wide, you need to move with your partner to help cover the middle of the court. You should be re-positioning with each shot.

## 7. Hit Softly When Hitting "Up" on the Ball | Hit Powerfully When Hitting "Down" on the Ball

Hitting up on the ball with pace likely means you are elevating the ball. Elevating the ball like this often means you are setting up your opponents for a prime smash opportunity. If you must hit up on the ball, do so softly. A slow and low defensive shot is typically the optimal play when you must hit up on the ball. Conversely, when you can hit down on the ball you can use power to put stress on your opponents. That leads us into our next point...

## 8. Take Advantage of the Opportunity to Put Away a Point

We stressed earlier the importance of keeping the ball down thereby not giving your opponent a shot they can easily hit down on. The flip side to this is when you're presented with a high ball while at the net you take full advantage of the mistake. This is your opportunity to put more drive on the ball and hopefully win the point. Remember, placement is still incredibly important. If you hit the ball with power but your placement is poor you'll often find the ball coming back at you faster than you sent it out. So increase the power but still be mindful of your placement. Remember, the optimal spot to aim is at the feet and to your opponent's backhand.

## Conclusion

The above tips are generally accepted as sound pickleball strategy but they are not absolutes. There is no one size fits all approach in pickleball. Know your strengths and weaknesses and those of your opponents and adapt your game based on them. Further, knowing the optimal play and executing it are two different things. We would all love to execute the perfect third or fifth shot drop each and every time but of course it doesn't always work out that way! Take time practicing your serves, service returns, third shot drops, lobs, and dinks. If you can pair sound strategy with consistent execution of the fundamental shots you will take your game to new heights!



## Chapter Seven

# Singles Strategy

*Discover the best strategies for singles, a great way to improve your consistency and endurance.*



# Singles Strategy

Singles pickleball is less popular than doubles but still a ton of fun. In many ways, it is a very different game than doubles. While doubles has long rallies and isn't overly physically demanding, singles is just the opposite. Singles points rarely move beyond the fourth shot and the game itself is exhausting. Typically the serving player will make a winning third shot or they will not execute the passing shot and either get put away on a volley or hit the ball out of bounds.

In this section we'll review some key strategies to help you play winning singles pickleball. Many doubles strategies hold true for singles (avoid service faults, return deep, etc) so we won't repeat them here. Let's instead focus on some of the singles specific strategies:

## 1. Use Your Serve As A Weapon

In doubles the serve is not particularly important and not where points are typically won or lost. However, in singles, a soft or short serve will really put you on the defensive. You need to turn the serve into a weapon otherwise your opponent will be able to very aggressively attack your serve. Practice serving with pace, spin, and placement so you can turn your serve into a weapon.

## 2. Hit To The Corners

In doubles you most often want to hit the ball down the middle as it can cause confusion between partners and because it minimizes the chance of you making an error. In singles you want to hit the vast majority of your shots to the corners. Hitting down the middle makes it too easy for your opponent to make a shot that wins the point or puts you in a high stress situation. Hitting to the corners keeps your opponent on his toes and doesn't let him easily dictate the play. Aim for about a foot inside the sideline to give yourself some cushion.

## 3. Make Your Opponent Move

Which corner to hit to? Hit to the corner that makes your opponent move the most or keeps him most off balance. It is harder to execute a shot when you're on the move as compared to being stationary so keep your opponent moving.

## 4. Control The Net

Like doubles, the player controlling the net will win the bulk of the points. After you return your opponent's serve, we advise immediately charging the net. The attack and volley approach puts major stress on the server. Imagine a situation where you return your opponent's serve by placing the ball in the corner of the court and to his backhand. Next, you charge the net and position yourself in ready position at the NVZ line. You have just put your opponent in a very intimidating situation! They can go for a passing shot (and it better be good or you'll easily a put it away for a winner!) or utilize a drop shot to try and neutralize the play. Both are very difficult shots when on the move and staring down an opponent hugging the NVZ line. If you instead hang back, it is much easier for your opponent to execute a number of shots to get back in the point.

## 5. Execute The Third Shot Pass

Few players can fully cover the net. The third shot pass is a well placed and powerful ground stroke that passes your opponent giving you the point. It takes skill but is often the best option when you are staring down an opponent at the net. The third shot is also where you can execute a drop shot or a lob.

## 6. Ensure You're In Good Shape

Conditioning plays a big role in singles. Often the player with weaker conditioning will tire and their play will become sloppy. If you want to succeed in singles you must be in tip top shape!

Again, there is no one size fits all for singles play. These strategies work quite well but you should adapt them for your skill level and the skill level of your opponent. Singles play can also help you become a more effective doubles player so mix it into your routine every so often!



## Chapter Eight

# The All Important 3rd Shot

*Learn the best third shot strategies to help you take control of points.*



# The All Important 3rd Shot

The third shot is oftentimes the most pivotal moment in a pickleball rally because it gives the serving team a chance to move up to the net and control the point. As the name indicates, this shot is the third of the rally and is hit by the serving team after the initial serve and return. Here are some different situational strategies that will help you decide how to utilize your third shot opportunity.

## The Drop Shot: Use When Opponents Are At Net

- The drop is by far the most commonly used third shot as it is very effective in neutralizing the play. Most high skill level pickleballers choose the drop as their default third shot.
- This is the most effective strategy to use when the other team has already moved up to the net and you are still pinned deep. If your shot lands in the opponent's kitchen, it will extend the point and give you time to move up and start dinking.

## Ground Strokes: Use When Opponents Are Deep

- A deep ground stroke is the best shot to use if the other team is still deep in their own court after returning the serve. Don't worry about power, just hit a solid and well placed shot to keep them deep. Remember to always be looking for opportunities to pin your opponent deep and get yourself up to the net.
- In doubles, place your shot down the middle and preferably to the backhand of the weaker player if both players have remained deep. If one player has come to the net, return to the player who is still at the baseline.

In singles, you can look for winner opportunities down the sidelines, but be wary that it is a lower percentage shot. Otherwise, it is smart to hit a deep shot to your opponent's feet or backhand to keep them off balance.

## The Lob: Use When Opponents Are Net

- Although it is not usually the best option, sometimes the lob can be utilized as a third shot that will help push a team that is already at the net back to the baseline.
- If you are not yet skilled in the drop shot, the lob can be an effective option.
- If facing a difficult return on your third shot, the lob can give you a chance at keeping the point alive. In this case, be in a position to defend after you hit a desperation lob.
- With enough finesse, the lob can also be very effective in getting your opponents deep again while you move up and dominate the net. The shot is more or less effective depending on the quickness of your opponent and wind conditions.





## Chapter Nine

# Top 10 Mistakes Made By Beginners

*Be aware of these common mistakes to help improve  
your game!*



# Top 10 Mistakes Made By Beginner Pickleballers

*Below are the common mistakes that we often see beginner players making. Focus on eliminating these from your game and you'll be a much more effective player!*

- 1.** Miss (fault) on your serve - you can't win the point if you can't get the ball into play!
- 2.** Fault on the return of your opponent's serve. Instead of playing a high percentage return down the middle, you instead go for a low percentage 'hero shot'.
- 3.** Poor court positioning and awareness. Failure to play up at the non-volley zone line and instead staying back near the baseline is the biggest problem we see with new players.
- 4.** Focusing on power at the expense of placement. A shot with normal pace that is well placed can be much more effective than one that is simply powerfully struck.
- 5.** Not letting your opponents out shots go out. Ensure you have court awareness so you don't hit a shot that is headed out.
- 6.** When faced with a difficult shot from your opponent, you try to be too precise with the return. It is better to hit a high percentage shot and make the return. Being defensive is okay!
- 7.** When playing doubles, take the shot on your backhand instead of deferring to your partner and his/her stronger forehand shot.
- 8.** Losing your focus and becoming angry at your partner. A (pickleball) house divided cannot stand!
- 9.** Not focusing on keeping the ball at your opponent's feet as much as possible. A ball in the air that your opponents can hit down on spells trouble so keep the ball low and near their feet.
- 10.** Going for hero shots down the lines instead of simply hitting down the middle of the court between your opponents.



## **Chapter Ten**

# **Pickleball Injury Prevention**

*Read about how to be proactive and prevent injuries  
so you can keep playing!*



# Injury Prevention



Can you get hurt playing pickleball? Absolutely. There seems to be a myth floating around that pickleball is such a benign sport that you can't get hurt playing. This is simply not true. Slips and falls, pickleball elbow (aka tennis elbow), pulled muscles - the list goes on and on. So how can we avoid injury while playing the great game of pickleball?

## Always Warm-Up

A good warm-up should last about 10 minutes and mirror many of the common moves you'll make while playing pickleball. Slowly jog around the court, shuffle side to side, and run (very carefully) backwards. Stretch your arms, legs, neck, and back. The old expression 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' holds true here. Invest in your warm-up time and make it part of your pickleball routine - it could make all the difference in preventing a pickleball injury. Continue on to the next chapter for a more detailed warm-up routine.

## Wear Good Shoes

Having the right gear goes a long way in helping avoid injury. Break in new shoes around the house before you hit the court. Shoes should fit right and provide the proper traction and support. Wearing the right shoes will also help with our next tip, balance.

## Practice Balancing

Falling on the pickleball court is a real risk. There are ample opportunities for a fall to occur whether it be a result of sudden movements reacting to a shot, two partners going for the same ball and trying to avoid a collision, or reacting to a lob over your head and moving backwards. The better balance you possess the better chance you can avoid taking a fall. There are some simple exercises you can perform to improve your balance. One we like is leg raises while holding onto a sturdy chair. Standing on one leg for 15 to 30 seconds can really help build your balance which will carry over to the pickleball court.

## Know Your Limits

It is easy to get carried away as the game of pickleball is incredibly addictive. However, many injuries happen when we push ourselves past our limits. When you're starting out you need to listen to your body and respect your physical limitations. If you are overly fatigued take a break or pick the game up another day.

## Get Proper Rest

Many seasoned pickleball players play nearly every day. If you're just starting out that may be too much for you. It is so important to get your body proper rest between games or practices. Listen to your body - if you have any pain or soreness let it subside before getting back on the pickleball court. Eat right, get good sleep, and rest up between games. That will go a long way in allowing you to play pickleball for years to come.

## Learn To Say "No"

Pickleball is fun and addicting. Many people play multiple times per week. The game is as much of a social activity as it is a fitness activity. It can be difficult to say "no" to your friends or pickleball group when you receive that phone call or text message asking you to play. If you're nursing an ailment or just need more time to recover from the last time you played don't be shy in saying "no". We all like to socialize with friends and hate to miss out on anything. Listen to your body. If you're not feeling up to it take a rain check!

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## Chapter Eleven

# Pickleball Warm Up Routines

*Try out some of our favorite warm up routines to get  
you ready for play.*

# Warm-Up Routines

*Warming up decreases your chance of injury and will enhance your performance on the courts.*

## Loosen Up Your Body

Start the warm up process by loosening up your joints and muscles. Reach up and touch the sky. Do a few gentle twists, lunges, bends to gently loosen the back, hips, arms, & legs. Raise up on your tip toes.

When we start our warm up, we're simply performing a handful very basic movements to begin loosening up the body. At this point your muscles are cold so don't push it. You don't want to "stretch" just yet as this should be done only after your body is a bit more warmed up.

Take time to "check in" with your body to see how it feels. Notice any areas of tension or soreness so you can ensure you properly stretch and loosen through the rest of your warm up.

## Go For A Jog

After a walk and initial loosening up, its good to take a brief jog to get the heart rate elevated. Increasing the heart rate switches on the nervous system and tells your body to prepare for action. Typically this is just a 5 minute jog around a nearby park or open space. If indoors you can jog around the gym or even use an exercise bike.

You don't need to push yourself too hard, just enough to get the heart rate elevated. Sometimes it is good to work in "mini-sprints" where you increase the speed for a short stretch. This simulates the short lived but fast movement that often occurs in play.

## Stretch

Next, it's helpful to perform dynamic stretching which involves continuous movement through a range of motion as opposed to holding static. Big arm circles, leg kicks, body weight squats, core twists, knees to chest, and touching the toes to touching the sky. are all good exercises. Dynamic stretching is believed to be more

effective than holding one stretch for an extended period of time. If you can warm up and stretch daily (even on non-pickleball days) it will help with injury prevention

## Try Balance Exercises

Losing your balance and falling over is a common way we've seen pickleballers get injured. This often happens when backing up for a ball. These situations most commonly arise on lob shots over your head. You can perform balance exercises to help prepare your body for these shots. A good way to do this is by balancing on one leg (hold onto something sturdy to get your balance if necessary). Further, you can try walking backwards to simulate backing up on for a lob.

## Partner Warm-Ups

Next, take a few minutes working through all the various shots you'll encounter in the game. We usually start up at the net with dinks and soft shots and gradually move back. Practice a few lobs and shots above your head. Simulating the shots and movements at a non-game speed will help get your body ready for play.





**Chapter Twelve**

# **Pickleball Paddle Guide**

*What paddle is right for your game?*





# Selecting A Paddle

Selecting a new paddle can at times feel overwhelming. We're here to help demystify the process!

The next page provides a helpful snapshot of our paddle lineup. Whether you are a beginner or a tournament player, we have a paddle that will work for you. Below we explain in greater detail some of the key criteria when selecting a paddle.

The initial criteria that we recommend reviewing when selecting a paddle is price, weight, and USAPA approval status.

## Price

Paddles can range anywhere between \$15 and \$100+. Wood is the cheapest material and non-wood composite paddles are more expensive. If your goal is to simply get a flavor of the game, we recommend starting with wood. If you progress with pickleball you will definitely want to upgrade to a composite paddle. This is what you see 95% of pickleball players using. We firmly believe a high quality paddle with cutting edge technology doesn't have to be expensive. We price most of our paddles below \$60. Value (great price AND great quality) is extremely important to us so that everyone can have access to the game of pickleball.

## Weight

We've seen paddles that range from 6 oz to 14 oz. A heavier paddle will help you put more drive on the ball while a lighter paddle will give you more touch and control. A heavier paddle will also increase arm fatigue; if you've had any previous arm or shoulder injuries you may wish to go with a lighter paddle. ~8 oz is considered middleweight. Anything above 9 oz is generally considered to be on the heavy end of the spectrum and anything below 7 oz is considered to be lightweight. Personally we like a paddle in the 8 oz range as we find it is the sweet spot of power and touch. Paddle weight is largely personal preference so experiment with a few paddles to see which one feels best to you.

## USAPA Approval

If you will be playing in a USAPA sanctioned tournament you will be required to use a USAPA approved paddle. Paddles with the "USAPA Approved" seal have undergone lab testing to ensure size, deflection, and roughness specifications are met. Many casual players do not play in sanctioned tournaments so there is no need to limit your search to USAPA approved paddles as often they are more expensive. The absence of this approval does not mean a paddle is of low quality or not in spec. In fact, all our paddles are designed to meet USAPA specs. If you are a tournament player we have a few USAPA approved paddles to choose from (Signature, Cambria, & Emerald).





The next criteria to be aware of is the different materials that comprise a paddle. More specifically we're referring to the core and the surface. We'll also touch on edge guards.

## Paddle Surface Types

- **Wood:** Wood surface
- **Composite:** Fiberglass or fiberglass/graphite blend surface
- **Graphite:** Graphite surface. Good power and touch
- **Polycarbonate:** Synthetic resin surface. Durable and light

## Paddle Core

- **Wood:** A wood core, usually a multiple-ply wood. Heavier than other cores with less 'playability'. Great for beginners.
- **Polymer:** The most popular core. A honeycomb core made from an advanced plastic blend. Offers great touch and plenty of power. Polymer is the quietest core which makes it a great choice for playing in residential communities.
- **Aluminum:** A honeycomb core made of aluminum, strong and light. Known for excellent touch and feel.
- **Nomex:** A honeycomb core usually made of DuPont Nomex® paper coated with a heat resistant resin. One of the original cores. Has a lot of 'pop'. Becoming less popular.
- **Composite:** A core made up of multiple materials which could have various resins, carbon fiber, fiberglass.

Keep in mind that paddle cores degrade over time and can develop dead spots. Your frequency of play will impact lifespan but a good paddle should last you at least one year.

## Edge Guard

- **Edge Guard:** An edge guard is a piece of material wrapped around the paddle face edge to keep the paddle from chipping but creates a slight lip around the edge of the paddle and may create a miss hit if hit
- **No Edge Guard:** A paddle that does not have an edge guard and therefore has a consistent flat surface providing the widest possible playing surface without the risk of a miss hit ball.

## Final Thoughts

If you need help picking out a paddle you can always email us at [info@amazinaces.com](mailto:info@amazinaces.com). We'd be happy to help you out. Lastly, at Amazin' Aces we work hard to produce awesome paddles and provide top notch customer service. If you've purchased one of our products, please considering leaving a brief review online to share your experience with our products and service. These reviews and shares with friends and family are the best compliments we can receive. Thank you for supporting us and the game of pickleball!

# Pickleball Paddle Guide

| Paddle   | Summary  | Weight | Core                 | Edge Guard  | USAPA Approved  |
|--|--|--------|----------------------|---|---|
|  <p><b>Wood</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great for beginners</li> <li>• An inexpensive way to learn the game</li> <li>• Includes bag &amp; balls</li> </ul>                                      | 10.0   | Wood                 |   |   |
|  <p><b>Graphite</b></p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great value for a polymer core paddle</li> <li>• Awesome power</li> <li>• Available as a single or in a set of two</li> </ul>                           | 8.9    | Polymer              |    |   |
|  <p><b>Signature</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style and playability</li> <li>• All around awesomeness</li> <li>• Comes with paddle cover</li> <li>• Premium grip</li> </ul>                           | 8.3    | Polymer              |  |  |
|  <p><b>Bainbridge</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edgeless for maximum hitting area</li> <li>• Aluminum core provides touch and pop</li> <li>• Comes with paddle cover</li> <li>• Premium grip</li> </ul> | 7.9    | Aluminum             |   |   |
|  <p><b>Cambria</b></p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light weight performance</li> <li>• Great blend of touch and pop</li> <li>• Made in the USA for premium performance and durability</li> </ul>           | 7.2    | Advanced Polymer 2.0 |  |  |
|  <p><b>Emerald</b></p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-weight performance</li> <li>• More pop with great touch</li> <li>• Made in the USA for premium performance and durability</li> </ul>                | 8.3    | Advanced Polymer 1.0 |  |  |

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## Chapter Thirteen

# Pickleball Skill Level Definitions

*To know who to compete with and where to improve your game, you must understand your pickleball skill level.*

# Pickleball Skill Level Definitions

*Knowing your numeric pickleball skill level can be a bit tricky when starting out. Read on to find out more where you might fit. After reading the definitions and comparing them to yourself, the best test is simply playing a variety of players, understanding their skill level, and seeing how you stack up!*

## 1.0

- New player with limited knowledge of the game

## 1.5

- Learning the rules, scoring, and generally how to play
- Learning how to serve
- Developing ability to hit a forehand
- Unable to execute simple shots with regularity
- Have taken a beginner lesson or two

## 2.0

- Has participated in novice and beginning skills practice
- Can navigate the court in a controlled and safe manner
- Able to get serves “in” on a semi-regular basis
- Understands aspects of score-keeping, rules and where to stand on the court during serve, receive of serve, and general play
- Has some basic stroke skills, backhand, forehand, volley but has obvious weaknesses
- Understands basic positioning concepts in doubles

## 2.5

- Able to serve “in” fairly consistently
- Knows the ‘two bounce rule’ and demonstrates it most times
- Knows where to stand on the court during serve
- Is mastering keeping score
- Aware of the soft game and occasionally tries to dink
- Working on form for ground strokes, accuracy is variable
- Makes longer lasting slow paced rallies
- Lobs with forehand with varying degrees of success
- Beginning to approach the non-volley zone to hit volleys
- Court coverage is weak but is improving.

## 3.0

- Working to keep the serve and serve receive deep
- Moves quickly towards the non-volley zone when opportunity is there
- Trying to make flatter returns (where appropriate)
- More aware of their partner’s position on the court and moving more as a team
- Developing more power in shots
- Beginning to attempt lobs and dinks with little success and doesn’t fully understand when and why they should be used
- Demonstrates improved skills with all the basic shot strokes and shot placement but lacks control when trying for direction, depth or power on shots

## 3.5

- Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the rules of the game
- Gets high majority of serves “in”
- Able to serve and return serve deep
- Hits to the weak side of opponent often
- Demonstrates more strategies during games
- Works better with partners in communicating, covering court, net play
- With varying consistency executes: lobs, forehand/backhand ground strokes, overheads, net volleys, and sustained dinking
- Starting to use drop shots in order to get to the net
- Knows when to make some specific placed shots in the game
- Working on mixing up soft shots with power shots to create an advantage
- Hits fewer balls out of bounds or in the net
- Dinks mostly in opponents’ kitchen and dinks lower over the net
- Able to sustain dinking in the game
- Has a moderate number of unforced errors

## 4.0

- Has good mobility, quickness, and hand eye coordination
- Poaches effectively
- Knows when to use and can accurately place lobs
- Creates coverage gaps and then consistently hits into these gaps
- Play quite consistently in all phases of the game
- Anticipates opponents shots resulting in good court position
- Primarily plays offensively
- Controls and places serves and return of serves to best advantage
- Puts strategy into play in the game
- Consistently varies shots to create a competitive advantage
- Works and moves well with partner – easily switches court positions when required
- Very comfortable playing at the non-volley zone.
- Works with partner to control the line, keeping opponents back and driving them off line
- Can block volleys directed at them
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward with ease
- Uses strategy in dinking to get a put-away shot
- Consistently executes effective drop shots
- Demonstrates 3rd shot strategies: drop shot, lobs and fast paced ground strokes
- Hits a low number of unforced errors

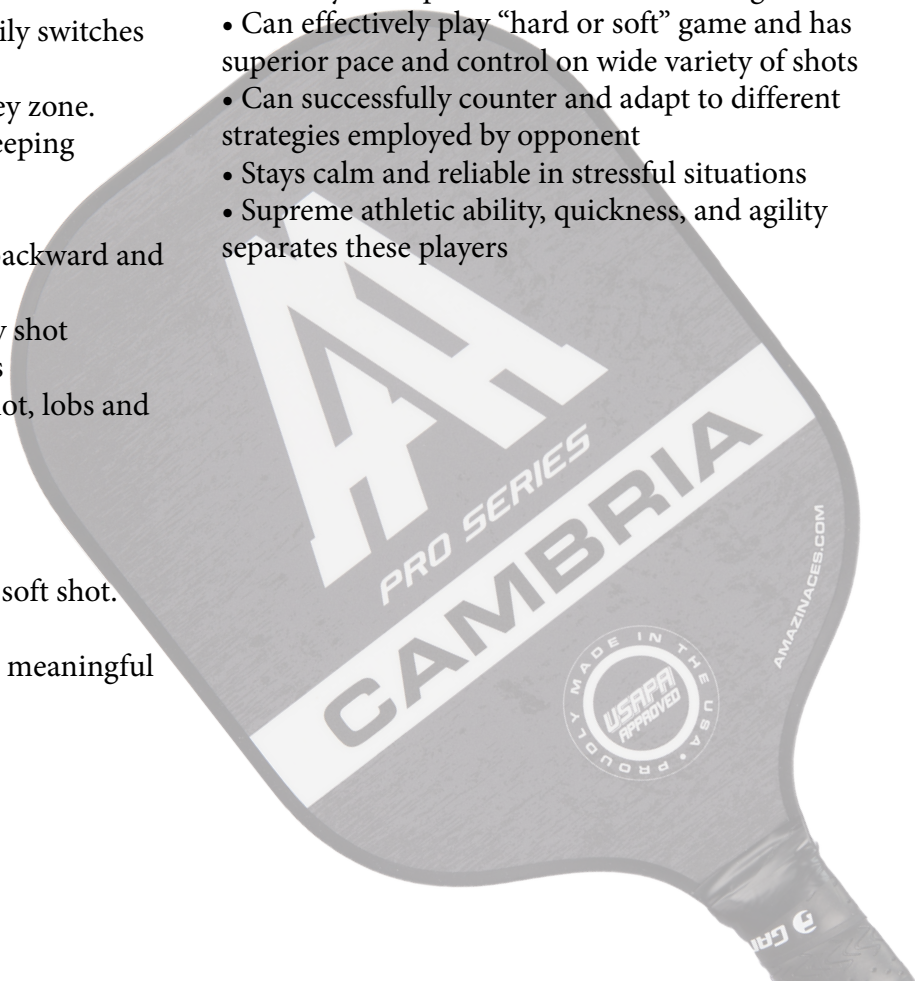
## 4.5

- Able to regularly convert a hard shot to a soft shot.
- Good blocking of power shots
- Has the ability to put spin on the ball in a meaningful way that disrupts opponents

- Exhibits high degree of patience even during prolonged rallies
- Shows noticeably increased skills, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands and movement, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots, anticipation of play, sustained volleying skills, superior put-aways – all with consistency
- Understands strategy and can adjust style of play and game plan according to opponents strength and weaknesses and court position
- Beginning to master dink and drop shots
- Makes very few unforced errors

## 5.0

- Mastery of all pickleball skills and strategies
- Can effectively play “hard or soft” game and has superior pace and control on wide variety of shots
- Can successfully counter and adapt to different strategies employed by opponent
- Stays calm and reliable in stressful situations
- Supreme athletic ability, quickness, and agility separates these players



*It is important to be honest with yourself and your opponents about your true skill level.*



## **Chapter Fourteen**

# **Pickleball Glossary**

*Brush up on common terms used in the  
game of pickleball.*





# Pickleball Glossary

*Pickleball terminology can be tough to pick up on for beginners. Here is a glossary defining the relevant terminology you should know when playing the sport.*

**Ace:** A serve that is not returned by your opponent.

**Ball:** A pickleball is a plastic ball with holes similar to a whiffle ball. Balls vary for indoor and outdoor environments.

**Backhand:** The opposite of a forehand.

**Backspin:** Imparting spin on the ball that causes it to spin in the direction opposite to its flight. Also referred to as a “slice” or “chop shot”.

**Baseline:** The line at the back end of the court (22 feet from the net).

**Carry:** Hitting the ball in such a way that it does not bounce away from the paddle but tends to be carried along on the face of the paddle during its forward motion.

**Court:** The playing surface for pickleball. The dimensions of the court are 44 feet long by 20 feet with (inclusive of lines). The non-volley zone section of the court measures 7 feet on each side of the net. The net height is 36 inches at the posts and 34 inches at the center.

**Cross-court:** The court diagonally opposite your court.

**Dead Ball:** A dead ball is declared after a fault.

**Deep:** The area far into the court near the baseline.

**Dink Shot:** A soft shot that is intended to arc over the net and land within the non-volley zone.

**Double Bounce Rule:** After the serve, each team must play their first shot off the bounce. Subsequent shots can be either played off one bounce, or volleyed out of the air.

**Double Hit:** One side hitting the ball twice before it is returned over net. Double hits may occur by one player or could involve both players on a team.

**Drop Shot:** A ground stroke shot that falls short of the opponent's position.

**Drop Shot Volley:** A volley shot that is designed to “kill” the speed of the ball and return it short, near the net, to an opponent positioned at or near the baseline. This shot is especially effective when initiated close to the non-volley line.

**Fault:** Any action that stops play because of a rule violation.

**Forehand:** A stroke hit on the same side of the body as the hand holding the paddle.

**Ground Stroke:** Hitting the ball after one bounce.

**Half Volley:** A ground stroke shot where the paddle contacts the ball immediately after it bounces from the court and before the ball rises to its potential height.

**Hinder:** Any element or occurrence that affects play.

**Kitchen:** The nickname for the non-volley zone.

**Let:** A serve that hits the net cord and lands in the service court. Let may also refer to a rally that must be replayed for any reason.

**Lob:** A shot that returns the ball as high and deep as possible, forcing the opposing side back to the baseline.

**Non-Volley Zone:** The section of court adjacent to the net in which you cannot volley the ball. Includes all lines surrounding the zone.

**Second Serve:** A term used to describe the condition when a serving team begins the game or subsequently loses the first of its two allocated serves.

**Overhead Slam / Smash:** A hard, overhand shot usually resulting from an opponent's lob, high return, or high bounce.

**Paddle:** The equipment used to play pickleball. Technically, it should be referred to as a paddle and not a racquet. In USAPA sanctioned tournaments, you must



use a USAPA approved paddle (look for the USAPA seal on the face of the paddle).

**Passing Shot:** A volley or ground stroke shot that is aimed at a distance from the player and is designed to prevent return of the ball.

**Permanent Object:** Any object near the court or hanging over the court that interferes with the flight of the ball.

**Poach:** Crossing over into your partner's side of the court to play a ball in doubles.

**Rally:** Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.

**Replays:** Any rallies that are replayed for any reason without the awarding of a point or a side out.

**Service Court:** The area on either side of the centerline, bounded by the non-volley line, the baseline, and the sideline. All lines are included in the service court except the non-volley line.

**Server Number:** Either "one" or "two". Denotes if you are the first or second server for your side.

**Service Side Out Scoring:** You can only register a point if you are serving.

**Side Out:** Declared after one side loses its service and other side is awarded service.

**Technical Foul:** The referee is empowered to add one point to a player's score or a team's score when the opponent violates one of the rules calling for a technical foul or, in the referee's judgment, the opponent is being overly and deliberately abusive.

**Volley:** Hitting the ball in the air, during a rally, before the ball has hit the ground.

# Thanks For Reading & Happy Pickleballing!

For any questions, comments, or assistance shoot us an email at  
[info@amazinaces.com](mailto:info@amazinaces.com).

