

The Rules— In A Nutshell



A Rules Guide for Beginners

Here is a brief, easy-to-follow guide to playing pickleball so you can share your beloved game with family, friends and your community. We picklers all know it's a great way to bring people together. It gets everyone moving, interacting and, most importantly, it's fun! And anybody can play—young, old, athletes, non-athletes—there's a spot for you on the pickleball court!

If you don't have access to an official pickleball court, don't sweat it! Be creative and work with what you've got. People set up nets (or net representations), chalk and tapelines on their driveways, cul de sacs, in parking lots—you name it! A common go-to spot is an unused tennis court. The court specs don't have to be perfect, until you want them to be. Just grab four paddles, a couple of balls and go.

The Rules in a Nutshell

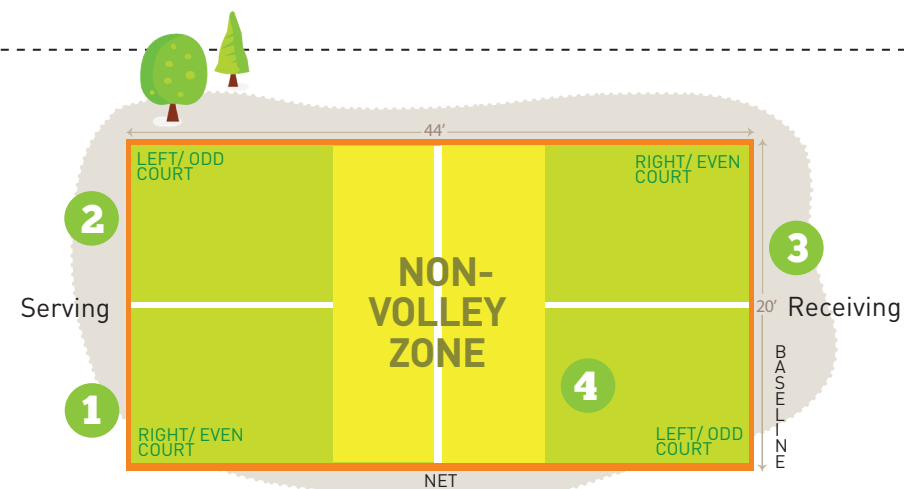
Pickleball is typically a doubles game. It can also be played as singles—the basic rules and playing area are the same.

The Serve

- Serves must be hit underhand, and contact with the ball must be made below the waist.
- You cannot serve off a bounce.
- The serve is initiated with at least one foot behind the baseline; neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.
- The server must call the score before making contact with the ball. The score is called in three numbers: Server score, receiver score, server #1 or #2.
- The serve is made diagonally cross-court and must land within the confines of the opposite diagonal court.
- Only one serve attempt is permitted, except in the event of a let. Let serves are replayed.

Service Sequence

- Both players on the serving team have the opportunity to serve and score points until they commit a fault (except for the first service sequence of each new game).*
- The first serve of each side-out is made from the right/even court.
- If a point is scored, the server switches sides and the server 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.
- After the first server loses the serve, the partner then serves from his/her correct side of the court (except for the first service sequence of a game*).
- The second server continues serving



- until his/her 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/even court and both players on that team have the opportunity to serve and score points until their team commits two faults.
- When playing singles, the server serves from the right/even court when his/her score is even and from the left/odd when the score is odd.

*At the beginning of each new game, only one partner on the serving team has the opportunity to serve before faulting, after which the service passes to the receiving team (side out).

Scoring

- The first team to score 11 points, with a two-point lead, wins the game.
- Matches are usually played two out of three games.
- Points are scored ONLY by the serving team.
- When the serving team's score is even (0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10), the player who was the first server in the game for that team will be in the right/even court when serving or receiving; when odd (1, 3, 5, 7, 9), that player will be in the left/odd court when serving or receiving.

Two-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—two bounces.
- After the two bounces occur, players can hit volleys or groundstrokes.
- The two-bounce rule applies at the start of every point.

Non-Volley Zone (NVZ/Kitchen)

The court area that extends 7 feet from each side of the net.

- Volleying is prohibited within the NVZ.
- You may enter the NVZ any time EXCEPT when hitting a volley.
- It is a fault if, when hitting a volley, you step onto the NVZ (line included) and/or when your momentum causes you to touch the NVZ. "You" includes anything you are wearing/carrying, as well.
- It is a fault if, after hitting a volley, momentum carries you or anything you're wearing/carrying onto the NVZ (line included). It is a fault even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.

Line calls—A ball that lands on any line, except the NVZ line during a serve, is in. If a serve hits the NVZ line, it's a fault. •

Adapted from the official rules/rules summary that can be found on the USAPA's website at usapa.org.

Brighten someone's day—take 'em out for a game of pickleball. Form teams and liven up a family reunion. Get the kids away from their electronics. Invite a few friends over for some fun. Coordinate a get-to-know-your-neighbor and/or club member pickleball tournament.

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.

Some of the most common faults...

- Hitting the ball into the net or out of bounds.
- Hitting a volley from inside the NVZ.
- A player (including clothing, paddle, etc.) touching the net or post when the ball is in play.
- A ball striking a player.
- A ball striking a permanent object before bouncing on the court.
- A serve that doesn't land in the receiver's service court. Serves must clear the NVZ, including the NVZ line.
- Hitting a volley after a serve. A bounce must occur on each side before anyone can hit a volley. (See two-bounce rule.)
- Stepping on the baseline before hitting a serve.
- A server striking the ball before the referee calls the score, in an officiated match.

Pickleball Vocab

Dink—a soft shot hit on a bounce from the NVZ. Dinks are made with the intention of placing the ball in the opposing NVZ either straight across or diagonally crosscourt.

Drop Shot—a soft shot hit off a bounce from deep in the court. It's intended to land in the opposing NVZ.

Fault—any action that stops play because of a rule violation.

Groundstroke—a ball hit after a bounce.

Let on a Serve—when the ball touches the net on a serve but lands in the receiver's proper service court. A serve is replayed in the event of a let.

Lob—a lofted shot that sends the ball high overhead and deep.

Overhead Smash—a hard overhead shot directed downward into the opposing court, usually as a return of an opposing lob, high return or high bounce.

Side Out—when service passes to the receiving team.

Volley—a ball hit in the air before it bounces.