



BEGINNERS
INTRODUCTION TO
RULES,
SKILLS,
AND
GAME STRATEGY

Contents

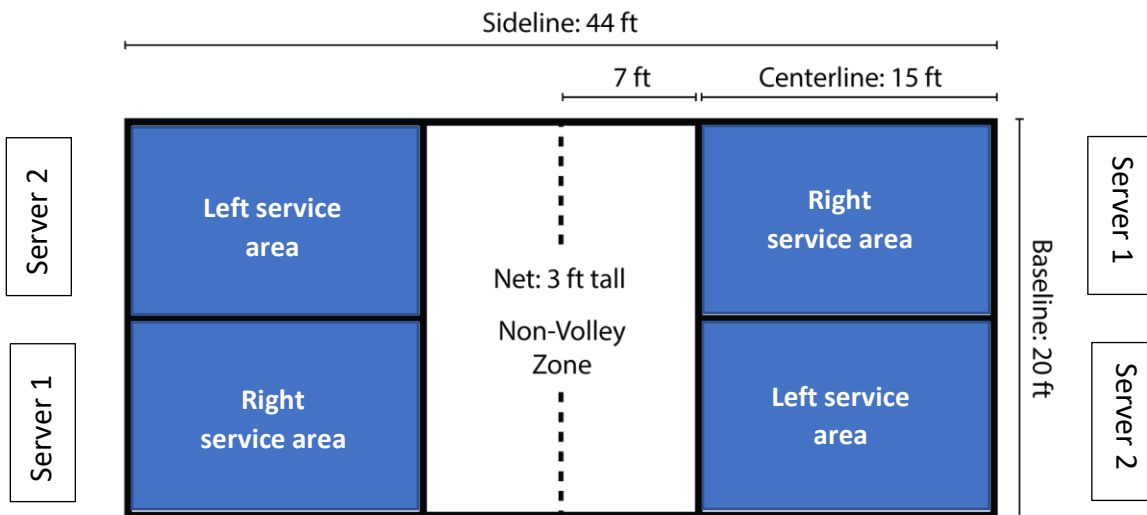
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE	3
THE COURT	3
THE BASICS	3
Pickleball Rules The Definitive Beginner's Resource to How to Play Pickleball	3
THE SERVING PROCESS	4
.....	4
FAULTS	4
SCORING	5
CALLING THE SCORE	5
The Doubles Scoring Confusion	5
THE SHOTS	6
THE DINK	6
Skill Components to Consider for the Dink	6
When Not to Dink	6
THE SERVE	6
THE RETURN OF SERVE	6
THE LONG DINK or THIRD SHOT DROP	7
VOLLEYS	7
THE STRATEGIES	8
OPENING SEQUENCE	8
FURTHER STRATEGIES AND TIPS	8

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide gives you a simple run down of the rules, skills and strategies you can employ when developing your pickleball game.

It includes written descriptions and links for videos if you prefer visual explanations to help you review what you already know and guide you to developing the basics of a sound pickleball game.

THE COURT



THE BASICS

- Pickleball can be played as **singles or doubles**, most commonly as doubles.
- Each point begins with an **underarm serve**
- The **serve is performed diagonally** beginning at the right-hand service square.
- The serve must clear the non-volley-zone
- The **serve must bounce** before being hit by the receiver
- The **return of serve must also bounce** before being hit. } **The 2 bounce rule**
- The **serving position alternates** with each serve **when a point is won.**
- Volleys can only be performed outside of the Non-volley zone (see diagram above)
- Volleys can only be made after the 2 Bounce Rule has been followed.

VIDEOS

[How To Play Pickleball: Part 1 of 3 - Intro & Definitions](#)

[What is Pickleball?](#)

[Pickleball Rules | The Definitive Beginner's Resource to How to Play Pickleball](#)

THE SERVING PROCESS

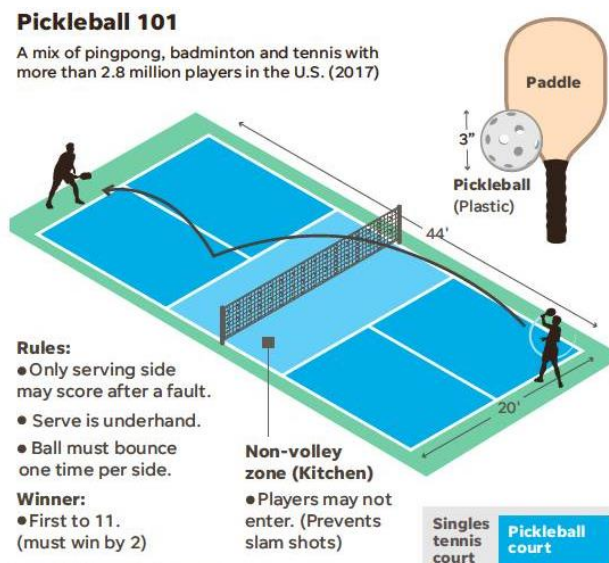
At the **start of each new game**, only one player in the 1st serving team has the opportunity to serve and score points until a fault occurs..

Thereafter both members of each team will serve and fault before the ball is turned over to the opposing team. When a team wins the serve, the player in the right-hand court will always start play.

- Server 1 serves until a point is lost
- Server 2 then repeats this process.

The **first server** is the person standing at the right hand service square.

- One attempt per service.
- The server alternates their position after every serve when a point is won.
- The server continues to serve until they lose a point while serving.
- The **second server** then serves, alternating position until they lose a point on their serve.
- The serve then goes to the opposition.



FAULTS

A fault is any action that stops play due to a rule violation.

A fault by the receiving team results in the servers earning a point

A fault by the serving team results in the server's loss of service and/ or side out.

A fault is committed when the ball:

- touches any part of the non-volley zone (including the line) or is hit out of bounds during the serve
- does not clear the net
- is volleyed from the non-volley zone
- is volleyed before a bounce has occurred on each side
- is hit out of bounds
- strikes a player or a permanent object before bouncing on the court

OR when:

- the player, their clothing or paddle make contact with the net during play
- the player, their clothing or paddle make contact with the NVZ during a volley.

SCORING

- A team shall score a point only when serving.
- The server calls the score.
- A player who is serving shall continue to do so until a fault is made by his/her team.
- The game is played to 11 points, however a team must win by 2 points.
- When playing doubles:
 - Each player on a team shall keep serving until their team makes a fault, then the serve moves to the opposing team - this is called a Side Out.
 - At the **start of each new game**, the 1st serving team is allowed only one fault (**one person serves**).

CALLING THE SCORE

This is often the most confusing part of the game but not difficult and you will master it quite quickly once you have played a few games.

The guidelines for scoring are:

- The server calls the score.
- When calling the score the server's score is called first.
- When playing doubles:
 - The score is called followed by either number 1 or 2 indicating whether Server 1 or Server 2 is serving.
 - E.G. 6 – 4, 1
 - This indicates that the serving team has won 6 points
 - The receiving team has won 4 points
 - 1 indicates the first server is calling – if they lose the point (the team commits a fault)
 - The score becomes 6 – 4 , 2
 - 2 indicates the second server is serving
 - The number 2 being called indicates that when a point is lost (a fault occurs) the ball goes to the other team to begin serving.

The Doubles Scoring Confusion

At the beginning of a doubles game only one team member is given the opportunity to serve.

So when calling their serve it begins as 0 – 0 Start OR 0 – 0, 2

This number 2 being called indicates that after losing their serve the ball goes to the opposition.

VIDEOS

[How To Play Pickleball: Part 2 of 3 - Serving & Scoring](#)

[How To Play Pickleball: Part 3 of 3 - Rules and Gameplay](#)

[Pickleball Scoring](#)

THE SHOTS

THE DINK

Dinking is an effective necessary doubles strategy involving hitting the Pickleball while generally being as close to the kitchen line as possible, and trying to position the ball just over the net and land in your opponent's non-volley zone or at your opponent's feet.

- The aims of the dink are:
 - 1) extend the rally and force you opponent to make the mistake.
 - 2) to force your opponent to 'pop' the ball up so it can be easily put away.
- If your opponent dinks, the highest percentage response is a dink.

Skill Components to Consider for the Dink

For a successful dink keep in mind the following pointers:

- Stay facing the net
- Keep your feet as close to the Non-volley zone as possible
- Meet the ball in front
- Use 'soft hands'
- Arc the ball over the net but with the high point on your side of the net.
- Try to make the dink bounce in your opponent's non-volley zone.
- Volley dink when you can it cuts down your opponents time to react to the shot.

When Not to Dink

The dink is typically a smart and effective shot. However, it is not the most effective strategy when you and your partner are at the net and you have pinned your opponent to the baseline. You have a distinct advantage at this point. Don't negate this advantage for you and your partner. Instead, keep your opponent pinned to the baseline — and don't let him get to the net — you'll increase your chances of winning the point.

THE SERVE

The following are requirements for a legal serve:

- Both feet behind the back line
- Both feet within the width of the sidelines
- At impact the paddle head must be below the wrist.
- At impact the paddle must be traveling in an underarm upward motion.
- The ball must be hit without it bouncing
- Ball and paddle meet below the waist
- A legal serve touching the net is a let
- The most important component of a good serve is to make it as deep as possible.

THE RETURN OF SERVE

The main goal of the return of service is to make it deep to keep the serving team at the baseline and allow the receiver to reach the Non-volley zone (NVZ) line.

Points to remember are:

- Power is not as important as control.
- The serve must bounce before being returned.
- A short return brings the serving team forward, allowing them to reach the NVZ line, negating the receiving team's advantage.

- Wait behind the baseline for the serve in order to permit moving forward to hit the return with momentum.
- The preferred service return stroke is a forehand with a backswing and follow through.
- Step forward and meet the ball in front of the body.
- A shot lofted deep to the opponent's backhand gives the receiver time to reach the NVZ line and keep the serving team back.
- Watch the ball.
- **If you realize you can't make it all the way to the NVZ line before the ball is hit by the opponent, stop and assume the ready position.** Return the ball, then continue to the NVZ line. Stop again if necessary.

THE LONG DINK or THIRD SHOT DROP

The long dink is the most important shot to master in pickleball. This shot is absolutely essential to learn if your quality of play is to improve.

The long dink is simply a dink but from further away with the purpose of:

- 1) dropping the ball over the net or at the opponents feet.
- 2) landing in the NVZ.
- 3) Providing time and the shot for the hitting (usually serving team) to reach the net.

The long dink is a soft shot that arcs upward and lands softly into the kitchen. This will force your opponent to dink the ball instead of drive it.

To complete an effective long dink focus on the following points:

- Hit the ball as it is falling after the bounce, let it come down to your paddle
- Use a short pendulum swing with a smooth follow through.
- Contact the ball in front of you.
- Aim for the apex of the arc of the ball to be on your side of the net, just the same as the dink.

VOLLEYS

To volley means to hit a ball in the air without first letting it bounce.

The following are requirements for a legal volley:

- The player's feet are outside the non-volley zone (seven feet behind the net).
- The player must have both feet grounded outside the non-volley zone before starting the volley.
- No part of the player or their equipment can touch the non-volley zone during or after the volleying movement.
- The line indicating the non-volley zone is part of the non-volley zone.

VIDEO

[The Pickleball Non-Volley Zone Rules Video](#) (Well worth a watch)

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of the shots used in pickleball but rather the most commonly used shots and important for success.

Other shots include: Lobs (offensive and defensive), overhead smash, and driving volleys

Find a complete guide to the rules of Pickleball at: [IFP Official Rules - USAPA Pickleball](#)

THE STRATEGIES

This is a very simple summary of the basic strategies behind an effective game of pickleball. It focusses solely on doubles strategy as this is the most common form of play and differs greatly from singles strategy. A good start is to watch the following video of a single point with a simple analysis of the strategies used to play effective doubles.

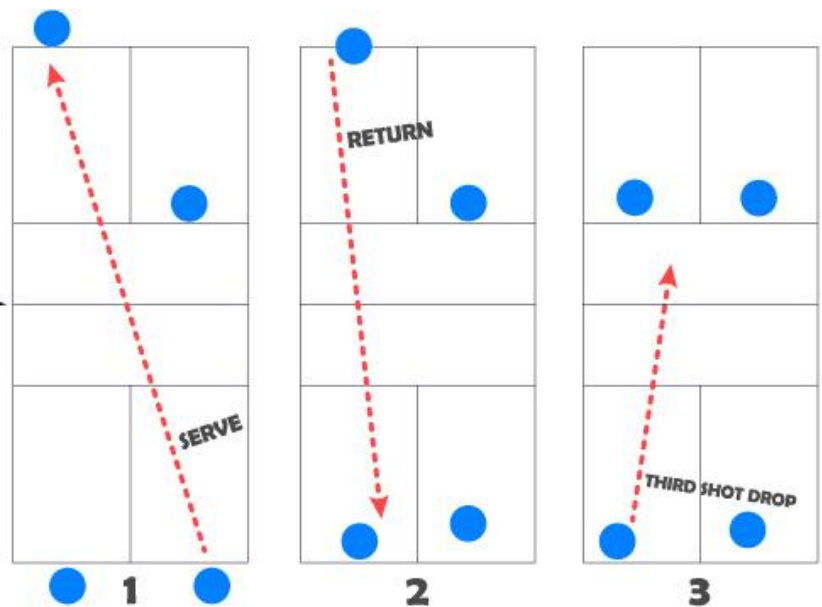
VIDEO

[Single Point Strategy Analysis](#)

OPENING SEQUENCE

The opening sequence strategy for most pickleball points can be seen in the diagram.

1. A deep serve to keep the receiver back as long as possible
2. A deep return which allows the receiving team the advantage of getting to the NVZ line first.
3. The long dink which minimises the opponents attacking opportunities and allows the serving team to also get to the NVZ line.



FURTHER STRATEGIES AND TIPS

Other strategies to get your doubles game improving are:

- Consistent and accurate serving and returning of the ball are crucial if you are to get to the NVZ line and have an impact on the game.
- Allow the forehand player to have primary responsibility for shots coming down the middle
- Anticipation of return shots to cover potential angles
- Use angles, placement and control with your shots over power and speed to achieve success
- Continue to include soft hands and dinks to reset points – See video to understand this fully
- Always face the ball on the other side of the net
- Work to push your opponents back in the court, off the NVZ line
- Play shots down the middle of the court to create confusion between the opponents.

FURTHER VIDEOS

Have a look at [The Pickleball Channel 411](#) for a wide range of videos to help you with the development of your game.

Enjoy and all the best with your game
Cheers Jen