



Pickleball

The Official Special Olympics Missouri Pickleball Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Missouri Pickleball competitions. Special Olympics Missouri has created these rules based upon USA Pickleball (USAP) Rules.

A. Events offered by Special Olympics Missouri

1. Individual Skills Pickleball
2. Doubles Pickleball
3. Unified Doubles Pickleball

B. General Guidelines

1. Court Size

- a. USAP approved regulation court measures 20'x44' and is used for both singles and doubles play with a 7' non-volley zone, (kitchen), in front of the net. The net must rest at 36' on both ends and 34' in the middle. Standard paddles should be used (see below).

2. Equipment

- a. Paddles – Standard USAP approved paddles constructed of wood, graphite, or composite may be use.
- b. Balls – Indoor or outdoor balls may be used based on playing location.

C. Individual Skills - Pickleball

1. Forehand Dink

- a. The athlete stands in the middle of the court at/behind the Kitchen Line with the feeder on the other side of the net in the middle of the court at/behind their respective Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) or more commonly called the Kitchen.
- b. Each athlete is given 10 opportunities to hit a ball safely over the net to land inside the NVZ/Kitchen.
- c. The feeder underhand tosses each ball to the athlete's forehand side inside the NVZ/Kitchen.
- d. The athlete must allow the ball to bounce inside the NVZ/Kitchen before hitting the ball.
- e. The athlete scores 1 point for successfully hitting the ball into the opponent's NVZ/Kitchen.
- f. Total points possible = 10 points

2. Backhand Dink

- a. Same as Forehand Dink except the feeder sends the balls to the athlete's backhand side.
- b. Athletes are given 10 opportunities for the Backhand.
- c. Total points possible is 10 points

3. Forehand Volley

- a. The athlete stands in the middle of the court at/behind the NVZ/Kitchen Line with the feeder on the other side of the net in the middle of the court at/behind their respective NVZ/Kitchen Line.
- b. Each athlete is given 10 opportunities to hit a ball in the air safely over the net before it bounces.
- c. The feeder underhand tosses each ball to the athlete's forehand side without the ball bouncing.
- d. The athlete must hit the ball before it bounces without stepping into the NVZ/Kitchen.
- e. The athlete scores 1 point for successfully hitting the ball over the net in bounds.
- f. Total points possible = 10 points

4. Backhand Volley

- a. Same as Forehand Volley except the feeder sends the balls to the athlete's backhand side.
- b. Athletes are given 10 opportunities for the Backhand.
- c. Total points possible is 10 points.

5. Forehand Third-Shot Drop

- a. The athlete stands in the middle of the court at/near the baseline with the feeder on the other side of the net.
- b. Each athlete is given 10 opportunities to hit the ball safely over the net with the intention of landing their shot within the NVZ/Kitchen.
- c. The feeder throws the ball to the athlete's forehand side with the ball bouncing in front of the athlete.
- d. If the athlete returns the ball so it hits within the NVZ/Kitchen, it is worth 10 points. If the ball hits past the NVZ/Kitchen line in bounds, it is worth 5 points.
- e. Total points possible is 100 points.

6. Backhand Third-Shot Drop

- a. Same as Forehand Third-Shot Drop except the feeder sends the balls to the athlete's backhand side.
- b. Athletes are given 10 opportunities for the Backhand.
- c. Total points possible is 100 points.

7. Forehand Ground Stroke

- a. The athlete stands in the middle of the court at/near the baseline with the feeder on the other side of the net.
- b. Each athlete is given 10 opportunities to hit the ball safely over the net with the intention of hitting it deeper rather than having the ball land within the NVZ/Kitchen.
- c. The feeder throws the ball to the athlete's forehand side with the ball bouncing in front of the athlete.
- d. The athlete attempts to have their return shot hit past NVZ/Kitchen line. If the ball hits past the NVZ/Kitchen line, it is worth 10 points. If the ball lands within the NVZ/Kitchen, it is worth 5 points.
- e. Total points possible is 100 points.

8. Backhand Ground Stroke

- a. Same as Forehand Ground Stroke except the feeder sends the balls to the athlete's backhand side.
- b. Athletes are given 10 opportunities for the Backhand.
- c. Total points possible is 100 points.

9. Deuce Serve

- a. The athlete stands beyond the baseline on the Deuce side of the court (the server's right-hand side as they face the net).
- b. Each athlete will be given 10 opportunities to successfully serve the ball into the Deuce service area (the opposite diagonal court).
- c. The serve must be made underhand with the paddle contacting the ball below the server's waist/navel level, and neither foot may contact or cross the baseline until after the ball is struck.
- d. The ball can, but does not have to, bounce before contact is made during the serve. The ball may not be thrown up in the air or thrown down to bounce off the court. The ball must be dropped.
- e. The ball must make it over the net and land within the diagonal serving area past the NVZ/Kitchen line, and the ball must not touch this line. If the ball touches the baseline, middle service line, or sideline, however, it is a successful serve.
- f. Each successful serve is worth 1 point.
- g. Total points possible is 10 points.

10. Ad Serve

- a. The athlete repeats this process from the Ad side of the court (the server's left-hand side as they face the net) for 10 attempts.
- b. Each successful serve is worth 1 point.
- c. Total points possible is 10 points.

D. Doubles and Unified Doubles - Pickleball

1. Start of Game

- a. The official will write a 1 or 2 on the back of the scoresheet and ask one of the players to pick a number which will determine which player or team has first choice of side, service, or receiving service. Other team gets to choose from the remaining choices.

2. The Serve

- a. The serve must be made underhand.

- b. Paddle contact with the ball must be made below the server's waist (navel level).
- c. The serve must be made underhand with the paddle contacting the ball below the server's waist/navel level, and neither foot may contact or cross the baseline until after the ball is struck.
- d. The ball can, but does not have to, bounce before contact is made during the serve. The ball may not be thrown up in the air or thrown down to bounce off the court. The ball must be dropped.
- e. The ball must make it over the net and land within the diagonal serving area past the NVZ/Kitchen line, and the ball must not touch this line. If the ball touches the baseline, middle service line, or sideline, however, it is a successful serve.

3. Serving Sequence

- a. The first serve is made from the right side of the service court.
- b. Server changes side of service after every point that is won.
- c. In doubles, when starting the game the server will serve until a point is lost, then the opposing team will have their first serving opportunity until a point is lost.
- d. Serve will then continue to go into normal rotation (Server 1 Team A → Server 2 Team A → Server 1 Team B → Server 2 Team B → etc.)
- e. The second server continues serving until his team commits a fault or loses a point to the opposing team.
- f. Once the service goes to the opposition (at side out), the first serve is made from the right/even court and both players on that team have the opportunity to serve and score.
- g. **Unified Doubles Note:** Unified Partners are not permitted to dominate a game. Officials and/or event managers have the authority to issue a warning if they feel a Unified Partner is dominating a game. If the issue persists, the officials and/or event managers have the authority to disqualify a team.

4. Return of Serve

- a. Ball must be returned after a single bounce on the receiving team's side. The serving team must then allow the ball to bounce once before contact can be made.
- b. After the serve and return of service, the ball may be struck before it bounces if behind the NVZ/Kitchen.

5. Faults

- a. A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team.
- b. After the initial service at the start of the game, two faults by the serving team results in the server's loss of serve or side out.
- c. All faults are defined by the USAP.

6. Line Calls

- a. A ball contacting any line is considered "in". The only exception is during a serve, the ball may not make contact with the NVZ/Kitchen line. This will be considered a fault serve.

7. Non-Volley Zone

- a. The non-volley zone, "the kitchen" is the court area within 7 feet on both sides of the net.
- b. Volleying is prohibited within the non-volley zone. This rule prevents players from executing smashes from a position within the zone. Players may not stand in this zone.
- c. A player may step into the non-volley zone if their momentum carries them after hitting the ball below the waist behind the line. If momentum carries the player into the non-volley zone from a hit that is at or above the waist, it will be considered a fault.

8. Scoring

- a. Points are scored only by the serving team.
- b. First to 11 points wins.

9. Competition

- a. Best 2 out of 3 wins the match.
- b. Tie Breakers will be determined in order of Head-to-Head competition, total points for, total points against. If still tied after those three, a single match to 5 points will be played.
- c. Time limits per match can be implemented based on each competition.