

Special Olympics Missouri Pickleball Manual 2024



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SOMO Pickleball Mission

Special Olympics Missouri aims to promote pickleball and include those with intellectual disabilities in this rapidly growing sport. Pickleball is an activity that anyone can participate in and is welcoming to individuals of all ages and abilities.

Rules for Special Olympics Missouri



- Currently, pickleball is not a sanctioned sport nationwide. Meaning, each state has the liberty to adapt their own set of rules up to the state competition level.
- Special Olympics North America (SONA), in conjunction with USA Pickleball (USAPA), has published guidelines for court dimensions and rule modifications. However, we have elected to utilize the rules that preserve the game of pickleball in its truest and most traditional form.

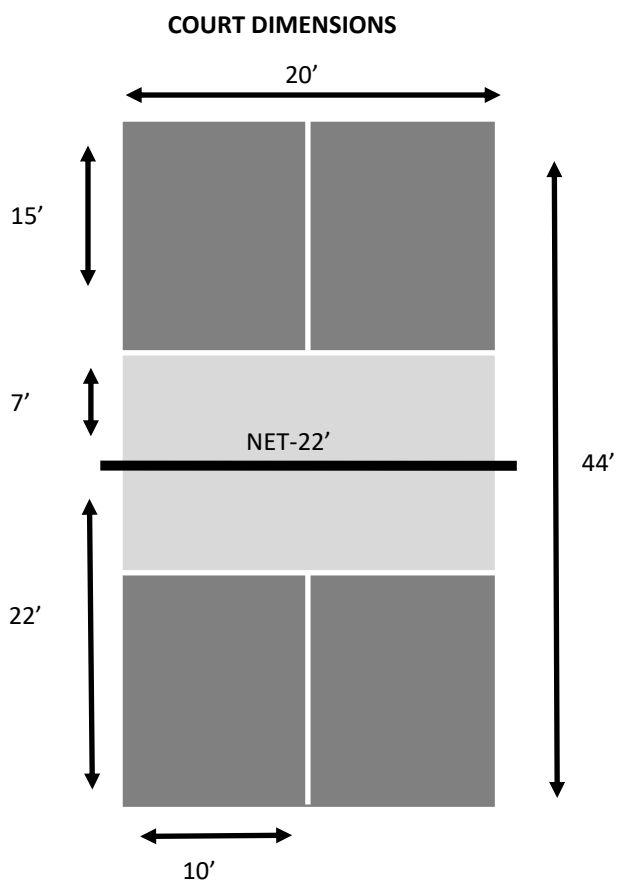
Our goal is for an athlete to be able to go out into the community and have the ability to join in on a game of pickleball without Special Olympics-specific rules cluttering the common understanding of how pickleball operates.

Inclusion over Specialization!

Equipment

COURT

Pickleball is played on a court that is much smaller than a tennis court. The net should be 36 inches measured at the end posts and 34 inches at the middle of the net. If you need to set up your own net, be sure that it is positioned with one foot beyond the sideline on each side and in the middle of the non-volley zone or kitchen. There are many court surfaces including a hard court (traditional tennis court style), sport tile, or indoor gym flooring. Each type of flooring has a different impact on game play. Practicing on a similar surface that will be used for competition can be helpful.



PICKLEBALLS

There are two types of pickleballs - indoor and outdoor balls. Indoor balls have larger holes and are softer than their counterparts. Outdoor balls are firmer and have more holes that are smaller in size. On hardwood surfaces such as basketball gym floors, we would suggest using indoor pickleballs. On hard court surfaces such as tennis courts, the outdoor ball will be of better use. Common brands include Franklin, Dura, Onix, and Selkirk.

SHOES

Please use tennis or court shoes when playing as they provide lateral support! There is a heightened risk of foot injuries when athletes are using running shoes and non-court specific shoes. Your local sportswear store should have a selection of tennis shoes and Tennis Warehouse has a large collection online.

PADDLES

When it comes to paddles, avoid using wooden paddles if at all possible! While there are pricey paddles (much like tennis rackets), there is no need to buy the fanciest paddle on the market. You can find reliable paddles on Amazon and brands that are suggested include Selkirk, Joola, Franklin, and ProXr. If you are having trouble securing paddles for your athletes, reach out to your area director or SOMO for assistance.

Paddles come in a variety of shapes and weights. The handle length and diameter and the thickness of the paddles also varies. Smaller players with small hands benefit from a smaller grip and perhaps a light or mid-weight paddle. Players transitioning from tennis often prefer a paddle with a longer handle. Make sure the paddles your athletes are using are USA Pickleball approved (stamped on the paddle).

Pickleball Safety

Keeping our participants safe is a major priority and while we can't eliminate every risk, there are specific ways to mitigate potential hazards in our control.

Backpedaling is a dangerous proposition in pickleball. If we have our weight on the heels of our feet as we attempt to get a ball over our heads, then there is the potential for a stumble to occur. Instead, practice turning the shoulders and running towards the ball to maintain better balance. Sometimes you will need to let a ball go rather than scrambling and falling or injuring yourself.



Our eyes are important! More and more players are electing to use protective eyewear due to the size of the ball and the speed that some players are able to hit the ball. This will not be mandatory for participants, but will be encouraged.

Staying Healthy and Strong

Overuse injuries are common in pickleball. Playing or practicing longer than your body is ready for as well as poor technique will leave a player vulnerable to over use injuries like tennis/pickleball elbow, wrist, shoulder and knee tendonitis and various foot or ankle injuries. Just like any other sport, your body needs time to adjust to the new activity. Maintaining good cardio and strength training will help you be a stronger player.

Pickleball is an active sport and requires speed, agility and hand eye coordination. The court is small and the ball moves fast! Many new players will practice well beyond their physical fitness level and get so sore afterward that they may not want to play again. Take care to progress slowly and let your body adapt to the sport! It's easy to play for hours when you first start because the game is so fun. Pace yourself and play again another day!

Stay healthy first and foremost!

Grips for Pickleball Play

There are a multitude of ways to hold the paddle and when people first begin to play, there isn't a massive emphasis on how to hold the paddle.

However, there are a handful of grips that are commonly used and easier to teach our participants. Also, to assist in identifying where our grip should be, we will discuss what bevels or notches our index knuckle should be on. (bevel numbers increase in a clockwise rotation.)



Continental Grip—This grip, also known as the “**Hammer Grip**”, is widely used for beginners new to racket sports. The index knuckle is placed on the second bevel of the handle.



Eastern Grip—This style of grip is referred to as the “**Handshake Grip**”. In this case, the index knuckle is placed on the third bevel. It should be noted that this and the continental grip are similar and that some may use the titles “**Hammer**” and “**Handshake**” interchangeably.



Western Grip—The last of the three basic grips, this one is the **most difficult to use**. Using this grip, your index knuckle will be located on the fourth bevel on your paddle.



Scoring

In pickleball, there is a unique scoring system that is not common in most sports. It is a **three-number system** and consist of the following: Your team's score, your opponent's score, and who the current server is. Ex. (1-3-1 or 4-2-2)

The reason we have the third number is because beyond the very first side out (or change of possession), **both players on a respective team get a chance to serve.**

In the first example (1-3-1), team A has one point, team B has three points, and team A is on its first server.

In the second example (4-2-2), team A has four points, team B has two points, and team A is on its second server.

Side Out Scoring

Pickleball operates via **side out scoring** instead of rally scoring. Meaning, you can only score points when your team is serving.

If you score a point when serving, then that player continues to serve after switching spots with their partner. If you lose a point or lose serve, then you stay on your respective side (either the deuce/right or ad/left side). The serve moves to your 2nd server or if you **are** the second server, to the opposing team. Watching a game is the best way to learn!

HINT: Keeping score is hard for many players at all levels. Remembering that points can only be scored by the serving team helps volunteers, parents, athletes and coaches keep track of the score.

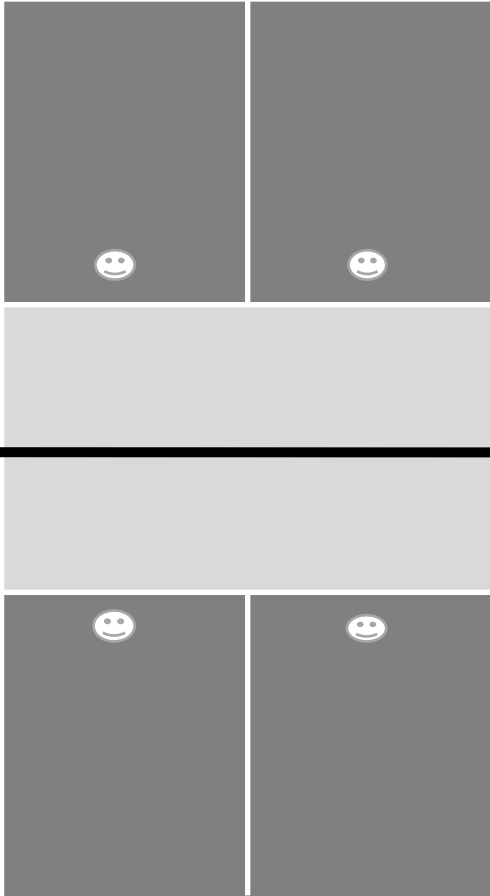
Most **competition games** are 2/3 games to 11 (win by two points). Some tournaments will have one game to 15 (win by two points). You may find recreational games only play to 8 if there are people waiting for court space.

Remembering **which player started serving** for each side will help you to confirm the score. The starting server on each side should always be on the right or deuce side when the score is even. Tournaments use a wrist band to signify the first server on each team. You can do this in practice with your athletes for a helpful visual aid!

Saying the score before you serve is a requirement. It allows the returner to be ready.

Court Position, Lines and Movement

PLAYER POSITIONS KITCHEN LINE



Court Position

The most successful strategy in doubles is to move as a team on the court. This means paying attention to where your partner is when you are not hitting the shot. Work to maintain the same spacing between players laterally as well as from baseline to kitchen line. When partners get separated (pulling one out wide while the other remains in place or one player staying back) makes for easy points for your opponents.

Lines

The **SIDELINES** are IN (ball hitting the line is IN)

The **BASELINE** is IN (ball hitting the line is IN)

The **SERVICE BOX LINE** or "T" is IN (ball hitting the line on a serve is IN)

The **KITCHEN LINE** is OUT (if a served ball hits the line it is OUT)

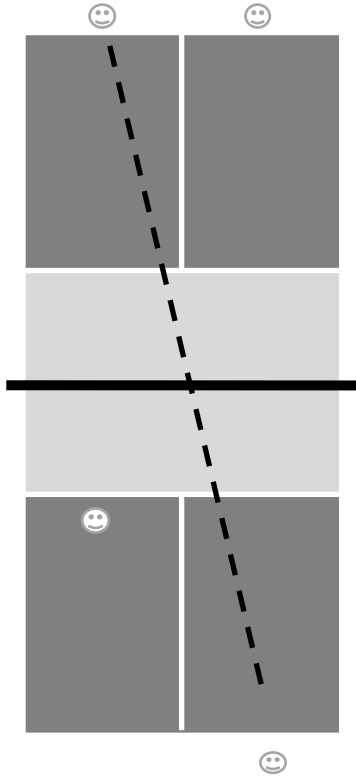
The **KITCHEN LINE** is OUT if any part of a player or paddle is touching the line and the player hit the ball out of the air (no bounce)

Movement on the Court

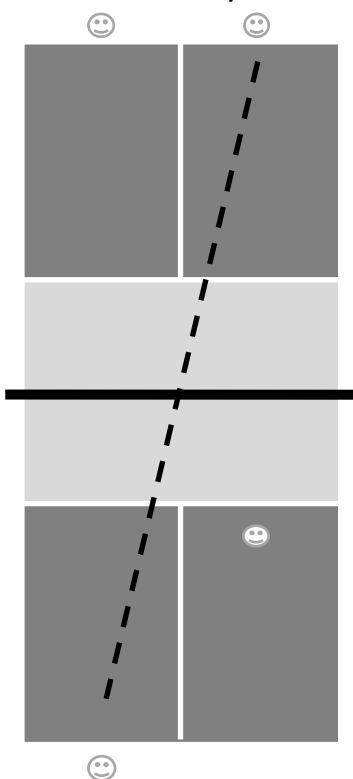
- Being proactive and efficient on the pickleball court can lead to a higher effectiveness on the court.
- Efficient movement can also assist in preventing injury.
- We always want to be on the balls of our feet ready to move.
- We want to be in an active stance with our knees slightly bent and the paddle up at our chest, ready for any ball that comes our way.
- When moving towards the ball, it is much safer to not cross our feet. Instead, shuffle-stepping can promote stability and an ability to stay more vertical.
- And, of course, there is no such thing as over-communicating. It is better to talk too much rather than stay silent on the court.

Serving

SERVING FROM DEUCE/RIGHT SIDE



SERVING FROM AD/LEFT SIDE



Serving Position and Requirements

When serving, we only get one chance to get the ball in the corresponding service box (the deuce or ad side). The server must stand within the extended boundaries of the deuce or ad side and stay behind the baseline with both feet prior to contacting the ball. On any serve, we should be serving at a diagonal (from deuce side to deuce side or ad side to ad side).

- **The serve must land beyond the kitchen line for it to be legal.**
- **Only underhand serves are permissible in pickleball.**
- **You must swing from low to high.**

Serving Options: The Volley and Drop Serve

Volley serve—This is where you take the ball out of the air on the serve, similar to a badminton serve. With this serve, the contact point between the paddle and ball must be made below the naval or belly-button.

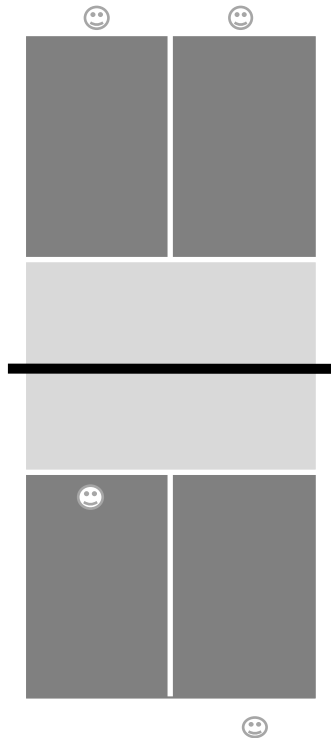
Drop serve— This serve involves the player letting the ball bounce at least once prior to hitting it. You can drop the ball from any height, but it cannot be propelled down or up to create a higher bounce. Gravity must do the work.

While the technicalities for each of the two serves differ slightly, it is highly encouraged that there is no manipulation of the ball with the non-dominant arm (or tossing arm).

HINT: Serving takes practice! Spend time helping players to face their target (the service box) and aim for the back third of the appropriate service box. While the server can't stand beyond the sideline or beyond the line dividing the serving sides, they can move between the lines to find the spot they are most comfortable serving from.

Returning Serve and Two Bounce Rule

PLAYER POSITIONS SERVING

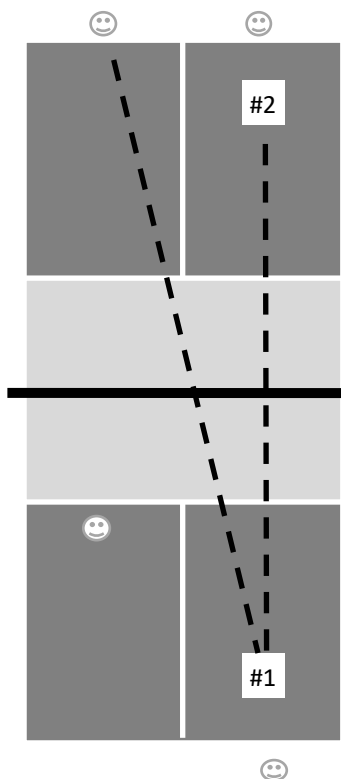


PLAYER POSITIONS RETURNING

Returning Rules and Strategy

- When **returning the serve**, the designated player must let the ball bounce once prior to hitting the ball.
- The returner has the freedom to hit the ball anywhere they please as long as it falls inside the court of play.
- Ideally, the returner hits the ball deep towards the opposing baseline in order to keep their opponent back since they have to let the ball bounce last.
- The goal of the return of serve is to both keep the opposing team back toward the baseline, and also to give the returning player time to join their partner at the non-volley zone or kitchen line. A short and fast return makes it hard for the returner to get to the kitchen line and leave their partner vulnerable to an offensive block or shot from the opposing team.

TWO BOUNCE RULE



Two Bounce Rule

The two bounce rule is one of the hardest things to remember in pickleball. The player returning serve must let the ball bounce before hitting it (just like tennis). **THEN-the SERVING TEAM must also let the ball bounce once** when they hit it on the third shot of the rally (hit #1 serve, hit #2 return, hit #3 third shot). This is what “equalizes” game play. It is unique to pickleball. After this sequence occurs, players are no longer required to let the ball bounce on the court before hitting unless the player is in the non-volley zone (kitchen).

HINT: Many players struggle to remember the two bounce rule when they start playing pickleball. Making sure that the serving team is in the right position (both behind the baseline) can help them remember that they must let the ball bounce after they serve. The players can also remind each other to “stay back” or “bounce it” to help them remember the two bounce rule. Players that begin to move toward the kitchen line before the ball is returned by the opposing player often are caught too far forward to let the ball bounce. **STAY BACK!**

Pickleball Shots

Once a player is comfortable making contact with the ball, the shots specific to pickleball should be taught. Some shots will come to players easily, while others will require lots of consistent practice. It is hard to improve your technique during competition play, so structured practices that allow for repetition are very important. This will help the players improve each individual shot and this will in turn improve their game play.

Swing

The pickleball swing is much shorter than a tennis swing. It generally begins at hip height and rises at around a 45 degree angle upward. The elbow has a slight bend (a more open than closed angle) and the wrist is firm. Grip pressure on the handle changes with different shots, but overall should be held half-way between as tight as possible and as loose as possible.



Player is using too much back-swing, well behind the shoulder and hip on this forehand shot.

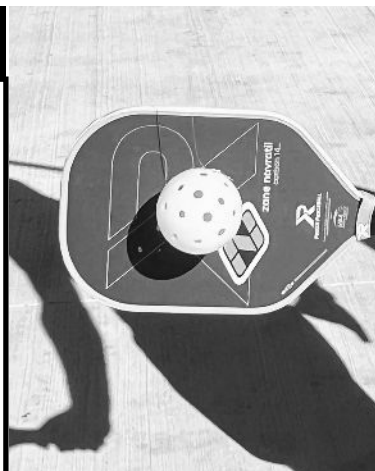


Back Swing

Swinging the paddle behind your shoulder is never an advantage in pickleball. The court size and ball do not require this amount of loaded back swing and most balls hit with exaggerated backswing will be out. Keep the back swing in line with your hip or shoulder with the paddle in a ready position in an athletic stance with knees bent and weight on the balls of your feet.

Paddle Face

Your paddle face will indicate where the ball is likely to go. If you make contact with your paddle face angled upward (open), the ball will likely pop up. If your paddle face is angled downward when you contact the ball (closed face) it is likely to go into the net. Work on being aware of the angle of the face of the paddle at all times so that contact is made in the correct position.

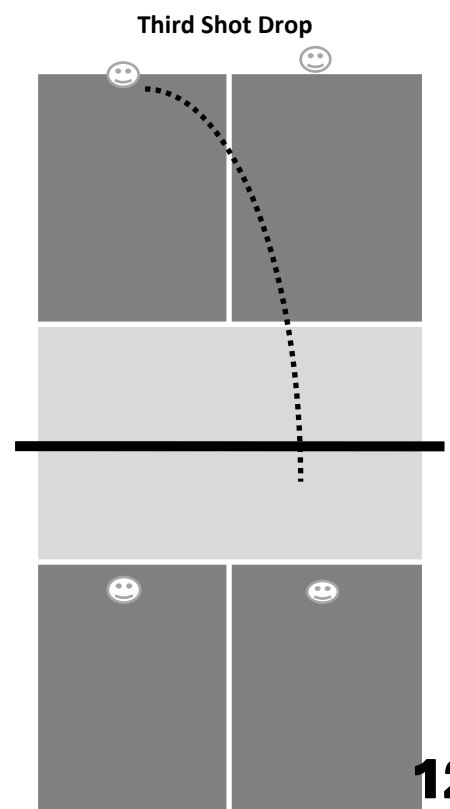


The Third Shot

- With the rules of pickleball, the serving team has to let the ball bounce once on their side before they can hit a volley.
- If this sequence is followed properly, the returning team should make their way up to the kitchen/non-volley zone first.
- This means that the serving team can hit a variety of shots with the 3rd.
- There are a plethora of options, but there are two shots that are commonly used—the third shot drive and the third shot drop.
- The **third shot drive** is an aggressive groundstroke from near the baseline that has the purpose of creating a neutral/defensive block.
- The **third shot drop** is a more difficult choice, but the dividends are much higher because, if done correctly, the team at the baseline should be able to place the ball into the kitchen. This forces the team currently at the kitchen line to let it bounce and not get an offensive opportunity.

HINT: Hitting a third shot with a plan is the difference between a beginning player and a more intermediate player. **The drop shot, while not fast or exciting is a very difficult shot to execute in a game setting.** Don't let your athletes get discouraged and give up on a third shot drop.

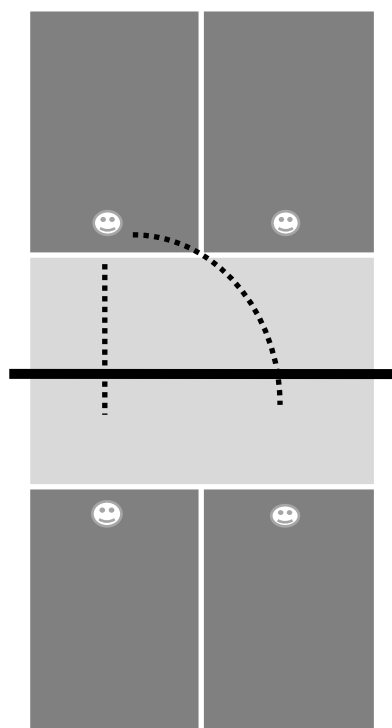
- **It's better to get the ball in play rather than hitting a third shot drop short and into the net.**
- Work on developing courage from your players and keep going for that drop even if it's too high or deep sometimes.
- A player with a reliable third shot drop can also develop a "reset" which is essentially a drop shot into the kitchen during the course of game play.



The Dink

- The dink is a subtle shot on the surface, but is the **key to playing pickleball** at its most fun and intensive form.
- Dinking happens when at least two players are at the kitchen (and more often, all four players). Small shots are made over the net and into the kitchen, forcing players to let it bounce.
- If a dink is too high, then an opponent can reach into the kitchen (without stepping in) and take it out of the air for an offensive shot.
- The action of dinking is akin to chess, moving your pawns or dinks in a measured and progressive format until an offensive opportunity arises.
- To hit a dink, have the player keep their paddle in front and move it forward and slightly upward when swinging. Nothing in pickleball is black and white when it comes to how someone should swing, so please treat each participant individually based upon their abilities and needs.

Dink Shots



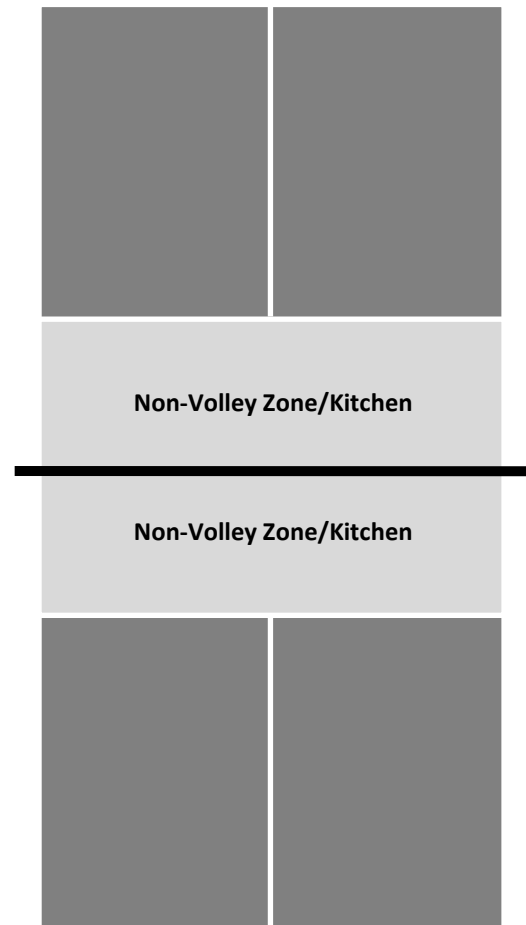
HINTS: Learning to dink really well makes a strong pickleball player. Most players (even professionals) begin their warm up with straight line dinking, forehand dinks and cross court dinks. Work to help your athletes control their swing to keep the ball falling into the kitchen forcing their opponents to let the ball bounce.

- Some players will “avoid” the dinking game in favor of a faster paced driving strategy. Dinking is a fundamental shot in pickleball and it would be challenging to move up in skill without a reliable dink.
- Practice “cooperative” dinking where athletes try to hit as many dinks in a row as possible by hitting carefully to their teammates.

The Volley

The volley is an aggressive shot that is taken when the ball is lofted into the air by an opponent and player hits the ball out of the air.

- The volley can only take place after the returning team has let the ball bounce once and the serving team has done so as well.
- Most importantly, you cannot hit a volley inside the kitchen (non-volley zone).
- Everywhere outside of the kitchen is fair game.
- Also, if you hit a volley outside of the kitchen, but your momentum carries you into the kitchen, then that is a fault as well.
- Volleys can include everything from punch-like shots at the shoulders to overheads that are often referred to as smashes or put-aways.



HINT: The volley or smash is an exciting shot to hit. However, the pickleball court is very small. There is only a 20' x 15' area of court where hitting the ball out of the air is legal in pickleball.

- The overhead is another word to describe a volley that is taken around head height. The player should work to contact the ball in this zone rather than reaching up above their head or allowing the ball to drop too low. Both mistakes are likely to drive to the ball into the net.
- Volleying at the kitchen line is an important part of game play and can look like blocking or taking a dink out of the air. It's legal as long as you stay out of the non-volley zone (kitchen).

The Groundstroke

The groundstroke encompasses long shots from the baseline up to what is called the transition zone (halfway between the baseline and the kitchen line).

The goal of these shots is to send the ball towards the opposing baseline in hopes of keeping the opponent back or to create passing drive opportunities.

The two main shots account for a vast majority of groundstrokes—the **forehand and backhand**.

No matter the shot, the ball is ideally hit on the outside of the body. Using the hips as a designation for whether a shot is on the inside or outside is a good barometer.

Forehand



Player loading position for forehand shot, contact position for forehand shot and follow through position for forehand shot.

The **forehand** is hit on the dominant side of the player's body and only one hand should be placed on the paddle when hitting a forehand.

Backhand

Player loading position for backhand shot, contact position for backhand shot and follow through position for backhand shot.



The backhand is hit on the non-dominant side of the body and you can use either a one-handed backhand or a two-handed backhand. If choosing the two-handed version, the dominant hand should be placed on the bottom of the paddle handle while the non-dominant arm is placed above it.

Common Errors

- Positioning can either help or diminish the efforts of a team.
- When serving, we want both players back behind the baseline.
- The returning team should have one player up at the kitchen line (the non-returner) while the player receiving serve should be behind the baseline.

The Middle

When the ball lands in between two players, there can be a moment of confusion and uncertainty. The general rule of thumb is if you have players that are both righties or lefties, then the person with the forehand should take the middle because it is an easier shot than a backhand. Once the team has determined who is going to take the shot, the other player **MUST** get out of the way and make space for their partner to move into the best position possible to hit the ball.

The Role of Power in Pickleball

In pickleball, you do not need to hit the ball hard. The court is smaller than that of tennis, the ball doesn't travel as far, and the paddles used limit how far we can hit. That, and the kitchen gives us the opportunity to make our way up towards the net without putting ourselves in the line of fire. Excessive focus on power can cause frustration for a player and ultimately can make their game very one-dimensional. Work toward control first, then add speed only when control can be maintained.

Many points are earned from “dinking wars” and successful drop shots. Placement is almost always more important than power.

Keep it in Play

Often just keeping the ball in play by keeping it in the court is the most important thing a player can do. Worrying about a ball going too high or not fast enough can hinder a player's ability to keep the ball in the court and getting over the net. Work on keeping the ball on the court before introducing other skills.

This also applies to serving and return of serve. Keep it in the court first!

HINTS: There are many resources available to help you improve your play and your coaching. The fast growth means many videos, articles and helpful tips about becoming a better player. While one instructor might explain with words that don't make sense, another instructor might use analogies that are clearer.

Skills Assessment Format

This assessment is used for both skills competitions and ratings for athletes competing in regulation and Unified doubles.

The ten shots that are tested include:

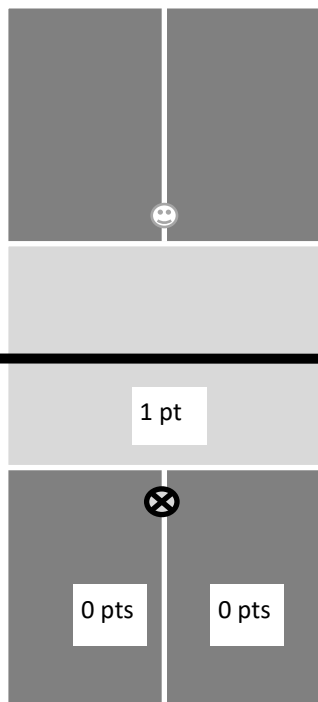
1. forehand dink
2. backhand dink
3. forehand volley
4. backhand volley
5. forehand third-shot drop
6. backhand third-shot drop
7. forehand groundstroke
8. backhand groundstroke
9. deuce-side serve
10. ad-side serve

- An athlete will be given **five attempts** at each shot type. Points scored will vary on the specific shot.
- When testing, each attempt should be conducted via an **underhand toss to the athlete** that doesn't force them to scramble to the ball.
- The following diagrams indicate the athlete position 😊 and the feeder position. ☒

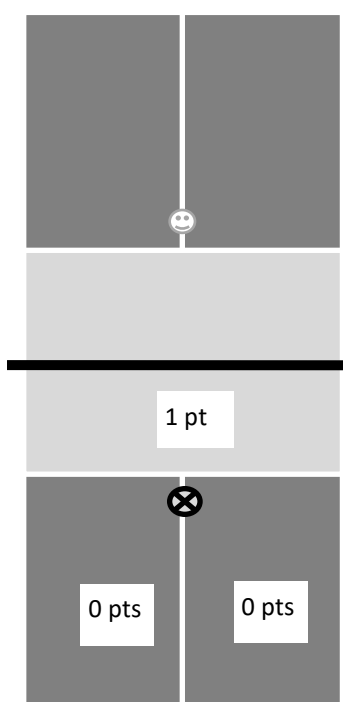
HINT: Feeding the ball takes practice! Experiment with your toss to determine what works best for each shot type and your athletes. In general, putting a little bit of air on your toss will give the player more time to plan their shot.

Skills Assessment: Dinks and Serving

SKILLS: FOREHAND DINK



SKILLS: BACKHAND DINK

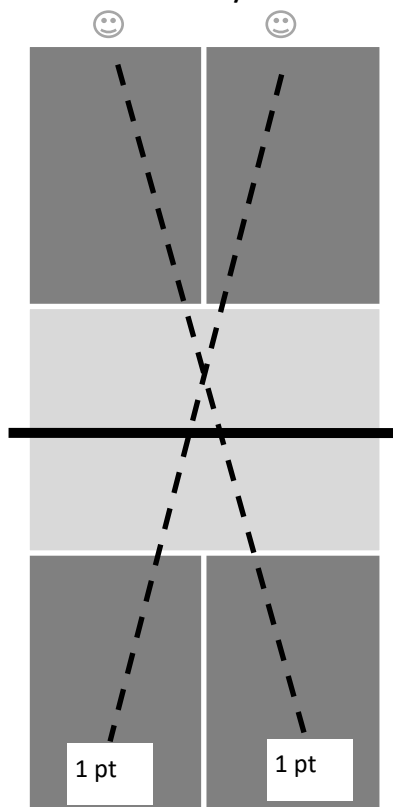


Skills Dinks

Skills assessments and skills competitions require 5 forehand dinks and 5 backhand dinks.

The athlete should be positioned at the non-volley zone /kitchen line. The feeder should underhand toss the ball to the forehand side ideally bouncing in the kitchen before being hit by the athlete. The backhand dinks should be fed to the athlete's non-dominant side. 1 point is earned for each shot that lands in the kitchen on the opposite side. No points are earned for dinks that land outside of the kitchen in or outside of the court.

SKILLS: SERVING DEUCE/RIGHT AND AD/LEFT



Skills Serving

Skills assessments and skills competitions require the athlete to complete 5 attempts at serving from the deuce/right and ad/left side of the court.

The feeder or volunteer will provide pickleballs to the athlete for each service attempt.

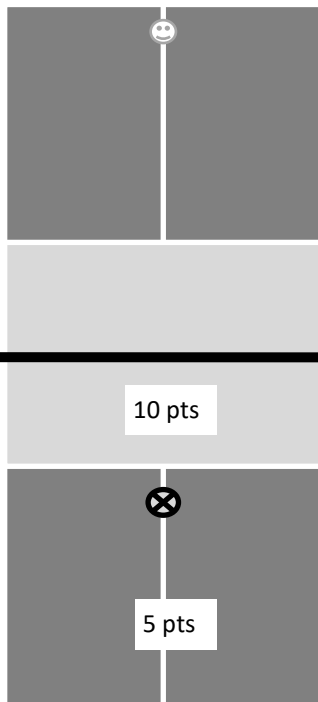
Serves receive 1 point for each one that lands in the correct service box, and are "in" according to line calling rules.

Service Line Reminders:

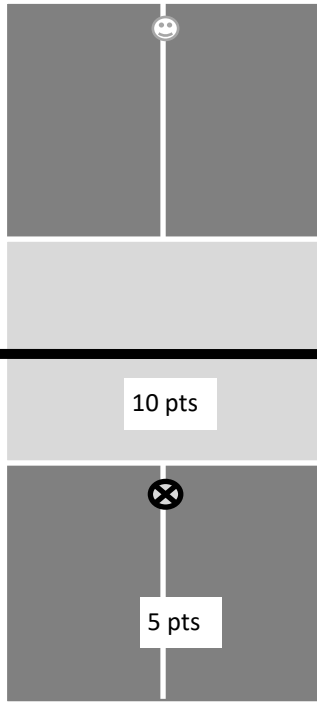
- Sideline and Service Box Line "T" are IN
- Baseline is IN
- Kitchen line is OUT (short)
- Let (serve hits the top of the net) and bounces "in" is IN
- Let (serve hits the top of the net) and bounces in the kitchen or out of the court is OUT

Skills Assessment: Drops and Groundstrokes

SKILLS: FOREHAND DROP



SKILLS: BACKHAND DROP



Skills Forehand and Backhand Drop

The forehand and backhand drop skill gives the athlete five attempts for the forehand and 5 attempts for the backhand drop. **A drop that lands in the court and in the kitchen earns 10 points. A drop that lands in the court but in the service boxes earns 5 points.**

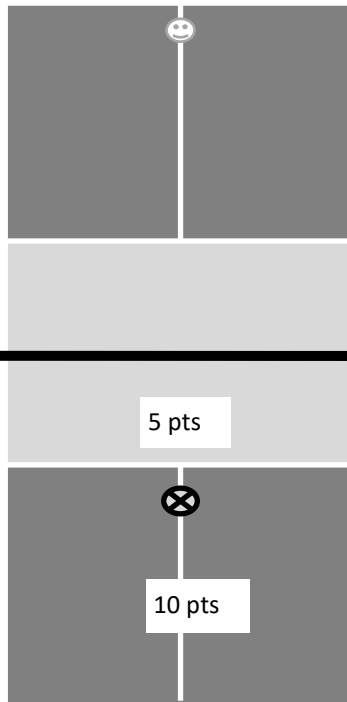
The feeder should toss the ball underhand but into the transition zone so that the athlete has the opportunity to hit the forehand or backhand drop off the bounce. 5 forehand tosses to the dominant side and 5 tosses to the non-dominant side completes the drop assessment or skill.

Skills Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

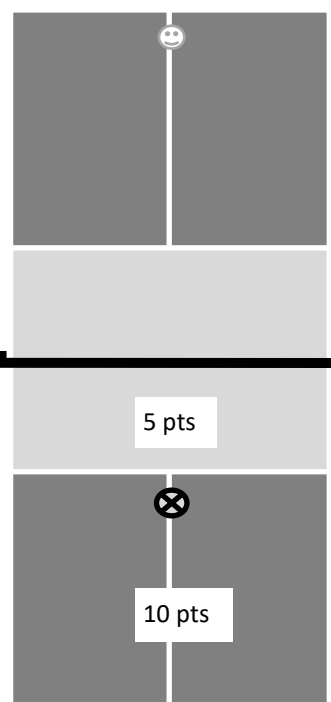
Skills assessment and competition for groundstrokes earn different points depending on where the shot lands. **A groundstroke that lands in on the court in the kitchen earns 5 points. A groundstroke that lands in the service box earns 10 points as deep groundstrokes are desirable.**

The feeder should toss the ball underhand but into the transition zone so that the athlete has the opportunity to hit the forehand or backhand groundstroke off the bounce. 5 forehand tosses to the dominant side and 5 tosses to the non-dominant side completes the groundstroke assessment or skill.

SKILLS: FOREHAND

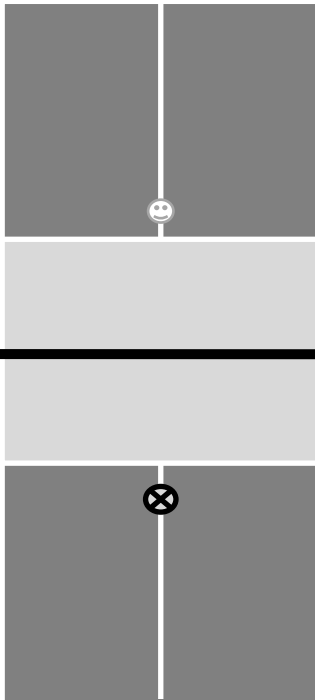


SKILLS: BACKHAND

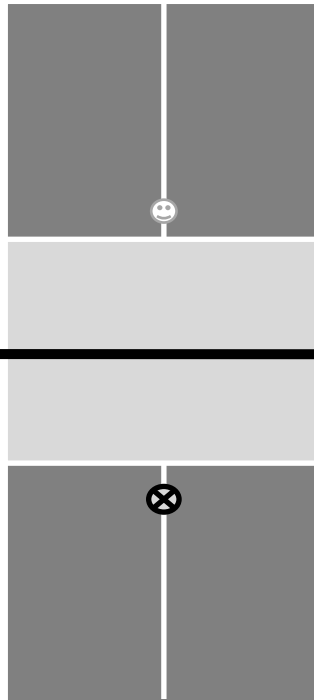


Skills Assessment: Volleys

SKILLS: BACKHAND VOLLEY



SKILLS: FOREHAND VOLLEY



Skills Volleys

The volley skills assessment requires the athlete to hit the ball out of the air (not off the bounce) to earn 1 point.

The athlete should stand a step behind the non volley zone/kitchen line to volley.

Feeding the ball for a volley is a little bit challenging. The goal is to underhand toss the ball but the ball will need to go past the kitchen. Feeders should toss the ball for 5 attempts to the dominant side and 5 attempts to the non-dominant side.

An athlete that misses a volley receive no points for that attempt.

Feeding

It takes practice to be a good feeder. It is always a good idea to have a few people learn to feed so that skills assessments can occur with efficiency. Practicing with markers or cones without the distraction of an athlete waiting for you can help you to become a great feeder! If your athlete is lunging to get to the ball, work on feeding closer to the paddle so that a small shuffle step will be the most they need to execute the shot.

Player lunging
(first photo right)
versus one step
(photo far right).

Work to feed
within ONE step!



Unified Partners

Playing doubles as a Unified Partner is a way to allow family and friends to support their athlete and get community members involved in Special Olympics. The role of the Unified Partner in pickleball is very similar to the role of the Unified Partner in tennis.

The coach is obligated to make sure that their Unified Partners understand the following guidelines prior to participation as a Unified Partner in pickleball.

1. The Unified Partner should not dominate the game at any time.
2. Common competition strategies in the doubles game like poaching (crossing in front of the athlete and taking their shot) is strongly discouraged.
3. Another common competition strategy is stacking. While allowed, it should not be done to minimize the shots the athlete takes, but rather give the athlete an advantage. Accommodating a physical condition by stacking is not taking shots away from the athlete.
4. Assisting with position, scoring or the two bounce rule is GREAT! Communication is a big part of playing pickleball doubles at every level.
5. Everyone plays better when they are getting positive reinforcement from their partner. Make it a point to be an encouraging and positive player.
6. A Unified Partner with a difficult serve or excessive spin should not use these tools to gain advantage over an athlete in a way that diminishes the chance for the athletes to play.
7. The Unified Partner is facilitating the game rather than being the primary point earner. If there is a choice between hitting a smash or overhead and extending the rally, the Unified Partner should extend.
8. While some Unified Sports have limits on the percentage of points that can be scored by a Unified Partner, pickleball (like tennis) relies on good judgement from the Unified Player to make the focus of the game the athlete.
9. Unified Partners also participate in a skills assessment. This assures the most accurate brackets for competition play.



SOMO Competition Format

Each year, there will be an area tournament held in each of SOMO's six designated areas (St. Louis, KC Metro, North, Central, Southwest, and Southeast).

Divisions Offered

Currently, we are offering:

- **Regulation Doubles**
- **Unified Doubles**
- **Skills**

Future Divisions

Future plans may include:

- **Singles**
- **Skinny Singles**

Tournament Scoring

The format for scoring will depend on the number of participants for a given tournament, but in most cases, games will be 2/3 to 11 points or 1 game to 15 points, win by two in both cases.

State Tournament Qualification

- To qualify for the state tournament, participants must win a gold or silver medal at their respective area tournament.
- USA Games athletes who represent SOMO will be trained and coached to the current SONA pickleball guidelines.
- Watch for new information as the sport evolves!

Volunteer Cheat Sheet

THE TWO BOUNCE RULE—The ball must bounce before it is returned by the receiving player. The ball must also bounce before the serving team hits the third shot of the rally. **After that—it can be hit out the air.**

Score

Points can only be earned by the serving team. The serving team only changes sides when points are earned. After the first rally, if the second server's side loses the rally, then it is called a side out and no point is earned. The other team now serves.

Most matches are win by two points.

Position for Serving/Returning

Serving Side—BOTH PLAYERS BEHIND THE BASELINE

Receiving Side—RETURNER BEHIND BASELINE, PARTNER AT NON VOLLEY/KITCHEN LINE

Goal—all players at the KITCHEN LINE

Non Volley Zone/Kitchen Rules

A player can step into the non volley zone (kitchen) or even stand in the non volley zone. They can hit the ball while standing either in the zone or on the kitchen line as long as it bounces first. The player CANNOT hit the ball out of the air while standing in the kitchen or on the kitchen line. This is called a foot fault. If the player's momentum carries them into the kitchen or onto the kitchen line after hitting the ball out of the air it is also a foot fault. The rule of thumb is if you go in to hit a dink in the kitchen (after it bounces) get back out!

Line Calls

If you aren't sure it was out, IT WAS IN!

All lines except the kitchen line are considered IN
Players call the lines on their side—the opposition can't call it in or out unless asked by their opponents

The crowd can't decide so don't ask them.

Serving

Can use a drop or volley serve.

Must serve within the imaginary boundaries created by the service box line and the sideline.

Must be underhand

Must be served to the diagonal opposing service box.

Unified Partners

- Unified Partners shouldn't dominate the game.
- Don't take the athlete's shots (don't poach).
- Facilitate the game—don't be the primary point scorer!

Pickleball Video Resources



Pickleball Rules: The Definitive Beginner’s Resource to How to Play Pickleball

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTvPYdKZqO0>



How to Play Pickleball via USA Pickleball

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMwKyO4-WYU>



Pickleball Fundamentals via USA Pickleball

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKyb5KZ62CU>



How to Teach Pickleball to Kids with Pro Pickleball Coach Mark Renneson of Selkirk TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84D6GhVuu3M>



Play, Practice, Play—Pickleball Coaching & Instructor Tips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua9tkTijoE0>

New content is being created almost daily as the sport grows! Check out Pickleball TV for livestreamed professional pickleball tournament play along with the Tennis Channel. YouTube is a great source of both video of tournament play and free instructional content.

Pickleball Websites/Resources

ORGANIZATIONS



USA Pickleball

<https://usapickleball.org/>



Professional Pickleball Association

<https://www.ppatour.com/>



Association of Pickleball Professionals

<https://www.theapp.global/>



Major League Pickleball

<https://www.majorleaguepickleball.net/>

VENDORS



Pickleball Central

<https://pickleballcentral.com/>



Selkirk

<https://www.selkirk.com/>



Joola

<https://joolausa.com/pickleball/>



ProXR

<https://proxrpickleball.com/>



Franklin

<https://franklinsports.com/sports/pickleball>



Vulcan

<https://vulcansportinggoods.com/pages/vulcan-pickleball-paddles>

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This manual, diagrams and photography were produced exclusively by Aiden Petterson and AP Pickleball. Any use outside of Special Olympics Missouri is prohibited without the expressed permission of the author.



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