



**2025**  
**OFFICIAL**  
**RULEBOOK**



## **USA Pickleball Official Rulebook**

USA PICKLEBALL was organized to perpetuate the growth and advancement of pickleball on a national level and to set goals for worldwide play and recognition. USA Pickleball is committed to furthering the growth and development of pickleball among all players.

USA Pickleball is the National Governing Body of American pickleball that formulates and interprets all the rules of the sport in a manner that preserves the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport. All such decisions by USA Pickleball are final and not appealable.

The purpose of the rulebook is to provide pickleball players with the rules necessary for recreational, social, organized league and tournament play. Some sections of this rulebook are designed to be used only for the conduct of USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournaments. A sanctioned tournament allows players to obtain a rating on a national or international basis.

Non-sanctioned tournaments may also use these sections as guidelines. Tournament Directors for non-sanctioned tournaments may be flexible in the use of these guidelines to better fit the skills, ages, and diversity of their players. USA Pickleball enthusiastically encourages these non-sanctioned tournaments to promote knowledge and growth of the sport, and skill development, while having fun playing pickleball.

USA Pickleball published the sport's first official rulebook in March 1984.



These rules will not be changed without good cause.  
Comments and opinions are always welcome. If you have any  
questions about the rules, please visit:

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USA Pickleball  
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USA Pickleball Association is the National Governing Body for the sport of  
pickleball in the United States.

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## SECTION 1 – THE GAME

Pickleball is a paddle sport played using a special perforated ball on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court with a tennis-type net. The court is divided into right/even and left/odd service courts and non-volley zones. (See Figure 2-1.)

The ball is served diagonally across the net to the opponent's receiving court using an approved motion. The ball is struck back and forth across the net until a player fails to return the ball in accordance with the rules.

Points are scored only by the serving side when the server or the server's team wins the rally, or the opposing side commits a fault. The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side loses the rally or commits a fault. For matches that use the provisional rally scoring option, a point is scored by the player or team that wins each rally except game point can only be scored when serving.

Typically, the first side scoring 11 points and leading by at least a 2-point margin wins.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles.

### **The Players**

Pickleball is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy. A sense of fair play by giving the opponent the benefit of any doubt is essential in maintaining the game's underlying principles of fun and competition. To that end:

- All points played are treated the same regardless of their importance; the first point of the match is as important as match point.

- Either partner in doubles can make calls, especially line calls; there is no place in the game for one partner telling another, “That was my call, not yours.”
- Prompt calls eliminate the ‘two chance option.’ For example, a player cannot claim a hinder from a ball rolling on the court after they hit a ball ‘out;’ they gave up their ability to call the hinder by choosing instead to hit the ball.
- Players strive to cooperate when confronted with a situation not covered by the Rulebook. Possible outcomes can be a replay, allowing the rally to stand, or in extreme cases, asking for a referee to resolve a dispute.
- Where possible, rules accommodate players with various adaptive needs
- Players avoid wearing clothing that closely matches the ball color.
- Players should not question or comment on an opponent’s call.

## Unique Features

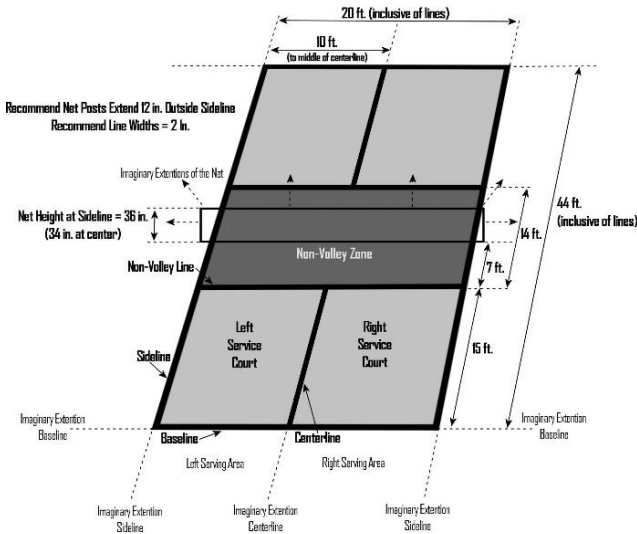
**Two-Bounce Rule.** After the ball is served, each side must make one groundstroke prior to volleying the ball.

**Non-Volley Zone (NVZ).** An area that extends 7 feet from the net on each side, within which a player is not allowed to strike the ball without it first bouncing. More specifically, the whole court from net to baseline is the same and can be freely used for all play with one exception: volleying. The first seven feet, the non-volley zone, cannot be used for volleying.

**(Wheelchair)** Players using wheelchairs may allow the ball to bounce twice before returning the ball. The second bounce can be anywhere on the playing surface, which includes the area surrounding the court.

## SECTION 2 – COURT AND EQUIPMENT

**2.A. Court Specifications.** The dimensions and measurements for the standard pickleball court are:



**Figure 2-1**

- 2.A.1. The court shall be a rectangle measuring 20 feet (6.10 m) wide and 44 feet (13.41 m) long for both singles and doubles matches. (See Figure 2-1.)
- 2.A.2. Court measurements shall be made to the outside of the perimeter and non-volley zone lines. All lines should be 2 inches (5.08 cm) wide and the same color, clearly contrasting with the color of the playing surface.
- 2.A.3. The minimum playing surface area measures 30 feet (9.14 m) wide and 60 feet (18.29 m) long. A 10-foot (3.05-m) surrounding margin measures 40 feet (12.19 m) by 64 feet (19.51 m). Other recommendations for playing surface dimensions are:

Purpose	Width – feet (m)	Length – feet (m)
New Construction	34 (10.36 m)	64 (19.5 m)
Tournament Play	34 (10.36 m)	64 (19.5 m)
Wheelchair Play	44 (13.41 m)	74 (22.56 m)
Stadium Court	50 (15.24 m)	80 (24.38 m)

2.A.4. (Wheelchair) The recommended playing surface area for Wheelchair play is 44 feet (13.41 m) wide and 74 feet (22.55 m) long. The size for Wheelchair play in a stadium court is 50 feet (15.24 m) wide by 80 feet (24.38 m) long.

**2.B. Lines and Areas.** The lines and areas of the standard pickleball court are explained below. (See Figure 2-1.)

2.B.1. Baselines. The lines parallel to the net at each end of the court.

2.B.2. Sidelines. The lines perpendicular to the net on each side of the court.

2.B.3. Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). The area of the court, specific to each team, on either side of the net bounded by the non-volley zone line. The non-volley zone line is a line between the two sidelines (non-volley zone line) parallel to and 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net. All NVZ lines are part of the NVZ.

2.B.4. Service Court. The area beyond the NVZ on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline.

2.B.5. Centerline. The line down the center of the court on either side of the net extending from the NVZ to the baseline separating the odd and even service courts. For Mini-singles, the centerline shall also extend through the non-volley zone.

2.B.6. Right/Even Court. The service area on the right side of the court when facing the net.



2.B.7. Left/Odd Court. The service area on the left side of the court when facing the net.

## **2.C. Net Specifications.**

2.C.1. Material. The net may be made of any mesh fabric material that will not allow a ball to pass through it.

2.C.2. Posts. Net posts should be 22 feet +/- 1.0 inch (6.71 m +/- 2.54 cm) from the inside of one post to the inside of the other post. The maximum diameter of the net post should be 3 inches (7.62 cm).

2.C.3. Size. The net length should be at least 21 feet 9 inches (6.63 m) extending from one post to the other. The net height from the bottom edge of the net to the top should be at least 30 inches.

2.C.4. Edge. The top of the net should be edged with a 2-inch (5.08-cm) white tape binding over a cord or cable running through the binding. This binding must rest upon the cord or cable.

2.C.5. Net Height Measurement:

Sidelines - At the location where the net crosses the sideline markers, the top of the net shall be 36 inches +/- .25 inch (91.44 +/- 0.635 cm) from the playing surface.

Center - At the center point on the court that is equidistant from both sideline markers (10 feet from each sideline) the top of the net shall be 34 inches +/- .25 inch (86.36 +/- 0.635 cm) from the playing surface. If there is a center strap located 10 feet from the sidelines, the top of the net at the center strap shall be 34 inches +/- .25 inch (86.36 +/- 0.635 cm) from the playing surface.

- 2.C.6. Draping Net. Except on the serve, a replay will occur if the ball goes over the net and hits a draping net on the ground.



**Figure 2-2**

The ball pictured on the left, with larger holes, is customarily used for indoor play, and the ball pictured on the right is customarily used for outdoor play. Colors may vary. However, all approved balls are acceptable for indoor or outdoor play. The complete list of approved balls is on the USA PICKLEBALL website.

## **2.D. Ball Specifications.**

- 2.D.1. Design. The ball shall have a minimum of 26 to a maximum of 40 circular holes, with spacing of the holes and overall design of the ball conforming to flight characteristics. The ball must have a manufacturer's or supplier's name or logo printed or embossed on the surface.
- 2.D.2. Approval. The Tournament Director will choose the tournament ball. The ball selected for play in any USA PICKLEBALL-sanctioned tournament must be named on the official list of approved balls posted on the USA PICKLEBALL website: [USA Pickleball.org](http://USA Pickleball.org).

- 2.D.3. Construction. The ball shall be made of a durable material molded with a smooth surface and free of texturing. The ball will be one uniform color, except for identification markings. The ball may have a slight ridge at the seam, as long as it does not significantly impact the ball's flight characteristics. (See Figure 2-2.)

## ***2.E. Paddle Specifications.***

- 2.E.1. Material. The paddle must be made of any material deemed safe and not prohibited by these rules. The paddle shall be made of rigid, non-compressible material meeting the criteria located on the USA PICKLEBALL website.
- 2.E.2. Surface. The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain delamination, holes, cracks, rough textures, or indentations that break the paddle skin or surface, or any objects or features that allow a player to impart excessive spin on the ball.
- 2.E.2.a. Reflection. The paddle's hitting surface shall not be adversely reflective, such that it has the potential to negatively affect the vision of opposing player(s).
- 2.E.3. Size. The combined length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed 24 inches (60.96 cm). The paddle length cannot exceed 17 inches (43.18 cm). There is no restriction on paddle thickness.
- 2.E.4. Weight. There is no restriction on paddle weight.
- 2.E.5. Alterations. Altered paddles must meet all specifications.

- 2.E.5.a. Player alterations or additions to a commercially produced paddle as certified, may include items such as edge guard tape/replacements, weighted tape, weights for an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) integrated weight system, changes to the grip size via inserts, grip wraps, OEM interchangeable grips, OEM replacement paddle faces, and name decals and/or other identification markings on the paddle face.
  - 2.E.5.b. Decals and tape can extend no farther than 1.0 inch (2.54 cm) above the top of the grip nor more than 0.5 inch (1.27 cm) inside the outer edge of a paddle or, if an edge guard is in place, 0.5 inch inside the edge guard.
  - 2.E.5.c. The only permissible handwritten pen markings allowed on the paddle's playing surface must be for identification purposes only (name, signature, phone, email address) or an autograph. No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle.
- 2.E.6. Prohibited Surface Features and Mechanical Features.
- 2.E.6.a. Anti-skid paint or any paint textured with sand, rubber particles, or any material that causes additional spin.
  - 2.E.6.b. Rubber and synthetic rubber.
  - 2.E.6.c. Sandpaper characteristics.



2.E.6.d. Moving parts that can increase head momentum.

2.E.7. Model Designation. The paddle must have a manufacturer-provided and clearly marked brand and model name or model number on the paddle. The brand and model information may be shown on the paddle by a manufacturer affixed decal.

## ***2.F. Equipment Approval and Authorization.***

2.F.1. USA PICKLEBALL Approved Paddle List – Players are responsible for confirming that the paddle they are using for match play is approved and listed as “Pass” on the USA PICKLEBALL Approved Paddle List. The lists of approved equipment may be posted on the USA PICKLEBALL website: [USA Pickleball.org](http://USA.Pickleball.org).

2.F.1.a. Violation. If at any point during the tournament it is determined that a player is using a paddle that violates any of the paddle specifications or is not listed on the USA PICKLEBALL Approved Paddle List as Pass, the following penalties apply:

2.F.1.a.1. If the violation is identified prior to the match starting, the player shall switch to a paddle listed as Pass on the USA PICKLEBALL Approved Paddle List. There is no penalty to switch paddles.

2.F.1.a.2. If the violation is identified after the match has started, the

player or team forfeits only the match being played.

- 2.F.1.a.3. If the violation is discovered after the scoresheet is returned to the tournament operations desk, the match results stand.

## ***2.G. Apparel.***

- 2.G.1. Safety and Distraction. A player may be required to change apparel that is inappropriate, including that which approximates the color of the ball.
- 2.G.2. Depictions. Graphics, insignias, pictures, and writing on apparel must be in good taste.
- 2.G.3. Footwear. Shoes must have soles that do not mark or damage the court's playing surface.
- 2.G.4. Violation. The Tournament Director has the authority to enforce apparel changes. If the Tournament Director enforces an apparel change, it will be a non-chargeable time-out. If the player refuses to comply with the apparel rules, the Tournament Director may declare a forfeit of the match.

## SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

### 3.A. *Definitions.*

- 3.A.1. Ball In Play – The timeframe during which a rally is played, from the hit of the ball to make the serve until the ball becomes dead. (See also 3.A.20 “Live Ball”)
- 3.A.2. Carry – Hitting the ball in such a way that it does not bounce away from the paddle but is carried along on the face of the paddle.
- 3.A.3. Coaching - Communication of any information, including verbal, nonverbal, and electronic, from someone other than a player’s partner, that a player or team may act upon to gain an advantage or help them avoid a rules violation.
- 3.A.4. Court – The area inside the outer dimensions of the baselines and sidelines.
- 3.A.5. Cross-Court – The court diagonally opposite of the court from which the ball was last struck.
- 3.A.6. Dead Ball – A ball that is no longer in play.
- 3.A.7. Distraction – Physical actions by a player that are ‘not common to the game’ that, in the judgment of the referee, interfere with the opponent’s ability or concentration to hit the ball. Examples include, but are not limited to, making loud noises, stomping feet, and waving the paddle in a distracting manner.
- 3.A.8. Double Bounce – When the ball bounces twice on one side before it is returned.
- 3.A.9. Double Hit – Hitting the ball twice before it is returned.
- 3.A.10. Ejection - A behavior violation so flagrant that it warrants ejection from the tournament by the

Tournament Director. The player may stay at the venue but may no longer play in any matches.

- 3.A.11. Expulsion – A behavior violation so flagrant that the Tournament Director prohibits the player from playing in any current and any future brackets of the tournament. In addition, the player shall leave the venue immediately and not return for the remainder of the tournament.
- 3.A.12. Fault – A rules violation that results in a dead ball and/or the end of the rally.
- 3.A.13. First Server – In doubles, the player who shall serve from the right/even service court after a side out, according to the team’s score.
- 3.A.14. Forfeit – The awarding of a game or match to the opponent due to a violation of the rules .
- 3.A.15. Groundstroke – A strike of the ball after the ball has bounced.
- 3.A.16. Hinder – Any transient element or occurrence not caused by a player that adversely impacts play, not including permanent objects. Examples include, but are not limited to, balls, flying insects, foreign material, players, or officials on another court that, in the opinion of the referee, impacted a player’s ability to make a play on the ball.
- 3.A.17. Imaginary Extension. A term used to describe where a line would extend if it projected beyond its current end point. Players and referees are to project where the line would extend if it were not limited to the boundaries of the playing area.
- 3.A.18. Left/Odd Court – The service area on the left side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles or the singles server should be



positioned on the left/odd side of the court when their score is odd.

- 3.A.19. Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) and/or a hand signal to indicate to the referee and/or players that a live ball has not landed in the required court space.
- 3.A.20. Live Ball – The period of time that begins when the referee or server (or server's partner per Rule 4.D.1) starts to call the score and ends when the ball becomes dead. (See also 3.A.1 "Ball in Play.")
- 3.A.21. Momentum – Momentum is a property of a body in motion, such as a player executing a volley, that causes the player to continue in motion after contacting the ball. The act of volleying produces momentum that ends when the player regains balance and control of their motion or stops moving toward the non-volley zone.
- 3.A.22. Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) – The 7-foot-by-20-foot area adjacent to the net and specific to each team's end of the court relating to NVZ faults. All lines bounding the NVZ are part of the NVZ. The NVZ is two-dimensional and does not rise above the playing surface. (See Figure 2-1 and Section 2.B.3.)
- 3.A.23. Officiating team – Personnel under the leadership of the Tournament Head Referee on or off the playing surface, including Lead and Second Referees, Tracking Referee, Video Replay Referee, and Line Judges.
- 3.A.24. Paddle Grip Adjustments – Non-mechanical devices that change the size of the grip or stabilize the hand on the grip.
- 3.A.25. Paddle Head – The paddle, excluding the handle.

- 3.A.26. Permanent Object – Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with play. Permanent objects include the ceiling, walls, fencing, lighting fixtures, net posts (including connected wheels, arms, legs, net cable, or rope on top of the net post, or other support construction), the stands and seats for spectators, the referee, line judges, spectators when in their recognized positions, and all other objects around and above the court.
- 3.A.27. Plane of the Net - The imaginary vertical planes on all sides extending beyond the net system.
- 3.A.28. Playing Surface – The court and the area surrounding the court designated for playing.
- 3.A.29. Profanity – Words, phrases, or hand gestures, common or uncommon, which are normally considered inappropriate in “polite company” or around children. Typically included are four-letter words used as expletives or verbal intensifiers.
- 3.A.30. Rally – Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault or valid hinder.
- 3.A.31. Receiver – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. The correct receiver in doubles is the player whose correct position is diagonally opposite the correct server as determined by the player’s score and starting position in the game.
- 3.A.32. Replay – Any rally that is restarted for any reason without the awarding of a point or a change of server.
- 3.A.33. Retirement - A player/team’s decision that stops the match and awards the match to the opponent.

- 3.A.34. Right/Even Court – The service area on the right side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles or the singles server should be positioned on the right/even court when their score is even.
- 3.A.35. Second Serve – In doubles, a term used to describe the condition when a serving team loses the first of its two allocated serves.
- 3.A.36. Second Server – In doubles, the first server's partner. The second server serves after the first server loses serve.
- 3.A.37. Serve – The initial strike of the ball with the paddle to start the rally.
- 3.A.38. Server – The player who initiates a rally by serving the ball. The correct server in doubles is the player whose correct position is determined by their score and starting position in the game (see Rule 4.B.6.b).
- 3.A.39. Service Court – The area on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline, excluding the NVZ.
- 3.A.40. Serving Area – The area behind the baseline and on and between the imaginary extensions of the court centerline and each sideline.
- 3.A.41. Side Out – The awarding of the serve to the opposing team after a singles player or doubles team loses its serve.
- 3.A.42. Starting Server – For each doubles team, the player designated to serve first at the start of the game. In doubles tournament play, the starting server shall wear a visible form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.

- 3.A.43. **Technical Foul** – A referee’s assessment of a behavioral violation that results in one point being removed from the score of the offending team, unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. A technical foul shall be issued if one technical warning has already been given and a second technical warning is warranted; or when warranted by a player’s or team’s action, based on the referee’s judgement.
- 3.A.44. **Technical Warning** – A referee’s warning of a behavioral violation given to a player or team. Points are neither awarded nor deducted for a technical warning.
- 3.A.45. **Verbal Warning** – A referee’s warning of a behavioral violation. A single verbal warning may be issued to each team once per match.
- 3.A.46. **Volley** – During a rally, a strike of the ball out of the air before the ball has bounced.
- 3.A.47. **Wheelchair Player** – Any person, with or without a disability, who plays the game in a wheelchair. The wheelchair is considered part of the player’s body. This can be a player with a disability or anyone that wants to play in a wheelchair.
- 3.A.48. **Withdrawal** – A player/team’s request to be removed from any upcoming play in a specified bracket.

## SECTION 4 – THE SERVE, SERVICE SEQUENCE, AND SCORING RULES

### 4.A. *Serving.*

- 4.A.1. The entire score must be called before the ball is served.
- 4.A.2. Placement. The server must serve to the service court diagonally opposite their correct position. The ball may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The ball may land on a service court line.
- 4.A.3. If the serve clears the net or contacts the net in crossing and then touches the receiver or the receiver's partner, it is a point for the serving team.
- 4.A.4. The moment the ball is served:
  - 4.A.4.a. At least one foot must be on the playing surface behind the baseline.
  - 4.A.4.b. Neither of the server's feet may touch the court on or inside the baseline.
  - 4.A.4.c. Neither of the server's feet may touch the playing surface outside the serving area.
  - 4.A.4.d. (**Wheelchair**) Both rear wheels must be on the playing surface behind the baseline and may not touch the court on or inside the baseline or outside the imaginary extensions of the sideline or centerline.
- 4.A.5. The serve shall be made with only one hand or the paddle releasing the ball. While some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball, the server shall not impart

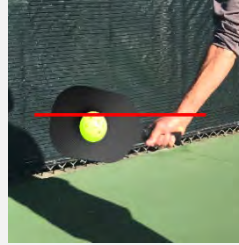
manipulation or spin on the ball with any part of the body or the paddle as a result of the release.

Exception: The server may allow the ball to roll off the face of the paddle by gravity.

- 4.A.6. In officiated matches, the server's release of the ball must be visible to the referee and receiver. In matches without a referee, the server's release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. A replay as determined in accordance with Rule 4.A.9 shall occur when the release is not visible.
- 4.A.7. **The Volley Serve.** The volley serve is made by striking the ball without bouncing the ball off the playing surface and can be made with either a forehand or backhand motion. A proper volley serve includes the following elements:
  - 4.A.7.a. The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc at the time the ball is struck with the paddle. (See Figure 4-3.)
  - 4.A.7.b. The highest point of the paddle head must not be above the highest part of the wrist (where the wrist joint bends) when the paddle strikes the ball. (See Figures 4-1 and 4-2)
  - 4.A.7.c. Contact with the ball must not be made above the waist. (See Figures 4-1 and 4-3)



**Figure 4-1 (legal serve)**



**Figure 4-2 (illegal serve)**



**Figure 4-3 (legal serve)**

*(Photos and graphics courtesy of Steve Taylor, Digital Spatula)*

- 4.A.8. **The Drop Serve.** The drop serve is made by striking the ball after it bounces on the playing surface and can be made with either a forehand or backhand motion. There is no restriction how many times the ball can bounce nor where the

ball can bounce on the playing surface. A proper drop serve includes the following elements:

- 4.A.8.a. The server must release the ball from one hand only or drop it off the paddle face from any natural (un-aided) height.
  - 4.A.8.b. When releasing the ball, the ball shall not be propelled in any direction or in any manner prior to striking the ball to make the serve.
  - 4.A.8.c. The restrictions on the Volley Serve in Rule 4.A.7 do not apply to the drop serve.
- 4.A.9. **Replay or Fault.** In officiated matches, the referee may call for a replay if they are not certain that one or more of the requirements of the serve has been met. The replay must be called before the return of serve. The referee shall call a fault if they are certain that one or more of the requirements of the serve, other than Rule 4.A.6, has not been met. In non-officiated matches, if the receiver determines that manipulation of spin has been imparted prior to the serve, or the release of the ball is not visible, the receiver may call for a replay before the return of serve. In non-officiated matches, the receiver has no authority to call for replays or faults for service motion violations.
- 4.A.9.a. The remedies for service motion violations are as follows:



	OFFICIATED PLAY		NON-OFFICIATED PLAY
	Referee not certain of violation	Referee certain of violation	Receiver determines violation
<b>VOLLEY SERVE</b>			
4.A.7.a. No upward arc	Replay	Fault	None
4.A.7.b. Paddle head above wrist	Replay	Fault	None
4.A.7.c. Contact above waist	Replay	Fault	None
4.A.5. Spin imparted	Replay	Fault	Replay
4.A.6. Release not visible	Replay	Replay	Replay
<b>DROP SERVE</b>			
4.A.8.a. Drop not made with one hand only or from paddle face or not from unaided height	Replay	Fault	None
4.A.8.b. Ball propelled up or down	Replay	Fault	None
4.A.5. Spin imparted	Replay	Fault	Replay
4.A.6. Release not visible	Replay	Replay	Replay

## **4.B. Player Positions.**

- 4.B.1. Server and Receiver. The correct server must serve from the correct service area (see Rules 4.B.5 and 4.B.6). The correct receiver must receive the serve.
- 4.B.2. At the start of each game, the starting server begins the serve from the side of the court dictated by the score.
- 4.B.3. Each player will serve until a rally is lost or a fault is declared against the player or team.
  - 4.B.3.a. (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. After the server loses the rally or faults, a side out will occur and service is awarded to the opponent.
- 4.B.4. As long as the server holds serve, after each point, the server will alternate serving from the right/even and left/odd sides of the court.
- 4.B.5. Singles.
  - 4.B.5.a. If the server's score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the serve must be made from the right/even serving area and be received in the right/even service court by the opponent.
  - 4.B.5.b. If the server's score is odd (1, 3, 5 ...), the serve must be made from the left/odd serving area and be received in the left/odd service court by the opponent.
  - 4.B.5.c. After the server loses the rally or faults, a side out will occur and service is awarded to the opponent.
- 4.B.6. Doubles. Both players on a team will serve before a side out is declared, except at the start of each

game, when only the starting server will serve. The starting server of each game is therefore designated as “Second Server” for scoring purposes, since a side out will occur once a rally is lost or a fault is committed by the serving team and service is awarded to the opposing team. (Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, one player on a team will serve before a side out is declared.

- 4.B.6.a. At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area.
- 4.B.6.b. When the team’s score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the team’s starting server’s correct position is at the right/even serving area. When the team’s score is odd (1, 3, 5...), the starting server’s correct position is at the left/odd court.
- 4.B.6.c. After each side out, service begins with the player correctly positioned on the right/even side of the court according to the team’s score. This player is referred to as “First Server” and the partner is “Second Server.” (Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, after each side out, service begins with the player correctly positioned on the right/even side of the court according to the team’s score.
- 4.B.6.d. The First Server will serve, alternating service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server’s team commits a fault. (Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, the server will

alternate service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server's team commits a fault.

- 4.B.6.e. After the First Server's team loses a rally or faults, the Second Server will serve from the correct position and will alternate serving positions as long as the serving team continues to win points. (Provisional Rule) For the rally scoring option, a side out occurs after the server's team loses a rally or commits a fault.
- 4.B.7. Partner Positions. In doubles, with the exception of the server (see 4.A.4), there is no restriction on the position of any player, as long as all players are on their respective team's side of the net. They can be positioned on or off the court.
- 4.B.8. Before the serve occurs, any player may ask the referee for the score, who is the correct server or receiver or whether any player is in an incorrect position. A generic question, such as "Am I good?," may be asked and shall be considered to encapsulate both the correct server question and the correct position question if asked by the serving team. For non-officiated play, a player may ask the opponent the same questions and the opponent shall respond with the appropriate information.
- 4.B.9. The referee will confirm and correct, if necessary, that all players are in the correct position and the correct server has the ball before calling the score.
- 4.B.10. If the correct server and correct receiver are in their correct positions when the score is called, it is a fault on a player who serves or receives

incorrectly, even if the rally is completed before the fault is called. The fault must be called before the next serve.

If the correct server or correct receiver is not in their correct position when the score is called, the referee or a player may stop the rally in progress to identify the player/position error and the rally shall be replayed. If the correct server or correct receiver is not in their correct position when the score is called and the rally is played out, the rally shall stand.

If a player stops a rally and incorrectly identifies a player/position error, it is a fault on the player who stopped the rally. If the referee stops a rally in progress and incorrectly identifies a player/position error, the rally shall be replayed.

**4.C. Readiness.** Any player may indicate “not ready” prior to the start of the score being called.

- 4.C.1. One of the following signals must be used to indicate “not ready”: 1) raising the paddle above the head, 2) raising the non-paddle hand above the head, 3) completely turning their back to the net.
- 4.C.2. After the start of the score being called, “not ready” signals will be ignored, unless there is a hinder. A player or team out of position is not considered a hinder. Verbal indicators to stop play such as “stop” and “wait” will be recognized.

- 4.D. Calling the Score.** The score shall be called after the server and receiver are (or should be) in position and all players are (or should be) ready to play.
- 4.D.1. In non-officiated play, the server normally calls the score, but the server's partner may call the score if the server is unable to call the score. The person calling the score shall not change during the game unless there is a voice impairment.
- 4.E. 10-Second Rule.** Once the score has been called, the server is allowed 10 seconds to serve the ball.
- 4.E.1. If the server exceeds 10 seconds to serve, a fault will be declared.
- 4.E.2. After the score has been called, if the serving team changes serving courts, the referee shall stop play, allow all players to reposition, and then recall the score to re-start the 10-second count. In a non-officiated match, the server will allow for the same repositioning and will recall the score to re-start the 10 second count.
- 4.F. Scoring.** A singles player or doubles team scores points only when serving. Points may also be awarded when technical fouls are called against the opposing side and their score is 0.
- 4.F.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. A player or team scores a point for each rally won except game point is scored only when serving.
- 4.G. Points.** A point is scored by serving the ball and winning the rally.

4.G.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. A point is scored by winning the rally except game point is scored only when serving.

**4.H. *Winning the Game.*** The first side scoring the winning point wins.

**4.I. *Calling the Score in Singles Matches.*** The proper sequence for calling the score is server score then receiver score as two numbers. (e.g., “one – zero.”)

**4.J. *Calling the Score in Doubles Matches.*** The score is called as three numbers in doubles matches. The proper sequence for calling the score is: serving team’s score – receiving team’s score – the server number (one or two), (e.g., “zero – one – one”). To start each game, the score will be called as “zero – zero – two.”

4.J.1. (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option – Calling the Score in Doubles Matches. The proper sequence for calling the score is server score then receiver score as two numbers. (e.g., “one – zero.”)

**4.K. *Wrong Score Called.*** If the wrong score is called, the referee or any player may stop play before the return of serve to correct the score. The rally shall be replayed with the correct score called. After the return of serve, play shall continue to the end of the rally and the score correction made before the next serve. After the return of serve, a player who stops play to identify or ask for a score correction will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally. A player who stops play after the serve to identify or ask for a score correction when the score was correctly called will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.

**4.L. Service Foot Faults.** A fault occurs when the server violates any of the rules listed in Rule 4.A.4.

**4.M. Service Faults.** During the serve, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:

- 4.M.1. The served ball touches any permanent object before it hits the ground.
- 4.M.2. The served ball touches the server or their partner, or anything the server or their partner is wearing or holding.
- 4.M.3. The served ball lands in the non-volley zone which includes the NVZ lines.
- 4.M.4. The served ball lands outside the service court.
- 4.M.5. The served ball hits the net and lands inside the non-volley zone.
- 4.M.6. The served ball hits the net and lands outside the service court.
- 4.M.7. The server uses an illegal serve when performing the Volley Serve (as explained in Rule 4.A.7) or the Drop Serve (as explained in Rule 4.A.8).
- 4.M.8. The server or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.
- 4.M.9. The server hits the ball to make the serve while the score is being called.
- 4.M.10. The server violates any of the rules listed in Rule 4.A.4.

**4.N. Receiver Faults.** It is a fault against the receiving team resulting in a point for the server if:

- 4.N.1. The receiver or their partner is touched by or interferes with the flight of the ball before it bounces.
- 4.N.2. The receiver or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.



## **SECTION 5 – SERVICE AND END SELECTION RULES**

### ***5.A. Selection of End, Serve, Receive, or Defer.***

- 5.A.1. Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer (e.g., a 1 or 2 written on the back of the score sheet, flipping a coin). Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.
- 5.A.2. In doubles, teams may change the starting server between games and should notify the referee. In non-officiated matches, the team should notify the opponents if there was a starting server change. The starting server for the game is the player wearing the starting server form of identification. There is no fault or penalty for failure to make the notifications. Once a game has started, if the referee notices a starting server has changed, the referee will annotate the scoresheet accordingly, after the rally has completed.
- 5.A.3. In doubles, the starting servers must visibly wear the form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.

### ***5.B. Change of Ends.***

- 5.B.1. Teams change ends and initial service upon the completion of each game.
- 5.B.2. Two minutes is allowed between games. If both teams agree, play may resume early. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.
- 5.B.3. In matches that consist of a single game, the teams will change ends at the midpoint based on the match format. Examples: Change ends at 6 for

game to 11; 8 for a game to 15; or 11 for a game to 21. Serve remains with the player holding serve.

- 5.B.4. In matches that consist of multiple games, the teams will change ends at the midpoint of the last game based on the match format. Example: Change ends at 6 for the last game to 11. Serve remains with the player holding serve. Exception: If the first game was forfeited due to a no-show, the end change will not occur in the last game since each team will have played the same number of games on each end.
- 5.B.5. End Change Time-Out. One minute is allowed to change ends during a game. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.
- 5.B.6. Once the end change point has been scored, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completion of the end change.
- 5.B.7. If the end change fails to be executed per Rules 5.B.3 or 5.B.4, the end change will be executed when realized. It is not a fault on either team, the score is not impacted and the serve remains with the player holding the serve.

## SECTION 6 – LINE CALL RULES

- 6.A.** A served ball that clears the non-volley zone and its lines and lands in the correct service court or on any correct service court line is in. Any other ball in play that lands in the court or touches any court line is in.
- 6.B.** A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is "out." A served ball that lands in the opponent's non-volley zone, including on the non-volley zone lines, is "out".
- 6.C. *Code of Ethics for Line Calling.*** Pickleball is played according to specific rules. It also requires a code of ethics for line-calling responsibilities when performed by players.

The line-calling responsibilities of players are different from those assigned to referees or line judges. The officials make impartial judgment calls with all players' interests in mind. The player, when assigned line-calling duties, must strive for accuracy and operate under the principle that all questionable calls must be resolved in favor of the opponent.

The basic elements are:

- 6.C.1.** Players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court (excluding short serves, service foot faults and all non-volley-zone faults, if being called by a referee). If a player makes an initial line call, and then asks for either the opponent(s) or the referee's opinion, if the opponent or referee can make a clear "in" or "out" call, the clear call will stand. If no clear call can be made, the initial line call by the player will stand.

A call made by the opponent can be appealed to the referee for a final “in” or “out” decision.

- 6.C.2. In matches that have line judges, the players’ only line call is the centerline on the serve.
- 6.C.3. The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made. Any ball that cannot be called “out” will be considered “in.” A player cannot claim a replay because the ball was not seen or there is uncertainty. A player who does not make a call may appeal to the referee to make the call if they did not clearly see the ball land. If the referee is unable to make the call, the ball is “in.” The moment the receiving player/team appeals to the referee, they lose their right to make any subsequent “in” or “out” call for that rally.
- 6.C.4. Spectators shall not be consulted on any line call.
- 6.C.5. A player/team may ask the opponent’s opinion to make the line call on the player’s end of the court. If requested and the opponent makes a clear “in” or “out” call, it must be accepted. If the opponents cannot make a clear “in” or “out” call, then the ball is ruled as being “in” on the receiving team. The moment the receiving player/team asks for the opponent’s opinion, they lose their right to make any subsequent “in” or “out” call for that rally. The receiving team/player may also appeal to the referee to make a clear call. If the referee cannot make a clear call, the outcome of the opponent’s ruling will stand.
- 6.C.6. Players shall not call a ball “out” unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.

- 6.C.7. All “out” calls must be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal.
- 6.C.7.a.If a player/team returns the ball, the “out” call shall be made before the opponent hits the ball or the ball becomes dead.
- 6.C.7.b.If a player/team does not return the ball, they may make an “out” call, appeal the call to the referee, or defer to their opponents to make the line call up until the next serve occurs.
- 6.C.8. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball “out” and the partner calls it “in,” then doubt exists and the team’s call will be “in.” Any player may appeal the team’s call to the referee or defer a line call to their opponent up until the next serve occurs. If the referee or opponent did not see the ball, the ball is considered in.
- 6.C.9. While the ball is in the air, if a player yells “out,” “no,” “bounce it,” or any other words to communicate to their partner that the ball may be out, it shall be considered player communication only and not considered a line call.
- 6.C.10. An “out” call made after the ball bounces is a line call. The ball is dead and play shall stop. If, upon appeal, the referee overrules any type of “out” call, it is a fault against the player or team that made the “out” call. Exception: If the match has line judges, the baseline and sideline judges are responsible for the call. (See Rule 13.E.2)
- 6.C.11. Players may overrule a partner’s line call, their own line call, an officiating team’s line call, or an “in” ruling to their own disadvantage.

## SECTION 7 – FAULT RULES

A fault (and resulting dead ball) will be declared for the following:

- 7.A.** If the serve or service return does not bounce before the ball is struck.
- 7.B.** Hitting the ball into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side. Note: The ball is dead and the fault occurs the moment the ball hits the ground.
- 7.C.** Hitting the ball under the net or between the net and the net post.
- 7.D.** A ball hit by a player that first lands out of bounds or onto their own side of the court.
- 7.E.** Failure of a standing player to return the ball before it bounces twice on the receiving player's side of the net and failure of a player using a wheelchair to return a ball before it bounces three times.
- 7.F.** Violation of Section 4, Section 9, and Section 11 rules.
- 7.G.** A player, a player's apparel, or a player's paddle contacting the net system, the net posts, or the opponent's court, when the ball is live.
- 7.H.** After the serve, the ball contacts a player or anything the player is wearing or carrying, except the paddle or the player's hand(s) in contact with the paddle and below the wrist. If the player is in the process of changing hands with both hands on the paddle or is attempting a two-handed stroke and either hand is hit below the wrist, as long as a player's hand is in contact with the

paddle, the ball is still in play. The fault is on the player who was hit by the ball.

- 7.I.** A ball in play that is stopped by a player before it becomes dead (e.g., catching or stopping a ball in flight before it makes contact with the playing surface). The fault is on the player who stopped the ball. Exception: See Rules 4.B.10 and 4.K.
- 7.J.** After the serve, a ball contacting any permanent object before bouncing on the court.
- 7.K.** Once the ball is in play, a player hitting the ball before the ball entirely crosses the plane of the net.
- 7.L.** A player carrying or catching the ball on the paddle while performing the serve or during a rally.
- 7.M.** A hinder called by a player that is determined by the referee to be invalid.
- 7.N.** In non-officiated matches, players may carry an additional pickleball(s) as long as the ball(s) is carried in a way that the ball(s) is not visible to their opponent(s) during play. If an additional ball that a player was carrying falls on the playing surface during play, a fault shall be declared.
- 7.O.** Any disagreement between partners on a fault call will be decided to the benefit of their opponents.

## **SECTION 8 – DEAD BALL RULES**

- 8.A.** Any action that stops play will result in a dead ball.
- 8.B.** A fault called by a referee or player, or a fault committed by a player, will result in a dead ball.
- 8.C.** A hinder called by the referee or player will result in a dead ball. The referee will determine if the hinder called by the player was valid. A valid hinder per the Referee or a hinder called in non-officiated play will result in a replay.
- 8.D.** A ball in play that contacts a permanent object after it has bounced on the opponent's court will result in a dead ball. The player who hit the ball shall win the rally.
- 8.E.** Other than non-volley zone violations, a fault may only be committed when the ball is live. The penalty for a fault (other than non-volley zone faults) is normally enforced the moment it is identified (e.g., distractions, double bounces, etc.) but may also be enforced any time before the next serve occurs.



## **SECTION 9 – NON-VOLLEY-ZONE RULES**

- 9.A.** All volleys must be initiated outside of the non-volley zone. For players using wheelchairs, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone during a volley.
- 9.B.** It is a fault if the volleying player or anything that has contact with the volleying player while in the act of volleying touches the non-volley zone. For players using wheelchairs, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone.
- 9.B.1. The act of volleying begins when the ball is struck out of the air before bouncing (volleyed) and ends when the player's movement from the follow-through action (momentum) stops.
- 9.C.** During the act of volleying, it is a fault if the volleying player's momentum causes the player to contact anything that is touching the non-volley zone, including the player's partner. For players using wheelchairs, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone.
- 9.C.1. It is a fault even if the ball becomes dead before the player contacts the non-volley zone.
- 9.D.** If a player has touched the non-volley zone for any reason, that player cannot volley a return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the non-volley zone. A maneuver such as standing within the non-volley zone, jumping up to hit a volley, and then landing outside the non-volley zone is a fault. If the rear wheels of a wheelchair have touched the non-volley zone for any reason, the player using a wheelchair cannot volley a return until both rear wheels

have made contact with the playing surface outside the non-volley zone.

- 9.E.** A player may enter the non-volley zone at any time except when that player is volleying the ball.
- 9.F.** A player may enter the non-volley zone before or after returning any ball that bounces.
- 9.G.** A player may stay inside the non-volley zone to return a ball that has bounced. There is no violation if a player does not exit the non-volley zone after hitting a ball that bounces.
- 9.H.** There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the non-volley zone as long as the partners, including anything the partners are wearing or carrying, do not contact each other during the act of volleying.

## SECTION 10 – TIME-OUT RULES

**10.A. Standard Time-Out.** A player or team is entitled to two time-outs for 11- or 15-point games and three time-outs for a 21-point game.

10.A.1. Each time-out period may last up to 1 minute.

10.A.2. Play may be resumed early if all players are ready.

10.A.3. If a team has any remaining time-outs, any player on that team may call a time-out before the next serve occurs.

10.A.4. Before the serve occurs, if a team calls a time-out while having no time-outs remaining, no penalty shall be called.

10.A.5. The referee will announce when there are 15 seconds remaining. At the end of the time-out period, the referee shall call “time in” and then call the score when all players are (or should be) ready to play.

**10.B. Medical Time-Out.** A player needing medical attention during a match should request a medical time-out from the referee. Once the medical time-out has been requested, the following guidelines shall be used:

10.B.1. The referee shall immediately summon on-site medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, to assess the situation and render appropriate first aid.

10.B.1.a. When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, the referee shall start the 15-minute timer.

- 10.B.2. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that a valid medical condition exists, then that player will be allowed no more than 15 minutes for the medical time-out.
- 10.B.2.a. The time-out must be continuous and shall not exceed 15 minutes. If medical treatment is rendered off-court at another location at the venue, the time to transport the player to and from the off-court location shall be excluded from 15-minute time period.
  - 10.B.2.b. If the player uses fewer than 15 minutes, the remaining time is lost and no additional medical time will be available to the player during the match.
  - 10.B.2.c. If the player cannot resume play after the 15-minute medical time-out period, the match will be declared a retirement. The player may use their available regular timeouts after the medical timeout has expired to allow more time before the match must be retired.
- 10.B.3. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that no valid medical condition exists, the player or team will be charged a standard time-out, if available, and issued a technical warning.
- 10.B.3.a. If a standard time-out is not available, then a technical foul will be issued.
  - 10.B.3.b. The medical time-out is no longer available to that player for that match.

10.B.3.c. A player may be granted only one player-requested medical time-out per match.

10.B.4. Rule 10.A.5. shall be used to continue play.

10.B.5. Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the playing surface, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the playing surface has been removed.

10.B.5.a. Issues relating solely to blood cleanup or control will be considered a referee time-out.

10.B.5.b. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.

**10.C. Continuous Play.** Play should be continuous, although players are permitted to quickly take a drink or towel off in between rallies as long as, in the judgment of the referee, the flow of the game is not adversely impacted. The referee shall call the score when play should be resumed.

**10.D. Equipment Time-Outs.** Players are expected to keep all apparel and equipment in good playable condition. If the referee determines that an equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of the match, the referee may award an equipment time-out of reasonable duration. Rule 10.A.5 will be used to continue play. In non-officiated matches, players will work out a reasonable accommodation among themselves for equipment malfunctions.

10.D.1. Apparel and equipment adjustments that can be accomplished quickly are allowed between rallies (e.g., tying shoelaces, cleaning glasses, adjusting hat).

**10.E. Time Between Games.** The standard time between games is two minutes. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to continue play.

10.E.1. In between games of a match, players may take one or both of their upcoming game's timeouts. The players must inform the referee, or their opponents if there is no referee. If a team returns to play before one (or both) requested time-outs have started, the team retains the time-out(s) for the upcoming game. The normal two minutes in between games will be used before any team-allotted timeouts.

**10.F. Time Between Matches.** The standard time between matches is 10 minutes. If all players are ready to play prior to 10 minutes, the match may be started early.

10.F.1. In a championship match with a tie-breaker match: If the winner of the loser's bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played. The standard time between the championship match and the tie-breaker match is 10 minutes.

**10.G. Suspended Games.** A game suspended due to extenuating circumstances shall be resumed with the same server, score, and remaining time-outs as when interrupted.

**10.H. Other Time-Out Rules.**

10.H.1. Before a Match or Between Games: Neither medical nor regular time-outs may be taken before a match starts. A match cannot begin until all players are present and the starting score is called. Time-out(s) may be used before the start of

the second and subsequent games in a multiple-game match.

10.H.2. Extenuating Circumstances: The referee may call a referee time-out to address extenuating circumstances that may require an extended interruption of play.

10.H.2.a. In the interest of safety, if the referee determines a potential medical situation exists, (for example, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, etc.) and the player is unable to or refuses to call a medical timeout, the referee is authorized to call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director. Referee requested time-outs will not be charged against the player.

10.H.2.b. Active bleeding shall be addressed in accordance with Rule 10.B.5.

10.H.2.c. Foreign substances on the playing surface, such as debris, water, or other fluids, shall be removed or cleaned up.

10.H.2.d. Rule 10.A.5 shall be used to resume play.

## SECTION 11 – OTHER RULES

- 11.A. *Double Hits.*** Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during a continuous, single-direction stroke by one player. If the stroke made while performing the serve or during a rally is not continuous, or not in a single direction, or the ball is struck by a second player, it is a fault.
- 11.B. *Switching Hands.*** A paddle may be switched from hand to hand at any time.
- 11.C. *Two-Handed Shots.*** Two-handed shots are allowed.
- 11.D. *Missed Shot.*** A player completely missing the ball when attempting to strike it does not create a dead ball. The ball remains in play until it bounces twice or until any other fault occurs.
- 11.E. *Broken, Cracked, Degraded, or Soft Ball.*** If any player suspects the ball is or becomes broken, cracked, degraded, or soft after the serve, play must continue until the end of the rally. In officiated matches, players may appeal to the referee before the next serve occurs to determine if a ball is degraded, soft, broken or cracked. If, in the judgment of the referee, a broken or cracked ball impacted the outcome of a rally, the referee will call for a replay with a replacement ball. If both teams agree that the ball is degraded or soft, the ball will be replaced, but there is no replay of the prior rally. In non-officiated matches, if both teams agree, players may replace a degraded, soft, broken, or cracked ball before the next serve occurs. In only the case of a broken or cracked ball, if the players agree the cracked ball impacted the prior rally, a replay occurs. If the players do not agree that a cracked ball impacted the outcome of the prior



rally, the prior rally stands as played. If both teams agree that the ball is degraded or soft, the ball will be replaced, but there is no replay of the prior rally.

- 11.F. Injury During Rally.** The rally continues to its conclusion despite an injury to any of the players.
- 11.G. Player Equipment Problem.** A rally will not be stopped if a player loses or breaks a paddle or loses an item, unless the action results in a fault.
- 11.H. Items on the Court.** If any item a player is/was wearing or carrying lands on their end of the court, unless the item lands in the non-volley zone as a result of a volley, the ball remains in play even if it hits the item.
- 11.I. Plane of the Net.** Crossing the plane of the net prior to striking the ball is a fault. Immediately after striking the ball, a player or anything the player is/was wearing or carrying may cross the plane of the net. The player may not touch any part of the net system, the opponent's court, or the opponent while the ball is still live. After striking the ball, the allowance to cross the plane of the net only applies in the course of executing the current strike of the ball and for continuation specifically associated with the current strike of the ball.
- 11.I.1. Exception: If the ball bounces into a receiving player's court with enough backspin or wind aid to cause it to return to the other side of the net, the receiving player may cross the plane of the net (over, under or around the net post) to hit the ball. It is a fault if the receiving player (or anything the receiving player is wearing or carrying) crosses the plane of the net before the ball has first crossed back over the plane of the net to the

opponent's side. It is a fault if the player touches the net system, the opponent's court, or the opponent while the ball is still in play.

**11.J. *Distractions.*** Players shall not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If in the judgment of the referee a player has distracted their opponent, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team. See Rule 3.A.7.

**11.K. *Net Posts.*** It is a fault if a player contacts the net post while the ball is live. A ball contacting the net post results in a dead ball and the team that hit the ball loses the rally.

**11.L. *Net.***

- 11.L.1. If the ball strikes the top of the net or the top net cable or rope that is between the net post and the net and lands inbounds, it remains in play.
- 11.L.2. If the ball travels between the net and the net post, it is a fault against the striking player.
- 11.L.3. A player is allowed to go around the net post and cross the imaginary extension line of the net after hitting the ball, so long as the player or any item he or she is/was wearing or carrying does not touch the opponent's court. If the player goes around the net post and crosses the imaginary extension line of the net but does not make contact with the ball, a fault will be declared.
- 11.L.4. If a player hits the ball over the net into the opponent's court, and then the ball bounces back over the net and bounces a second time without being touched by the opponent, the striking player wins the rally.

- 11.L.5. For net systems with a horizontal bar or a center base, or both:
- 11.L.5.a. Before going over the net, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base, it is a fault.
  - 11.L.5.b. Except on the serve, a replay will occur if the ball goes over the net and:
    - hits the center base
    - hits any part of the horizontal bar
    - the ball gets caught between the net and the horizontal bar
    - hits a deflecting net
    - hits a draping net on the groundExcept on the serve, if the ball goes over the net, bounces on the court, and then performs any of the above listed actions, a replay shall occur.
  - 11.L.5.c. On the serve, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base or gets caught between the net and horizontal bar after going over the net, it is a fault.
  - 11.L.5.d. Any malfunction of a net system during play shall be considered a hinder.

**11.M. Shots Around the Net Post.** A player may return the ball around the outside of the net post.

- 11.M.1. The ball does not need to travel back over the net.
- 11.M.2. There is no restriction on the height of the return, meaning a player may return the ball around the net post below the height of the net.

**11.N. One Paddle.** A player shall not use or carry more than one paddle during a rally. A violation of this rule is a fault.

**11.O. Paddle Possession.** A player must have possession of the paddle when the paddle makes contact with the ball. A violation of this rule is a fault (Exception see Rule 11.H).

**11.P. Electronic Equipment.** Players shall not wear or use any form of headphones, earbuds, or other equipment that enables audio communication during competition play. Exception: Prescribed or necessary hearing aids are permitted.

## SECTION 12 – SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT POLICIES

### *12.A. Event Categories.*

Men: Singles and Doubles

Women: Singles and Doubles

Mixed: Doubles

Wheelchair: Singles and Doubles

12.A.1. In events described by gender, only members of that gender shall be allowed to play in that event.

12.A.2. Mixed doubles – A mixed doubles team shall consist of one male and one female player.

12.A.3 Open Gender and Age – An event that includes players of any gender and age.

12.A.4. Players using wheelchairs may play in any event with either standup partners or wheelchair doubles.

***12.B. Tournament Scoring Options.*** The recommended tournament scoring option is best two of three games to 11 points, win by two points. Other options include: best three of five games to 11 points, one game to 15 or one game to 21. All formats win by two points. Round robin brackets may also use one game to 11, win by two points, if the bracket has six or more teams.

12.B.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. The Tournament Director shall have the option to use rally scoring. This includes singles and doubles round-robins, team play and singles double-elimination. Also, for doubles, double-elimination is not a rally scoring option. For 2025, all USAP Golden Ticket events and the USAP National

Championships will use side-out scoring. All standard rules shall apply to rally scoring except as otherwise provided herein and in Rules 4.B.3.a, 4.B.6, 4.B.6.c, 4.B.6.d, 4.B.6.e, 4.F.1, 4.G.1, and 4.J.1.

12.B.1.a **Game Scoring Format.** Game scoring shall be to 11, 15, or 21 points. Matches may consist of one game, best two of three games, or best three of five games. For inclement weather considerations, the Tournament Director may approve game scoring to 7 points, with an end change at 4 points in a single-game match or in the tiebreaker game of a multiple-game match.

12.B.1.b **Point Scoring.** A point is scored by the player or team that wins a rally, except as provided for in 12.B.1.c.

12.B.1.c **Scoring the Game-Winning Point.** The game-winning point can only be scored by the serving player or team. When a player or team is at game point and the opponent serves and loses the rally, it is a side out and no point is awarded.

**12.C. Tournament Formats.** There are six tournament formats that may be used. The particular format is typically the choice of the tournament sponsor or the Tournament Director.

12.C.1. **Single Elimination with Consolation.** The first player/team to score the match-winning point by at least a two-point margin wins. Losers from all rounds go into a consolation bracket playing for the bronze medal/third place and are eliminated

after a second loss. The final two players/teams in the winner's bracket play for the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals.

- 12.C.2. (Pro and Senior Pro Player Brackets) Single Elimination Without Consolation. The first player/team to score the match-winning point by at least a two-point margin wins. The final two players/teams in the winner's bracket play for the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals. The determination of the final standings of the remaining players/teams is left to the discretion of tournament officials.
- 12.C.3. Double Elimination. The first player/team to score the match-winning point by at least a two-point margin wins. A loss will put the loser into the consolation bracket. Players/teams are eliminated after one loss in the consolation bracket. The winner of the consolation bracket will play the winner of the winner's bracket for the championship. If the winner of the consolation bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played to determine the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals. The loser of the consolation bracket final will receive the bronze/third-place medal.
- 12.C.4. Round Robin. All players/teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied, ties shall be broken in accordance with 12.C.4.a. through 12.C.4.e. The

method that succeeds in breaking the tie will be used to rank all tied teams.

- 12.C.4.a. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin without a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin with a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin and the player/team will not be eligible to move on to a playoff elimination draw. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating.
- 12.C.4.b. First tie-breaker: head-to-head matches won among the tied teams.
- 12.C.4.c. Second tie-breaker: point differential of all games played. (e.g., Team A won Match 1 11-8, 11-4, so they would have a point differential of +10. Team A then wins the second match 11-9, 2-11, 11-6. For this round, they would have a point differential of -2. This would give them a total for the day of +8.)
- 12.C.4.d. Third tie-breaker: head-to-head point differential.
- 12.C.4.e. Fourth tie-breaker: point differential against next-highest player/team (e.g., if the players/teams are tied for second, use



point differentials against the first-place team.)

- 12.C.5. Pool Play. The participants are divided into two or more player pools. Each pool plays a round robin to determine the qualifiers that put the players into a single-elimination or double-elimination playoff.
- 12.C.6. Non-Pool Play. The participants are seeded based on the results of the round robin and play either a single or double elimination medal round format of two of three games to 11, one game to 15, or one game to 21. Each format requires a two-point win margin.
- 12.C.7. Team Play. The participants are designated by roster and play can include gender singles/doubles and mixed doubles. Win-by one is permissible. Teams play can also use side-out scoring or rally scoring for both singles and doubles play.

**12.D. Draws and Seeding.** A draw and seeding committee shall be appointed by the Tournament Director to rank the players and teams and set up a fair draw for each event.

**12.E. Notice of Matches.** It is the responsibility of each player to check the posted schedules to determine the time and place of each match. If any change is made in the schedule after the initial posting, the Tournament Director or their designated representative shall notify the players of the changes.

## ***12.F. Retirements.***

- 12.F.1. After the initial score has been called to start the match, the only option available for a player/team to discontinue playing the match until completion is Retirement.
- 12.F.2. During a match, if a player/team cannot immediately continue after the 15-minute medical time-out period has expired, a Retirement will be imposed. (See also Rule 10.B.2.c.)
- 12.F.3. The player/team must make a Retirement request during the match to either the referee or the opposing player/team.
- 12.F.4. The player/team who requests a Retirement during a match, or a player/team on which a Forfeit has been imposed, will have all score(s) reported per the guidelines in the Retirement Scoring section (see Rule 12.H.1)
  - 12.F.4.a. If applicable, a player/team is still eligible for the next match in the same bracket after choosing a Retirement option for a previous match.
  - 12.F.4.b. A player/team may request a Retirement for any upcoming match in the specified bracket.

## ***12.G. Withdrawals***

- 12.G.1. A player/team may request to be withdrawn from any scheduled bracket(s) that has not been started by tournament operations personnel.
- 12.G.2. If a player/team has completed any matches, the player/team may request to be withdrawn from all upcoming matches in that bracket. The

request must be made prior to the initial score being called to start their next match.

- 12.G.3. The player/team must make their Withdrawal request to either the Tournament Director, Head Referee, or operations desk personnel.
- 12.G.4. The withdrawn player/team shall be removed from any future participation in the specified bracket.
- 12.G.5. The withdrawn player/team shall have all scores reported per the guidelines in the Withdrawal Scoring section. (See Rule 12.I.)

### ***12.H. Forfeits, Ejections, Expulsions and Retirement Match Scoring Guidelines***

- 12.H.1. Actual game scores at the time of retirement shall be reported for the player/team that retires. The opponents shall be awarded all points necessary for proper match completion, ensuring a two-point margin. For example, in Game 1 of a two-out-of-three games match, a team with 10 points retires when the score is 10-5. The final scores will be recorded as:

“12-10, 11-0”

Scores for a match forfeit, an ejection or an expulsion shall be reported as:

Two out-of-three games format: “11-0, 11-0”

Three out-of-five format: “11-0, 11-0, 11-0”

15- or 21-point format: “15-0” or “21-0”

The score for any game forfeit shall be reported as 11-0, 15-0, or 21-0, as appropriate for the game format.

- 12.H.2. If a player/team elects the Retirement option or a Forfeit has been imposed for the match, (and the Withdrawal option has not been chosen) the player/team may continue to compete in any upcoming matches.
- 12.H.3. All previous completed match scores, prior to an Ejection, Forfeit or a player Retirement, will be retained.

### ***12.I. Withdrawal Scoring Guidelines for Remaining Matches***

- 12.I.1. Two-out-of-three format: "0-0, 0-0"  
Three-out-of-five format: "0-0, 0-0, 0-0"  
One Game to 15 format: "0-0"  
One Game to 21 format: "0-0"
- 12.I.2. Scores for all matches completed prior to the Withdrawal request will be retained.

***12.J. Two-Match Minimum.*** In all USA PICKLEBALL-sanctioned tournaments, each entrant shall be entitled to participate in a minimum of two scheduled matches per event entered. Exception: Single Elimination Without Consolation events guarantee only 1 match per event.

***12.K. Scheduling Matches.*** A player is not permitted to enter multiple events scheduled on the same day with an overlapping time frame.

***12.L. Doubles Play.*** A doubles team shall consist of two players who meet the classification requirements to participate in a particular division of play.

- 12.L.1. In an event based upon skill rating, the higher-rated player determines the team's ability level. In an adult event (ages 19 and over) based upon age

grouping, the lower age of the team members will determine the team's age classification. Players may play in a younger division unless prohibited by the rules of the National Senior Games Association.

12.L.2. *Juniors (ages 18 and under) may enter any junior event for which they are age qualified. If a junior event is not available or does not receive enough entrants, or at the Tournament Director's permission, juniors may play as adults in the 19-and-over events.*

**12.M. Partner Changes.** Partner change may be made prior to the first-round match, with the consent of the Tournament Director, if the change is due to injury, illness, or circumstances beyond the control of the player.

12.M.1. Under no circumstances can a partner change be made after the partners have begun team play.

**12.N. Court Changes.** In USA PICKLEBALL-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director or designee may decide on a change of courts after the completion of any tournament game if such a change will accommodate better spectator or playing conditions.

**12.O. Mini-singles.** Mini-singles is played according to the same rules as singles except as otherwise provided herein.

12.O.1. The Court: Mini-singles is played on a standard pickleball court.

12.O.1.a. An additional line shall be provided that extends the centerline of the court through each non-volley zone. The color

of this line is not required to be the same as the other court lines.

12.O.1.b. Only one of the two courts at a player's end is "in play" during a rally. The court that is in play is determined by the required player position based on their score (i.e., the right [even] or the left [odd] court).

### 12.O.2. Player Positions

12.O.2.a. Each player's position is determined by their individual score. This applies at all times, whether the player is serving or receiving.

12.O.2.b. When a player's score is even, the player plays from the right (even) court and that is the court that is in play at that end. When the player's score is odd, the player plays from the left (odd) court and that is the court that is in play at that end.

### 12.O.3 Boundary of the In-Play Courts

12.O.3.a. Each player's shot must land in bounds of the opponent's court that is in play.

12.O.3.b. The baseline and outer sideline determine two of the three boundaries of the in-play court.

12.O.3.c. Because only one of the courts at an end is in play during a rally (i.e., either the right [even] court or the left [odd] court), the centerline of the court, including the portion that extends through the non-

volley zone, serves as the other sideline of the in-play court. The playing surface on the other side of the centerline, including that portion of the non-volley zone, is out of bounds.

**12.P Error Corrections.** Tournament Operations reserves the ability to make changes in order to rectify any operational errors that results in incorrect scores, players on courts, match results, bracket results, medal results, matches being played, or future matches to be played.

## **SECTION 13 – TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIATING**

- 13.A. Tournament Director.** A Tournament Director is responsible for the tournament. It is the Tournament Director's responsibility to designate the officials and their areas of responsibility.
- 13.A.1. A player may appeal any officiating decision to the Tournament Director or their designee. The Tournament Director, however, retains the final decision-making authority while following the applicable rule in the Official Rulebook.
- 13.A.2. In all USA PICKLEBALL-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director will provide some method of identifying each team's starting server for each game. This identification must be visible to all on the court during play. Refusal to wear this identification will result in forfeit of the match.
- 13.A.3. The Tournament Director should check to ensure that planned support (e.g., first aid, tournament volunteers, etc.) is available.
- 13.A.4. The Tournament Director has the authority to expel any player from the tournament for misconduct.
- 13.B. Tournament Briefing.** Before the tournament, the Tournament Director shall brief players and referees on any unique features, abnormal local conditions, or hazards associated with the courts. The briefings may include but are not limited to court distances that are not uniform (such as the distance from end line to back fence or barrier), low ceilings, existence of overhangs,



court repairs, or damage that could affect the play of the ball. If possible, the players should be notified in writing as part of the pre-tournament instructions. The referees shall be briefed upon arrival at the venue by the Tournament Director or their designee.

13.B.1. The Tournament Director may not implement or impose any rule that is not provided in the USA Pickleball Rulebook. If the Tournament Director desires an exception to any rule because of physical limitations of the court or local conditions, the USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating must grant permission before the tournament.

**13.C. Referee Duties.** The referee is responsible for all decisions related to procedural and judgment calls during the match. Players may appeal any decision of the referee to the Tournament Director or their designee.

13.C.1. The referee calls non-volley-zone infractions, short serves, and service foot faults.

13.C.2. If the players or line judges make the line calls and there is a disputed line call, the players may request that the referee determine the line call. If the referee cannot make the line call, the player's or line judge's call will remain. If doubles partners appeal a line call that they disagree on and the referee cannot make the call, the ball will be declared "in." Note: A player may choose to overrule a line call to their disadvantage (See Rule 6.C.11).

13.C.2.a. Spectators should not be consulted on any calls.

- 13.C.3. Before each match begins, the referee must:
  - 13.C.3.a. Check on preparation of the court with respect to cleanliness, lighting, height of the net, court markings, and hazards.
  - 13.C.3.b. Check on availability and suitability of necessary materials for the match, such as balls, score sheets, pencils, and the timing device (stopwatch).
- 13.C.4. Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players at courtside to:
  - 13.C.4.a. Inspect paddles for irregularities.
  - 13.C.4.b. Point out approved rule modifications, court abnormalities and non-standard court conditions that could be potential safety issues, including but not limited to court repairs or seams, different distances from end lines to back fences, and spectators and their seating.
  - 13.C.4.c. Instruct players on line-calling duties of the referee, line judges, and players. Note: This requirement may be satisfied by the pre-match player instructions provided by the Tournament Director.
  - 13.C.4.d. Use any fair method to determine the initial selection of end, serve, receive, or defer.
  - 13.C.4.e. Ensure the starting servers for each team are wearing the official identification. Refusal to wear the identification will result in forfeit of the match.

- 13.C.5. During the match, the referee must:
- 13.C.5.a. Recheck the net height and position if the net is disturbed.
  - 13.C.5.b. Call the score to start each rally. Calling the score indicates to each side that play is ready to resume.
  - 13.C.5.c. Call “point” after each is awarded.
  - 13.C.5.d. Appropriately annotate the score sheet after each rally is completed or time-out is called.
  - 13.C.5.e. In doubles matches, call “second server” (or “second serve”) after the first server’s team loses the rally.
  - 13.C.5.f. Call “side out” when appropriate.
  - 13.C.5.g. Enforce time-out procedures. (See Section 10.)
  - 13.C.5.h. Maintain player conduct. In USA PICKLEBALL tournaments, the referee is empowered to call verbal warnings, technical warnings, technical fouls, and to forfeit a game or match based on a defined combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls. The referee may also recommend an ejection to the Tournament Director.

***13.D. Player Line and Fault Call Responsibilities.***

- 13.D.1. Non-Officiated Play.
- 13.D.1.a. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call any type of fault on themselves or their partner as soon as the fault is committed or

detected. The fault call must happen before the next serve occurs.

- 13.D.1.b. Players make all line calls, non-volley zone fault calls, and service foot fault calls on their end of the court.
- 13.D.1.c. Players may call non-volley zone faults and service foot faults on the opponent's end of the court. Claims of non-volley zone faults and service foot faults on opponents must be called as soon as the claimed fault is detected. If there is any disagreement between teams about the called fault, a replay shall occur.
- 13.D.1.d. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes an opponent has committed any type of fault other than a service foot fault or non-volley zone fault as noted in Section 7 – Fault Rules, they may mention the specific fault to the opponent(s) upon completion of the rally but they have no authority to enforce the fault. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

#### 13.D.2. Officiated Play.

- 13.D.2.a. Players call baseline, sideline, and center service line on their end of the court.
- 13.D.2.b. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call faults on themselves as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call

must happen before the next serve occurs.

### 13.D.3. Officiated Play with Line Judges.

13.D.3.a. Players call center service line on their end of the court.

13.D.3.b. Except for center service line calls, player's line calls are not valid in matches with line judges, except to overrule a call to disadvantage their own team (See Rule 6.C.11). Players may appeal a line call made by the line judge to the referee. (See Rule 13.F.)

13.D.3.c. If the line judge(s) and referee cannot make a line call, the rally shall be replayed.

### ***13.E. Line Judges.***

13.E.1. The Tournament Director shall determine which medal matches will use line judges. Line judges are recommended, but not required.

13.E.2. Line judges will make the assigned line and foot fault calls within their jurisdiction and will signify by loudly calling "out" (or "service foot fault") and showing the "out" signal (outstretched arm pointing in the out-of-bounds direction).

13.E.3. If a line judge shows the "blocked/blinded" signal, the referee can make the call immediately if they clearly saw the ball land. If the referee cannot make the call, the referee shall canvass other appropriate members of the officiating team to assist in making the call.

13.E.4. Upon appeal, if a referee overrules a line judge's "out" call as "in," a replay will occur, unless the

team that benefitted from the referee's call chooses to concede the rally.

- 13.E.5. If a player disagrees with a line judge's "out" call that benefitted their team, the player may overrule the "out" call as "in" per rule 6.C.11. A replay will occur, unless the team that made the call to their detriment chooses to concede the rally.

**13.F. Appeals.** Appeals to the referee regarding judgment calls (e.g., line calls, double bounce, etc.) shall be decided by the referee. The referee may consult players or line judges to decide the outcome of the appeal.

- 13.F.1. In a match without line judges, if a player appeals a line call to the referee, the referee shall make a call if they clearly saw the ball land "in" or "out." If the referee is unable to make the call, the original call will remain. If no call was made, the ball will be considered "in."
- 13.F.2. A referee's decision will result in a point awarded, a service loss, or a replay.
- 13.F.3. Only rally-ending line calls may be appealed. Any player may appeal a rally-ending line call to the referee before the next serve occurs. A match ending line call appeal must be requested before the scoresheet is initialed.

**13.G. Verbal Warnings, Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls.**

- 13.G.1. Verbal Warning and Technical Warnings. The referee is empowered to issue a single verbal warning to each player/team or call technical warnings. Actions or behavior that shall result in a verbal or technical warning:

- 13.G.1.a. Objectionable language directed at another person.
- 13.G.1.b. Profanity (audible or visible) used for any reason. The referee will determine the severity of any violation.
- 13.G.1.c. Arguing aggressively with the officiating team, other players or spectators in a way that disrupts the flow of play.
- 13.G.1.d. Ball abuse (aggressively or purposely breaking or stepping on the ball) or striking the ball between rallies.
- 13.G.1.e. Taking time between rallies in a way that unnecessarily disrupts the flow of play.
- 13.G.1.f. Repeatedly appealing line calls such that the flow of play is disrupted.
- 13.G.1.g. Challenging the referee's decision or ruling and losing the challenge (e.g., referee's ruling was correct) and a time-out is assessed. (Verbal Warning not applicable)
- 13.G.1.h. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition (time-out assessed) as determined by medical personnel or the tournament director if no medical staff is present. (Verbal Warning not applicable)
- 13.G.1.i. Actions that are considered minor unsportsmanlike behavior, including but not limited to making repeated questionable 'out' calls that, upon appeal, are reversed (overruled) by the referee.

- 13.G.1.j. Except during time-outs and in-between games, receiving coaching from anyone other than a partner.
- 13.G.2. Technical Fouls - The referee is empowered to call technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending player/team unless their score is zero, in which case, a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical foul (without a technical warning being issued beforehand):
  - 13.G.2.a. Aggressively or recklessly throwing a paddle in frustration or anger, with negligent disregard of the consequences, and does not strike a person or damage property.
  - 13.G.2.b. A player using extremely objectionable language, or profanity, regardless of to whom or what it is directed.
  - 13.G.2.c. Making a threat or challenges of any nature toward or against any person.
  - 13.G.2.d. Challenging the referee's decision or ruling and losing the challenge (e.g., referee's ruling was correct) and no time-out is available. (Verbal Warning not applicable)
  - 13.G.2.e. Any other actions that are considered extreme unsportsmanlike behavior.
  - 13.G.2.f. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition, and the team (or player in a singles match) has no time-



outs remaining. (Verbal Warning not applicable)

13.G.2.g. Deliberately throwing or hitting a ball that is not in play with negligent disregard of the consequences which inadvertently hits a person.

13.G.3. Effect of Technical Fouls and Technical Warnings. The assessment of a technical warning or technical foul shall be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reason.

13.G.3.a. A technical warning shall not result in a loss of rally or point awarded.

13.G.3.b. Once a technical warning has been issued, a second technical warning for any reason, given to the same player/team during the match, will result in a technical foul being issued to the player/team.

13.G.3.c. If a referee issues a technical foul, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending player/team unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. After the point is removed or awarded, the player or team losing or awarded the point must move to the correct position(s) that reflects their score.

13.G.3.d. A called technical warning or technical foul shall have no effect on server change or side out.

13.G.3.e. Verbal warnings, technical warnings and technical fouls may be assessed any time the players are at the court. This includes during warm-up time. Play shall not be stopped to assess a warning or foul. The assessment of the warning or foul shall be applied after the rally has ended.

13.G.4. Behavior raising to the level of a warning or foul after the match is over while a player is still on court shall be brought to the attention of the Tournament Director. Based on this information, the Tournament Director may impose a Verbal Warning, Technical Warning, or Technical Foul that will be applied to the offending player's next match at the tournament.

**13.H. Game Forfeit.** The referee will impose a game forfeit when either of the following occurs:

13.H.1. After one technical warning has been assessed and the subsequent issuance of a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2.

13.H.2. After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.3.b. or Rule 13.G.2. and the subsequent issuance of another technical warning for any reason.

13.H.3. For a match format that is one game to 15 or 21, a game forfeit is equivalent to a match forfeit.

13.H.4. For a match format that is two-out-of-three or three-out-of-five games, a referee may impose a game forfeit when a player/team fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match has been called to play. A match forfeit will be imposed when a

player/team fails to report to play 15 minutes after the match has been called to play. If the match format is a one game to 15 or 21, the match forfeit occurs when the player/team fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match has been called to play. The Tournament Director may permit a longer delay if circumstances warrant such a decision.

### ***13.I. Match Forfeit.***

- 13.I.1. The referee will impose a match forfeit based on a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls when either of the following occurs:
  - 13.I.1.a. The combined issuance of two technical warnings and a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2.
  - 13.I.1.b. After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.3.b or Rule 13.G.2 and the subsequent issuance of a second technical foul for any reason.
  - 13.I.1.c. Behavior that shall result in a match forfeit that is not due to a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls.
    - 13.I.1.c.1 Making deliberately aggressive physical contact with an opponent, official or spectator.
    - 13.I.1.c.2 Aggressively or recklessly striking or throwing a ball or paddle out of frustration or anger that puts an individual

or facility property at risk or in danger.

13.I.2. The Tournament Director may impose a match forfeit for failure to comply with the tournament or host facility's rules while on the premises, or for improper conduct on the premises between matches, or for abuse of hospitality, locker room, or failure to comply with other rules and procedures.

**13.J. Challenging Referee Rulings or Decisions.** If a player disagrees with a referee's ruling or decision, that player may challenge the referee's ruling or decision by asking for the Head Referee, Tournament Director, or the Tournament Director's designee. If the referee's ruling or decision is determined to be correct, the player or team will lose a time-out and be given a technical warning (see 13.G.1.g). If no time-outs are available and the referee's ruling is correct, the player/team will be given a technical foul (see 13.G.2.d). When the referee's ruling or decision is incorrect, the ruling will be reversed and, if applicable, the rally will be replayed.

**13.K. Removal of a Line Judge.** The referee may remove a line judge for any reasonable cause, based on either the referee's own observation or that of the players. If the referee decides to replace a line judge based on their own observation, the referee's decision is final. The players may also petition the referee to remove a line judge, providing all players agree. If the referee does not agree, the referee must consult with the Tournament Director for a final decision. If a line judge is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.

13.K.1. Removal of a Referee. If all players agree, they may petition the Tournament Director for a referee removal. The Tournament Director retains the final discretionary authority on the removal of a Referee. If a Referee is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.

**13.L. Non-Officiated Play.** Any player may request a referee or Tournament Director if:

13.L.1. The player reasonably believes that a rule is being consistently and deliberately violated by their opponent.

13.L.2. A situation arises where players are not able to quickly and easily resolve a dispute.

13.L.2.a. If any player believes a paddle is not USAP approved or does not otherwise comply with all paddle rules, the player is allowed to summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director to determine if the paddle is legal for play.

**13.M. Ejections and Expulsions.** The Tournament Director may eject a player from the tournament for flagrant and particularly injurious behavior that, in the opinion of the Tournament Director, impacts the success of the tournament. An ejection can occur due to actions any time the player is at the tournament venue and may include, but is not limited to:

13.M.1. Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs.

13.M.2. Injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse.

13.M.3. Spitting or coughing on a person.

13.M.4. Not exhibiting “best effort.” This includes but is not limited to, defaulting, forfeiting, or not giving best efforts in matches, whether for their own benefit or otherwise.

**Note:** In addition to an ejection, the Tournament Director also has the option to expel the player from the tournament venue.

## **APPENDIX**

USA Pickleball Official Rulebook Priorities and Guiding Principles.

### ***Preface***

The USA Pickleball Official Rulebook is the organization's most important product. It is the foundational document for the sport of pickleball and should be treated with the respect accorded the sport's founders and those who have written and approved rules over the years.

Writing rules that are objective, clear and concise is difficult work. Because those involved in writing and/or approving rules come from different backgrounds and experiences, it is important to have rule writing priorities and guiding principles that help provide a measure of consistency from year to year. The following Rulebook Priorities and Guiding Principles were developed to guide rule writers and approvers in their important work.

### ***Priorities***

The following three priorities should be considered "tests" for any suggested rule change. Any suggested rule change should satisfy at least one of these three priorities, listed in order of importance:

1. The first priority is preserving the integrity of the sport, one that incorporates the elements of fun, cooperation, courtesy, and competition. This priority pays homage to those who developed the sport in 1965 and those who have written and approved rule changes over the years.
2. The second priority is what is collectively best for the players. This priority examines rule changes for

improving the player experience. It “tests” suggested rule changes from the standpoint of minimizing player disagreements, making it easier to learn the sport, teach the sport, and play the sport, while also allowing for moderate innovation as player skills and equipment develop and evolve.

3. The third priority is what’s best for officiating. It “tests” rule changes to make it less likely conflicts will occur between players as well as between players and officials.

### ***Guiding Principles***

The USA Pickleball Official Rulebook covers a wide variety of rules that cover the court and equipment, recreational and social play as well as tournament play, officiated and non-officiated. The following are Guiding Principles for those writing and approving rules. To the extent possible, rules should:

1. Apply to all levels and categories of players; recreational and social players, as well as professional and amateur tournament players (officiated and non-officiated). Specific rules for a single category of player, for example, the pro level player, should be approved after careful consideration and examination of how the rule change might impact the sport beyond the pro level of competition.
2. Be written with a deterministic focus, i.e., from the standpoint of “if this occurs, this is what happens.” If something is not allowed or should not happen, the consequences (for example: replay, fault, technical warning, etc.) should be provided as part of the rule.
3. Center on that which should not occur, not on what is permitted or allowed. Attempts to include rules



describing what is allowed will result in an unnecessarily lengthy Rulebook.

4. Avoid ambiguity, player discretion, or referee judgment-related rules. Such rules invite disagreements and different interpretations. To this end, when a key word is used to describe when a rule applies, the word should be defined as either a part of the rule or in the Definition Section of the Rulebook.
5. Allow equipment manufacturers to innovate, as long as such innovation does not overwhelm or outpace the average player's ability to keep up with the speed and difficulty of the sport. Equipment-related rule changes should be given particularly close scrutiny because of their precedent-setting potential.
6. Have an element of precedent accorded to them. Change for change's sake should be avoided to avoid frustration among or a loss of confidence by players.
7. Allow for an appropriate degree of player innovation. Such innovation should maintain a healthy balance between historical rules that have been instrumental to the sport's growth and appeal.
8. Preserve the unique features and rules of the sport involving the Non-Volley Zone and the two-bounce rule and prevent one shot, one paddle, or type of play from dominating the sport.
9. Address a known issue or anticipate trends and needs of the sport before it becomes necessary.
10. Be subjected to reviews and comments by domestic and international stakeholders.

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# **NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY**

The Official Rules of pickleball is an essential resource for players, referees, coaches, parents, and fans.

Included are USA Pickleball's official playing rules and interpretations, and detailed court diagrams.

This book is the singular source for the rules of the game.

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Please visit our website: [usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org)  
for the most current rules and information

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