

Pickleball Rules - How to Play the Game

Pickleball is played either as doubles or singles. The same rules apply for both singles and doubles.

Rules Summary

- The ball is served underhanded and diagonally to the opponent's service court without bouncing it off the court.
- Points are scored by the serving side only and occur when the opponent faults (fails to return the ball, hits ball out of bounds or into the net, etc.)
- The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side faults
- The first side scoring 11 points and leading by at least a 2-point margin wins
- You must win by 2 points
- Following the serve, each side must make at least one ground-stroke prior to volleying the ball (hitting it before it has bounced)
- Non-Volley Zone (also known as the kitchen): A player cannot volley a ball while standing within the non-volley zone.

Serving

- Serving must be underhand
- Paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist
- You must start the serve with at least one foot behind the baseline and neither foot can contact the baseline or court until after you hit the ball
- The serve should be diagonal crosscourt and must land in the opposite diagonal court
- You only get one serve attempt unless you hit the ball into the net and it lands on the other side in the proper service court (known as a "let")

Serving Sequence

- Both players on each team of a doubles game get to serve until they commit a fault
 - The exception is the first service of each game, where only one player from the initial serving team gets to serve before service passes to the other team
- Every time service changes sides, the first serve is from the right hand court
- Every time you score, you switch sides of the court for your next serve

- In doubles play, when the first server loses the serve, the partner moves to serve from the same side of the court their partner had last served from
- In singles play, the server serves from the right side of the court when their score is even and from the left side when their score is odd

Scoring

- Points are only scored by the serving team
- Games are generally played to 11 and you must win by 2
- Tournament games are sometimes played to 15 or 21 and you must win by 2

Double Bounce Rule

- When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning it, and the serving team must let it bounce before returning as well.
- After the initial two returns, no bounces are mandatory. You may then hit the ball with a ground stroke where the ball bounces first or with a volley where no bounce occurs.

Volleys

- Volleying isn't allowed within the non-volley zone, an area of the court within 7 feet of the net on both sides, marked with a line on pickleball courts. It is also known as the "kitchen".
- Volleying isn't allowed within the non-volley zone, preventing smashes from the net.
- It is a fault to step in the non-volley zone or even on the line when volleying.
- It is a fault when your momentum carries you into the kitchen or causes you to touch the line after a volley.
- You may be in the non-volley zone at any other time as long as you're not volleying the ball.

Line Calls

- Balls contacting any line, except the non-volley zone line on a serve, are considered in.
- Serves contacting the non-volley zone line are short and cause a fault.

Faults

A fault occurs when:

- A serve does not land within the receiving court
- The ball is hit into the net on the serve or any return
- The ball is volleyed before a bounce has occurred on each side

- The ball is hit out of bounds
- The ball is volleyed from the non-volley zone
- The ball bounces twice before being struck by the receiver
- The player, player's clothing, or any part of a player's paddle touches the net or the net post when the ball is in play
- There is a violation of a service rule
- A ball in play strikes a player or anything the player is wearing or carrying
- A ball in play strikes any permanent object before bouncing on the court

Determining Serving Team

- The first serve is determined by a coin toss. The winner of the coin toss will have the option to choose side or to serve or receive.