

## P.E. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

# PICKLEBALL



*“I wear my fitness tracker when I play Pickleball and after two hours, I’ve moved the equivalent of four miles of walking. The nice thing is that if you’re playing doubles, you can get in a workout without killing yourself.”*

**Josh Jenkins**, American Pickleball player, IPTPA Certified Pickleball Instructor, gold medalist in tournament play

## INTRODUCTION

Pickleball is a racket game that is easy to learn and can be played either indoors or outdoors. The pickleball net is about three feet tall. Players hit a perforated plastic ball, similar to a wiffle ball, with a wood or composite paddle. The game has elements of ping-pong, badminton, and tennis, and begins with an underhand serve.

This unique sport has been around for decades and has gained great popularity in recent years. It is easy for beginners to learn, and can develop into a fast-paced competitive game for experienced players. It is enjoyed by people of all ages and makes a fun family activity.

## HISTORY OF THE GAME

Pickleball was created during the summer of 1965 near Seattle, Washington. The inventors of the game, the family of U.S. Congressman Joel Pritchard, were attempting to have a family badminton game but did not have a birdie. A wiffle ball was substituted for the birdie.

The game is known to have been named after the Pritchard’s family dog. Rumor has it the dog would watch the game from a distance and when a loose ball would come in his direction, he would take it and run off.

Pritchard’s daughter, Peggy Pritchard-Olson, has given her own version of the story. “It was not named after the dog because we didn’t get the dog until years after the game started. The dog was named after the game. Not the other way around.”

However, Frank Pritchard, Joel Pritchard’s son, said the name might have come from his mother, Joan, who was a competitive rower on the island. She sometimes referred to the ‘pickle boat,’ the slowest vessel in a race.



As you can see, even the Pritchard's aren't quite sure where the name Pickleball came from. Regardless of how the sport was named, pickleball has expanded from a backyard family activity to a net court sport with formalized rules that is currently played in thousands of schools, parks, recreation centers, health clubs, and corporate fitness centers.

## HOW THE SPORT IS PLAYED

### Overview

The game is played on a badminton-sized court: 20' x 44'. Pickleball is played either as doubles (two players per team) or singles; doubles is most common. The same size playing area and rules are used for both singles and doubles. In singles the server serves diagonally from the right-hand court when his or her score is even and from the left when the score is odd. The side that serves can only score points.



Players on each side must let the ball bounce once before volleys are allowed, and there is a seven-foot no-volley zone on each side of the net to prevent “spiking.”

The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until he or she faults. The first side scoring eleven points and leading by at least two points wins.

### The Serve

Players use a coin toss to determine who will serve first. The winner of the coin toss will have the option to choose side or to serve or receive. Players must announce the score prior to serving. Always call the server's score first!

The ball is served underhand (paddle below the waist), without bouncing it from the court. If the ball touches the net, but still lands within the appropriate service court, the serve may be taken over.

The player's feet must be seven feet behind the net and the serve must clear the seven-foot non-volley-zone in front of the net. The serve is initiated with at least one foot behind the baseline; neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.

### Double-Bounce Rule

The ball must bounce twice before volleying is permitted. The ball takes the first bounce on the serve to the opposing team, and when the opposing team returns the serve, the ball must bounce one more time on the service side of the court. Once both bounces have been made, the ball can be volleyed or played off a single bounce until a fault has occurred.

### Volley

To volley means to hit the ball directly in the air without allowing the ball to bounce. This is permitted after the first two bounces and as long as you are outside of the “no volley zone.”

### Fault

A fault is committed when the ball:

- Is hit out of bounds
- Does not clear the net
- Is volleyed from the non-volley zone
- Is volleyed before a bounce has occurred on each side

### Skills and Techniques

**Serve**—With practice, players should be able to vary the speed of their underhand serves. Players should try to make their serves land deep in the opposite court. A slice serve will call for extra concentration by the returnee.

**Return of Serve**—The player’s goal is to keep the ball in play and then to advance to the net area. The best returns are either high and slow or hard and low.

**Ground Stroke**—Players should be able to sustain long rallies and to place the ball deep and in the corners of the court. Cross-court shots and shots down the line are valuable weapons.

**Dink**—The most effective short shots, or dinks, are those that bounce in front of the no-volley line (the area 7 feet out from the net where volleying is not allowed). Dinks should be short and low.



**Drop Shot**—Similar to the dink, the drop shot from the base line or mid-court goes far enough to clear the net, but not far enough to give the opponent the chance for a return volley.

**Volley**—A good way to develop volleying skills is for two players to stand across the net from each other, at the no-volley line, and hit the ball back and forth without bouncing it.

**Lob**—The lob can be highly effective, especially against players with weak overhead skills. The successful lob is usually hit fairly high, over the opponent's head. The defensive lob allows a player time to return to his optimum position on the court. If the opponent is close to the net, a player can score by hitting an offensive lob that goes over the opponent's head and lands inside the base line.

**Overhead**—After a player learns to lob, she or he is ready to learn hitting overhead shots (returning lobs) down the middle and to both corners. The overhead stroke is nearly identical to the tennis serve (i.e., a throwing motion, with the arm fully extended above).

**Strategy**—The game of Pickleball involves many strategies including unique serves, lobbing the ball, slamming on volleys, dinks (drop shots) at the net, and quick volley exchanges. Typically, the majority of the game is played close to the net, where players engage at the "No Volley Zone" waiting for the other player(s) to hit into the net or hit the ball high enough for a volley.



Here are a few tips:

Try to return serves to the deepest part of the court, as the opposing team has to let the ball bounce a second time, which allows time for you and your partner to get positioned close to the net.

A good lob may also have an advantage, making players move out of position at the net, giving your team the advantage.

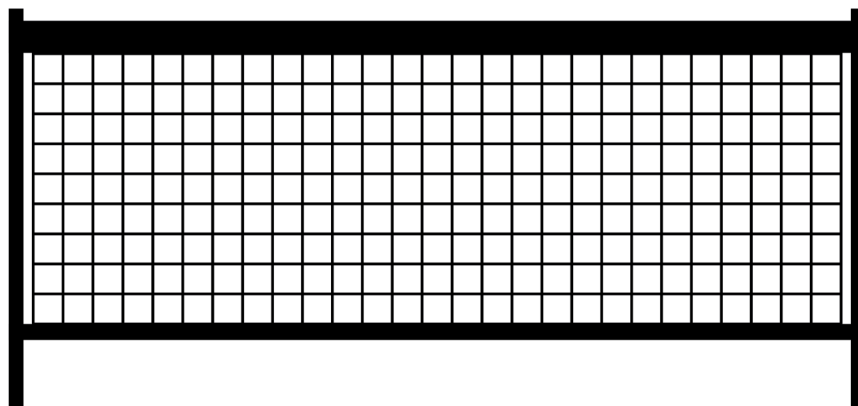
## **EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING**

The basic equipment needed for Pickleball is a paddle, a vented plastic ball (often called a wiffle ball), a badminton sized court (it can be indoors or outdoors) and a lowered tennis net (36" at the ends and 34" in the middle).

The paddle hitting surface can't contain holes, indentations, rough texturing, tape, features that are reflective, or any objects or features that allow a player to place additional or increased spin on the ball.

The standard ball is made of durable plastic material molded with a smooth surface and free of texturing. The official ball is between 2 and 3/4 inches (6.99cm) to 3 inches (7.62 cm) in diameter. The ball shall weigh between 0.8 and 1.02 oz (21 and 29 grams).

Pickleball players wear what is comfortable. Recommend is a good pair of athletic shoes, as you are going to be moving about and relying on your foot work for game play.



Recently there have been notable rule changes by the United States of America Pickleball Association/International Federation of Pickleball for this popular and unique sport. Of significance are:

- The re-designation of the service courts as right/even and left/odd
- The backhand serve is legal
- The entire score must be called before the service begins a service motion
- Serves that clear the net or hit it and then touches the receiver or the receiver's partner is a point for the serving team
- The maximum time allowed to switch sides during a game is 60 seconds
- If the server exceeds 10 seconds to serve, a fault will be called
- A person with a disability may bounce the ball before serving

**PICKLEBALL NOTES**

Pickleball, like other racquet sports, involves a lot of multi-directional and multi-planar movements involving both the upper and lower limbs. This makes pickleball a great cross-training option for those individuals who primarily perform exercises that are largely done in one plane, such as running or biking. Cross-training is a great way to keep the body balanced.

Currently, the sport of pickleball is exploding in popularity. The number of places to play has nearly doubled since 2010. There are now thousands of locations to play. The spread of the sport is attributed to its popularity within community centers, PE classes, YMCA facilities and even retirement communities. The sport continues to grow worldwide with many new international clubs forming and national governing bodies established in Canada and India.

In addition to the websites that are listed below, you can also visit YouTube and type in Pickleball to find out more about this sport. Here, you will be able to see players in action as they explain some of the basics and more of Pickleball.

**Check out these websites for more information about this fast-growing sport:**

[www.usapa.org](http://www.usapa.org)

[www.pickleball.com](http://www.pickleball.com)