

PICKLEBALL SKILLS/DRILLS

Getting Started:

Ball Balance:

- Players must try and keep the ball balanced on the paddle while touching the ground with their opposite hand.

Tap Downs:

- Try to bounce the ball down at waist level

Bump Ups:

- Try to bounce the ball up eye level without letting the ball touch the ground.

Ball Pass:

- Players work with a partner or small group and pass a ball back and forth and catch it with the paddle. Begin a few feet apart. For each successful catch, students can back up a step.

Drop, Hit, Catch:

- One player drop hits a ball very gently to their partner standing 6-10 feet away. The partner tries to catch the ball to earn a point. Change rolls after 6 hits. (1. Drop 2. Hit 3. Catch)

Toss, Hit, Catch:

- Using a ball, one partner tosses to the forehand or backhand side of their partner. The partner rallies it back to the tosser, who catches it. Begin with partners three steps apart. Change roles after 6 tosses. (1. Toss 2. Hit 3. Catch)

Partner Rally:

- Standing a few feet apart, players attempt to rally the ball over a line or net. Players should act as teammates to rally the ball as many times as possible.

Wall Rally:

- Standing 10-15 feet away, players attempt to rally the ball consecutively against the wall. Rallies can also be done in pairs.

1. RULES OF THE GAMES

SKILL – Discuss these rules, demonstrate when possible

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.

DRILL - Practice Match

Equipment Needed: Paddle, Balls

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Place players into pairs.
2. The pairs of players will face off in a match.
3. Play a quick practice match – up to 5 points.
4. The rest of the students should watch and help ref the game to learn the rules.

2. GRIP/STANCE/FOOTWORK/NET PLAY

a. GRIP/STANCE SKILL –

- Grip: Shake hands with your paddle
- Stance: Open stance (feet shoulder width apart) or square stance (left foot in front of right, ready to hit the ball)

b. FOOTWORK SKILL –

- Start in ready position.
- Emphasize staying on toes, knees slightly bent, hands on paddle
- Move quickly around the court

DRILL – Simon Says Defense

Equipment Needed: Paddle

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Have players line up in front of the instructor.
2. Tell each player to grab their racket and practice the correct grip.
3. Now practice stance.
4. Have them slide/run around the court to get a feel for holding the paddle.

5. Instructor calls out a command.
6. Example: slide left, slide right, 5 steps forward, touch the baseline, touch the sideline, etc.
7. Then Instructor starts adding a ball and the players must move to where it is hit.

3. FOREHAND

SKILL –

- a. Grip the paddle like taught last week
- b. Start in your ready position/stance
- c. Bring paddle back in a slight loop (make sure it is a continuous motion)
- d. Place the weight on your back foot, then transfer to front foot as you hit
- e. Try to hit the ball in the center of the paddle (the SWEET SPOT)
- f. Ready Position – Slight Loop – Make Contact – Follow Through

DRILL – Volley Stacks

Equipment Needed: Paddle, Balls

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Place players into stacks; Instructor has balls.
2. First player in the stack gets in their ready position.
3. Instructor volleys a ball to them, they hit it back.
4. Next player goes.

4. BACKHAND

SKILL –

- a. Grip is like the forehand, but you add your second hand
- b. Paddle will be on your non-dominant side
- c. Use backhand when the ball is hit to your non-dominant side
- d. Start in ready position
- e. Swing the paddle backwards and turn your shoulder
- f. As the ball comes close, swing racket forward and make contact
- g. Follow through

DRILL – Volley Stacks

Equipment Needed: Paddle, Balls

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Place players into stacks; Instructor has balls.
2. First player in the stack gets in their ready position.

3. Instructor volleys a ball to them, they hit it back.
4. Next player goes.

5. SERVING

SKILL –

- a. Feet should be shoulder width apart
- b. Put ball in your non-dominant hand
- c. Weight on your back foot
- d. Toss ball in air
- e. Swing underhand
- f. Do not let toes come past the baseline
- g. Server must stand to the right of the center hash and serve to the diagonal service court

DRILL – Partner Serving

Equipment Needed: Paddle, Balls

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Place players into pairs.
2. Split the pairs into stacks.
3. First person in line has a ball.
4. Stand behind baseline.
5. Practice serving to their partner.
6. If a fault, they get 1 more try.
7. Partner practices serving back.

6. DOUBLES MATCHES

SKILL –

- a. Doubles match you play with a partner
- b. The serving team is responsible for announcing the score before serving
- c. Scoring is the same
- d. Partners take turns serving

DRILL – Two Way

Equipment Needed: Rackets, balls

Set Up: No set up needed.

How to Play:

1. Place players into pairs.
2. Each pair will play a doubles match against another pair.