

Beginners Guide to Pickleball



Welcome to Pickleball!



As professional coaches and players over 50, we know that being a beginner isn't easy!

If you've already played pickleball, I'll bet you noticed that most players are willing to offer a lot of advice. **Unfortunately, much of it isn't accurate.**

Our passion is cutting through the clutter and providing solutions that will not only help you play better pickleball but ultimately lead a healthier life!

In the pages that follow, the highlighted text are clickable resources to help you transition into this fun sport.

If we can do anything to make your time on the courts more enjoyable, please reach out to us at support@wearepickleball.com

How to Start Playing Pickleball

1. Find an [Ambassador Near You](#). If you don't know what an Ambassador is, scroll down to USA Pickleball Resources.
2. Tell them you are new to pickleball and ask them their recommendations for learning the game.
3. No Ambassador near you? Try [Places to Play](#), your local recreation department, or search pickleball near me.
4. Call the contact and tell them you are a beginner. If they don't have beginner play at that location ask for recommendations.
5. **Open/Drop in/Rec Play** means there will be other people at the courts playing pickleball at that designated time.
6. Make sure to ask;
 - a) If they have loaner paddles and balls
 - b) Is the level appropriate for beginners
7. Dress to move and wear athletic shoes. Court shoes are best, **avoid running shoes**. [Need shoe 411?](#)
8. Bring a snack and water if needed.
9. [Warm up and stretch](#) before you play.
10. Tell people you are just starting and ask for help with the rules, scoring etc.
11. Ask if there are any beginner lesson programs. Lessons will help you learn faster.
12. Have FUN and enjoy the new friends you just made!

What is USA Pickleball?

[USA Pickleball](#) was organized to promote the growth and development of pickleball, not only on a national but an international level. This organization provides players with official rules, tournaments, rankings, and promotional materials.

[Click for a free
rules pdf](#)



What is Pickleball Ambassador?

Ambassadors are volunteers who have pledged to promote the sport of pickleball in the local area they have applied to represent. They may be individuals or couples, or a group of ambassadors working together as a team. The main prerequisite is a love of the sport and the desire to share our game with others of all ages. [Find an Ambassador Near Me](#)

PLAY PICKLEBALL

A Beginner's Guide

Everything **You** Need to Get Started Playing Pickleball



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Edited by Nan Spier

Part of the In2Pickle Getting Started Series

Sample-Sneak Peak
Resource Links NOT active

Getting Started Your Pickleball Journey

The slogan for a popular table game could have been written to describe pickleball:

***a minute to learn ...
... a lifetime to master***

You can play pickleball after only a few initial instructions. You can then spend an entire lifetime working to master the game.

In this Guide, you will receive the initial instructions to get started:

- What you need to play and where you can find courts and games
- How to play and keep score
- Even some pickleball strategy to get you off on the right foot

All that you need to start playing pickleball is included in this Guide.

In addition to the Guide, we have prepared a series of videos that go along with this Guide. [You can access all of the videos, and other supplemental written materials, at our Getting Started Series Catalog here >>](#). We will remind you from time to time about the availability of these materials. They are organized in a manner to help you learn the game.

You will be able to learn pickleball. Trust us and the thousands who have learned before you who are still playing. People just like you. Some with sports experience and others with none. Some young and others young at heart. Some physically impaired and others not.

Follow along in this Guide and you will know everything you need to get out there playing pickleball as soon as possible.

After you play a few times, you will probably be ready for some more advanced concepts and strategies. Start with the Strategies in this Guide. When you want more, visit us at In2Pickle.com. We will be here as a resource for your growth in the game.

Jill and I are confident in saying that pickleball can improve your life – physically, spiritually, and emotionally. We were lucky to be introduced to pickleball by a friend and are grateful for the opportunity to share this amazing sport with you.

Join us on the journey

How to Hit the Pickleball

Even if you are comfortable with racket or paddle sports (tennis, table tennis, racquetball), some of the stroke concepts in this section can help you become a better pickleball player.

You are ready to play but unsure how to hit the pickleball. In this section, you will learn the basics for how to hit a groundstroke and a volley – the two shots you need to play pickleball. If you have never picked up a paddle or racket before, have no fear. Pickleball shots are easy to learn. Read on.

We will explain the basic mechanics of each shot, then display some pictures to help you visualize the proper stroke mechanics. ***There are also stroke videos to help you along in this [Catalog](#).*** By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

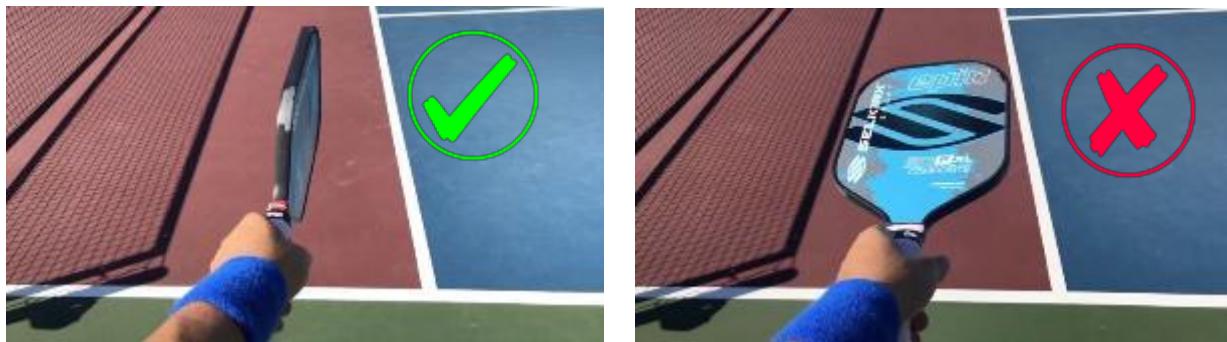
- Hold your pickleball paddle comfortably
- Hit a pickleball serve, return, and other groundstrokes
- Hit a pickleball volley
- Most importantly, be ready to go out there and play pickleball



How to Hold (Grip) Your Paddle

Before you can hit the ball, you need to know how to hold a paddle (we call it “grip” the paddle). If you already have a paddle, go grab it to follow along. If your paddle is not handy, read on but also come back to this section later with your paddle. Having a good paddle grip foundation will be more comfortable and will allow you to play better pickleball.

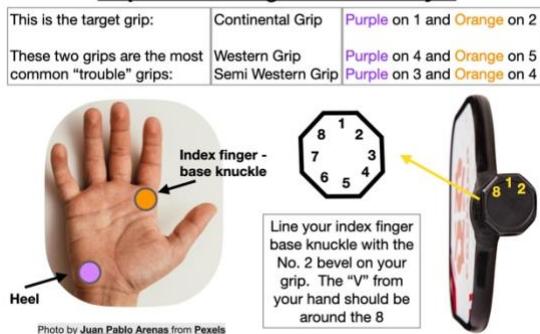
The best grip to use when playing pickleball is called the continental grip – sometimes referred to as the “handshake” grip. You are literally shaking hands with your paddle.



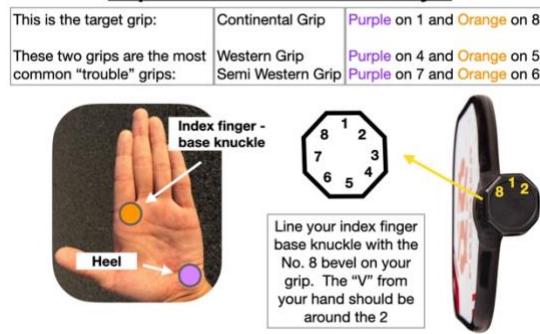
You will use the same grip for your forehand and backhand shots – we will cover more on forehand and backhand shots below.

These illustrations should help you hold your paddle with the continental grip (***you can download full-size versions of the charts [here](#)***):

Grip Chart for Right-Handed Player



Grip Chart for Left-Handed Player



You will know you are using the continental grip when you hold your paddle out in front of you, without twisting your arm:

- the "V" of your hand is in line with the edge of the paddle and
- the paddle face is 90 degrees to the court.



Paddle in front of you with straight arm; paddle face is 90 degrees to the court



"V" of hand in line with edge of paddle



This is not the continental grip

You will come across players not using the continental grip. While there is nothing wrong with other grips, it is best to use the continental grip if you can. It is the most versatile grip and gives you the ability to improve as you learn the game.

TRY IT NOW!

1. Align your hand with the paddle as shown on the above charts. If it helps, you can place the "V" of your hand on the paddle edge and slide it down to the handle.
2. Put your arm at your side, relax it, and bring the paddle forward
3. Is the paddle 90 degrees to the floor?
 - **YES:** Great – you have a continental grip
 - **NO:** try to align your hand again ([Visit these videos for additional help](#))

Fundamental Strategy

Once you have played a few times, you will realize that there is more to pickleball than just getting the ball over the net and into the court. As mentioned at the beginning of this Guide, while you can learn pickleball in a few minutes, it can take a lifetime to master every aspect of the game. In this section, we get you started down the path by sharing some of the most important fundamentals of effective pickleball play.

The first fundamental is understanding that the strategies when you are the serve team differ from the strategies when you are the return team.

When you are the serve team, you are at a disadvantage because of the Two-Bounce Rule. The disadvantage is that your opponents (the return team) will be able to move up to the NVZ line before you. Most successful pickleball is played at the NVZ line. The following will show you how to neutralize that disadvantage and get you into position to win the rally and score a point.

When you are the return team, you have the positional advantage of being able to control the NVZ line first. The following will show you how to maintain that advantage and make it as difficult as possible for the serve team to score a point.

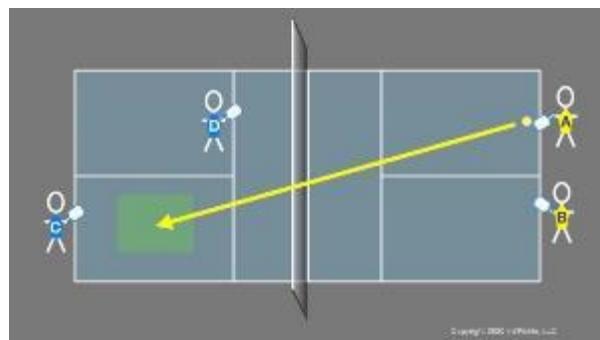
We will also give you some tips about playing once all players are up at the NVZ line.

Understanding these fundamental strategies will help you build a good foundation to grow in the game.

The Serve Team

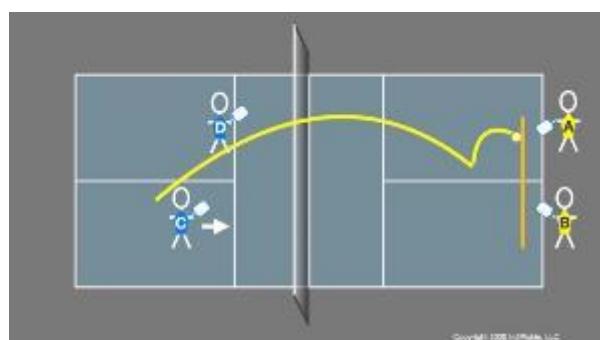
When you are serving, aim the ball deep, but not so deep that the serve has a high chance of going out.

Aim your serve towards the middle of the service box – 7 or 8 feet past the opponent's NVZ line. This target will provide you with room to avoid an out serve.

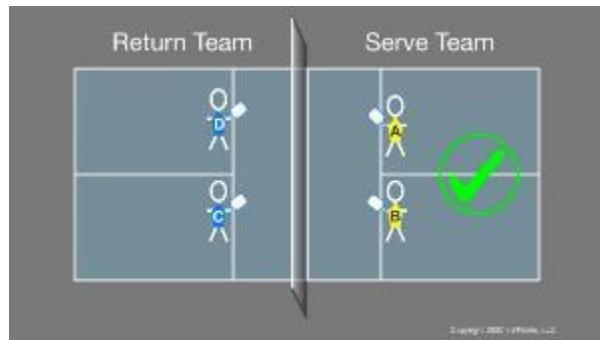


Because Players A and B have to wait for the ball to bounce (the Two-Bounce Rule), they start with a positional disadvantage compared to the blue team.

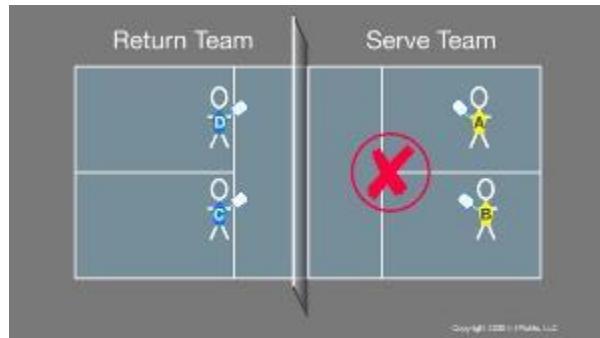
The yellow team's objective as the serve team is to neutralize the advantage of the blue team by getting up to the NVZ line.



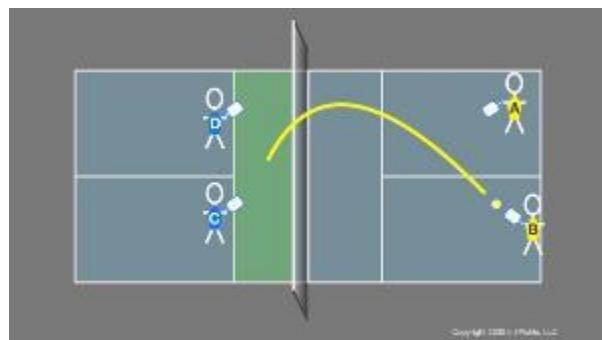
As a general rule, pickleball is best played at the NVZ line. If a team can control the NVZ line and keep the other team from the NVZ line, it will win most of the rallies.



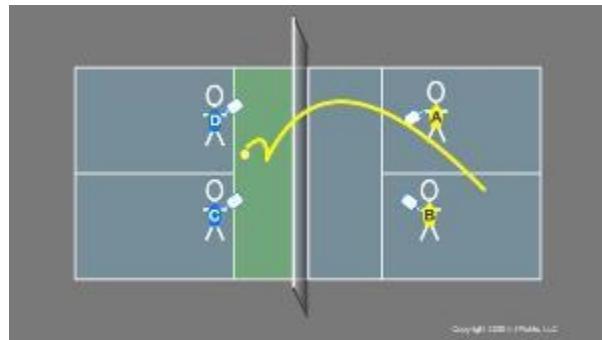
Trying to win a pickleball rally from the back of the court is very difficult and is less than optimal strategy.



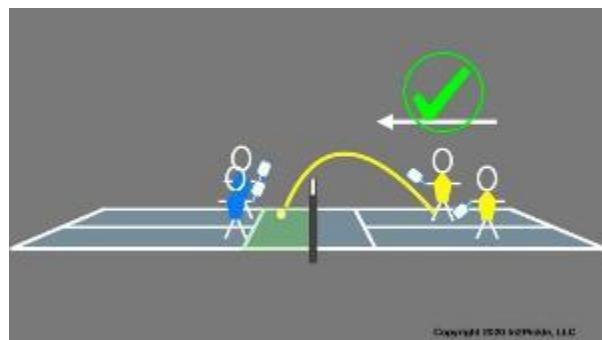
The most traditional technique for the serve team to move forward is to hit a high arcing shot called the third shot or long dink. The long dink should be hit high enough that the ball clears the top of the net but still bounces in the return team's NVZ.



This approach makes it difficult for the return team to volley the ball (making the long dink harder to attack) and the serve team will have more time to move forward to the NVZ line.



If the ball hit by the yellow team lands in or near the NVZ, the yellow serve team should move forward.



If the ball hit by the yellow team is too deep, then the blue team will probably hit it hard from a volley ("slam" it). In that case, the yellow team should stop moving forward until a better shot has been hit.

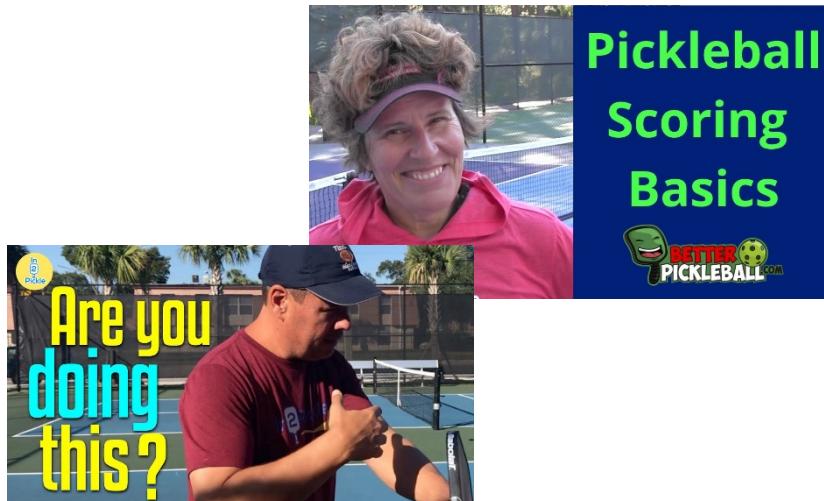


You will learn more about the third shot/long dink as you play the game. When getting started, practice a high arcing shot that clears the net and lands in your opponent's NVZ. Your objective is to get up to, and play pickleball up at, the NVZ line.

[You can learn more about serve team strategy in the Strategy videos here >](#)

Need help learning to play?

Special Beginner Playlist



Podcast--[Pickleball Therapy](#) with Tony Roig

[Rules Made Easy](#) and [Playing Tips](#)

Want to watch a tournament?-[The Pickleball Channel](#)



Need Pickleball
Gear?

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recommendations](#)