



New Player Handbook

Welcome to the Cochrane Pickleball Club (CPC)

We are so glad that you have joined the club and look forward to seeing you on the courts. We're sure you will have a great time playing pickleball in Cochrane. The first goal of pickleball is to have fun, and we are here to help you achieve that goal and to improve your game.

This handbook describes the basics of the doubles game, and reviews some of the most common rules. Both the basics of the game and the rules will be covered in your introductory lesson. Additional training will be available in the Skills and Drills sessions offered by the club over the summer months.

We hope this handbook provides you with the information you need to get started with the great game of pickleball. Full rules can be found in the USA Pickleball Official Rulebook. <https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/official-rules>

See you on the courts,
Your CPC training team

Contents

1. What is Pickleball?	3
2. Definitions	3
3. The Court.....	5
4. The Ball.....	5
5. Types of Strokes	6
5.1 Specific Strokes	6
6. The Serve and Serving Rules	7
6.1 Volley Serve.....	7
6.2 Drop Serve.....	7
6.3 Serving Rules	7
6.4 Player Positions	8
6.5 Calling the Score.....	8
6.6 Service Faults	8
6.7 Receiver Faults	9
7. Line Call Rules	9
8. Fault Rules.....	9
9. Non-volley Zone Rules.....	10
10. Other Rules	11

1. What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a paddle sport played using a perforated ball on a 20 x 44-foot court with a tennis-type net. The court is divided into right/even and left/odd service courts and non-volley zones. The non-volley zone, commonly called the kitchen, is an area that extends seven feet from the net on each side. In this area, a player is not allowed to strike the ball without it first bouncing.

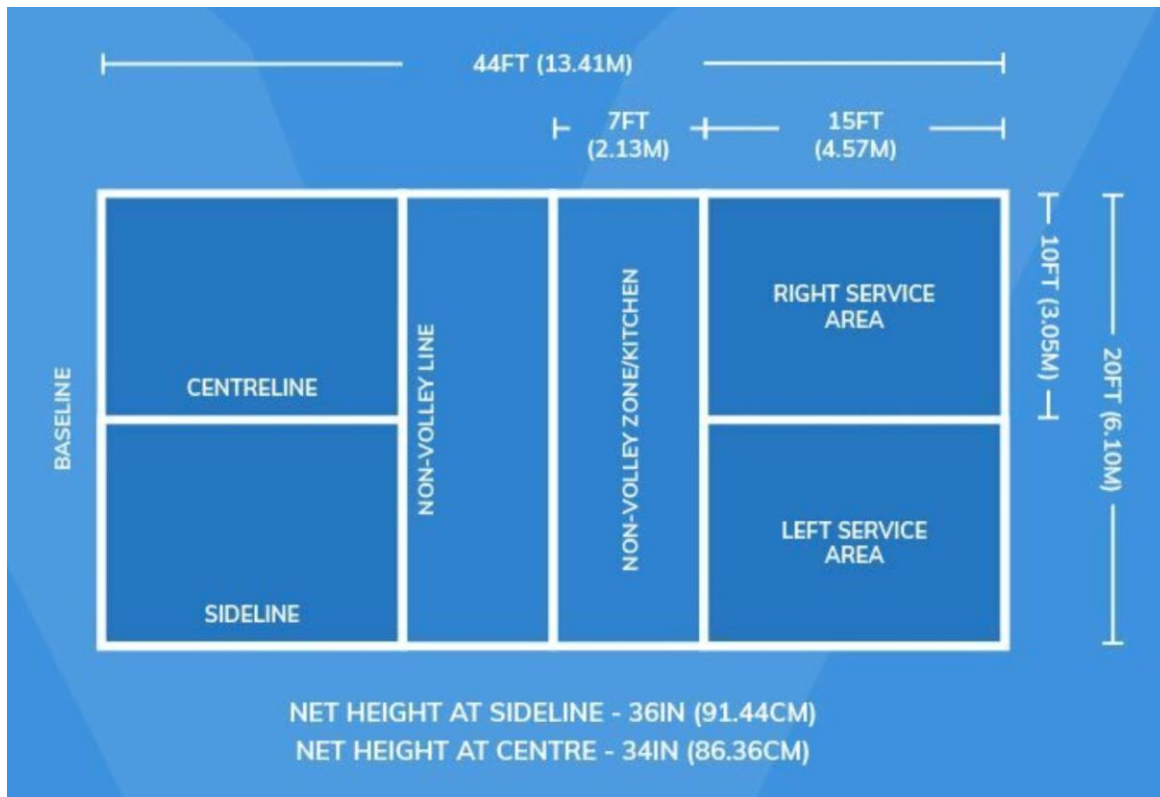
To play, the ball is served diagonally across the net to the opponent's receiving court and then struck back and forth across the net until a player fails to return the ball in accordance with the rules. Points are scored only by the serving side when the server's team wins the rally, or the opposing side commits a fault. The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until the serving side loses the rally or commits a fault. Typically, the first side scoring 11 points and leading by at least a 2-point margin wins.

2. Definitions

- **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.
- **Court:** The area inside the outer dimensions of the baselines and sidelines.
- **Cross-Court:** The court diagonally opposite the court from which the ball was last struck.
- **Dead Ball:** A ball that is no longer in play.
- **Double Bounce:** The ball bounces twice on one side before it is returned.
- **Double Hit:** Hitting the ball twice before it is returned.
- **Fault:** A rules violation that results in a dead ball and/or the end of the rally.
- **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.
- **Imaginary Extension:** A term used to describe where a line would extend if it projected beyond its current end point.
- **Left/Odd Court:** The service area on the left side of the court when facing the net. The starting server in doubles should be positioned on the left/odd side of the court when their score is odd.
- **Line Call:** A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) to indicate that a live ball has not landed in the required court space. The preferred word to indicate a line call is 'OUT'.
- **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. All lines bounding the NVZ are part of the NVZ. The NVZ is two-dimensional and does not rise above the playing surface.

- **Permanent Object:** Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with play.
- **Plane of the Net:** The imaginary vertical planes on all sides extending beyond the net system.
- **Playing Surface:** The court and the area surrounding the court designated for playing.
- **Rally:** Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.
- **Receiver:** The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve.
- **Replay:** Any rally that is restarted for any reason without the awarding of a point or a change of server.
- **Right/Even Court:** The service area on the right side of the court when facing the net. The starting server in doubles should be positioned on the right/even court when their score is even.
- **Second Serve:** In doubles, a term used to describe the condition when a serving team loses the first of its two allocated serves.
- **Second Server:** In doubles, the first server's partner. The second server serves after the first server loses serve.
- **Serve:** The initial strike of the ball with the paddle to start the rally.
- **Server:** The player who initiates a rally.
- **Service Court:** The area on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline, excluding the NVZ.
- **Serving Area:** The area behind the baseline and on and between the imaginary extensions of the court centerline and each sideline.
- **Side Out:** The awarding of the serve to the opposing team after a team loses its serve.
- **Starting Server:** For each doubles team, the player designated to serve first at the start of the game.

3. The Court



- **Baselines:** The lines parallel to the net at each end of the court.
- **Sidelines:** The lines perpendicular to the net on each side of the court.
- **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.
- **Net Specifications:** The top of the net is 36 inches high at the sidelines and 34 inches high at the centre.

4. The Ball

Balls used for indoor play normally have 26 holes, and balls for outdoor play normally have 40 smaller holes. Colours may vary.

5. Types of Strokes

This section excludes serves, which are covered in section 6. There are two categories of strokes: groundstrokes and volleys.

Groundstroke: A groundstroke is any shot you make after the ball has bounced once. Most of the shots in pickleball are groundstrokes.

Volley: A volley is any shot that is made before the ball hits the ground. It doesn't matter if you hit the ball near the ground or over your head, as long as it hasn't bounced, it's a volley. Volley shots are typically much more powerful than groundstrokes.

5.1 Specific Strokes

- **Block Shot:** This shot is used to stop drives from your opponent and take away their advantage. To do a block shot, simply stick your paddle out in front of you in a backhand position. Let the ball collide with the paddle and do nothing else. Do not swing at the ball.
- **Cross-court Dink:** A dink stroke that is sent from one side of the court to the opposite side of the opponent's court.
- **Dink:** A type of groundstroke that's only used at or near the net. The main characteristics of a dink are that it is done in or near the kitchen, it is very soft and just barely gets over the net.
- **Drive Shot:** A groundstroke or volley that you hit at, or near as hard as you can. Drives are meant to be hard, fast, and unstoppable.
- **Lob:** A shot that is hit high up into the air and over the heads of your opponents into the backcourt. It forces your opponents to turn around quickly to run the ball down in backcourt, allowing you to take the net. This shot helps to reset the tempo (pace of play) of a point.
- **Overhead Smash:** The overhead smash is designed to make it impossible for your opponents to return it. If your opponents pop up a shot that goes slightly over your head, reach up and smash the ball downward.
- **Third Shot Drop:** This is a soft shot that arcs upward and then lands softly in the NVZ of your opponent. The soft landing will force your opponent to dink the ball instead of driving it. If you hit your shot too far, or too high, your opponent can smash or drive the ball making it likely that you lose the point. The third shot drop is the most important shot to master in pickleball.

6. The Serve and Serving Rules

Two types of serves are allowed in pickleball: the volley serve and the drop serve.

6.1 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. The serve must be hit with an underhand stroke so that contact with the ball is made below the waist. The arm must move in an upward arc and the highest point of the paddle head must be below the wrist when it strikes the ball. The highest point of the paddle head cannot be above any part of the line formed where the wrist joint bends.

6.2 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 regarding how many times the ball can bounce or where the ball can bounce on the playing surface. The server must release the ball from one hand only or drop it off the paddle face from any natural (un-aided) height. The ball can not be thrown downward or tossed or hit upward with the paddle. The restrictions on the volley serve do not apply to the drop serve.

6.3 Serving Rules

The entire score must be called before the ball is served.

The server must serve to the correct service court (the court diagonally opposite the server).

The serve may clear or touch the net and must clear the NVZ and the NVZ lines. The serve may land on any other service court line.

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.

The moment the ball is served:

- At least one foot must be on the playing surface behind the baseline.
- Neither of the server's feet may touch the court on or inside the baseline.
- Neither of the server's feet may touch the playing surface outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline.
- The serve must be made with only one hand releasing the ball. While some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball from the hand, the server can not put spin on the ball with any part of the body immediately before the serve.

6.4 Player Positions

The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game. At the start of each game, the starting server begins the serve from the right/even side of the court. 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.

Each player will serve until a rally is lost or a fault is declared against the player or team. After the server loses the rally or commits a fault, a side out will occur, and service is awarded to the opponent. 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.

At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area. When the team's score is even, the team's starting server's correct position is at the right/even serving area. When the team's score is odd, the starting server's correct position is at the left/odd court.

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 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. The second server will then serve, alternating sides, until the serving team loses a rally or commits a fault.

6.5 Calling the Score

The score is called after the server and receiver are in position and all players are ready to play. The server normally calls the score. Once the score has been called, the server is allowed ten seconds to serve the ball. If the server exceeds ten seconds to serve, a fault will be declared.

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"). At the start of a game, the score is called as "zero – zero – two."

A team scores points only when serving.

6.6 Service Faults

During the service, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:

- The server serves from the incorrect serving area.
- The incorrect player serves the ball.
- The served ball touches any permanent object before it hits the ground.
- The served ball touches the server or their partner.
- The served ball lands in the NVZ, including the NVZ lines.
- The served ball lands outside the service court.
- The server uses an illegal serve when performing the volley serve or the drop serve.
- The server or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.

6.7 Receiver Faults

It is a fault against the receiving team resulting in a point for the server if:

- The incorrect player returns the serve.
- The receiver or their partner is touched by or interferes with the flight of the ball before it bounces.
- The receiver or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.

7. Line Call Rules

- A served ball that clears the NVZ and lands in the correct service court or on any correct service court line is in.
- Except the serve, any ball in play that lands in the court or touches any court line is in.
- A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is 'out.'
- In non-refereed games, players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court.
- If one player calls the ball 'out' and the partner calls it 'in,' then doubt exists, and the team's call will be 'in.'
- 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.
- An 'out' call made after the ball bounces is a line call. The ball is dead, and play shall stop.

8. Fault Rules

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

- The serve or service return does not bounce before the ball is struck.
- The ball is hit into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side.
- The ball is hit under the net or between the net and the net post.
- The ball is hit out of bounds or onto the player's own side of the court.
- The ball bounces twice on the receiving player's side of the net.
- A player, a player's clothing, or a player's paddle contacts the net, the net posts, or the opponent's court, when the ball is in play.
- 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.

- A live ball 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.
- After the serve, a ball contacting any permanent object before bouncing on the court.
- Once the ball is in play, a player hitting the ball before the ball entirely crosses the plane of the net.

9. Non-volley Zone Rules

- All volleys must be initiated outside of the NVZ. 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 NVZ.
 - The act of volleying the ball includes the swing, the follow-through, and the momentum from the action.
 - If the paddle touches the NVZ during the volley motion, before or after contacting the ball, it is a fault.
- 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 NVZ, including the player's partner. It is a fault even if the ball becomes dead before the player contacts the NVZ.
- If a player has touched the NVZ for any reason, that player cannot volley a return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the NVZ. A maneuver such as standing within the NVZ, jumping up to hit a volley, and then landing outside the NVZ is a fault.
- A player may enter the NVZ at any time except when that player is volleying the ball.
- A player may enter the NVZ before or after returning any ball that bounces.
- A player may stay inside the NVZ to return a ball that has bounced. There is no violation if a player does not exit the NVZ after hitting a ball that bounces.
- There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the NVZ.

10. Other Rules

- **Double Hits:** Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during an unintentional, continuous, single-direction stroke by one player.
- **Switching Hands:** A paddle may be switched from hand to hand at any time.
- **Two-Handed Shots:** Two-handed shots are allowed.
- **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.
- **Broken or Cracked Ball:** If any player suspects the ball is or becomes cracked after the serve, play must continue until the end of the rally.
- **Injury During Rally:** The rally continues to its conclusion despite an injury to any of the players.
- **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.
- **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 NVZ as a result of a volley, the ball remains in play even if it hits the item.
- **Plane of the Net:** Crossing the plane of the net prior to striking the ball is a fault. 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 in play.
 - **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.
- **Distractions:** Players may not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball.
- **Net Posts:** The net posts (including connected wheels, arms, or other support construction) are positioned out of bounds.
 - It is a fault if a player contacts the net post while the ball is in play.
 - A ball contacting the net, the net cable, or rope between the net posts remains in play.

- The net and the wires or strings holding up the net are positioned (mostly) on the court. Therefore, if the ball strikes the top of the net or strikes the top net wire or string and lands inbounds, it remains in play.
- If the ball travels between the net and the net post, it is a fault against the striking player.
- 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 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.
- A player may return the ball around the outside of the net post. The ball does not need to travel back over the net. 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.