



PICKLEBALL SKILL LEVEL GUIDELINES



LEVEL 1/1.5

- This player is just starting to play pickleball and has no other sports background
- Minimal understanding of rules of the game

LEVEL 2.0

- Moves in a balanced and safe manner
- Gets at least 50% of serves in the service court and returns 50% of serves
- Is learning where to stand on court during serves, returns and point play (may still be uncomfortable with some positions)
- Knows the 2 bounce rule and applies it during games
- Keeps score comfortably
- Has basic ground strokes with very limited use of backhand, overhead, and volley
- Capable of keeping ball in play for a couple of shots

LEVEL 2.5

- Knows the basic rules including the “two bounce rule”, scoring
- Is attempting to control forehand ground-strokes (direction, depth, height)
- Is attempting backhand ground-strokes
- Gets 60% of serves in the service court and returns 60% of serve returns
- Knows where to stand as the server, server’s partner, and receiver
- Consistently approaches the non-volley line for volleys
- Can keep the ball in play for short rallies
- Sometimes lobs with forehand
- Is attempting to “dink” the ball at the net, can do so for short rallies
- Is attempting to hit 3rd shot drop shots
- Moves in a safe and balanced manner
- Is developing good hand-eye coordination



LEVEL 3.0 (will ALSO possess most/all of the 2.5 skills)

- Knows basic rules including how to keep score
- Is developing control on forehand ground-strokes (placement, direction, depth)
- Is developing control on backhand ground-strokes (placement, direction, depth)
- Gets 70% of serves and returns of serves “in”
- Strives to place serves deep into the court
- Is beginning to develop placement of serves
- Uses deeper and higher returns of serve to allow time to approach the net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly rather than staying back
- Sustains a short volley session at the net
- Exhibits correct court positioning for doubles and how to “move as a team”
- Is beginning to use the forehand lob with some success
- Is developing a sustained “dink” exchange at the net
- Is attempting to hit a soft “drop shot” to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Is attempting to adjust to differing ball speeds (hitting & returning)
- Has good mobility
- Is developing good hand-eye coordination

3.5 Skill Level (will ALSO possess most/all of the 3.0 skills)

- Knows all the main rules including how to refigure the score and correct server
- Demonstrates control on forehand ground-strokes (direction, depth and pace)
- Demonstrates some control on backhand ground-strokes (direction, depth and pace)
- Gets 80% of serves and return of serves “in”
- Regularly places serves deep into the court
- Regularly uses deeper & higher returns of serve to allow time to approach net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly (when appropriate) rather than staying back
- Is able to play with partners effectively
- Is beginning to use court strategies such as partner communication and team coverage of court
- Avoids hitting “out” balls
- Hits the ball lower over the net consistently
- Is developing a wide variety of shots with some consistency
- Is learning when to use soft shots vs. power shots to their advantage
- Is developing consistency on shot placement, including ability to create and hit “gaps”
- Sustains a short volley session at the net with some control and placement
- Initiates and maintains a sustained “dink” exchange at the net
- Is able to execute a soft “drop shot” to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Is able to adjust to differing ball speeds consistently
- Is developing ability to hit overheads with control
- Uses a forehand and backhand lob when appropriate
- Is developing patience in rallies
- Has good mobility*
- Has good quickness*
- Has good hand-eye coordination



4.0 Skill Level (will ALSO possess all of the 3.5 skills)

- Controls and places 90% of both serves and returns of serves
- Has consistent and dependable forehand and backhand ground-strokes, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Has consistent and dependable volleys, including some directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Has consistent and dependable overheads, including some directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Has good accuracy in placing lobs
- Consistently makes successful "drop shots" from the back court to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Regularly initiates and sustains a "dink" exchange at the net until a "put away" shot is received
- Is able to change from a soft shot strategy to a hard shot strategy, and vice versa
- Can block and return hard volleys
- Is developing the ability to return overheads hit at their feet
- Can handle speed on shots without over-hitting or hitting out of bounds
- Moves effectively with partner, easily switching courts and communicating when required
- Can control play at the non-volley zone line, keeping opponents back, driving them off the line and controlling the speed or placement of the ball
- Consistently uses shots to create and hit "gaps"
- Recognizes and exploits the weaknesses in opponent's game
- Can poach effectively
- Is developing the use of spin in both forehand and backhand shots
- Maintains patience in rallies
- Has good mobility *
- Has good quickness *
- Has good hand-eye coordination *

LEVEL 4.5 and 5.0

- The 4.5 player is distinguished from the 4.0 player by increased skills, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots and consistently fewer unforced errors.
- The 5.0 player is even more consistent in all skills than the 4.5 player with very few, if any, unforced errors.

