

**2021 OFFICIAL**  
**RULEBOOK**



**USA**  
**PICKLEBALL™**





# USA PICKLEBALL & IFP OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

The USA Pickleball Association (USA PICKLEBALL) and the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) were organized to perpetuate the growth and advancement of pickleball on an international level and to set goals for worldwide play and recognition. USA PICKLEBALL and IFP are committed to furthering the growth and development of pickleball among all players.

USA PICKLEBALL and IFP are the governing bodies of American and international pickleball that formulate and interpret all the rules of the sport in a manner that preserves the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport. All such decisions by USA PICKLEBALL and IFP are final and not appealable.

The purpose of the rulebook is to provide pickleball players with the rules necessary for organized league and tournament play. Some sections of this rulebook are designed to be used only for the conduct of sanctioned tournaments. A sanctioned tournament allows players to be ranked on a national or international basis.

Non-sanctioned tournaments may also use these sections as guidelines. Tournament Directors for non-sanctioned tournaments may be flexible in the use of these guidelines to better fit the skills, ages, and diversity of their players. USA PICKLEBALL and IFP enthusiastically encourage these non-sanctioned tournaments to promote knowledge and growth of the sport, skill development, and having fun while playing pickleball.

USA PICKLEBALL published the first rulebook in March 1984. The first IFP rulebook was adapted, with permission, from the March 28, 2010, version of the USA PICKLEBALL rulebook.

The IFP invites national pickleball organizations from all countries to become members of the IFP and to observe these rules as the international rules of pickleball.

These rules will not be changed without good cause. Comments and opinions are always welcome. If you have any questions in regard to the rules, please visit:

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**USA Pickleball Association (USA PICKLEBALL)**

*Website:* [usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org)

**International Federation of Pickleball (IFP)**

*Website:* [ipickleball.org](http://ipickleball.org)

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# CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – THE GAME .....	1
SECTION 2 – COURT AND EQUIPMENT .....	3
SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS .....	11
SECTION 4 – THE SERVE, SERVICE SEQUENCE, AND SCORING RULES.	17
SECTION 5 – SERVICE AND END SELECTION RULES .....	27
SECTION 6 – LINE CALL RULES.....	29
SECTION 7 – FAULT RULES .....	33
SECTION 8 – DEAD BALL RULES.....	35
SECTION 9 – NON-VOLLEY-ZONE RULES.....	36
SECTION 10 – TIME-OUT RULES .....	38
SECTION 11 – OTHER RULES.....	44
SECTION 12 – SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT POLICIES.....	48
SECTION 13 – TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIATING.....	55
NOTES .....	72



## SECTION 1 – THE GAME

Pickleball is a paddle sport played using a special perforated ball on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court with a tennis-type net. The court is divided into right/even and left/odd service courts and non-volley zones. (See Figure 2-1.)

The ball is served diagonally across the net to the opponent's receiving court using an approved motion. The ball is 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 or 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.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles.

### The Players

Pickleball is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy. A sense of fair play from giving the opponent the benefit of any doubt is essential in maintaining the game's underlying principles of fun and competition. To that end:

- All points played are treated the same regardless of their importance; the first point of the match is as important as match point.
- Either partner in doubles can make calls, especially line calls; there is no place in the game for one partner telling another, "that was my call, not yours".

- Prompt calls eliminate the 'two chance option'. For example, a player cannot claim a hinder from a ball rolling on the court after they hit a ball 'out'; they gave up their ability to call the hinder by choosing instead to hit the ball.
- Players strive to cooperate when confronted with a situation not covered by the Rulebook. Possible outcomes can be a replay, allowing the rally to stand, or in extreme cases, asking for a referee to resolve a dispute.
- Where possible, rules accommodate players with various adaptive needs

## Unique Features

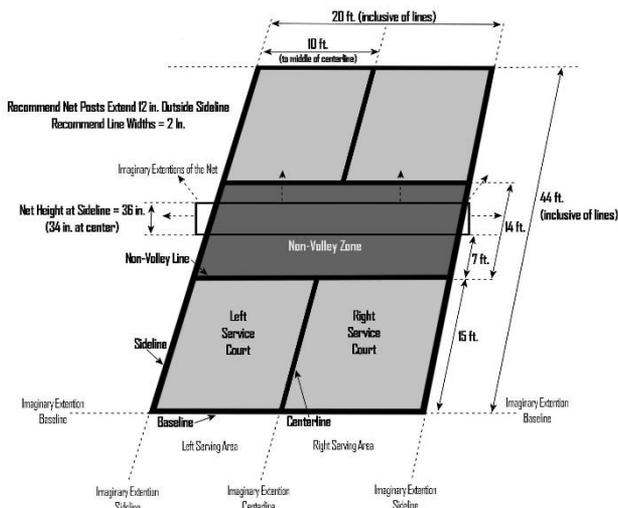
**Two-Bounce Rule.** After the ball is served, each side must make one groundstroke prior to volleying the ball.

**Non-Volley Zone (NVZ).** An area that extends 7 feet from the net on each side, within which a player is not allowed to strike the ball without it first bouncing.

**(Wheelchair)** A wheelchair player may allow the ball to bounce twice before returning the ball. The second bounce can be anywhere on the playing surface.

## SECTION 2 – COURT AND EQUIPMENT

- 2.A. **Court Specifications.** The dimensions and measurements for the standard pickleball court are:



**Figure 2-1**

- 2.A.1. The court shall be a rectangle measuring 20 feet (6.10 m) wide and 44 feet (13.41 m) long for both singles and doubles matches. (See Figure 2-1.)
- 2.A.2. Court measurements shall be made to the outside of the perimeter and non-volley zone lines. All lines should be 2 inches (5.08 cm) wide and the same color, clearly contrasting with the color of the playing surface.
- 2.A.3. The minimum playing surface area measures 30 feet (9.14 m) wide and 60 feet (18.29 m) long. A 10-foot (3.05-m) surrounding margin measures 40 feet

(12.19 m) by 64 feet (19.51 m). Other recommendations for playing surface dimensions are:

Purpose	Width – feet (m)	Length – feet (m)
New Construction	34 (10.36 m)	64 (19.5 m)
Tournament Play	34 (10.36 m)	64 (19.5 m)
Wheelchair Play	44 (13.41 m)	74 (22.56 m)
Stadium Court	50 (15.24 m)	80 (24.38 m)

2.A.4. **(Wheelchair)** The recommended playing surface area for Wheelchair play is 44 feet (13.41 m) wide and 74 feet (22.55 m) long. The size for Wheelchair play in a stadium court is 50 feet (15.24 m) wide by 80 feet (24.38 m) long.

2.B. **Lines and Areas.** The lines and areas of the standard pickleball court are explained below. (See Figure 2-1.)

2.B.1. Baselines. The lines parallel to the net at each end of the court.

2.B.2. Sidelines. The lines perpendicular to the net on each side of the court.

2.B.3. Non-Volley Zone (NVZ). The area of the court, specific to each team, on either side of the net bounded by a line between the two sidelines (non-volley zone line) parallel to and 7 feet (2.13 m) from the net. All NVZ lines are part of the NVZ.

2.B.4. Service Court. The area beyond the NVZ on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline.

2.B.5. 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 courts.

- 2.B.6. Right/Even Court. The service area on the right side of the court when facing the net.
- 2.B.7. Left/Odd Court. The service area on the left side of the court when facing the net.

2.C. ***Net Specifications.***

- 2.C.1. Material. The net may be made of any mesh fabric material that will not allow a ball to pass through it.
- 2.C.2. Posts. Net posts should be 22 feet +/- 0.0 Inches (6.71 m) from the inside of one post to the inside of the other post. The maximum diameter of the net post should be 3 inches (7.62 cm).
- 2.C.3. Size. The net length should be at least 21 feet 9 inches (6.63 m) extending from one post to the other. The net height from the bottom edge of the net to the top should be at least 30 inches.
- 2.C.4. Edge. The top of the net should be edged with a 2-inch (5.08-cm) white tape binding over a cord or cable running through the binding. This binding must rest upon the cord or cable.
- 2.C.5. Center Strap and Height. A center strap is recommended for permanent net and must be placed at the center of the net to enable easy adjustment to the 34-inch (86.36-cm) requirement at center. The top shall be 36 inches (91.44 cm) high at the sidelines.
- 2.C.6. If the net drapes onto the court and such a configuration is not corrected by the tournament staff prior to the start of play, and if the referee deems a ball is affected by the draping net, it shall result in a replay.



**Figure 2-3**

The ball pictured on the left, with larger holes, is customarily used for indoor play, and the ball pictured on the right is customarily used for outdoor play. Colors may vary. However, all approved balls are acceptable for indoor or outdoor play. The complete list of approved balls is on the USA PICKLEBALL and IFP websites.

**2.D. *Ball Specifications.***

- 2.D.1. Design. The ball shall have a minimum of 26 to a maximum of 40 circular holes, with spacing of the holes and overall design of the ball conforming to flight characteristics. The ball must have a manufacturer's or supplier's name or logo printed or embossed on the surface.
- 2.D.2. Approval. The Tournament Director will choose the tournament ball. The ball selected for play in any USA PICKLEBALL- or IFP-sanctioned tournament must be named on the official list of approved balls posted on the USA PICKLEBALL and IFP websites: USA Pickleball.org and ipickleball.org.

## 2.E. **Paddle Specifications.**

- 2.E.1. Material. The paddle must be made of any material deemed safe and not prohibited by these rules. The paddle shall be made of rigid, non-compressible material meeting the criteria located on the USA PICKLEBALL and IFP websites.
- 2.E.2. Surface. The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain delamination, holes, cracks or indentations that break the paddle skin or surface.
  - 2.E.2.a. Reflection. The paddle's hitting surface shall not be adversely reflective, such that it has the potential to negatively affect the vision of opposing player(s).
- 2.E.3. Size. The combined length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed 24 inches (60.96 cm). The paddle length cannot exceed 17 inches (43.18 cm). There is no restriction on paddle thickness.
- 2.E.4. Weight. There is no restriction on paddle weight.
- 2.E.5. Alterations. Altered paddles must meet all specifications.
  - 2.E.5.a. The only alterations or additions that may be made to a commercially made paddle are edge guard tape, lead tape, changes to the grip size or grip wrap, and name decals and/or other identification markings on the paddle face.
  - 2.E.5.b. Decals and tape can extend no farther than 1.0 inch (2.54 cm) above the top of the grip nor more than 0.5 inch (1.27 cm)

inside the outer edge of a paddle or, if an edge guard is in place, 0.5 inch inside the edge guard.

- 2.E.5.c. Hand-drawn or handwritten markings are allowed on the paddle's playing surface as long as they do not impact the surface roughness and are in good taste. No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle other than "hand-drawn" or "handwritten" pen markings. Any hand-drawn or handwritten depictions must be in good taste.
- 2.E.6. Prohibited Surface Features and Mechanical Features.
  - 2.E.6.a. Anti-skid paint or any paint textured with sand, rubber particles, or any material that causes additional spin.
  - 2.E.6.b. Rubber and synthetic rubber.
  - 2.E.6.c. Sandpaper characteristics.
  - 2.E.6.d. Moving parts that can increase head momentum.
  - 2.E.6.e. Removable parts. No removable parts except for paddle grip adjustments and/or grip wraps and lead tape on the paddle edge.
- 2.E.7. Model Designation. The paddle must have a manufacturer-provided and clearly marked brand and model name or model number on the paddle. The brand and model information may be shown on the paddle by a manufacturer affixed decal.

## 2.F. ***Equipment Approval and Authorization.***

2.F.1. USA PICKLEBALL/IFP Approved Paddle List – Players are responsible for confirming that the paddle they are using for match play is listed as Pass on the USA PICKLEBALL/IFP Approved Paddle List. The lists of approved equipment may be posted on the USA PICKLEBALL and IFP websites: USA Pickleball.org and ipickleball.com.

**2.F.1.a.** Violation. If at any point during the tournament it is determined that a player is using a paddle that violates any of the paddle specifications or is not listed on the USA PICKLEBALL/IFP Approved Paddle List as Pass, the following penalties apply:

2.F.1.a.1 If the violation is identified prior to the match starting, the player may switch to a paddle listed as Pass on the USA PICKLEBALL/IFP Approved Paddle List without penalty.

2.F.1.a.2 If the violation is identified after the match has started, the player or team forfeits only the match being played.

2.F.1.a.3 If the violation is discovered after the match has concluded, the match results stand.

2.G. **Apparel.**

- 2.G.1. Safety and Distraction. A player may be required to change garments that are inappropriate.
- 2.G.2. Depictions. Graphics, insignias, pictures, and writing on apparel must be in good taste.
- 2.G.3. Footwear. Shoes must have soles that do not mark or damage the court's playing surface.
- 2.G.4. Violation. The Tournament Director has the authority to enforce apparel changes. If the player refuses to comply with the apparel rules, the Tournament Director may declare a forfeit of the match.

## SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

- 3.A.1 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.
- 3.A.2 Coaching - Communication of any information, including verbal, nonverbal, and electronic, from someone other than a player’s partner, that a player or team may act upon to gain an advantage or help them avoid a rules violation.
- 3.A.3 Court – The area inside the outer dimensions of the baselines and sidelines.
- 3.A.4 Cross-Court – The court diagonally opposite of the court from which the ball was last struck.
- 3.A.5 Dead Ball – A ball that is no longer in play.
- 3.A.6 Distraction – Physical actions by a player that are ‘not common to the game’ that, in the judgment of the referee, may interfere with the opponent’s ability or concentration to hit the ball. Examples include, but are not limited to, making loud noises, stomping feet, waving the paddle in a distracting manner or otherwise interfering with the opponent’s concentration or ability to hit the ball.
- 3.A.7 Double Bounce – When the ball bounces twice on one side before it is returned.
- 3.A.8 Double Hit – Hitting the ball twice before it is returned.
- 3.A.9 Ejection - A behavior violation so flagrant that it warrants ejection from the tournament by the Tournament Director. The player may stay at the venue but may no longer play in any matches.

- 3.A.10 Expel – A behavior violation so flagrant that the Tournament Director prohibits the player from playing in any current and any future brackets of the tournament. In addition, the player shall leave the venue immediately and not return for the remainder of the tournament.
- 3.A.11 Fault – A rules violation that results in a dead ball and the end of the rally.
- 3.A.12 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.
- 3.A.13 Forfeit – An egregious behavior violation or a combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls that result in either a game or match being awarded to the opponent.
- 3.A.14 Groundstroke – A strike of the ball after the ball has bounced.
- 3.A.15 Hinder – Any transient element or occurrence not caused by a player that adversely impacts play, not including permanent objects. Examples include, but are not limited to, balls, flying insects, foreign material, players or officials on another court that, in the opinion of the referee, impacted a player's ability to make a play on the ball.
- 3.A.16 Imaginary extension. A term used to describe where a line would extend if it projected beyond its current end point. Players and referees are to project where the line would extend if it were not limited to the boundaries of the playing area.
- 3.A.17 Left/Odd Court – The service area on the left side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles

or the singles server should be positioned on the left/odd side of the court when their score is odd.

- 3.A.18 Line Call – A loud word(s) spoken by a player or line judge(s) to indicate to the referee and/or players that a live ball has not touched in the required court space. The preferred word to indicate a line call is “OUT”. Distinctive hand signals can be used in conjunction with a line call. Words such as “wide”, “long”, “no”, “deep” are also acceptable.
- 3.A.19 Live Ball/In Play – The point in time when the referee or server (or server's partner per rule 4.D.2) starts to call the score.
- 3.A.20 Momentum – Momentum is a property of a body in motion, such as a player executing a volley, that causes the player to continue in motion after contacting the ball. The act of volleying produces momentum that ends when the player regains balance and control of their motion or stops moving toward the non-volley zone.
- 3.A.21 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 relating to NVZ faults. All lines bounding the NVZ are part of the NVZ. The NVZ is two-dimensional and does not rise above the playing surface. (See Figure 2-1 and Section 2.B.3.)
- 3.A.22 Paddle Grip Adjustments – Non-mechanical devices that change the size of the grip or stabilize the hand on the grip.
- 3.A.23 Paddle Head – The paddle, excluding the handle.
- 3.A.24 Permanent Object – Any object on or near the court, including hanging over the court, that can interfere with

play. Permanent objects include the ceiling, walls, fencing, lighting fixtures, net posts, net post legs, the stands and seats for spectators, the referee, line judges, spectators when in their recognized positions, and all other objects around and above the court.

- 3.A.25 Plane of the Net. The imaginary vertical planes on all sides extending beyond the net system.
- 3.A.26 Playing Surface – The court and the area surrounding the court designated for playing.
- 3.A.27 Rally – Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.
- 3.A.28 Receiver – The player who is positioned diagonally opposite the server to return the serve. Depending on the team’s score, the player who returns the serve may not be the correct receiver.
- 3.A.29 Replay – Any rally that is restarted for any reason without the awarding of a point or a change of server.
- 3.A.30 Retirement - A player/team’s decision that stops the match and awards the match to the opponent.
- 3.A.31 Right/Even Court – The service area on the right side of the court, when facing the net. The starting server in doubles or the singles server should be positioned on the right/even court when their score is even.
- 3.A.32 Second Serve – In doubles, a term used to describe the condition when a serving team loses the first of its two allocated serves.
- 3.A.33 Second Server – In doubles, the first server’s partner. The second server serves after the first server loses serve.
- 3.A.34 Serve – The initial strike of the ball to start the rally.

- 3.A.35 Server – The player who initiates a rally. Depending on the team’s score, it is possible that the player who serves may not be the correct server.
- 3.A.36 Service Court – The area on either side of the centerline, including the centerline, sideline, and baseline, excluding the NVZ.
- 3.A.37 Serving Area – The area behind the baseline and on and between the imaginary extensions of the court centerline and each sideline.
- 3.A.38 Side Out – The awarding of the serve to the opposing team after a singles player or doubles team loses its serve.
- 3.A.39 Starting Server – For each doubles team, the player designated to serve first at the start of the game. In doubles tournament play, the starting server shall wear a visible form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.
- 3.A.40 Technical Foul – A referee’s assessment of a rule or behavioral violation that results in one point being removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. A technical foul shall be issued if one technical warning has already been given and a second technical warning is warranted; or when warranted by a player’s or team’s action, based on the referee’s judgement.
- 3.A.41 Technical Warning – A referee’s first verbal warning of a rule or behavioral violation given to a player or team prior to a technical foul being issued. Points are not awarded for a technical warning.

- 3.A.42 Volley – During a rally, a strike of the ball out of the air before the ball has bounced.
- 3.A.43 Withdrawal – A player/team’s request to be removed from any upcoming play in a specified bracket.
- 3.A.44 Profanity – Words, phrases or hand gestures, common or uncommon, which are normally considered inappropriate in “polite company” or around children. Typically included are four letter words used as expletives or verbal intensifiers.
- 3.A.45 Verbal Warning – A referee’s Verbal Warning (VW) is an optional, non-penalizing, game management tool. A VW is specific to profanity which has not risen to the penalty level (TW or TF). When used, a referee’s VW is simultaneously administered to all players on the court. Only one VW for profanity is permitted during a match.
- 3.A.46 Third Shot – After the receiver hits the ball to return the serve, the point in time when the serving team hits the ball.
- 3.A.47 **Wheelchair** Player – Any person, with or without a disability, who plays the game in a wheelchair. The wheelchair is considered part of the player’s body. This can be a player with a disability or anyone that wants to play in a wheelchair.

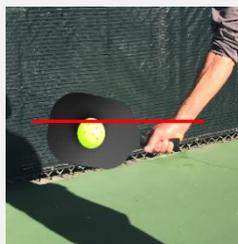
## SECTION 4 – THE SERVE, SERVICE SEQUENCE, AND SCORING RULES

### 4.A. **The Serve.**

- 4.A.1. The entire score must be called before the ball is served.
- 4.A.2. The moment the ball is served:
  - 4.A.2.a. At least one foot must be on the playing surface behind the baseline.
  - 4.A.2.b. Neither of the server's feet may touch the court on or inside the baseline.
  - 4.A.2.c. Neither of the server's feet may touch outside the imaginary extensions of the sideline or centerline.
  - 4.A.2.d. (**Wheelchair**) Both rear wheels must be on the playing surface behind the baseline and may not touch the court on or inside the baseline or outside the imaginary extensions of the sideline or centerline.
- 4.A.3. The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc at the time the ball is struck and may be made with either a forehand or backhand motion. (See Figure 4-3.)
- 4.A.4. The highest point of the paddle head must not be above the highest part of the wrist (where the wrist joint bends) when it strikes the ball. (See Fig 4-1 & 4-2)



**Figure 4-1 (legal serve)**



**Figure 4-2 (illegal serve)**

**Figure 4-3 (legal serve)**



*(Photos and graphics courtesy of Steve Taylor, Digital Spatula)*

- 4.A.5. Contact with the ball must not be made above the waist. (See Figures 4-1 and 4-3 above)
- 4.A.6. Placement. 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.

- 4.A.7. If the serve clears the net or hits the net and then touches the receiver or the receiver's partner, it is a point for the serving team.
- 4.A.8. **Provisional Drop Serve.** In addition to the standard serve sequence described in Rules 4.A.1 to 4.A.7, players may opt to use an alternate "drop serve" method.
  - 4.A.8.a. Servers must release the ball from one of the server's hands or dropped off the server's paddle face from any natural (unaided) height and hit the ball after the ball bounces on the playing surface. The server's release of the ball must be visible to the referee and the receiver. In matches without a referee, the server's release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. A replay shall be called before the return of serve if the release of the ball is not visible. The rules for feet placement (4.A.2 and 4.L) still apply.
  - 4.A.8.b. Before bouncing on the ground, the ball shall not be propelled (thrown) downward or tossed or hit upward with the paddle. Failure to drop the ball properly will result in a fault. There is no restriction on where the ball can land on the playing surface after it is dropped (providing 4.A.2 is satisfied) nor how many times within the

10 seconds after the score is called the server may drop the ball.

4.A.8.c. If the drop serve is used, the ball may be struck with either a forehand or backhand motion without any other restriction; i.e., the location restrictions of the ball and paddle in Rules 4.A.3, 4.A.4 and 4.A.5 do not apply.

4.B. ***Player Positions.***

4.B.1. Server and Receiver. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.

4.B.2. At the start of each game, the starting server begins the serve from the side of the court dictated by the score.

4.B.3. Each player will serve until a rally is lost or a fault is declared against the player or team.

4.B.4. 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.

4.B.5. Singles.

4.B.5.a. If the player's score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the serve must be made from the right/even serving area and be received in the right/even service court by the opponent.

4.B.5.b. If the player's score is odd (1, 3, 5 ...), the serve must be made from the left/odd

serving area and be received in the left/odd service court by the opponent.

4.B.5.c. After the server loses the rally or faults, a side out will occur and service is awarded to the opponent.

4.B.6. Doubles. 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. The starting server of each game is therefore designated as "Server 2" for scoring purposes, since a side out will occur once a rally is lost or a fault is committed by the serving team and service is awarded to the opposing team.

4.B.6.a. At the start of each side out, service begins in the right/even serving area.

4.B.6.b. When the team's score is even (0, 2, 4 ...), the team's starting server's correct position is at the right/even serving area. When the team's score is odd (1, 3, 5...), the starting server's correct position is at the left/odd court.

4.B.6.c. 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 player is referred to as "Server 1" and the partner is "Server 2."

4.B.6.d. Server 1 will serve, alternating service sides after each point is won, until a rally is lost or the server's team commits a fault.

- 4.B.6.e. After Server 1's team loses a rally or faults, Server 2 will serve from the correct position and will alternate serving positions as long as the serving team continues to win points.
- 4.B.6.f. The receiving team does not alternate positions when a point is scored by the serving team. The receiving team may switch positions after the return of serve, but after the rally is over, the receiving team must return back to their correct positions, which correspond to the team's score and the players' starting positions.
- 4.B.7. Partner Positions. In doubles, there is no restriction on the position of the partners of the correct server and receiver as long as they are on their respective team's side of the net. They can be positioned on or off the court.
- 4.B.8. Before the serve occurs, the serving team may ask the referee for the score, correct server, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score. Any player on the serving team may ask any one or more of these questions.
- 4.B.9. Before the serve occurs, the receiving team may ask the referee for the score, correct receiver, correct position, and may challenge/confirm the called score. Any player on the receiving team may ask any one or more of these questions.
- 4.B.10. When an incorrect player serves or receives, or a player serves from an incorrect position, the

referee will immediately stop play and identify the fault(s).

4.B.11. **Incorrect Player or Position.** When an incorrect server or player position is discovered after a rally, game, or match has ended, the offending team can be faulted until the next serve occurs or prior to the scoresheet being returned to the tournament operation's desk. A point scored during the rally by the offending team will not count. Any previous points scored by the incorrect server or with players in the incorrect positions will stand. After a match is completed, an incorrect player or position error may not be corrected after the scoresheet has been returned to tournament operations personnel.

4.C. **Readiness.** Any player may indicate "not ready" prior to the start of the score being called.

4.C.1. One of the following signals must be used to indicate "not ready": 1) raising the paddle above the head, 2) raising the non-paddle hand above the head, 3) completely turning their back to the net.

4.C.2. After the start of the score being called, "not ready" signals will be ignored, unless there is a hinder. A player or team out of position is not considered a hinder.

4.D. **Calling the Score.** The score shall be called after the server and receiver are (or should be) in position and all players are (or should be) ready to play.

4.D.1. If it appears the server or receiver is delaying the game, the referee will call the score to start the 10-Second Rule.

- 4.D.2. In non-officiated play, the server normally calls the score, but the server's partner may call the score if the server is unable to call the score. The person calling the score shall not change during the game.
- 4.E. ***The 10-Second Rule.*** Once the score has been called, the server is allowed 10 seconds to serve the ball.
- 4.E.1. If the server exceeds 10 seconds to serve, a fault will be declared.
- 4.E.2. After the score has been called, if the serving team changes serving courts, the referee shall call "Time", allow all players to reposition, and then recall the score to re-start the 10-second count. In a non-officiated match, the server will allow for the same repositioning and will recall the score to re-start the 10 second count.
- 4.F. ***Scoring.*** A singles player or doubles team scores points only when serving. Points may also be scored when technical fouls are called against the opposing side.
- 4.G. ***Points.*** A point is scored by serving the ball and winning the rally.
- 4.H. ***Winning the Game.*** The first side scoring the winning point wins.
- 4.I. ***Calling the Score in Singles Matches.*** The proper sequence for calling the score is server score then receiver score as two numbers. (e.g., "one – zero.")
- 4.J. ***Calling the Score in Doubles Matches.*** 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"). To start each game, the score will be called as "zero – zero – two."

- 4.K. **Wrong Score Called.** If the server or referee calls the wrong score, any player may stop play before the "third shot" occurs to ask for a correction.
- 4.K.1. If the score called was incorrect, the player or referee will recall the correct score and the ball will be re-served with no penalty.
  - 4.K.2. After the serve has occurred, a player who stops play and challenges the called score when there is no error will have committed a fault.
  - 4.K.3. A player who stops play after the "third shot" occurs will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.
- 4.L. **Service Foot Faults.** During the serve, when the ball is struck, the server's feet shall:
- 4.L.1. Not touch the area outside the imaginary extension of the sideline.
  - 4.L.2. Not touch the area on the wrong side of the imaginary extension of the centerline.
  - 4.L.3. Not touch the court, including the baseline.
- 4.M. **Service Faults.** During the service, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:
- 4.M.1. The server serves from the incorrect serving area.
  - 4.M.2. The incorrect player serves the ball.

- 4.M.3. The served ball touches any permanent object before it hits the ground.
- 4.M.4. The served ball touches the server or their partner, or anything the server or their partner is wearing or holding.
- 4.M.5. The served ball lands in the non-volley zone which includes the NVZ lines.
- 4.M.6. The served ball lands outside the service court.
- 4.M.7. The served ball hits the net and lands inside the non-volley zone.
- 4.M.8. The served ball hits the net and lands outside the service court.
- 4.M.9. The server uses an illegal serve (Rules 4.A.3, 4.A.4, 4.A.5) when not performing the Provisional Drop Serve. (Rule 4.A.8)
- 4.M.10. The server or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.
- 4.M.11. A fault occurs when the server hits the ball to make the serve while the score is being called.
- 4.N. **Receiver Faults.** It is a fault against the receiving team resulting in a point for the server if:
  - 4.N.1. The incorrect player returns the serve.
  - 4.N.2. The receiver or their partner is touched by or interferes with the flight of the ball before it bounces.
  - 4.N.3. The receiver or their partner calls a time-out after the serve has occurred.

## SECTION 5 – SERVICE AND END SELECTION RULES

### 5.A. ***Selection of End, Serve, Receive, or Defer.***

- 5.A.1. Any fair method shall be used to determine which player or team has first choice of end, serve, receive, or defer (e.g., a 1 or 2 written on the back of the score sheet). If the winner chooses to serve or receive first, the loser chooses the starting end. If the winner chooses the starting end, the loser chooses to serve or receive. Once a selection has been made, it cannot be changed.
- 5.A.2. In doubles, teams may change the starting server between games and should notify the referee. In non-officiated matches, the team should notify the opponents if there was a starting server change. The starting server for the game is the player wearing the starting server form of identification. There is no fault or penalty for failure to make the notifications. Once a game has started, if the referee notices a starting server has changed, the referee will annotate the scoresheet accordingly, after the rally has completed.
- 5.A.3. In doubles, the starting servers must visibly wear the form of identification determined by the Tournament Director.

### 5.B. ***Change of Ends.***

- 5.B.1. Teams switch ends and initial service upon the completion of each game.
- 5.B.2. A maximum of 2 minutes is allowed between games. The referee will announce a 15-second

warning. When the full 2 minutes have elapsed, the referee will state the game number, call "Time in", call the score and start the 10-second count. The referee will call the score even if all players are not on the court and/or not ready to play. (See Rule 4.E.) If both teams agree, play may resume early.

- 5.B.3. In a match with two out of three games to 11 points, in game three, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 6. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.4. In a game to 15 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 8. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.5. In a game to 21 points, the teams will switch ends when the first team reaches a score of 11. Serve remains with the player holding serve.
- 5.B.6. End Change Time-Out. A maximum of one minute is allowed to switch ends during a game. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.
- 5.B.7. After the end change has occurred, a technical foul resulting in the loss of a point for the serving team shall have no impact on the completed end change.

## SECTION 6 – LINE CALL RULES

- 6.A. A served ball that clears the non-volley zone and lands in the correct service court or on any correct service court line is in.
- 6.B. Except the serve, any ball in play that lands in the court or touches any court line is in.
- 6.C. A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is “out”.
- 6.D. Code of Ethics for Line Calling. Pickleball is played according to specific rules. It also requires a code of ethics for line-calling responsibilities when performed by players.

The line-calling responsibilities of players are different from those assigned to referees or line judges. The officials make impartial judgment calls with all players’ interests in mind. The player, when assigned line-calling duties, must strive for accuracy and operate under the principle that all questionable calls must be resolved in favor of the opponent.

The basic elements are:

- 6.D.1. Players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court (excluding short serves, service foot faults and all non-volley-zone faults, if being called by a referee). If a player makes an initial line call, and then asks for either the opponent(s) or the referee’s opinion, if the opponent or referee can make a clear “in” or “out” call, the clear call will stand. If no clear call can be made, the initial line call by the player will stand. A call made by the

opponent can be appealed to the referee for a final "in" or "out" decision.

- 6.D.2. Players' only line call is the centerline on the serve in matches that have line judges.
- 6.D.3. The opponent gets the benefit of the doubt on line calls made. Any ball that cannot be called "out" will be considered "in." A player cannot claim a replay because the ball was not seen or there is uncertainty. A player who does not make a call may appeal to the referee to make the call if they did not clearly see the ball land. If the referee is unable to make the call, the ball is "in." The moment the receiving player/team appeals to the referee, they lose their right to make any subsequent "in" or "out" call for that rally.
- 6.D.4. Spectators should not be consulted on any line call.
- 6.D.5. A player should not question an opponent's call, although any player may appeal a call to the referee before the next serve occurs.
- 6.D.6. A player/team may ask the opponent's opinion to make the line call on the player's end of the court. If requested and the opponent makes a clear "in" or "out" call, it must be accepted. If the opponents cannot make a clear "in" or "out" call, then the ball is ruled as being "in" on the receiving team. The moment the receiving player/team asks for the opponent's opinion, they lose their right to make any subsequent "in" or "out" call for that rally. The receiving team/player may also appeal to the referee to make a clear call. If the referee cannot

make a clear call, the outcome of the opponent's ruling will stand.

- 6.D.7. Players shall not call a ball "out" unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.
- 6.D.8. All "out" calls must be made "promptly"; otherwise, the ball is presumed to still be in play. "Promptly" is defined as calling "out" prior to the ball being hit by the opponent or before the ball becomes dead.
- 6.D.9. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball "out" and the partner calls it "in," then doubt exists and the team's call will be "in." Any player may appeal a call to the referee. If the referee did not see the ball, the ball is considered in.
- 6.D.10. "Out" line calls should be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal (as described in Rule 13.E.2).
- 6.D.11. 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.
- 6.D.12. An "out" call made after the ball bounces is a line call. The ball is dead and play shall stop. If, upon appeal, the referee overrules any type of "out" call, it is a fault against the player or team that made the "out" call. Exception: If the match has line judges, the baseline and sideline judges are responsible for the call. (See Rule 13.E.)

6.D.13. After the completion of a rally, players may overrule a partner's line call, an officiating team's line call, or an opponent's "in" call to their own disadvantage.

## SECTION 7 – FAULT RULES

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

- 7.A. If the serve or service return does not bounce before the ball is struck.
- 7.B. Hitting the ball into the player's side of the net without the ball crossing over to the opponent's side. Note: The ball is dead and the fault occurs the moment the ball hits the ground.
- 7.C. Hitting the ball under the net or between the net and the net post.
- 7.D. A player hitting a ball that first lands out of bounds or onto their own side of the court.
- 7.E. Failure of a standing player to hit the ball before it bounces twice on the receiving player's court and failure of a wheelchair player to return a ball before it bounces three times.
- 7.F. Violation of any service rule. (Section 4)
- 7.G. A player, a player's apparel, or a player's paddle contacting the net system, the net posts, or the opponent's court, when the ball is in play.
- 7.H. 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. If the player is in the process of changing hands with both hands on the paddle or is attempting a two-handed stroke and either hand is hit below the wrist, as long as the player's hand(s) are in contact with the paddle, the ball is still in play.

- 7.I. 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.)
- 7.J. A ball in play contacting any permanent object before bouncing on the court.
- 7.K. Violation of the non-volley-zone rules. (Section 9)
- 7.L. Violation of the other rules. (Section 11)
- 7.M. Once the ball is in play, a player hitting the ball before it passes the plane of the net.
- 7.N. After the serve, a player deliberately carrying or catching the ball on the paddle while the ball is live/in-play.
- 7.O. A hinder called by a player that is determined by the referee to be invalid.

## SECTION 8 – DEAD BALL RULES

- 8. A. Any action that stops play will result in a dead ball.
- 8. B. A fault called by a referee or player, or a fault committed by a player, will result in a dead ball.
- 8. C. A hinder called by the referee or player will result in a dead ball. The referee will determine if the hinder called by the player was valid. A valid hinder will result in a replay.
- 8. D. A ball in play that contacts a permanent object after it has bounced on the opponent's court will result in a dead ball. The player who hit the ball shall win the rally.
- 8. E. Other than non-volley zone violations, faults may only be committed when the ball is live and in-play. The penalty for a fault may be enforced after a rally has ended (e.g., NVZ, incorrect player/position, etc) Note: Technical warnings or technical fouls may be called at any time during the match including when the ball is dead.

## SECTION 9 – NON-VOLLEY-ZONE RULES

- 9. A. All volleys must be initiated outside of the non-volley zone. For a wheelchair player, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone during a volley.
- 9. B. 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 non-volley zone. For a wheelchair player, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone.
  - 9.B.1. The act of volleying the ball includes the swing, the follow-through, and the momentum from the action.
  - 9.B.2. If the paddle touches the non-volley zone during the volley motion, before or after contacting the ball, it is a fault.
- 9. C. 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 non-volley zone, including the player's partner. For a wheelchair player, the front (smaller) wheels may touch the non-volley zone.
  - 9.C.1. It is a fault even if the ball becomes dead before the player contacts the non-volley zone.
- 9. D. If a player has touched the non-volley zone for any reason, that player cannot volley a return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the non-volley zone. A maneuver such as standing within the non-volley zone, jumping up to hit a volley, and then landing outside the non-volley zone is a fault. If the rear wheels of a wheelchair have touched the non-volley zone

for any reason, the wheelchair player cannot volley a return until both rear wheels have made contact with the playing surface outside the non-volley zone.

- 9. E. A player may enter the non-volley zone at any time except when that player is volleying the ball.
- 9. F. A player may enter the non-volley zone before or after returning any ball that bounces.
- 9. G. A player may stay inside the non-volley zone to return a ball that has bounced. There is no violation if a player does not exit the non-volley zone after hitting a ball that bounces.
- 9. H. There is no violation if a player returns the ball while their partner is standing in the non-volley zone.

## SECTION 10 – TIME-OUT RULES

10. A. **Standard Time-Out.** A player or team is entitled to two time-outs for 11- or 15-point games and three time-outs for a 21-point game.
- 10.A.1. Each time-out period may last up to 1 minute.
  - 10.A.2. Play must be resumed at 1 minute or when all players are ready to resume play, whichever occurs first, unless another time-out is called by either side. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play during a standard time-out.
  - 10.A.3. If a team has any remaining time-outs, any player on that team may call a time-out before the next serve occurs.
  - 10.A.4. Before the serve occurs, if a team calls a time-out while having no time-outs remaining, no penalty shall be called.
  - 10.A.5. The referee will give the players a warning when there are 15 seconds remaining. At the end of the time-out, the referee will call “time in” and announce the score to begin the 10-second count even if all players are not on the court or not ready to play. If the server does not serve within 10 seconds after the score is called, and no additional time-outs are called or available, a fault will be called.
10. B. **Medical Time-Out.** A player needing medical attention during a match should request a medical time-out from the referee. Once the medical time-out has been requested, the following guidelines shall be used:

- 10.B.1. The referee shall immediately summon on-site medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, to assess the situation and render appropriate first aid.
  - 10.B.1.a. When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, the referee shall start the 15-minute timer.
- 10.B.2. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that a valid medical condition exists, then that player will be allowed no more than 15 minutes for the medical time-out.
  - 10.B.2.a. The time-out must be continuous and may be up to 15 minutes. If the player uses fewer than 15 minutes, the remaining time is lost and no additional medical time will be available to the player during the match.
  - 10.B.2.b. If the player cannot resume play after the 15-minute medical time-out period, the match will be declared a retirement.
- 10.B.3. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, determine that no valid medical condition exists, the player or team will be charged a standard time-out, if available, and issued a technical warning.
  - 10.B.3.a. If a standard time-out is not available, then a technical foul will be issued.
  - 10.B.3.b. The medical time-out is no longer available to that player for that match.

10.B.3.c. A player may be granted only one player-requested medical time-out per match.

10.B.4. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play after a medical time-out.

10.B.5. Presence of blood. If blood is present on a player or on the court, play may not resume until the bleeding has been controlled and blood on clothing and the court has been removed.

10.B.5.a. Issues relating solely to blood cleanup or control will be considered a referee time-out.

10.B.5.b. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

10. C. **Continuous Play.** Play should be continuous, although players are permitted to quickly take a drink or towel off in between rallies as long as, in the judgment of the referee, the flow of the game is not adversely impacted. The referee shall call the score when play should be resumed.

10. D. **Equipment Time-Outs.** Players are expected to keep all apparel and equipment in good playable condition and are expected to use regular time-outs and time between games for adjustments and replacement of equipment. If a player or team is out of time-outs and the referee determines that an equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of the match, the referee may award an equipment time-out not to exceed 2 minutes. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play during an equipment time-out.

10.D.1. Apparel and equipment adjustments that can be accomplished quickly are allowed between rallies

(e.g., tying shoelaces, cleaning glasses, adjusting hat).

10. E. **Time Between Games.** The period between games in a match shall not exceed 2 minutes. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to resume play.

10.E.1. In between games of a match, players may take one or both of their upcoming game's timeouts. The players must inform the referee, or their opponents if there is no referee. If a team returns to play before one (or both) requested time-outs have started, the team retains the time-out(s) for the upcoming game. The normal two minutes in between games will be used before any team-allotted timeouts. Rule 10.A.5 procedures will be followed to continue play.

10. F. **Time Between Matches.** The standard time between matches shall be 10 minutes. If all players are ready to play prior to 10 minutes, the match may be called early.

10.F.1. In a championship match with a tie-breaker match: If the winner of the loser's bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played. Maximum time between the championship match and the tie-breaker match is 10 minutes.

10. G. **Suspended Games.** A game suspended due to extenuating circumstances shall be resumed with the same server, score, and remaining time-outs as when interrupted.

10. H. **Other Time-Out Rules.**

- 10.H.1. **Before A Match or Between Games:** Neither medical nor regular time-outs may be taken before a match starts. A match cannot begin until all players are present and the starting score is called. Time-out(s) may be used at the start of the second or third game in a two-out-of-three game match.
- 10.H.2. **Extenuating Circumstances:** The referee may call a referee time-out to address extenuating circumstances that may require an extended interruption of play.
- 10.H.2.a. In the interest of overall safety, if the referee determines a potential medical situation exists, (for example, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, etc.) the referee is authorized to call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director. If determined to be a valid medical situation requiring treatment, the referee will charge a medical time-out to the affected player and proceed in accordance with Rule 10.B. If the player did not require treatment, play resumes and no time-out is charged to the player. If the player has previously used, or been charged a medical timeout, the referee will call a referee time-out and summon medical personnel or the Tournament Director to determine if the player may resume play.

- 10.H.2.b.** Active bleeding shall be addressed in accordance with Rule 10.B.5.
- 10.H.2.c.** Foreign substances on the court, such as debris, water or other fluids, shall be removed or cleaned up.
- 10.H.2.d.** Rule 10.A.5 procedures shall be used to resume play.

## SECTION 11 – OTHER RULES

- 11.A. **Double Hits.** Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during an unintentional, continuous, single-direction stroke, by one player. After the serve, if the stroke is deliberate, or not continuous or not in a single direction, or the ball is struck by a second player, it is a fault.
- 11.B. **Switching Hands.** A paddle may be switched from hand to hand at any time.
- 11.C. **Two-Handed Shots.** Two-handed shots are allowed.
- 11.D. **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 has occurred.
- 11.E. **Broken or Cracked Ball.** If a referee is present, players may appeal to the referee before the serve occurs to determine if a ball is broken or cracked. If the appeal is before the serve occurs, the referee will call "Time", inspect the ball, and either replace it or return it into play. The referee will recall the score. In non-officiated matches, players may replace a cracked ball before the serve occurs. If any player suspects the ball is or becomes cracked after the serve, play must continue until the end of the rally. If, in the judgment of the referee, a broken or cracked ball impacted the outcome of a rally, the referee will call for a replay with a replacement ball. In non-officiated play, if the players do not agree that a cracked ball impacted the outcome of the rally, the rally stands as played.
- 11.F. **Injury During Rally.** The rally continues to its conclusion despite an injury to any of the players.

- 11.G. **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.
- 11.H. **Items on the Court.** If any item a player is/was wearing or carrying lands on their side of the court, unless the item lands in the non-volley zone as a result of a volley, the ball remains in play even if it hits the item.
- 11.I. **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.
- 11.I.1. Exception: If the ball bounces into a receiving player's court with enough backspin or wind aid to cause it to return back over 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.
- 11.J. **Distractions.** Players may not distract an opponent when the opponent is about to play the ball. If in the judgment of the referee a distraction has occurred, the referee shall immediately call a fault on the offending team.
- 11.K. **The 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.

11.K.1. A ball contacting the net, the net cable, or rope between the net posts remains in play.

**11.L. *The Net.***

11.L.1. 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.

11.L.2. If the ball travels between the net and the net post, it is a fault against the striking player.

11.L.3. 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 the player goes around the net post and crosses the imaginary extension line of the net but does not make contact with the ball, a fault will be declared.

11.L.4. 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.

11.L.5. For net systems with a horizontal bar that includes a center base:

11.L.5.a. Before going over the net, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base, it is a fault.

- 11.L.5.b. Except on the serve, if the ball goes over the net and hits the center base, or any part of the horizontal bar, or the ball gets caught between the net and the horizontal bar, a replay will be called. Other than on the serve, if the ball goes over the net and bounces on the court and then performs any of the 3 above listed actions, a replay shall occur.
- 11.L.5.c. On the serve, if the ball hits the horizontal bar or the center base or gets caught between the net and horizontal bar after going over the net, it is a fault.
- 11.L.5.d. Any malfunction of a net system during play shall be considered a hinder.

11.M. ***Shots Around the Net Post.*** A player may return the ball around the outside of the net post.

11.M.1. The ball does not need to travel back over the net.

11.M.2. 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.

11.N. ***One Paddle.*** A player shall not use or carry more than one paddle during a rally. A violation of this rule is a fault.

11.O. ***Paddle Possession.*** A player must have possession of the paddle when it makes contact with the ball. A violation of this rule is a fault.

## SECTION 12 – SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT POLICIES

### 12.A. **Event Categories.**

Men: Singles and Doubles

Women: Singles and Doubles

Mixed: Doubles

Wheelchair: Singles and Doubles

12.A.1. In events described by gender, only members of that gender shall be allowed to play in that event.

12.A.2. Mixed doubles – A mixed doubles team shall consist of one male and one female player.

12.A.3. Wheelchair players may play in Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles or Mixed Doubles with either standup partners or wheelchair doubles.

12.B. **Tournament Scoring Options.** The recommended tournament scoring option is best two of three games to 11 points, win by 2 points. Other options include: one game to 15 or one game to 21. All formats win by 2 points. Round Robins may also use one game to 11, win by 2, as long as the bracket has six or more teams.

12.C. **Tournament Formats.** There are five tournament formats that may be used. The particular format is typically the choice of the tournament sponsor or the Tournament Director.

12.C.1. Single Elimination with Consolation. The first player or team to score the match-winning point by at least a 2-point margin wins. Losers from all rounds go into a consolation bracket playing for the bronze medal/third place and are eliminated

after a second loss. The final two players or teams in the winner's bracket play for the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals.

12.C.2. Double Elimination. The first player or team to score the match-winning point by at least a 2-point margin wins. A loss will put the loser into the consolation bracket. Players or teams are eliminated after one loss in the consolation bracket. The winner of the consolation bracket will play the winner of the winner's bracket for the championship. If the winner of the consolation bracket defeats the winner of the winner's bracket, then a tie-breaker match to 15 points must be played to determine the gold/first-place and silver/second-place medals. The loser of the consolation bracket final will receive the bronze/third-place medal.

12.C.3. Round Robin. All players or teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied:

12.C.3.a. First tie-breaker: head-to-head matches won.

12.C.3.b. Second tie-breaker: point differential of all games played. (e.g., Team A won Match 1 11-8, 11-4, so they would have a point differential of +10. Team A then wins the second match 11-9, 2-11, 11-6. For this round, they would have a point

differential of -2. This would give them a total for the day of +8.)

12.C.3.c. Third tie-breaker: head-to-head point differential.

12.C.3.d. Fourth tie-breaker: point differential against next-highest team. (e.g., If the teams are tied for second, use point differentials against the first-place team.)

12.C.4. Pool Play. The participants are divided into two or more player pools. Each pool plays a round robin to determine the qualifiers that put the players into a single-elimination or double-elimination playoff.

12.C.5. Non-Pool Play. The participants are seeded based on the results of the Round Robin and play either a single or double elimination medal round format of 2 of 3 games to 11, one game to 15, or 1 game to 21. Each format is win by 2 points.

12.D. ***Draws and Seeding.*** A draw and seeding committee shall be appointed by the Tournament Director to rank the players and teams and set up a fair draw for each event.

12.E. ***Notice of Matches.*** It is the responsibility of each player to check the posted schedules to determine the time and place of each match. If any change is made in the schedule after the initial posting, the Tournament Director or their designated representative shall notify the players of the changes.

12.F. ***Retirements and Withdrawals.***

12.F.1. After the initial score has been called to start the match, the only option available for a player/team

to discontinue playing the match until completion is Retirement.

- 12.F.2. During a match, if a player/team cannot immediately continue after the 15-minute medical time-out period has expired, a Retirement will be imposed.
- 12.F.3. The player/team must make a Retirement request during the match to either the referee or the opposing player/team.
- 12.F.4. The player/team who requests a Retirement during a match, or a player/team on which a rule-based Forfeit has been imposed, will have all score(s) reported per the guidelines in the Retirement Scoring section. (See Rule 12. F.6.)
  - 12.F.4.a. If applicable, a player/team is still eligible for the next match in the same bracket after choosing a Retirement option for a previous match.
  - 12.F.4.b. A player/team may request a Retirement for any upcoming match in the specified bracket.
- 12.F.5. **Withdrawals:**
  - 12.F.5.a. A player/team may request to be withdrawn from any scheduled bracket(s) that have not been started by tournament operations personnel.
  - 12.F.5.b. If a player/team has completed any matches, the player/team may request to be withdrawn from ALL upcoming matches in that bracket.

- 12.F.5.c. The player/team must make their Withdrawal request to either the Tournament Director, Head Referee or operations desk personnel.
- 12.F.5.d. The withdrawn player/team shall be removed from any future participation in the specified bracket.
- 12.F.5.e. The withdrawn player/team shall have all scores reported per the guidelines in the Withdrawal Scoring section. (See Rule 12.F.7.)

**12.F.6. Forfeit, Ejections and Retirement Match Scoring Guidelines**

12.F.6.a. 2 out of 3 Format: 11-0, 11-0

1 Game to 15 Format: 15-0

1 Game to 21 Format: 21-0

12.F.6.b. If a player/team elects the Retirement option or a Forfeit has been imposed for the match, (and the Withdrawal option has not been chosen) the player/team may continue to compete in any upcoming matches.

12.F.6.c. All previous completed match scores, prior to an Ejection, Forfeit or a player Retirement, will be retained.

**12.F.7. Withdrawal Scoring Guidelines for Remaining Matches.**

12.F.7.a. 2 out of 3 Format: 0-0, 0-0

1 Game to 15 Format: 0-0

1 Game to 21 Format: 0-0

12.F.7.b. Scores for all matches completed prior to the Withdrawal request will be retained.

- 12.G. **Two-Match Minimum.** In all USA PICKLEBALL-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, each entrant shall be entitled to participate in a minimum of two scheduled matches per event entered.
- 12.H. **Scheduling Matches.** A player is not permitted to enter multiple events scheduled on the same day with same or overlapping time duration.
- 12.I. **Doubles Play.** A doubles team shall consist of two players who meet the classification requirements to participate in a particular division of play.
- 12.I.1. In an event based upon skill rating, the higher-rated player determines the team's ability level. In an adult event (ages 19 and over) based upon age grouping, the lowest age of the team members will determine the team's age classification. Players may play in a younger division unless prohibited by the rules of the National Senior Games Association.
- 12.I.2. Juniors (ages 18 and under) may enter any junior event for which they are age qualified. If a junior event is not available or does not receive enough entrants, or at the Tournament Director's permission, juniors may play as adults in the 19-and-over events.
- 12.J. Partner change may be made prior to the first-round match, with the consent of the Tournament Director, if the

change is due to injury, illness, or circumstances beyond the control of the player.

12.J.1. Under no circumstances can a partner change be made after the partners have begun team play.

12.K. **Court Changes.** In USA PICKLEBALL-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director or designee may decide on a change of courts after the completion of any tournament game if such a change will accommodate better spectator or playing conditions.

## SECTION 13 – TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIATING

- 13.A. **Tournament Director.** A Tournament Director is responsible for the tournament. It is the Tournament Director's responsibility to designate the officials and their areas of responsibility.
- 13.A.1. A player may appeal any officiating decision to the Tournament Director or their designee. The Tournament Director, however, retains the final decision-making authority while following the applicable rule in the Official Rulebook.
- 13.A.2. In all USA PICKLEBALL-/IFP-sanctioned tournaments, the Tournament Director will provide some method of identifying each team's starting server for each game. This identification must be visible to all on the court during play. Refusal to wear this identification will result in forfeit of the match.
- 13.A.3. The Tournament Director should check to ensure that planned support (e.g., first aid, tournament volunteers, etc.) is available.
- 13.A.4. The Tournament Director has the authority to expel any player from the tournament for misconduct.
- 13.B. **Tournament Briefing.** Before the tournament, the Tournament Director shall brief players and referees on any unique features, abnormal local conditions, or hazards associated with the courts. The briefings may include but are not limited to court distances that are not uniform (such as the distance from end line to back fence or

barrier), low ceilings, existence of overhangs, court repairs, or damage that could affect the play of the ball. If possible, the players should be notified in writing as part of the pre-tournament instructions. The referees shall be briefed upon arrival at the venue by the Tournament Director or their designee.

13.B.1. The Tournament Director may not implement or impose any rule that is not provided in the USA Pickleball/IFP Rulebook. If the Tournament Director desires an exception to any rule because of physical limitations of the court or local conditions, the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating must grant permission before the tournament.

13.C. **Referee's Duties.** The referee is responsible for all decisions related to procedural and judgment calls during the match. Players may appeal any decision of the referee to the Tournament Director or their designee.

13.C.1. The referee calls non-volley-zone infractions, short serves, and service foot faults.

13.C.2. If the players or line judges make the line calls and there is a disputed line call, the players may request that the referee determine the line call. If the referee cannot make the line call, the player's or line judge's call will remain. If doubles partners appeal a line call that they disagree on and the referee cannot make the call, the ball will be declared "in." Note: A player may choose to overrule a line call to their disadvantage. (See Rule 6.D.13)

- 13.C.2.a. Spectators should not be consulted on any calls.
- 13.C.3. Before each match begins, the referee must:
  - 13.C.3.a. Check on preparation of the court with respect to cleanliness, lighting, height of the net, court markings, and hazards.
  - 13.C.3.b. Check on availability and suitability of necessary materials for the match, such as balls, score sheets, pencils, and the timing device (stopwatch).
- 13.C.4. Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players at courtside to:
  - 13.C.4.a. Inspect paddles for irregularities.
  - 13.C.4.b. Before each match begins, the referee must meet with players courtside to point out approved rule modifications, court abnormalities and non-standard court conditions that could be potential safety issues, including but not limited to court repairs or seams, different distances from end lines to back fences, and spectators and their seating.
  - 13.C.4.c. Instruct players on line-calling duties of the referee, line judges, and players.
  - 13.C.4.d. Use any fair method to determine the initial selection of side, serve, or receive.
  - 13.C.4.e. Ensure the starting servers for each team are wearing the official identification. Refusal to wear the identification will result in forfeit of the match.

- 13.C.5. During the match, the referee must:
  - 13.C.5.a. Recheck the net height and position if the net is disturbed.
  - 13.C.5.b. Call the score to start each rally. Calling the score indicates to each side that play is ready to resume.
  - 13.C.5.c. Call “point” after each is awarded.
  - 13.C.5.d. Appropriately annotate the score sheet after each rally is completed or time-out is called.
  - 13.C.5.e. In doubles matches, call “second server” after the first server’s team loses the rally.
  - 13.C.5.f. Call “side out” when appropriate.
  - 13.C.5.g. Enforce time-out procedures. (See Section 10.)
  - 13.C.5.h. Maintain player conduct. In USA PICKLEBALL/IFP tournaments, the referee is empowered to call technical warnings, technical fouls, and to forfeit a game or match based on a defined combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls. The referee may also recommend an ejection to the Tournament Director.

13.D. ***Player Line and Fault Call Responsibilities.***

- 13.D.1. Non-Officiated Play.
  - 13.D.1.a. Players call all lines on their side of the court, including NVZ and service foot faults.

- 13.D.1.b. Players may call NVZ faults and service foot faults on the opponent's side of the court. If there is any disagreement among players about the called fault, a replay shall occur.
- 13.D.1.c. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call faults on themselves as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call must happen before the next serve occurs. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes the opponent(s) have committed a fault, they may mention the specific fault to the player(s) but have no authority to enforce them. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault. The exception to which player has enforcement authority is provided in Rule 13.D.1.b.
- 13.D.2. Officiated Play.
  - 13.D.2.a. Players call baseline, sideline, and center service line on their side of the court.
- 13.D.3. Officiated Play with Line Judges.
  - 13.D.3.a. Players call center service line on their side of the court.
  - 13.D.3.b. Except for center service line calls, player's line calls are not valid in matches with line judges, except to overrule a call to disadvantage their own team (see Rule 6.D.13). Players may appeal a line call

made by the line judge to the referee.  
(See Rule 13.F.)

13.D.3.c. If the line judge(s) and referee cannot make a line call, the rally shall be replayed.

13.E. **Line Judges.**

13.E.1. The Tournament Director shall determine which medal matches will use line judges. Line judges are recommended, but not required.

13.E.2. Line judges will make the assigned line and foot fault calls within their jurisdiction and will signify by loudly calling "out" (or "service foot fault") and showing the "out" signal (outstretched arm pointing in the out-of-bounds direction).

13.E.3. If a line judge shows the "blocked/blinded" signal, (both hands covering the eyes) the referee can make the call immediately if they clearly saw the ball land. If the referee cannot make the call, the referee shall canvass the remaining officiating team to assist in making the call.

13.E.4. Upon appeal, if a referee overrules a line judge's "out" call as "in", a replay will occur.

13.E.5. If a player disagrees with a line judge's "out" call that benefited their team, the player may overrule the "out" call as "in" per rule 6.D.13. A replay will occur.

13.F. **Appeals.** Appeals to the referee regarding judgment calls (e.g., line calls, double bounce, etc.) shall be decided by the referee. The referee may consult players or line judges to decide the outcome of the appeal.

- 13.F.1. In a match without line judges, if a player appeals a line call to the referee, the referee shall make a call if they clearly saw the ball land "in" or "out". If the referee is unable to make the call, the original call will remain. If no call was made, the ball will be considered "in".
- 13.F.2. A referee's decision will result in a point awarded, a service loss, or a replay.

13.G. ***Verbal Warnings, Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls.***

- 13.G.1. Verbal Warning and Technical Warnings. The referee is empowered to issue a single verbal warning for profanity or call technical warnings. A verbal warning may be issued for a potential profanity violation. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical warning:
  - 13.G.1.a. Objectionable language directed at another person.
  - 13.G.1.b. Profanity (audible or visible) used for any reason. The referee will determine the severity of any violation.
  - 13.G.1.c. Arguing aggressively with the officiating team, other players or spectators in a way that disrupts the flow of play.
  - 13.G.1.d. Ball abuse (aggressively or purposely breaking or stepping on the ball) or striking the ball between rallies.
  - 13.G.1.e. Taking time between rallies in a way that unnecessarily disrupts the flow of play.

- 13.G.1.f. Repeatedly appealing line calls such that the flow of play is disrupted.
  - 13.G.1.g. Challenging the referee's interpretation of a rule and losing the challenge (e.g., referee's ruling was correct) and a time-out is assessed.
  - 13.G.1.h. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition (time-out assessed) as determined by medical personnel or the tournament director if no medical staff is present.
  - 13.G.1.i. Actions that are considered minor unsportsmanlike behavior, including but not limited to making repeated questionable 'out' calls that, upon appeal, are reversed (overruled) by the referee.
  - 13.G.1.j. Except during time-outs and in-between games, receiving coaching from anyone other than a partner.
- 13.G.2. Technical Fouls - The referee is empowered to call technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case, a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical foul (without a technical warning being issued beforehand):
- 13.G.2.a. Aggressively or recklessly throwing a paddle in frustration or anger, with

negligent disregard of the consequences, **and** does not strike a person or damage property.

- 13.G.2.b. A player using extremely objectionable language, or profanity, regardless of to whom or what it is directed.
- 13.G.2.c. Making a threat or challenges of any nature toward or against any person.
- 13.G.2.d. Challenging the referee's interpretation of a rule and losing the challenge (e.g., referee's ruling was correct) and no time-out is available.
- 13.G.2.e. Any other actions that are considered extreme unsportsmanlike behavior.
- 13.G.2.f. Requesting a medical time-out without a valid medical condition, and the team (or player in a singles match) has no time-outs remaining.
- 13.G.2.g. Deliberately throwing or hitting a ball that is not in play with negligent disregard of the consequences which inadvertently hits a person.

13.G.3. Effect of Technical Fouls and Technical Warnings. The assessment of a technical warning or technical foul shall be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reason.

- 13.G.3.a. A technical warning shall not result in a loss of rally or point awarded.

- 13.G.3.b. Once a technical warning has been issued, a second technical warning for any reason, given to the same player or team during the match, will result in a technical foul being issued to the player or team.
- 13.G.3.c. If a referee issues a technical foul, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending team unless their score is zero, in which case a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. After the point is removed or awarded, the player or team losing or awarded the point must move on their own to the correct position(s) that reflects their score.
- 13.G.3.d. A called technical warning or technical foul shall have no effect on server change or side out.
- 13.G.3.e. After assessing a technical warning or a technical foul, the referee will call a 15-second warning for the players to become ready. At the end of 15 seconds, the referee will announce the score to begin the 10-second count even if the server and receiver are not on the court or not ready to play. (See Rule 4.E.)
- 13.G.3.f. Technical warnings and technical fouls may be assessed any time during a match while the players are at the court.

### 13.H. **Game Forfeit.**

- 13.H.1. The referee will impose a game forfeit when either of the following occurs:
  - 13.H.1.a. After one technical warning has been assessed and the subsequent issuance of a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2.
  - 13.H.1.b. After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.3.c. or Rule 13.G.2. and the subsequent issuance of another technical warning for any reason.
  - 13.H.1.c. For match formats either 1 to 15 or 1 to 21, a game forfeit is equivalent to a match forfeit.
- 13.H.2. If the match is a two-out-of-three game format, a referee may impose a game forfeit when a player fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match has been called to play. A match forfeit will be imposed when a player fails to report to play 15 minutes after the match has been called to play. If the match is a 1 to 15 or 1 to 21 format game, the match forfeit occurs when the player fails to report to play 10 minutes after the match has been called to play. The Tournament Director may permit a longer delay if circumstances warrant such a decision.

### 13.I. **Match Forfeit.**

- 13.I.1. The referee will impose a match forfeit based on a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls when either of the following occurs:
  - 13.I.1.a. The combined issuance of two technical warnings and a technical foul listed in Rule 13.G.2
  - 13.I.1.b. After one technical foul has been assessed in accordance with Rule 13.G.3.c or Rule 13.G.2 and the subsequent issuance of a second technical foul for any reason.
- 13.I.2. Behavior that shall result in a match forfeit that is not due to a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls.
  - 13.I.2.a. Making deliberately aggressive physical contact with an opponent, official or spectator.
  - 13.I.2.b. Aggressively or recklessly striking or throwing a ball or paddle out of frustration or anger that puts an individual or facility property at risk or in danger.
- 13.I.3. The Tournament Director may impose a match forfeit for failure to comply with the tournament or host facility's rules while on the premises, or for improper conduct on the premises between matches, or for abuse of hospitality, locker room, or other rules and procedures.

- 13.J. **Rules Interpretations.** If a player disagrees with a referee's ruling or decision, that player may challenge the referee's decision by asking for the Head Referee, Tournament Director, or the Tournament Director's designee. If the referee's ruling is determined to be correct, the player or team will lose a time-out and be given a technical warning. If no time-outs are available and the referee's ruling is correct, the player or team will be given a technical foul. (See 13.G.2.d) When the referee's ruling is incorrect, the ruling will be reversed and, if applicable, the rally will be replayed.
- 13.K. **Removal of a Line Judge.** The referee may remove a line judge for any reasonable cause, based on either the referee's own observation or that of the players. If the referee decides to replace a line judge based on their own observation, the referee's decision is final. The players may also petition the referee to remove a line judge, providing all players agree. If the referee does not agree, the referee must consult with the Tournament Director for a final decision. If a line judge is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.
- 13.K.1. **Removal of a Referee.** If all players agree, they may petition the Tournament Director for a referee removal. The Tournament Director retains the final discretionary authority on the removal of a Referee. If a Referee is removed, the Tournament Director will appoint a replacement.

13.L. **Non-Officiated Play.** Any player may request a referee or Tournament Director if:

13.L.1. The player reasonably believes that a rule is being consistently and deliberately violated by their opponent.

13.L.2. A situation arises where players are not able to quickly and easily resolve a dispute.

13.M. The Tournament Director may eject a player from the tournament for flagrant and particularly injurious behavior that, in the opinion of the Tournament Director, impacts the success of the tournament. An ejection can occur due to actions any time the player is at the tournament venue and may include, but is not limited to:

Note: In addition to an ejection, the Tournament Director also has the option to expel the player from the tournament venue.

13.M.1. Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs.

13.M.2. Injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse.

13.M.3. Spitting or coughing on a person.

13.M.4. Not exhibiting 'best effort'. This includes but is not limited to, defaulting, forfeiting, or not giving best efforts in matches, whether for their own benefit or otherwise.

## INDEX

### **10 second rule 4.E**

between games 5.B.2  
switching sides 5.B.6  
technical warning/foul 13.G.3.e  
time out 10.A.5

### **Apparel 2.G**

violation 2.G.4

### **Ball specifications 2.D**

cracked/broken 11.E

### **Calling the score 4.D**

singles matches 4.I  
doubles matches 4.J  
wrong score called 4.K

### **Carry 3.A.1**

deliberate carry 7.N

### **Change of ends 5.B**

### **Coaching 13.G.1.j**

### **Court 3.A.3**

baseline 2.B.1  
centerline 2.B.5  
court specifications 2.A  
cross court 3.A.4  
items on court 11.H  
left/odd court 3.A.17; 2.B.7  
lines and areas 2.B  
net (see net)  
non-volley zone 2.B.3  
right/even court 3.A.31; 2.B.6  
service court 3.A.36; 2.B.4  
side lines 2.B.2

### **Dead ball**

definition 3.A.5  
rules 8

### **Distractions**

definition 3.A.6  
rule 11.J

### **Double bounce 3.A.7**

Wheelchair play 1  
(see also two-bounce rule)

### **Double hit**

definition 3.A.8  
allowed 11.A

### **Ejection 3.A.9**

scoring guidelines 12.F.6  
from tournament 13.M

### **Equipment prob. (player)**

### **11.G**

item on court 11.H

### **Expel 3.A.10; 13.M**

from tournament 13.A.4

### **Fault rules 7**

definition 3.A.11  
double bounce 7.E  
non-volley zone 9.B to 9.D  
plane of net 7.M; 11.I  
receiver faults 4.N  
service faults 4.M  
striking permanent object 7.J  
touching live ball 7.H; 7.I  
touching net system or post 7.G  
two-bounce rule 7.A

### **Forfeit**

defined 3.A.13  
game 13.H  
match 13.I  
scoring guidelines 12.F.6

### **Hinder 3.A.16**

### **Incorrect player positions**

**4.B.9, 4.B.10, 4.B.11**

### **Injury during rally 11.F**

medical time-out 10.B

## **Line call rules 6**

benefit of doubt 6.D.3; 6.D.9  
called promptly 6.D.8; 6.D.10  
called before bounce 6.D.11  
called after bounce 6.D.12  
definition 3.A.18  
point of contact 6.C  
requesting opponent help 6.D.6  
requesting referee help 6.D.3

## **Live ball 3.A.19**

## **Missed shot 11.D**

## **Non-volley zone (NVZ)**

defined 3.A.21  
volley momentum 9.B; 9.C  
rules 9

## **Not ready signals 4.C.1**

## **Net 2.C**

ball spins back untouched  
11.L.4  
bottom 2.C.6  
height 2.C.5  
net posts 11.K  
net in play 11.L  
specifications 2.C

## **Paddle**

one paddle 11.N  
paddle possession 11.O

## **Paddle specifications 2.E**

alterations 2.E.5; 2.E.6  
approved paddle 2.F.1  
grip adjustment 3.A.22  
model designation 2.E.7  
prohibited alterations 2.E.6  
size 2.E.3  
surface 2.E.2  
violation 2.F.1.a

## **Permanent object 3.A.24; 7.J**

## **Player positions 4.B**

questions to referee 4.B.9;  
4.B.10

## **Playing surface 3.A.26**

## **Points 4.G**

## **Rally 3.A.27**

## **Receiver 3.A.28**

## **Referee/line judge removal 13.J, 13.K.**

## **Replay 3.A.29**

Cracked/broken ball 11.E  
line call, officiated  
play 13.D.3.c  
wrong score called 4.K.1

## **Rules challenge 13.A.1**

## **Sanctioned tournament 12**

## **Scoring 4.F**

## **Select side, serve, receive, or**

## **defer 5.A**

## **Serve**

definition 3.A.34  
first server 3.A.12  
horizontal bar w/center base  
11.L.5  
identification, starting server  
5.A.2;  
readiness 4.C  
second serve 3.A.32  
second server 3.A.33  
service court 3.A.36  
service faults 4.M  
service foot fault 4.L  
service motion 4.A.3-5

server 3.A.35

serving area 3.A.37

starting server 3.A.39

(see starting server)

## **Shot around net post**

**11.M; 11.L.3**

## **Side out 3.A.38**

## **Side selection rules 5.A.1**

## **Singles**

calling the score 4.I

player positions 4.B.5

wheelchair play 4.B.6

## **Starting Server**

changing starting server 5.A.2

definition 3.A.39

identification band 5.A.3

suspended games 10.G

## **Technical foul 3.A.40;**

**13.G.2**

## **Technical warning 3.A.41;**

**13.G.1**

## **Time allowances**

between games 5.B.2; 10.E

between matches 10.F

end change during game 5.B.6

## **Time-out rules 10**

called before serve occurs

10.A.3

before match or game 10.H.1

blood 10.B.5

equipment time out 10.D

extenuating circumstances

10.H.2

Continuous play 10.C

medical time-out 10.B

standard time-out 10.A

## **Tournament management and officiating 13**

appeals 13.F

forfeiture of game 13.H

forfeiture of match 13.I

line judges 13.E

player line/fault call

responsibilities 13.D

referee's duties 13.C

removal of referee or line judge

13.K, 13.K.1

rules interpretation 13.J

technical warning/foul 13.G

tournament director 13.A

## **Two-bounce rule *Page 1;***

**7.A**

## **Two-handed shot 11.C**

## **Volley 3.A.42**

## **Winning the game *page 1,***

**4.H**

## **Withdraw 3.A.43**

scoring guidelines 12.F.7

tournament rules 12.F.5

## **Wrong score called 4.K**







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