

PICKLEBALL QUICK-START CHECKLIST

The Essential Day-One Checklist: Gear, First-Game Routine, Key Rules & Court Etiquette • [PickleballScope.com](#)

COURT DIMENSIONS 20' × 44' (Identical for 1s & 2s)	NET HEIGHT 36" at Posts • 34" at Center	KITCHEN ZONE 7' Depth from Net (No Air Volleys)	WINNING SCORE First to 11 Points (Must Win by 2)
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1. GEAR & COURT BAG CHECKLIST (WHAT TO BRING)

[] USAP-Approved Paddle Beginners should start with a 14mm–16mm polymer core paddle with a carbon or composite face for maximum sweet spot forgiveness and control.	[] Dedicated Court Shoes CRITICAL: Wear flat, lateral-support court shoes (tennis or pickleball). Never wear running shoes, which have high heels that cause rolled ankles on lateral cuts.
[] The Right Pickleballs Outdoor balls (40 small holes, hard plastic like Dura Fast 40 / Franklin X-40) for park courts. Indoor balls (26 larger holes, softer plastic) for gym wood surfaces.	[] Eye Protection & Hydration Impact-resistant sport glasses are strongly recommended (deflected balls travel at 40+ mph). Bring at least 32 oz of water plus electrolytes for warm outdoor play.

2. PRE-MATCH SETUP & THE FIRST GAME ROUTINE (STEP-BY-STEP)

Step 1: Determine First Server [] Spin paddle or toss coin. Winning team chooses to serve, receive, or pick side. [] Starting server stands in the right-hand service court behind baseline.	Step 2: Understand the Starting Score: 0-0-2 [] The first serving team only gets ONE serve to start the match (Rule 4.B.8). [] Call aloud: '0 (<i>Our Score</i>) - 0 (<i>Their Score</i>) - 2 (<i>Second Server</i>)' before hitting.
Step 3: Execute Legal Underhand Serve [] Contact ball below waist with upward paddle swing; feet behind baseline. [] Ball must clear net cord and land diagonally in opponent's court <i>past</i> kitchen line.	Step 4: Obey the Two-Bounce Rule [] Receiving team MUST let the serve bounce before returning. [] Serving team MUST let the return bounce before hitting third shot. No volleys on first 2 shots!

3. THE 5 CORE RULES & COMMON ROOKIE FAULT TRAPS

Rule Concept	How It Works & Legal Action	Instant Fault Trap to Avoid
The Kitchen Line is IN Rule 9.A.1	The 2" kitchen line is legally part of the Non-Volley Zone. You may step in freely <i>only after</i> the ball bounces.	FAULT: Touching the line with any part of your shoe or paddle while hitting an airborne volley.
Momentum Carryover Rule 9.B	Hitting behind the line is not enough. You must retain complete balance after a volley before stepping forward.	FAULT: Stumbling forward and brushing the kitchen line after hitting a clean winner. Negates point!
The 3-Number Score Rule 4.D	Always announce three numbers in doubles: Serving Score - Receiving Score - Server Number (1 or 2).	FAULT: Hitting the serve before calling the score aloud, or serving from the wrong side.
Point Scoring Only Rule 4.B	Points can ONLY be scored by the serving team. If the receiving team wins the rally, it results in a side-out or server change.	FAULT: Mistakenly awarding points to the receiving team when they win a rally.
Re-Establish Outside NVZ Rule 9.D	If you step inside the kitchen to hit a bounced dink, both shoes must touch the court outside the NVZ before your next volley.	FAULT: Jumping backward out of the kitchen and striking a volley while mid-air.

4. DAY-ONE COURT ETIQUETTE & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

[] Safety First: 'BALL ON COURT!' If a ball from an adjacent court rolls into your play area, yell ' BALL ON! ' instantly and stop play immediately. Replay the point. Never risk someone rolling an ankle.	[] Respect Line Calls You call balls on your side; opponents call balls on theirs. If a ball touches any part of the boundary line, it is 100% IN. If you aren't completely sure, give the benefit of the doubt to your opponent.
[] The Paddle Tap Tradition After every game, walk to the net and tap paddle handles with your opponents and partner saying 'Good game!' Pickleball is famous for its friendly, welcoming culture.	[] Drop-Step, Don't Backpedal When lobbed over your head, never walk backward on your heels. Turn your body sideways, pivot, and run forward to track the ball down to avoid dangerous backward head falls.