



## GENERAL PICKLEBALL CONCEPTS

Here are some of the **basics** you to keep in mind as you learn to play. You may see more advanced players deviate from these commonly accepted practices, but we encourage you to stick with the basics, learn good habits and refine your style after you have played for a while.

**Paddle grip** – Hold the paddle with the base of your hand at the end of the handle, rather than choking up on it (like table tennis). You will have more leverage and strength in getting the ball over the net. Some players elect to extend their index finger for support, which is optional.

**Wrist** – Keep your wrist stiff, instead of floppy, for a more powerful hit. Note: There are certain advanced shots that utilize a more fluid/loose wrist.

**Foot position** – keep your feet about shoulder-width apart. If you spread your feet too far apart it is difficult to shift and move quickly around the court.

**Switching paddle hands** – not recommended. Some do it because of injury or they because are ambidextrous and very quick. Switching hands takes extra time, so avoid using this technique.

**Ready position** – stay in the ready position. Keep your paddle up near your face, holding it so it's perpendicular to your body and you can see around each side of it. It's easier to react to hard shots and be ready to hit whatever comes your way. It takes longer to hit shots if you hold your paddle down by your side. Always go back to the “ready position” between shots. Put your weight on the balls of your feet and remember to bend your knees.

**Face the action** – face the player who will be hitting the ball back. You will be in a better position to return it.

**Keep your eye on the ball** – this is a basic rule for any sport involving a ball, yet it is SO important. Watch the ball as it comes over the net and hits your paddle, not where you plan to hit it. Focusing on the holes in the ball will help to ensure that you actually hit it, not whiff it! If your game starts to flounder it's always good to go back to this basic.

**NEVER run backwards** – and we mean never! Instead of running backwards to get a lob, turn and run towards the ball. Running backwards is one of the number one causes of falls on the Pickleball court. If it's too hard to get, don't risk your body.

**Get up to the no-volley zone (AKA The Kitchen)** – The game is won at the net. When serving: Once you get through the serve and double-bounce rule, you and your partner need to quickly move together to get up to the net. When receiving: Once you receive the ball, immediately move up to the net and join your partner who is already up there. Don't wait to see what the opponents are going to hit back at you before moving up there.

**Stay at the net** – Once at the net, stay at the net. Don't let your opponents back you away from the net. Claim the net, stay at the net. If they back you up, they will have the advantage. You

can hit most every shot while standing just behind the no volley zone. Really! The exception is the lob, in which case you're going to have to run back (the proper way) to get it. Just remember to quickly work your way back up to the net again.

**Stay out of the kitchen** – In reality, you can stand in the kitchen (no volley zone) all day long, but if you hit the ball from there without it bouncing somewhere on the court (anywhere on the court), it's a FAULT. This includes the kitchen and the line surrounding it. Don't be afraid of the kitchen because you're going to have to go in there quite frequently to get dinks. Just get in and out – quickly! If you are outside of the kitchen and hit a ball mid air and fall into the kitchen – it's a FAULT! So be careful your momentum doesn't carry you in. This often occurs when a player is charging from the back of the court to get the ball.

**Avoid "No Man's Land"** – No man's land is that area half way between the base line and the no volley zone. It's a dangerous place to get stuck in because the ball tends to land at your feet and it's hard to hit. You should move through this area, but not get stuck there. If you do get stuck, stop, hit and then move forward to the no volley zone.

**Hit the ball deep and down the middle** – most of your shots should be aimed down the middle towards the baseline. Why? It's a safe shot and it creates confusion between your opponents. If it hits the white line it skips making it harder for your opponents to hit.

**Keep the ball low** – unless you're trying to lob, hit the ball low just over the net. If you hit it up too high your opponents are likely to return it with a hard "overhead smash!"

**Forehand takes center** – typically a player's forehand is stronger and more accurate than the backhand. The player in the left court (if right handed) covers the center line with their forehand, as opposed to the player in the right court who would have to use their backhand. Exception: Left-handed players – you'll need to work it out between the two of you.

**Keep the ball in play** – About 75% of all rallies are won or lost because of unforced errors (mistakes players make). The most common mistakes include hitting the ball out of bounds, not getting the serve in, hitting it the ball into the net, and setting up the ball to the opponent.

**Change it up** – some players just want to power or spin the ball every time, which often results in a fault. It's the unpredictable finesse shots that are challenging. Change up your game and use all different types of shots.

**Let the ball do the work** – let the ball come to you before you hit it instead of running towards it. You have more time than you think you do and you will not get as winded. Running forward while hitting the ball can cause it to go out of bounds.

**Stop and hit** – if you find yourself running towards the ball, stop, hit the ball and then continue to the proper court position. If you run while hitting the ball you will have less accuracy and there's a good chance you will hit it out.

**Communicate** – talk with your partner as you're playing. If you're confused about who's going to get it, call it.