



## SERVING and COURT POSITION

For those new to Pickleball we teach the underhand style of serving similar to a “bowling” motion. There are many different types of serves and players who have played racquet sports may feel more comfortable with a forehand type serve. Be sure you are familiar with what constitutes a legal vs. illegal serve (see below).

### **UNDERHAND SERVING TECHNIQUE**

- Hold the paddle in your hand so when your arm is extended towards your intended target the paddle face is flat (like a serving tray). This may require you to shift your paddle grip slightly (quarter turn).
- Line up the front of your body with the target (rather than your shoulder).
- While bending your knees, keep your head down, hold the ball about knee level, in front of you and in line with your paddle hand. Swing back and then forward through the ball, extending your arm through to your target. As you are swinging forward shift your weight to the leg opposite your paddle hand. It is like a pendulum motion.
- Be sure to keep your eye on the ball as you are hitting it rather than looking to where you want to put it.
- Take your time when serving. Serving too quickly can cause you to make errors.

### TROUBLESHOOTING:

#### **The ball falls doesn't go over the net or falls short of the service court.**

- You may not be getting enough power to the ball. Over exaggerate your backswing and follow through, then adjust accordingly.
- If shifting weight to your opposite leg while you hit through the ball is throwing you off, take that motion out and just focus on the back swing and follow through to the target. Once you have the hang of it, add the shifting motion back in.
- You may be lifting up as you hit the ball. Avoid lifting your upper body up as you hit the ball. Keep your head down. Only your feet and arms should be moving.
- Avoid looking up as you hit the ball. Keep looking down where the ball was for a second or two before looking up until it becomes automatic.
- Still having trouble? Try hitting the ball harder and/or faster to get power. If you start hitting the ball too hard and out, just dial it back a bit.

**The ball is going too high in the air and not over the net, or falls short of the service court.**

- You may be holding the ball too high when making contact with it. Be sure to hold the ball down around knee level as you hit it. Keep your head down rather than lifting your body up as you follow through. Make sure you don't look up when hitting the ball.

**The ball is landing out on the sides of the service court.**

- You may be lined up incorrectly. Make sure the front of your body is lined up with the target.
- You may be pulling your arm and paddle around your body rather than towards your target. Watch your follow through and make sure you extend your arm towards the target and the face of the paddle is flat (like a serving platter) at full extension.
- The paddle face may be angled instead of flat as you extend towards your target. Watch your paddle face as you extend your follow through to make sure it's flat like described above.

## **SERVING/RECEIVING RULES**

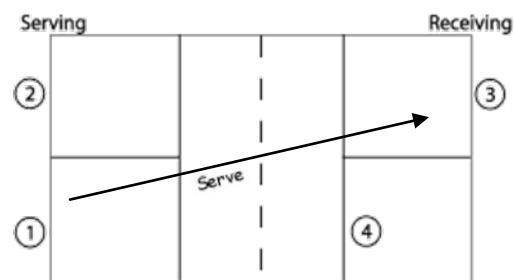
1. The server must stand behind the baseline and between the imaginary side and center line when paddle makes contact with the ball during a serve. If the server steps on any of these lines or within the court when the paddle makes contact with the ball, it is a fault. The server typically stands about 1 ½' - 2' away from the center line, but you can stand anywhere within the designated serving area.
2. The serve must be underhand. The paddle head cannot be above the waist when making contact with the ball and the wrist must be straight (not angled upwards). This can be problematic for those using a forehand or backhand type serve. This rule was adopted to prevent an unfair advantage.
3. The ball must be served into the diagonal court. The receiver in that court is the only one who can return it.
4. All lines except those surrounding the no volley zone (kitchen) are good. If the ball lands in the no volley zone or on the lines surrounding this area, it is a fault and loss of serve.
5. If the ball hits the net and lands in the no volley zone or the lines surrounding this area, it is a fault and loss of serve.
6. If the ball hits the net and lands in the service area on the side, end, or center lines surrounding the receiving court, it is a "let" and the ball is reserved. Note: If it hits the front line it is a fault as this is considered part of the "no volley" zone.
7. Except for the very beginning of the game, each side gets two chances to serve (one chance per player). The side that serves first at the very start of the game only has one chance to serve until they get the ball back again. This rule is in place to eliminate an unfair advantage.
8. A team only gets points when their side is serving.
9. The serve always starts on the right court. In our park, the *side* to serve first is always on the north end of the court.

10. The person in the court diagonal to the server must be the one to receive the ball, otherwise it's a fault. Take care after switching positions (like to get a lob) to go back to your proper location. If the wrong person receives the serve, it's a fault and the serving team gets a point.
11. The server must make sure the receiver is ready before serving the ball. It is up to the server and receiver to make sure their partners are ready (i.e. in the proper positions). If the receiving team is not ready, the receiver can hold their hand and/or paddle high above their head or turn their back to the server as a signal to wait until they are ready.

### Two-Bounce Rule

The two-bounce requires that after the serve the ball must bounce on each side of the court before it can be hit mid-air (without it bouncing). For instance, when the ball is served the receiver must let it bounce before returning it. The serving side must let it bounce once more on their side before hitting it back. It doesn't matter which player hits it back, but it must bounce first.

### Court Placement During the Serve



#### When Serving:

- **Both players should stand behind the baseline.** The server must abide by the serving rules described above. There is no rule that says the server's partner has to stand behind the baseline, however, it's a good strategy in the event the opponents return the ball deep (which they should).
- After the ball is served, both players on the serving side should remain back behind the baseline in preparation for the second bounce and return shot. Remember the ball has to bounce again on the serving side before it is returned, otherwise it's a fault.
- Sometimes the ball is returned short causing the serving side to run forward quickly to get it, but in most cases the receiver should try to return it deep to the baseline. Players have a tendency to creep up a foot or two into the court after the serve. Avoid this!
- Once the ball is returned after a serve, either player on the serving side can hit it back as long as the ball bounces first.
- Once the second bounce rule has been met, both players should move in tandem to the net. Try to get up to the net as quickly as possible. Just remember, you may need to wait for the strategic moment to do so. The game is won at the net!

### When Receiving:

- The **receiver should stand behind the baseline**. If receiving the serve on the right side of the court you should stand about middle so you can move right and/or forward towards the ball. If you're receiving on the left side then stand near the middle or towards the corner of the court you can move forward and/or to the right (opposite for lefties). You can stand on lines, in the court or out of the court as long as you are ready to accept the serve. Generally, you should stand well behind the baseline, but if you know for sure a server will consistently serve short then it's okay to stand within the court.
- The **receiver's partner should stand up at the net just behind the non volley line**. It is their job to watch the serve as it goes over and help call the ball if it is out. Do not stand in "no man's land." Stay up just behind the non volley line. Note: Some players like to stand in the court in their normal position where they are ready to return a ball and some prefer to stand just outside the court in and then move into the court as the ball is returned. Either or fine as long as you watch the serve to help your partner determine if it's in or out.
- The person in the receiving court must be the player to return the serve, otherwise it's a fault.
- When the ball is served, the receiver must let it bounce once on their side before returning it.
- After the receiver hit's the ball, they should immediately move up to the net with their partner. This should one fluid movement – hit the ball and instantaneously move up to the net. Don't wait to see how your opponents are going to react to your shot, hit and go! Remember, they have to let the ball bounce before they hit it, so you should have plenty of time.

### **STRATEGIES:**

- ✓ Get your serve in! Avoid fancy serves that have a tendency to go out (like spin serves).
- ✓ When you first start playing Pickleball, try serving deep into the court. As your skills progress try serving to different locations on the court. If your opponent is standing in the court or on the baseline, try hitting it long. If they are standing way beyond the baseline, try hitting it short. Serve to their backhand. Just make sure to get the serve in!
- ✓ Pay attention to wind direction and speed. Adjust your serve accordingly.
- ✓ When returning a serve, hit it slow, high and deep in the court so you have plenty of time to move up to the net. If you hit it hard and fast, just remember you have to move more quickly to get up! Hard hits are more likely to be hit back with the same force.
- ✓ Remember the player with the forehand covers the center line, even during the serve. If you're serving and in the forehand position, remember to cover that line when your opponents return the ball. If your partner is in the forehand, they should position themselves near the center line ready to take the ball. The forehand is in charge of the entire center line from the baseline to the no volley line at the kitchen.