



Pueblo El Mirage (PEM) revised 1-15-23 Beginner Pickleball Lesson Plan

SET-UP/PREP, SIGN-IN and PLAYER WARM-UP (Trainers) (30 minutes before start)

1. Gather training materials from storeroom
2. Welcome new players, sign in
3. Check for name tags
4. Help new players select a paddle
5. Make sure players have water
6. Have players stretch (do each exercise until loose)
 - a. Do 2 arm stretches: across body and above head
 - b. Legs wide apart, stretch back and forth
 - c. Squat, touch toes and stand up

Gather everyone on courts

WELCOME and OVERVIEW (20 minutes)

1. Welcoming players to the game of Pickleball.
2. Trainer introductions
3. Wear name tag at all times on court or in events
4. About skill ratings: where to play, how to progress (About 1.0, About 1.5)
5. We teach commonly accepted practices (as you progress you will see other practices)
6. It is about socializing and having fun, not scoring points, not winning games.
7. Expose players to basic shots, serving scoring, rules, etiquette and able to play a game by the end of the session.
8. Divided into two days:
 - a. Serving and returning
 - b. Forehand, backhand, volleying and dinking, playing.
9. About the www.pempickleball.com site
10. **INJURY PREVENTION AND SAFETY** (warming up before play, hydration, shoes, eyewear, running backwards, slow down)

BASICS (10 minutes)

1. **Paddle Grip** (v-shape, grip towards end of handle)
2. **Wrist** (stiff not floppy - except dinking and certain advanced shots)
3. **Foot position** (shoulder-width apart, stand on ball of feet)
4. **Ready position** (paddle vertical in front near face, return to ready position, knees bent)
5. **Watch the ball** (at all times, as it hits the paddle – watch the holes)
6. **Move feet** (shuffle, never run backwards)

Instructor demo with students following, check paddle grips, foot positioning, ready position, etc.

HAND-EYE DRILLS (15 minutes)

The objective for these exercises is to introduce you to the relationship between the paddle, ball and your legs.

1. With paddle face parallel with the ground, drop the ball from waist height let it bounce and with the paddle under the ball hit it up, let the ball bounce again on the ground and hit the ball up. Knees are bent as the ball is hit, stand up slightly to add momentum to the ball. (5 minutes)

2. With paddle face parallel with the ground, bounce the ball off the paddle up into the air and keep hitting the ball without it bouncing. Knees are bent as the ball is hit, stand up slightly to add momentum to the ball. (5 minutes)
3. Same #2 exercise, turn the paddle to the other side and repeat the exercise. Knees are bent as the ball is hit, stand up slightly to add momentum to the ball. (5 minutes)

ETIQUETTE REMINDERS (incorporate during instruction and throughout play) (5 minutes)

1. **Never walk through other courts where people are playing**
2. **Calling balls in or out, favor your opponents**
3. **Player communication and good sportsmanship** (keep it positive)
4. **Call your own foot faults**
5. **Ball in the court** (stop play)
6. **End of game** – tapping paddles
7. **Open court doors into court** - safety issue
8. **Being an ambassador** (welcome others, direct them to where they can get into)

SERVING AND RETURNING (explain 2 bounce rule)

This is the most important shot in Pickleball, why? (only score points when serving)

Serving Rules (5 minutes)

1. **Types of serves** (bounce vs underhand – we are teaching underhand)
2. **Illegal serves** (above waste, angled wrist)
3. **Where to serve** (diagonal court)
4. **Where to stand** (behind and within lines)
5. **Service faults** (foot fault, net landing in kitchen, wrong court, out of bounds)
6. **Service net** but in proper court is a good serve.
7. **Serve deep** (near baseline), vary serves (high and slow OK)
8. **Get the serve in!** Fancy serves (like spins) or hard serves aren't always consistent.

Underhand (Bowling Style) Serve (5 minutes)

1. **Similar concept to bowling**
2. **Shift paddle grip quarter turn** (so paddle face flat when extended towards target)
3. **Face target** (front of body, not shoulder, is lined up with receiver or target area)
4. **Hold ball down about knee level**, just in front of body in line with paddle arm
5. **Bend knees and keep head down.**
6. **Keep eye on ball**
7. **Swing paddle back simultaneously while stepping back with leg closest to paddle arm**
8. **Swing paddle forward, simultaneously while making contact with ball and stepping forward with the opposite leg**
9. **Follow-through and extend towards the target**
10. **Wind factor** (make adjustments as necessary)

Note: Players with previous racquet sports experience may prefer forehand style serve, which is fine.

Instructor demo followed by student practice.

SERVING PRACTICE (10 minutes)

Have players line up diagonally on the court and practice serving. One player serves, the receiver catches the ball and serves it back.

This is a critical skill, so practice, practice, practice

SERVICE RETURNS (10 minutes)

This is the second most important shot in Pickleball, why? (Servers gain (returners lose) a point if the ball is not returned in play)

1. **Types of returns** (short, deep, hard, lob, etc.)
2. **Where to return** (cross court, middle, down the line)
3. **Where to stand** (opposite of the server)

1. **Ready position** (who can show it to us?)
2. **Firm paddle grip.**
3. **Hit the ball while it is still in front of you.**
4. **Turn sideways to the net** (forehand, turn right, backhand, turn left)
5. **Bring arm and paddle 90 degrees back, parallel to the net.**
6. **Weight on back foot**
7. **Swing arm and paddle forward to contact ball in front of you with paddle below the height of the ball.**
8. **Follow through with arm and paddle extending toward the target.**
9. **Return to the ready position.**

Instructor demo followed by student practice.

SERVICE RETURN PRACTICE (20 minutes)

Break Out Into Groups – 1 instructor 4 player ratio

Divide players: 1 to practice shots, another player behind (who will be the next one to practice) collecting balls and remaining players line up behind trainer to retrieve balls.

Trainer hits balls to the player's forehand side for 6 shots, then rotate players. Continue for a second round of forehands.

When forehands are complete do the same with backhands.

Break Out Into Groups – 1 instructor 4 player ratio

SERVING AND RETURNING DRILLS (20 minutes)

1. Have players divide with 2 players on each side of the net.
2. One side serves, the other catches the ball and serves back.
10 minutes
3. Have players switch sides and serve to the other court.
4. One side serves, the other catches the ball and serves back.
10 minutes
5. Now have one server serve and the diagonal player return.

6. Alternate servers to serve and the opposite return.
10 minutes
7. Switch servers to the opposite side and continue as above.
10 minutes

WRAP UP - gather together as a group for questions and what comes tomorrow.

END OF DAY ONE

HOMEWORK

STUDY HOW TO KEEP SCORE

START DAY TWO

WELCOME BACK TO DAY 2 OF THE BEGINNER TRAINING (5 minutes)

Review yesterday: We learned the importance of serving and returning. today we start with forehand and backhand strokes which are the same as you learned yesterday returning serves.

FOOTWORK (5 minutes)

1. **How to turn to the right** (turn right foot first before moving)
2. **How to turn to the left** (turn left foot first before moving)
3. **How to move forward** (stop before hitting a ball)
4. **How to move backwards** (DO NOT back up, turn around and run or skip)

FOREHAND (10 minutes)

1. **Ready position** (who can show it to us?)
2. **Firm paddle grip.**
3. **Hit the ball while it is still in front of you.**
4. **Turn sideways to the net** (forehand, turn right, backhand, turn left)
5. **Bring arm and paddle 90 degrees back, parallel to the net.**
6. **Weight on back foot**
7. **Swing arm and paddle forward to contact ball in front of you with paddle below the height of the ball.**
8. **Follow through with arm and paddle extending toward the target.**
9. **Return to the ready position.**

BACKHAND (10 minutes)

1. **Same fundamentals as forehand**, except:
 - Shift body perpendicular to net (paddle arm facing net)
 - Open up club face (angle up) slightly if problem getting ball over net
2. **Try to take as forehand when possible**

Instructor demo followed by student practice.

FOREHAND/BACKHAND PRACTICE (20 minutes)

Break Out Into Groups – 1 instructor 4 player ratio

Divide players: 1 to practice shots, another player behind (who will be the next one to practice) collecting balls and remaining players line up behind trainer to retrieve balls.

Trainer hits balls to the player's forehand side for 6 shots, then rotate players. Continue for a second round of forehands.

When forehands are complete do the same with backhands.

KITCHEN RULES/DINKING/MID-AIR VOLLEY

KITCHEN RULES (5 minutes)

1. **Kitchen** (no volley zone) and boundaries
2. **Foot Faults** (foot faults on line, falling into kitchen, touching net)
3. **When to go into the kitchen** (when to dink and when to hit mid-air)

The game starts with a serve and a return with the returner going to the NVZ. The serving team also works its way to the NVZ and for the most part, the rest of the game is played at the NVZ dinking and volleying.

MID-AIR VOLLEY (hitting the ball in the air before it bounces) (5 Minutes)

1. **Ready position, firm paddle grip**
2. **Knees bent and stay low**
3. **Hit ball mid air when and in front** (forehand or backhand)
4. **When to dink and when to hit mid air**
5. **Keep the ball low**
6. **Staying at the net** (not letting opponent push them back, getting back to net)

□ Instructor demo followed by student practice with mid-air volley. (5 minutes)

DRILL

1. Players hand toss ball to each other across the net. (5 minutes)
2. Using paddles, hit forehand balls to each other across the net (5 minutes)
3. Using paddles, hit backhand balls to each other across the net (5 minutes)

DINKING (5 minutes)

1. **Dinking is an advanced shot**
2. **Why we teach dinking** (at beginner lessons)
3. **Purpose of the dink** (change momentum, reset)
4. **How to hold paddle** (in front of you, 45 degrees angle up, looser paddle grip)
5. **Face the ball** wherever it is.
6. **Push or lift the ball** (not hit, just over the net and into kitchen using legs)
7. **Hit from your side** (rather than in front of you)
8. **Follow through** (extend through to the target)
9. **Keep knees bent and step in and out of the kitchen** (no lunging or reaching)
10. **Tips** (eye on ball, move feet, get back to ready position, work in tandem)
11. **Be patient**

□ Instructor demo followed by hand ball drill and then student practice with paddle.

DRILL

1. Players hand toss ball to each other across the net. (5 minutes)
2. Using paddles, hit forehand balls to each other across the net (5 minutes)
3. Using paddles, hit backhand balls to each other across the net (5 minutes)
4. Using paddles, hit balls diagonally (backhand or forehand) to each other across the net (5 minutes)

We have covered all the shots you need to know to play the game of Pickleball.

REMEMBER: (1 minute)

1. Pickleball is a fun game to play, HAVE FUN playing!
2. It is a social event, meet people, have fun.

SCORING (5 minutes)

1. **Two chances to serve on each side** (except beginning of game)
2. **Serve starts right hand court** (anywhere you play)
3. **Team on north end of courts (closest to Cactus) serves first** (varies in different places)
4. **Points awarded only when team is serving**
5. **Rotate positions only after winning the point, hand ball over to partner after a fault**
6. **Make sure receiver is ready before saying the score and serving**
7. **Saying score** (your score, their score and server number 1 or 2)
8. **Games are generally played to 11** (must win by two)
9. **Tapping paddles** (most tape with handles)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER – PLAYING A GAME

REVIEW Court Positioning (5 minutes)

1. **Where to stand when serving**
2. **Where to stand when receiving**
3. **Double bounce rule**
4. **Player positioning**
5. **Moving up to net** (receiver and serving side)
6. **Forehand takes center**
7. **No man's land** (transition zone)

- Time to play!** Players put to practice what they've learned by playing a couple games. Trainers help on scoring, court positioning, etc. (45 minutes)

GATHER OUTSIDE COURTS AFTER PLAY

PLAYER REMINDERS

- **Etiquette AT ALL TIMES!**
- **Ready position** (after every shot)
- **Keep eye on the ball**
- **Face the action**
- **Slow down, take time** (don't be frenetic)
- **Stop and hit ball, then move**
- **Use forehand rather than backhand** (when possible)
- **Forehand takes center** (even when playing with a weaker player, let them take it)
- **Communicate with your partner**
- **Move to the net, stay at the net** (unless it's a lob – to be taught later)
- **Don't kill the ball, keep it in play**

- **Don't try to spin the ball or be tricky for every shot**
- **Let opponents make the mistakes** (safe shots rather than always trying to win a point)
- **Try to move together**
- **Lefties and righties**
- **Unforced errors vs forced errors** (75% of errors are unforced – mistakes players make)

You have finished with your 1.0 training, you are now 1.5 rated Pickleball players - CONGRATULATIONS!

What comes next?

Wednesday you will be invited to a mentored 1.5 event. Thursday you will be invited to a 1.5 event and Friday there will be an evaluation event to advance to 2.0. Those of you needing more practice you will continue to be invited to the Wednesday - Friday events until you qualify for 2.0 play. Good luck and thank you for participating in this wonderful game of Pickleball.