



GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING PICKLEBALL

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USAPA Guidelines for Teaching Pickleball

9-1-16 LL

Purpose of This Document

To provide USAPA members who intend to teach pickleball on a volunteer or commercial basis with guidelines for safe, effective and comprehensive instruction to novice and intermediate players of all ages.

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Section 1: Introduction

A. Prerequisites for Teaching

1. Demonstrate pickleball rules knowledge by studying the [IFP Rules](#) and passing USAPA Teacher tests (currently under development).
2. Possess adequate playing skills and knowledge, including the ability to:
 - a. Demonstrate basic strokes and strategies with proper movement mechanics.
 - b. Accurately and consistently feed balls to students for all basic strokes.
 - c. According to the [IFP Rating Descriptions](#), the above skills generally equate to a skill level of 4.0 or higher; however, a lower rating, or no rating, does not necessarily preclude an individual from teaching beginners.
3. Possess the patient demeanor necessary to deal constructively with students of

- varying ages, physical abilities and athletic backgrounds.
4. Adhere to the [Code of Conduct for pickleball players](#) and teachers and established court etiquette (see below).
 5. Obtain liability insurance where required or recommended [Note: Ambassadors may be covered by USAPA insurance when offering free instruction, clinics, etc.; however, participants and facility owners and managers are not covered.]
 6. Submit to criminal background checks when required for teaching in communities, public or private facilities, educational institutions (see Section 3.C on teaching in schools), etc.
 7. First aid/CPR certification is highly recommended if not required by teaching facilities. Especially when teaching seniors, it is recommended to have an automated external defibrillator (AED) available if possible.

B. Pickleball Teacher Code of Conduct

As a USAPA pickleball teacher I agree to:

1. Be professional while maintaining a pleasant and professional demeanor.
2. Treat all students with fairness and respect.
3. Follow training procedures that promote safe, healthy play.
4. Teach ALL rules according to the official USAPA interpretation, even if I do not agree with a particular rule.
5. Maintain control without being dictatorial.
6. Avoid overfriendliness with individual students.
7. Keep lessons within stated timeframes.
8. Receive permission from students prior to the use of video analysis.

C. A Word about “Pickleball”

Over the past five decades, as pickleball has grown, it has been shown in print with a variety of spellings. Start new players out right by letting them know that pickleball is the name of a sport, like tennis, basketball, hockey, etc. The name “pickleball” is one word and only capitalized at the beginning of a sentence, in a title, or as part of a proper name, such as that of a company that sells pickleball equipment.

Section 2: Standard Content for Teaching Beginners

This section presents guidelines for what players new to pickleball need to know to understand the game and progress at their own pace from novices to higher skill levels. It does not constitute a lesson plan; it represents the subjects that should be taught, not how to teach, when, or in what order.

Beginners cannot learn even the basics of pickleball in one session. It will take several sessions to cover the basic rules, strokes, strategies, etiquette and safety concerns outlined below. How the standard content is divided into sessions will depend on many factors, including age and athletic background of students; available courts and equipment; number, skill level and teaching proficiency of teachers and time allotted. As a basis for planning, a sample lesson plan for teaching adults is provided in Appendix B and information on teaching in schools in Appendix C.

Although not strictly part of the standard content for beginning players, it is a good idea for teachers to promote a sense of the game as a whole, including not just recreational, but tournament play as well. Once players have a feel for the basics of the game, consider introducing the idea that players can enhance their own knowledge of the game and help grow

the sport by volunteering to officiate (line judge and/or referee) at local tournaments and by joining USAPA. For refereeing practice, during later drills involving students playing a few points, suggest that others in the class keep track of the score and practice recognizing faults.

A. On-Court Safety

Discuss the following:

1. Number One Rule: Don't backpedal or run backwards. [Note: demonstrate right and wrong ways to position for a lob return to avoid the potential for a fall (i.e. turn sideways to move back, making sure to pick up your feet; or turn and run)].
2. Instill the idea that the sport is about good footwork.
 - a. Move to the ball before hitting. [Note: If you are familiar with tennis, consider using a tennis ball to demonstrate the difference in bounce as the reason why you need to move to the ball.]
 - b. Don't try for a ball that is too far away to reach while maintaining safe balance; move the feet so the head and torso are always centered.
 - c. Try to hit the ball within your "comfort zone," which is approximately one foot in front of the body and one foot on either side.
 - d. Leaning forward stresses the back and can cause strains. Stretching sideways stresses the upper leg muscles, hips and knees. Planting the heels stresses the feet and ankle tendons. Shoulder pulls are common injuries also caused by reaching or twisting instead of moving to the ball. Avoid overreaching in any direction.
3. If you can't avoid falling, attempt to tuck and roll rather than extending the hands to break the fall.
4. Wear proper court shoes to prevent ankle/knee injury. [Note: Show non-marking sole and body features of appropriate shoes.]
5. Protective eyewear is recommended for both outdoor and indoor play. A strike in the eye by a ball can cause serious injury and potentially loss of eyesight.
6. Individuals should choose a paddle that is right for them and has an appropriate grip size (i.e., one finger width between palm and fingers). Encourage students to test numerous paddles before buying. Lighter paddles are less likely to cause wrist injury and are more maneuverable for those with slow swings; however, they generally require a more powerful swing. Heavier paddles, especially in the head, create more power with less swing energy, but can result in wrist injury if correct mechanics are not applied.
7. Ball on Court: Discuss importance of players calling "Ball on Court!" or "Ball!" to stop play immediately if a ball from another court enters their playing surface. Point is replayed following this "hinder" call. Likewise, if a ball is hit into another court, players should immediately yell "Ball!" to warn those players. Do not follow a ball onto another court to return it or retrieve it until play on that court has ceased.
8. In doubles, partners need to communicate, especially when there is a question about who should hit the ball. Call "Yours" or "Mine" to avoid collisions or getting hit by the partner's paddle.
9. Walking behind a court while a ball is in play is dangerous and distracting. Wait for play to stop and then ask permission to cross between rallies.
10. Warm up muscles before play and stretch before and after play to avoid injury (see Appendix E: Pre- and Post-play exercises/stretching).
11. Stay hydrated: Drink water before feeling thirsty; preserve electrolytes through eating proper snacks and/or electrolyte drinks before and after play.

B. Pickleball Etiquette

Every sport develops a unique culture over time. For pickleball, it is friendliness and camaraderie that are a defining characteristic of the sport. Despite sometimes fierce competition, recreational players invariably end up friends on and off the court. To preserve this “traditional nature and character of the sport,” pickleball teachers have a responsibility to impart the importance of good sportsmanship to their students. To that end, consider touching on the following during training sessions:

1. Players should introduce themselves before beginning a game or greet those they already know. New students should be given temporary name badges if they don't have permanent ones.
2. After a rally, the player closest to the ball should retrieve it and gently return it to the proper server, preferably by tossing by hand or hitting with the paddle in a controlled manner, rather than kicking it under the net. The server should raise his/her hand while moving to the serving position to indicate to whom the ball should be directed.
3. In a game with no referee, if partners disagree on whether a ball is “in” or “out,” the proper call is “in.” This is not only a rule, it is good sportsmanship. [IFP Rule 6.D.10]
4. If a ball is so close it's hard to call, the benefit of the doubt goes to the opponent. [Note: Demonstrate how, depending on the angle at which you are viewing the ball and line, the ball can look out when it is really touching the line and vice versa.]
5. Avoid questioning an opponent's line call. In most cases the opponents are closer and have a better angle to see where the ball hits the surface. If you are not sure of a call on your side of the net you may ask the other team, but in that case their call should be accepted [IFP Rule 6.D.5].
6. In a game without a referee, players should call foot faults on themselves. While it is within the rules to call foot faults on your opponents, and hopefully this would be received as helping to improve their game, be sensitive to the particular situation before choosing to exercise this prerogative.
7. In open recreational play, when the players on the opposing team are unequal in skill, avoid always playing the weaker player just to score points. Also, play the stronger player equally or he/she may get bored and not want to play with your team in the future. In addition, your game will improve by playing the better player.
8. In open recreational play individuals are often of diverse skill levels. Exhibit patience and tolerance. As a stronger player, practice your shot accuracy; as a weaker player, use the opportunity to improve your game.
9. After the game come to the net and touch paddles, bump fists, whatever is the local custom. Say something positive to acknowledge opponents and partner. If it was a particularly bad game and “good game” seems hollow, at least say, “Thanks for playing.”
10. When others are waiting, relinquish the court or offer to rotate (e.g., two-out, two-in; four-off, four on) when no local rules cover court usage.
11. As frustrating as play can be, *never* use foul language or denigrate another player; apologize immediately if something inappropriate slips out.
12. Avoid anger and/or confrontation; it is only a game.

C. Basic Rules of the Game

For the purpose of these teaching guidelines, references are to rules, strategies, etc., associated with doubles play (except where noted), since that is by far the most common form of recreational pickleball play. Make sure to cover all of the following at some point during the first session or two with new students:

1. Define and point out parts of the court: court, playing surface, service court, baseline, centerline, sidelines, non-volley zone (NVZ - often referred to as the *Kitchen*, but officially NVZ), NVZ line, net, net post, etc. (see Appendix F: Selected Definitions or [Official IFP Rules](#).)
2. Scoring: Game typically played to 11 points (games to 15 or 21 can be used in tournaments, leagues, ladders).
3. Win by two points.
4. Only the serving side can score points.
5. The player positioned on the right-hand side of the court is always the first to serve when it is that team's turn.
6. Serves are to the diagonally opposite court between the NVZ line and the baseline.
7. The Double Bounce Rule: The serve and the service return must be allowed to bounce before the ball may be struck. That is, each side must play a groundstroke (can include a drop shot or lob) on the next shot following the serve. After the initial two groundstrokes have been completed, play may include volleys.
8. Both members of the serving team should be positioned at the baseline when the ball is served (because of the Double Bounce Rule). The receiver is at the baseline diagonally opposite the server. The receiver's partner is typically positioned just behind the NVZ line in the non-receiving court, but may stand anywhere.
9. In doubles, a team gets to serve until two faults are made by that team, except for the starting possession of the game, in which the serving team is permitted only one fault before the serve passes to the opposing team.
10. Fault: any action that stops play due to a rule violation. [Note: Describe the most common faults, such as hitting the ball into the net or out of bounds, failure to return a ball over the net into the court, short serve, etc. Discuss less common faults as they occur in practice].
11. Briefly describe the purpose of the NVZ and associated faults (see NVZ rules below).
12. Advise students that they should visit the USAPA website, read the [Official IFP Rules](#) and then take the [Player Rules Quiz](#).
13. Service Rules: The server begins a rally by hitting the ball into the service area of the diagonally opposite court of the opponent. (See [Official IFP Rules](#): Section 4: Service Rules for more detail)
 - a. The serving area is defined as the area behind the baseline and on or between the imaginary lines extending rearward from the court centerline and each sideline.
 - b. The ball may not be served off of a bounce. It typically is dropped (not tossed) from the non-paddle hand and struck with the paddle.
 - c. The serve must be made with an underhand stroke (arm moving in an upward arc) so that contact with the ball is made below waist level (navel) and the paddle head is below the break of the wrist when it strikes the ball.
 - d. Both feet must be behind the baseline at the beginning of the service motion (i.e., the backswing).
 - e. At the time the ball is struck, at least one foot must be on the playing surface or ground behind the baseline and the server's feet may not touch the playing surface in an area outside the confines of the serving area.

- f. Calling the Score: The score should be called loudly and clearly before every serve as three numbers. The proper sequence is: server score, receiver score, then, for doubles only, (server) 1 or 2. To start a match, the score will be called as: zero – zero – two. [IFP Rule 10.F].
- g. The serving motion must not start until the entire score has been called.

14. Non-Volley Zone Rules [IFP Rules, Section 9]

- a. When volleying, a player or anything he/she is wearing or carrying, may not touch the NVZ or the NVZ line.
- b. If, when volleying, the player's momentum carries him/her or anything he/she is wearing or carrying into the NVZ, it is a fault even if the ball is declared dead before the player or anything he/she is wearing or carrying touches the NVZ.
- c. A player may be positioned inside the NVZ to return balls after they bounce.
- d. If a player has touched the NVZ for any reason, that player cannot volley the return until both feet have made contact with the playing surface completely outside the NVZ.
- e. A player may stand inside the NVZ any time when not volleying the ball.

D. Preliminaries

1. Grip: "V" or Continental.

- a. Preferred grip – eliminates switching between forehand and backhand grips.
- b. "Shake hands" with the paddle handle.
- c. Hold the paddle firmly, but not with a stranglehold.
- d. The point of the "V" between the thumb and index finger rests on either narrow edge of the paddle handle (i.e., with the paddle head perpendicular to the court surface) with the fingers gripping the handle.
- e. Thumb and fingers should be wrapped around the handle. Index finger may be placed on the face of the paddle, if desired.

2. Ready position: For maximum efficiency and best results, begin every stroke from the ready position and return to it after every shot.

- a. Face the opponent who will hit the ball.
- b. Hold the paddle out in front of the chest; the head may rest on fingers of the opposite hand.
- c. Feet at shoulder width apart, side by side.
- d. Weight balanced on the balls of the feet, not the heels; shoulders over the feet.
- e. Knees flexed.
- f. Body balanced with the feet under the body, ready to move left or right.

3. During Play:

- a. Eyes should follow the ball at all times. Track it from the opponent's paddle to your paddle and off the paddle.
- b. Always keep the paddle up near chest level – above the net – to be ready for the next shot.
- c. Move to the ball and into ready position before hitting it. Although not necessarily true at higher levels of play, it is a good idea for beginners to follow the "Move, Stop, Hit" rule.
- d. The body should remain balanced at all times for safety as well as accuracy. That is, throughout the swing, contact and follow through, both feet should be in

contact with the court surface and the upper body balanced on the balls of the feet.

- e. Use a fluid swing initiated from the shoulder for groundstrokes. Transfer weight from back foot to front foot as you swing for power and control.
- f. Control the power and direction of the swing rather than trying to hit the ball as hard as possible. (e.g., minimal backswing and short follow through for dinks; significantly larger backswing and follow through for service returns.)
- g. Whether the face of the paddle is open, vertical or closed will determine whether the ball travels upward, straight or downward when hit. [Note: Demonstrate Open, Vertical and Closed paddle face] .
- h. Return immediately to the ready position after striking the ball.

E. Strokes

Demonstrate each and have students perform drills (see Appendix D: Common Drills). See the USAPA website, Training & Courts, Learning to Play, for video demonstrations of specific skills by top players.

1. Dink: Many instructors prefer to teach the dink first to give new students a feel for the smooth motion of the pickleball swing and the action of the ball and paddle. Lift with knees; no wrist action.
 - a. A soft shot hit on a bounce from the NVZ intended to arc over the net and land within the opposing NVZ either straight across or diagonally crosscourt.
 - b. An effective dink arcs downward as it crosses the net, creating a more difficult shot to return than a power shot.
 - c. Dinks that land close to the net are the most difficult to return because of the steep angle required to get the ball over the net.
 - d. Crosscourt dinks are easier because the net is lower in the center and you can force their opponent off the court, potentially opening a hole.
 - e. Contact the ball in front of the body with the paddle face open, using a gentle lifting (pushing) motion.
 - f. The shot is soft and controlled with movement from the shoulder, no wrist break and minimal or no backswing to avoid overpowering the ball.
 - g. Be patient. Continue to dink until the opponent makes a mistake. If the ball is hit too high, there is a good chance for a put-away shot.
 - h. Dink problems to watch for:
 - Ball goes into net – hitting too hard and too shallow, failure to keep the head down and eyes on the ball.
 - Ball goes too high – too much arm swing and follow through; bending the wrist.
 - Reaching forward – let the ball bounce and move in to hit it.
2. Forehand Groundstroke: Typically, the most powerful and most accurate shot; therefore, the most utilized from at or near the baseline.
 - a. Move sideways into correct court position first. Avoid reaching; move the feet instead and prepare to meet the ball from the ready position.
 - b. From the ready position pivot shoulders and hips so the non-paddle shoulder is facing the approaching ball and begin the backswing. Some players extend the

- opposite arm forward for balance.
 - c. Step forward with the front foot toward the direction the ball is intended to go to create forward momentum. Bring the paddle forward to **contact the ball in front of the body**, preferably before the ball reaches the top of its bounce.
 - d. The paddle head is angled slightly open (tipped back from vertical)
 - e. Keep the wrist firm (not wobbly), but allow it to hinge backward enough to meet the ball squarely.
 - f. Follow through to straighten the body and return to the ready position.
3. Backhand Groundstroke: Used when a ball is approaching the side opposite the paddle arm.
- a. Move into correct court position first. Avoid reaching; move the feet instead.
 - b. From the ready position pivot shoulders and hips sideways so the paddle shoulder is toward a ball that is approaching the non-paddle side of the body.
 - c. Bring the paddle arm across the body and extend the paddle shoulder to head high. Opposite arm may be extended across the body toward where the ball will be hit for balance or held behind the body (depends on what feels natural and “works” for each player.)
 - d. Step forward with the front foot toward the direction the ball is intended to go to create forward momentum. Bring the paddle forward to **contact the ball in front of the body**, preferably before the ball reaches the top of its bounce. Weight on the front foot.
 - e. The paddle head is angled slightly open.
 - f. Wrist and forearm aligned, wrist firm (not wobbly).
 - g. Follow through to straighten the body and return to the ready position.
4. Groundstroke problems to watch for:
- a. Looking up toward where you want to hit the ball instead of keeping eyes on the ball
 - b. Lack of control – bending the wrist or not turning sideways and stepping toward where you want the ball to go
 - c. Ball goes into net – paddle face closed or swinging high to low too much
 - d. Ball goes long – paddle face too open or swinging low to high too much
 - e. Out of balance – weight on back foot or reaching
 - f. Lack of power, slow to return to ready position – inadequate follow through, weight on back foot
 - g. Lack of control – shoulders and hips turn initiated late or not at all.
 - h. Forehand vs. backhand: many players and teachers prefer the forehand over the backhand in most situations because it usually provides more power and control. However, other coaches prefer to teach the backhand as the preferred groundstroke. For shots hit anywhere from in front of the body to the non-paddle side of the body a backhand eliminates the need to “run around” the ball to hit on the forehand side. A backhand can also provide more control because of the inability to take as long a backswing, which helps players contact the ball in front of the body.
5. Service Technique:
- a. The purpose of the serve (at the developing levels) is simply to place the ball in play and is not intended as an offensive weapon.

- b. The serve must be hit with an underhand stroke so that contact with the ball is made below the waist, defined as the navel. The arm must be moving in an upward arc and the highest point of the paddle head shall be below the wrist when it strikes the ball. The highest point of the paddle head cannot be above any part of the line formed where the wrist joint bends [Rule 4.A.1]. The ball may not be struck off a bounce.
- c. Serve to the diagonally opposite service court from behind the baseline and on or within the imaginary extension of the sidelines and centerline.
- d. Begin the service motion facing the opposite service court, not parallel with the baseline. The serve may be made with a backhand stroke if it is easier for the player.
- e. Strike the ball in the center of the paddle face (the “sweet spot”) with the face open to produce lift.
- f. Keep the head down and eyes on the ball until after contact with the ball.
- g. As with a groundstroke, the player may step forward with one foot to add power as the ball is struck. [Note: Reiterate that at the time the ball is struck, at least one foot must be on the playing surface or ground behind the baseline and the server's feet may not touch the playing surface in an area outside the confines of the serving area.]
- h. The serve may be driven hard and low to the net or lofted. However, the momentum from a hard serve will be transmitted to the return, causing it to come back faster and deeper.
- i. Placement should be deep and to the center of the diagonally opposite service court to keep the receiver back.
- j. Follow through toward target and return to the ready position to be set to receive the service return.
- k. Don't continue into the court; remain behind the baseline until after the 3rd shot is hit.
- l. Only after a player masters the basics, should he/she practice aiming for the opponent's backhand side and eventually adding spin and velocity.
- m. Problems to watch for:
 - Ball being tossed up or bounced as opposed to dropped onto the paddle.
 - Faulty form: Arm motion across the body instead of upward, paddle head above wrist, ball struck above waist (navel).
 - Lack of control -- Looking up toward where they want to hit the ball instead of keeping eyes on the ball, limp wrist.
 - Serve goes wide either right or left -- grip paddle more firmly; adjust stance to face net more directly.
 - Serve lands in the net or the opposing NVZ – hit the ball sooner; be sure the swing is upward; check the direction of the paddle face.

6. Return of Serve:

- a. The main goal is to return the serve deep to keep the serving team at the baseline; power is not as important as control. A short return brings the serving team forward, allowing them to reach the NVZ line and negating the receiving team's advantage.
- b. The serve must bounce before being returned.
- c. Wait behind the baseline for the serve in order to permit moving forward to hit the return with momentum.

- d. The preferred service return stroke is a forehand with a backswing and follow through, stepping forward to meet the ball in front of the body. This allows the receiver to quickly move toward the net by following the natural momentum of the follow through.
- e. A shot lofted deep to the opponent's backhand gives the receiver time to reach the NVZ line and keep the serving team back.
- f. Follow through, move to the NVZ line and return to the ready position to be set to return the next shot.
- g. Watch the ball. If you realize you can't make it all the way to the NVZ line before the ball is hit by the opponent, stop and assume the ready position. Return the ball, then continue to the NVZ line. Stop again if necessary. In tennis this is often referred to as the "split step."
- h. Return problems to watch for:
 - Lack of control -- Looking up toward where they want to hit the ball instead of keeping eyes on the ball, limp wrist.
 - Return goes wide either right or left -- grip paddle more firmly; adjust stance to face net more directly; check the direction of the paddle face.
 - Return lands in the net -- hit the ball sooner; be sure the swing is upward; check the direction of the paddle face.
 - Return not deep enough -- exaggerate loft or hit return harder to keep serving team back; shift weight to forward foot during stroke.

7. Drop Shot/Long Dink:

- a. The drop is a soft shot hit off a bounce from deep in the court, intended to land in the opponents' NVZ, preferably close to the net.
- b. Allows the hitting team to follow the shot to the NVZ line. It is the primary 3rd shot, giving the serving team the opportunity to approach the net after the return of serve, but can also be effective anytime the opponents are at the net.
- c. One of the more difficult shots to master.
- d. Face the net and hit the ball underhand in front of the body, lofting it in an arc over the net. The ball should arc before reaching the net so it lands near the opponent's feet within or at their NVZ line.
- e. Move toward the net after hitting the ball. If you don't make it all the way to the NVZ line by the time your opponent hits the ball, stop and assume the ready position in preparation for the next shot, then quickly continue to the NVZ line.
- f. Drop Shot problems to watch for:
 - Ball is high and too deep, setting up a put-away for the other team -- hit the ball softer with the paddle face less open; eliminate any backswing; minimize follow through.
 - Ball goes into the net -- hit the ball harder and/or with enough arc to clear the net by opening the paddle face slightly.
 - Failure to follow the drop shot to the NVZ line -- advise student to move forward (follow the ball) after hitting an adequate shot.

8. Volley:

- a. A ball hit in the air before it bounces onto the court during a rally.
- b. It is often used when at the NVZ line to return a ball hit hard and low over the net.
- c. May be hit forehand or backhand; backhand is more common.

- d. No backswing -- hit in a blocking motion with the paddle face square (vertical) to "push" the ball over the net.
- e. Hit away from your opponent to make him/her reach.
- f. To hit the ball deeper, open the paddle face slightly to give the volley a little more loft.
- g. The drop volley and the half volley are more advanced shots that may be introduced if the skill level of students indicates.
- h. Volley problems to watch for:
 - Missing the ball – paddle held too low; raise to chest level; keep eyes on the ball.
 - Lack of control – make sure paddle face is aligned with oncoming ball; hit ball in front of body; keep wrist firm on contact.
 - Ball goes into net – slightly open paddle face; grip handle more firmly; watch ball to paddle.
 - Ball goes long – close paddle face slightly; push ball with short movement instead of swinging; no backswing.

9. Drop Volley

- a. At the NVZ line, a soft shot into the opponent's NVZ hit before the ball bounces.
- b. Effective when the opponent(s) is at the baseline.
- c. Angle the shot away from the opponent(s).
- d. Face the net with the paddle face open. Absorb the force of the shot so the ball drops over the net into the NVZ.

10. Half Volley

- a. A groundstroke hit immediately after the bounce while the ball is still close to the ground (short hop, trap).
- b. Used when caught in "no man's land" on the way to the net (too far from the net for a volley, too close to drive a groundstroke).
- c. Also can be effective in returning an overhead hit to the feet.
- d. Bend knees deeply so the eyes are low and put the paddle behind the ball with the face sufficiently open so the ball clears the net.

11. Lob

- a. A lofted shot that sends the ball high overhead and deep.
- b. Purpose: To catch the opponent off guard or force him/her back to the baseline (offensive). It can also be effective as a defensive shot to buy time to get into position for an offensive shot.
- c. Offensive: An unexpected lob from the NVZ line over your opponent at the NVZ line or as he/she is running to the net.
- d. Defensive: A lob from the baseline allowing the lobbing team time to move to the NVZ line. However, players must be aware that the opponent may return the lob with an overhead smash (see below). It might be safer to use a drop shot as an approach shot instead.
- e. From the baseline, take a backswing and contact the ball in front of the body with paddle face open to lift the ball and send it high, then follow through fully (paddle at least head high).
- f. The trajectory should carry the ball over the opponent's outstretched paddle and land inbounds near the baseline.

- g. Lobbing over the opponent when dinking can create the advantage of surprise.
- h. Lob problems to watch for:
 - Lob is not deep enough – the ball was not hit hard enough or the paddle was too far under the ball; hit a bit farther in front of the body to have the paddle more behind the ball at contact.
 - Lob is too low – use more force and/or lift the ball higher by hitting under it.
 - Lob is wide – play it safely within the width of the court.

12. Overhead Smash:

- a. A hard, overhand shot directed downward into the opponent's court, usually as a return of an opponent's lob, high return, or high bounce.
- b. The paddle is extended over the head at maximum height with elbow straight.
- c. Aim at an open spot on the opponent's court or at the feet of an opponent, not at the body.
- d. Never back up to position for an overhead. Shuffle sideways or turn around and run into position. Backpedaling is a dangerous maneuver.
- e. Look up and point toward the ball with non-paddle hand.
- f. Contact the ball as high as possible and in front of you, shifting weight from the back foot to the front foot as the ball is contacted with a downward swing and wrist flex (snap).
- g. The backhand overhead smash requires flexing the wrist backwards.
- h. Overhead smash problems to look for:
 - The ball goes into the net – rushing, hitting on top of the ball. Take time to get into position without running backwards.
 - The ball goes long – instead of attempting to hit the ball as hard as possible, use less force and aim the ball.
 - The shot has little power – hitting early (reaching) or late (behind the head) – slow down, get in position and control the shot. (Have students practice the motion used in throwing a ball to develop more power and control.)

F. Basic Strategies

Strategies listed below are based primarily on doubles since players new to pickleball are much more likely to play doubles. Singles requires different strategies in many situations. See the USAPA website, Training & Courts, Learning to Play, for video demonstrations of strategies by top players.

1. Player positioning

- a. Serving player or team stands behind the baseline to serve and remains there or just inside to hit serve return after it bounces (Double Bounce Rule).
- b. Receiver typically stands at or near the baseline to return serve; however, be alert for the possible need to move forward to return a shorter serve.
- c. Receiver's partner may stand anywhere, but is usually positioned at the NVZ line on his/her side of the court.
- d. Face the action. Move your feet so your body is pointing straight toward the player who is about to hit the ball.
- e. Don't plant your feet when in the ready position. Keep the feet active, weight on

the balls of the feet for quick movement in any direction. Hold paddle at chest level, eyes on the ball.

2. Getting to the net

- a. After returning the serve the receiver should quickly move forward to the NVZ line to a position parallel with his/her partner.
- b. The serving team should both move toward the NVZ line together as soon as possible after the third shot (return of serve return).
- c. Players should attempt get to the NVZ line in time to be ready to return the next ball hit to them by the opposing team. However, if caught mid court (no man's land), stop and assume the ready position before hitting the ball (split step). It may take two or three shots to get to the NVZ line safely and in balance.
- d. Once at the NVZ, stay there. Don't move back unless it is necessary to return a lob, then return to the NVZ line ASAP.

3. Partners move in unison

- e. The partner hitting the ball determines when and where the team moves.
- f. At the baseline, when one partner hits the ball and moves toward the NVZ at the angle he/she hit the ball, the other partner should move forward also, but *not before*.
- g. With partners separated – one at the baseline and one at the NVZ -- an inviting gap is created for the opponents to place a winning shot.
- h. When one partner is pulled to the sideline to return a shot the other partner moves toward the centerline to close the gap in the middle, which is a higher percentage shot for the opponent than trying to pass down the other sideline, which is left open. [Note: Explain the string theory: Imagine you and your partner are tethered by string; if your partner gets pulled wide you can't allow the string to break by staying still. If the string is pulled six feet, you move six feet.]

4. Pickleball is more about placement than power

- a. Keep the ball in play. The player or doubles team who makes fewer unforced errors is most likely to win.
- b. According to an accomplished tournament player and instructor, 75 percent of rallies are won (or lost) because of errors; only 25 percent are actually earned or won by a good shot.
- c. Rather than trying to hit a winner every shot, it is better to place the ball back over the net in control and let the opponent(s) make the fault, or wait for a chance to hit a sure winner.
- d. The safest place to hit a ball in singles is away from your opponent. In doubles it is deep down the middle – this minimizes the chances of hitting wide and may cause confusion over which opponent should return the ball.
- e. Try to hit to your opponent's backhand, especially on the serve – most players have less power and are less comfortable hitting with their backhand. However, many top players prefer the backhand for a majority of their shots because this across-the-body shot precludes a significant backswing, which often leads to over-hitting. A well-practiced backhand can create as much or more control as a forehand.
- f. Keep the ball low to avoid setting up a winner for your opponent. Angle shots downward so your opponent must hit upward.

- g. With dinks and drop shots, clear the net with enough height to land the ball in the NVZ rather than risk hitting into the net.
5. Communicate with your partner
- a. Get in the habit of calling “Mine,” “I Go,” “Yours,” “You” or something similar for every shot, especially if playing with an unfamiliar partner and if one partner is right handed and the other left handed.
 - b. Decide who will take lobs – it may be the faster partner even if the lob is on the other side of the court.
 - c. Call “Switch” if you move to your partner’s side of the court – it is quicker to stay there for the next shot than to run back to your side. But make sure you are in the correct court position before the next rally begins (based on the score).
 - d. Decide who handles shots coming down the middle of the court. How far over the centerline will the partner with the paddle hand in the middle take balls? When partners are left- and right-handed both forehands or both backhands will be in the middle.
 - e. Warn your partner by calling “Bounce it!” if a ball hit high appears as if it may land out. Yell “No!” or “Out!” *before the ball strikes the court* if you are sure it is going out. (Calling “Out” after the ball strikes the court is a line call and the ball is dead.)
 - f. Bolster team confidence by complimenting your partner on good play – *after the rally ends*. Never criticize your partner for faults – it just makes matters worse.
 - g. Discussing team strategy, such as which opponent to hit to, before a game starts, between points, or during a timeout gives the team a common goal and demonstrates that the players are united as a team and not playing as two individuals.
 - h. Although the correct player to take a shot is not always the one in the forehand position, if the ball is heading in your partner’s direction, don’t take away his/her forehand shot with your backhand unless he/she is obviously unable to reach the shot or yells “Yours.” *Poaching* is a more advanced strategy.

G. The Mental Game

1. Keep in mind that pickleball is a social game for the vast majority of players; they do not aspire to win tournaments, or in most cases, even play in any but a local fun tournament. They just want to get out on the court, get some exercise and play well enough to have fun with their playing friends.
2. A positive attitude is the first step to improving one’s game. [Note: Teachers need to maintain a positive attitude in their classes by continually reinforcing students with verbal praise for successes and constructive instruction for less than perfect performance. Keep it light, but on point.
3. Students continually compare themselves to others in the class. Negative comparisons can discourage slower learners. [Note: If possible, when there is a wide disparity in the skill level and/or athleticism within a class, divide them into smaller groups by relative skill to practice with assistants on different courts.]
4. Players need to focus on the ball rather than the opponents.
5. Dwelling on a mistake distracts from focus on the next point. [Note: Encourage students to acknowledge a mistake, learn from it, then move on mentally and emotionally. This is very important for winning play.]
6. It’s counterproductive to blame one’s partner for a mistake, and destructive to the

partner relationship to express these thoughts verbally and/or through body language. [Note: Teach students to move beyond their partner's mistakes as well as their own. They should express support with positive words such as "Good Try," "You'll get it next time," "Good idea," etc.]

7. Don't expect students to remember and be able to work on everything you teach in a session. Suggest that between classes they concentrate on mastering one element of the game at a time and move on to another only when they have achieved a level of comfort with that one. After sufficient practice, muscle memory occurs and the subconscious takes over; then the conscious mind becomes free to focus on and absorb more facets of the game.
8. For the above reason it is imperative that you teach proper physical mechanics. Once improper strokes become ingrained in the subconscious, it's much more difficult to retrain the muscles. Do it correctly from the start!
9. Encourage practice, practice, practice. Even off the court students can practice by visualizing themselves performing proper strokes and successful strategies.

Section 3: Appendices

A. Setting up Training

1. Advertise time, place, length of session(s) and cost, if any.
2. It is suggested that at least three sessions be scheduled to cover the standard curriculum. Allocate approximately two hours per session: about 90 minutes of instruction and drills, followed by 30 minutes of actual play.
3. If possible, request an RSVP and commitment to participate.
4. Suggest that participants visit the USAPA website (usapa.org) and watch pickleball videos to become more familiar with the game.
5. Advise participants of proper attire, especially footwear, and what will be provided (e.g., paddles, balls).
6. Advise prospective participants that pickleball is an active sport and those with medical restrictions should consult their doctor before participating.
7. If minors are to be included in training, secure signed parental permission in advance unless parent or guardian will be present.
8. Restrict the number of participants depending on number of courts and teachers. Ideal ratio is four students per teacher per court.
9. Be prepared to answer questions, such as the differences among types of paddles (i.e., wood vs composite, not brands – avoid recommending to new players the paddle you use or sell) and balls (typical indoor vs outdoor). Be familiar with USAPA ball and paddle specifications (usapa.org/rules & referees) and what equipment has been disapproved by the USAPA.

B. Sample Group Lessons for Adult Beginners

Following is a sample outline for a series of three two-hour sessions that cover the basics of pickleball. Teachers should plan the content of actual sessions based on number of students and courts, times available, age and skill level of students, weather, equipment availability, etc.

1. Preparation
 - a. Arrive early to check courts for debris, net height, obstructions, etc. and lay out equipment.
 - b. Bring a bucket of balls for practice. Good idea to invest in a ball carrier and retriever.
 - c. Request that participants arrive 10 to 15 minutes early so the session can start on time – and start on time.
2. First session only
 - a. Introduce yourself and offer a few words about your background. Keep it brief and avoid bragging about your accomplishments!
 - b. Ask who has played before. Stress that no court experience is necessary. No judgements on ability. Anyone can play; some may learn faster than others. Especially if teaching seniors, emphasize that they should do only what their physical limitations allow.
 - c. If time permits, *briefly* cover pickleball history (<http://www.usapa.org/history-of-the-game/>) Keep it short. Refer students to the USAPA website for more info. (See Appendix G: Brief History of Pickleball). Briefly explain the USAPA's role as the National Governing Body of the sport.
3. Each Session
 - a. Check for proper footwear, eye protection, appropriate apparel.
 - b. Outline session, including length, breaks and what will be covered.
 - c. Emphasize safety and fun.
 - d. Have students do brief pre- and post-play stretches.
 - e. At the end of the session remind them of what you have just taught them. Or, if not too many students and time allows, have each briefly tell you one thing they learned.
4. On-Court Sessions
 - a. Be sure to include breaks for hydration, rest and questions, but try to stick to planned timeframe. However, take advantage of teachable moments, which may throw off your timeframe a bit.
 - b. Be friendly and encouraging, but avoid unrelated conversation.
 - c. Explain the reasons for what you tell students.
 - d. Don't spend a disproportionate amount of time with any one student.
 - e. Explain that it is very normal to learn at different rates and that any students struggling to keep up may benefit from an additional private lesson to help bridge the gap.
5. First Session Outline (2 hours suggested):
 - a. Take students onto the court and point out the various parts of the playing surface.
 - b. Demonstrate "V" grip
 - c. Demonstrate ready position
 - d. Demonstrate soft shots from NVZ line (dinks) and introduce basic NVZ rules
 - e. Dinking drill (See Common Drills below)
 - f. Demonstrate serves and explain basic serving/receiving rules and technique [three components of legal serve, two bounce rule, positioning]
 - g. Serving drill (See Common Drills below)
 - h. *Short comfort break about halfway through or as required*
 - i. Demonstrate forehand groundstrokes

- j. Forehand drill (See Common Drills below)
- k. Demonstrate backhand groundstrokes
- l. Backhand drill (See Common Drills below)
- m. Explain scoring [Only the serving side makes points; call score as serving team score, receiving team score, first or second server.]
- n. Have students walk through calling the score and change of side as serving team and receiving team
- o. Divide students into teams to play a few points as time permits. Introduce basic strategies as appropriate [moving to the net, partners parallel, etc.]

End of first session

6. Second Session Outline (2 hours suggested):

- a. Ask how much students have practiced (if any) since first session and how successful they feel they were. If there are questions, answer briefly or hold to answer during review time (but don't forget to answer them).
- b. Review first session -- safety, scoring, dinks, serves, groundstrokes – with short drills to evaluate student readiness to progress to additional strokes. Repeat first session instruction if necessary. Proceed at the students' pace.
- c. Demonstrate drop shots
- d. Drop shot drill (See Common Drills Appendix D)
- e. Demonstrate volleys
- f. Volley drill (See Common Drills Appendix D)
- g. Demonstrate Drop Volley and Half Volley (demo only, don't do student practice unless all have good, comfortable groundstrokes).
- h. Short comfort break about halfway through or as required*
- i. Demonstrate Lob & Overhead Smashes
- j. Lob & Overhead smash drill (See Common Drills Appendix D)
- k. Divide students into doubles teams and play several points (3 to 5). Stop play to correct rules mistakes or safety issues. Save coaching until the end of rallies. Emphasize practicing shots correctly; score not important.

End of Second Session

7. Third Session Outline (2 hours suggested):

- a. Review of first and second sessions: rules, safety, scoring, dinks, serves, groundstrokes, drop shots, volleys, lobs, overheads
- b. Mention how attempting to put spin on balls can distract from learning basic technique. Caution that it is much more important to develop sound basic shot technique before trying anything fancy.
- c. Evaluate how well the students have learned up to this point with short drills; try to correct problems:
 - Ready position
 - Depth and placement of serves and returns
 - Third shot and getting to the NVZ line
 - Proper stroke technique
 - Team moving together in parallel
 - Appropriate shot selection
 - Covering for partner on lob returns
- d. Short comfort break about halfway through or as required*
- e. Divide students into doubles teams and play several points (3 to 5). Stop play only

to correct rules mistakes or safety issues; save coaching until the end of rallies. Emphasize practicing shots correctly; score not important. While students are not on the court, encourage them to watch the game, keep score in their heads and try to catch faults. In addition to helping them learn the rules it introduces them to refereeing, diminishing the fear players sometimes have of refereeing.

- f. If time and circumstances permit, consider partnering with each student so that the class can see how the skills and strategies they have been learning are actually implemented in the game, and also what they can look forward to as they progress. It's important to demonstrate high-percentage basic pickleball with emphasis on practicing what you preach.

End of Third Session

8. Closing each Session

- a. Allow time for questions.
- b. Review key points covered, including safety items.
- c. Have handouts of rules, strategies covered.
- d. End on time.
- e. Demonstrate post-play stretch.
- f. Encourage students to stay and play if court-time allows.

End of Sample Group Lessons

C. Teaching in Schools

Developed by Norm Davis for the Surprise, Arizona school system

1. Getting Started

Before contacting a school or district office about offering pickleball as part of their physical education classes, tentatively enlist a number of adult pickleball players to help with teaching the classes. I recommend using higher skilled players as volunteer trainers, if possible.

Visit the selected school and consult with the principal's office about having a discussion with a teacher(s) who might be interested in having pickleball taught in their classes.

Also, to increase the schoolteachers' level of knowledge of the game, consider holding a combined "playing/training" session or two for them. If they are interested you can work out locations, schedule possible days and times that might work for both parties. Classes should be limited to two-hour sessions with no more than 24 players so volunteer trainers have time to make sure players understand the basics of the game. It is also best to schedule classes during regular school days to avoid interfering with schoolteachers' weekend activities. The classes can be held at the schools or on public courts, if available, whichever is convenient.

Provide each school with training materials and instructions on how to navigate the USAPA website, purchase equipment, etc.

2. Volunteering Process

Schools require security clearances for volunteers. The process varies among school districts. Generally, you can log onto the school district website and find instructions on how to register as a volunteer. The process usually involves giving personal information, taking pictures, fingerprints and a short introduction class. An ID badge is issued that allows you to enter the school and move about unescorted. This process can take a couple weeks. Sometimes you will need to enter the main school office and be directed or led to the playing areas.

3. Establishing a Team of Volunteers

Gather a group of fellow trainers, who will need to go through the volunteer process noted above. People not cleared can sometimes participate by having school personnel lead them to the pickleball courts. Maintain a schedule of which volunteers can help, might help or can't help, for each class. It is best to recruit folks who really enjoy working with children and youths and have a passion for the game. It is also best to have both men and women who can communicate with both boys and girls.

The number of volunteer trainers at a class will determine how you handle the class. In high schools they often have about 30 players and use 8 courts. Ideally, you have a trainer at each court, but sometimes each person may have to cover two or more courts. When that is not possible, work with the schoolteachers to determine the group of students you should teach. Often this is a group of the more athletic students who want to learn the rules, strategy, etc.

4. Rules of Conduct

Maintaining a friendly, positive attitude with eye contact and a smile when speaking is essential. It is best to avoid physical contact with students unless absolutely necessary, especially for men touching girls. It is common for students to thank the volunteer trainers as classes end.

Often a few students have problems with attitude, mental or physical handicaps, etc. Generally, you can use good judgment, but when a student creates a problem it's best to let the schoolteachers deal with it.

Occasionally a few students, usually boys, will see how far they can hit a ball or throw a paddle, etc. Make them retrieve the ball themselves with a warning that if they do it again they will have to sit out for a while. That can mean that the teacher has to join the play. Throwing the paddle should draw an even more severe warning.

A very few students will refuse to play and the only control the teachers have is to give them no grade points for the day. In general, it is best for the volunteers to "take charge" like a regular schoolteacher, but discipline is limited to sitting them out for a few minutes. More serious problems must be referred to the schoolteachers.

5. On the Courts

The most important aspect of teaching in schools is that the **students must have fun**. You want them to tell others what a great time they had. Having fun is not the same for all. Ninety percent of the students are not sports oriented or skilled and will never likely play in active sports. About ten percent of the students play in organized sports.

Teaching youth is not the same as working with adults. Their attention span is very short and they are motivated socially and physically. Trying to explain the basic rules of the game and showing them examples is a waste of time. The younger the players the less important it is to them to learn the rules and other technical details. Instead, build up from simple skills, such as tossing the ball back and forth without the paddle. Teaching in middle schools is primarily a task of helping them learn to hit the ball back and forth and get a feel for court movement. That is how Barney McCallum and friends started the game. Trying to get them to understand position, serving, scoring, etc. will frustrate both students and schoolteachers (who probably don't know the game). Avoid trying to teach youth groups under 10 years of age.

Generally, the classes break down into three loosely-defined groups. Ten percent are competitive and will be eager to learn all the game's rules and strategies; these are usually the ones who play organized school sports. Eighty-nine percent will be nice kids who are only interested in having fun hitting the ball back and forth. Forget scoring and line calling. They are

there because it's a required physical education class. One percent are kids with various mental, health or attitude problems. Teachers don't really have much control over these except to penalize them for not participating in activities or working with their disabilities. The success of a class can vary greatly from group to group. It's not always a matter of age, mental capacity or skill.

In initial sessions the schoolteachers don't usually understand the game either. Work with them to help learn the rules and basic flow of the game. They learn most by watching the volunteers teach the kids. Usually there is time to get them onto the court for some training games. Some will be very organized and some not.

Because schools have severely limited budgets they often have horrible heavy plastic paddles. Contact local pickleball clubs to get old paddles donated to use in the classes. Some vendors have helped with new grips, paddle seconds and balls. Borrowing paddles from the volunteer teachers is a difficult process. There may be local organizations willing to donate funds or equipment to help establish and equip school courts.

6. Class Procedures

Start by having kids line up on both sides of a court and select 4 to 8 to enter the court and stand at the ends of the baselines and non-volley zone lines. More students will pay attention when classmates are involved. When the games are played on tennis courts use those nets, the serving lines as the pickleball baselines and chalk or tape the non-volley zone lines; then explain that no other lines are involved.

Next have 6 to 8 students line up on each side of the net and, after a very brief explanation and demo of the dink, have them try it until several get the knack. Then move them back to mid court for a few longer hits. The third step is to line them up on the baseline and let each student serve about three times, with receivers catching the ball. They then go to the back of the line. If the group is fairly good, repeat the process with returns. Because most classes run for only 30 to 40 minutes, all the above is done in about 10 to 15 minutes.

When it looks like the group is ready, ask if they want to play a game. They always say yes. From that point the rules are briefly explained only as the situations occur. Teachers keep the score and keep players in position. The best players will catch on quickly, but most will make the same mistakes over and over. These are the eighty-nine percent who just want to hit the ball back and forth and have some laughs.

First days are chaotic and may seem to be not worthwhile, but the kids do tend to get the feel quickly and succeeding days usually show great improvement. Some schoolteachers will start a round robin on the second day with players (choosing their own partners) competing for short periods and accumulating points. This helps separate the skill levels noted at the beginning. At some schools the best players are given a chance to play with or against the teachers, who almost always choose to play against them. Those games are usually to 5 or 7 points and students are given a good chance to make plays and be successful without intentionally letting them win games. These competitive kids really get into the games and often volunteer to stay after regular school hours or through lunch to keep playing.

The very competitive students we invite to play at public courts and to attend local club classes. I have also had success with small inter-school tournaments that have created a great deal of interest, with participants taking the good word back to classmates and teachers. I think this played a big role in the Surprise, Arizona school district looking into making the sport a regular activity in all 24 schools. Initially the tournaments were free to students, but after consulting with schoolteachers and coaches, a small, non-returnable entry fee actually makes the games more attractive to students. We use the Pickleballtournaments.com software to manage the games and get adult pickleball players to referee games. These referees are still teaching;

primary focus is on the rules, strategies and having fun, not strictly enforcing the rules.

7. Encouraging play outside school hours

While we encourage schoolteachers to try to get students to play outside school hours and in tournaments, be careful not to imply that this is a requirement for having us conduct future classes.

Schoolteachers do not have control of students' activity outside school hours and organized school events. Asking them to get involved with tournaments outside their school day can be a touchy situation. We recommend that the athletic students participate in local public classes or open play. Near the end of day or week classes ask the class as a group if they would be interested in participating in a "schools only" tournament. If several raise their hands, add that there will be a non-reimbursable entry fee (say \$10) and ask the schoolteachers to gather a list of names. If the tournament becomes a reality, follow up with the information to register with PickleballTournaments.com or an alternate system. These tournaments may involve USAPA sanctioning and local city fees and other requirements. They may also involve a need for canopies, tables and chairs and other equipment, as well as a tournament director and volunteer referees. Referee responsibilities in these events may be more instructional than penal.

Encouraging inter-high school tournaments involves contact with each school in a district to find interest. These events could be in the form of conventional tournaments or similar to other school sports events (meets). There are questions involving individual medals or ribbons and/or an annual school trophy. If the events are done at the schools, it might require that the school system's procedure for hiring referees be followed or that our volunteer referees be cleared by security beforehand.

D. Common Drills [Video links to be added]

1. Devote approximately 10 to 15 minutes to each beginner drill.
2. Try to organize students into groups according to relative skill level.
3. Consider making appropriate drills into mini games to add excitement and an element of competition.
4. Keep as many students busy as possible; shoot for a ratio of no more than four students per teacher.
5. Teachers should control the timing so each student gets approximately the same amount of drill practice.
6. Be positive even if a student can't complete a drill successfully.

Ball Control

1. Tap the ball into the air off the paddle with the palm up. Then palm down; then alternating. Go for a personal best.
2. Two players stand 8 to 10 feet apart and hit the ball back and forth without it hitting the ground (volley). Gradually move back to 14 feet (i.e., NVZ distance).

Footwork

1. Train the feet to take small steps by doing quick steps in place (One teacher suggests 30 steps in 10 seconds). Then do the same with side-to-side steps.
2. Two players at each NVZ line. Without a paddle, players toss balls to each other and catch them off the bounce with *both* hands. Players move their feet in short steps so their bodies are square to the ball when caught and balanced over both feet on the

toes. No reaching.

Dinks

1. Two students line up on opposite sides of the net behind the NVZ line and gently hit the ball directly over the center of the net to land inside the NVZ. After a few minutes they switch to hitting diagonally (cross court) into the NVZ. Make sure they step back out of the NVZ each time they step in to hit the ball.
2. Two students begin dinking at the center of the court. Each moves to their left while continuing to dink, turning direct across dinks into progressively longer crosscourt dinks. When each reaches the respective sideline, reverse direction and dink back to the center and continue to the opposite sideline. Try to dink to each sideline and back to the center. Start again from the center after a fault.
3. One player on each side of net at the NVZ line. Each player has a ball. At the count of three, each player drops the ball and hits a soft dink over to practice partner. The goal is to keep both balls in play as long as possible. (J. Jessen)
4. Dink game: Play a regular game, except serve from the NVZ line into the crosscourt NVZ. The serve return and every subsequent ball must land inside the NVZ and be dinked back. Landing outside the NVZ or into the net constitutes a fault and the serve passes to the second server on the team or to the opposing team.

Serves & Returns

1. Four players stand behind the baseline at each service court and serve to the diagonally opposite court. The receivers catch the balls and serve them back. Have teams switch odd/even sides after a few minutes and serve to the other service court.
2. Using chalk or plastic hoops, mark target serving areas near the baseline on one side of the court. Two students position behind the baseline in the left and right serving areas on the opposite side of the court. Students attempt to serve into the targets. After a few minutes, students switch sides. Target areas indicate the backhand sides of right-handed receivers or vice versa to practice serving to left-handed receivers.
3. Four players (two teams) position themselves behind the baseline at each service court and serve to the diagonally opposite court. The receiver returns the ball to the serving team and moves to the NVZ line opposite his/her partner. The serving team returns the ball with an appropriate 3rd shot and follows it to the net. Repeat the sequence 3 or 4 times and then the serve passes to the opposite team.

Groundstrokes

1. If more than one court is available, divide students into teams of 4 or fewer to each teacher. Teacher hits ball to student at center of baseline, who returns it with forehand groundstroke (3 times) and then backhand groundstroke (3 times). Student then goes to back of line and next player hits.
2. Four students, positioned behind the baseline, two at each end of the court. Using one ball, hit groundstrokes from baseline to baseline, keeping a rally going as long as possible.

Volleys

1. Two teachers line up behind the NVZ line and feed (throw or hit) balls to a student standing behind the opposing NVZ line. Students volley balls back into the NVZ on the feeders' side. After several volleys the next students move in to practice.
2. Four students, two positioned behind each NVZ line. Each volleys back and forth with

the student opposite, trying to keep the ball off the ground for as long as possible. Try for 20 in a row.

3. Two teams (four students), two positioned behind each NVZ line. Using one ball, teams volley back and forth with the team opposite, trying to keep the ball off the ground for as long as possible.

Lobs

1. Two students stand behind the baseline at one end of the court. Using a hopper of balls, each practices lobbing balls deep into the opposite court. Two more students collect the lobbed balls in another hopper and lob from the other end.
2. Two teachers line up behind the NVZ line and toss or hit groundstrokes to two students at the opposite baseline. The teachers then raise their paddle hands high over their heads and the students attempt to lob over their outstretched arms.
3. Four players, two positioned behind each NVZ line begin dinking. At a signal from the teacher, the player who is about to play the ball lobs over the head of the student opposite and into the backcourt. Players on the receiving side quickly decide who will try to get to the ball SAFELY and attempt to return it.
4. Play a game (to 5, 7 or 11) using only lobs, including the serves. Any lob that lands in the NVZ is a fault or loss of point.

Overhead Smashes

1. Two teachers line up mid court on each side of the centerline with a student at the NVZ line opposite each. They alternate throwing or hitting high, lofted underhand balls to the students, who smash them back away from each teacher. After a few lobs the next students move in to practice.
2. One or two players stand at the baseline on opposite sides of the centerline and one or two more line up at the opposing NVZ line. The player(s) at the NVZ hit a groundstroke to the baseline player(s), who lob it back over the net. The player(s) at the NVZ line then attempt to smash it back to the baseline player(s), who lob it again... and so on. Players change places after a few minutes.

Drop shots

1. Two students stand behind the baseline with a hopper of balls. They bounce the ball and hit a drop shot.
2. Two teachers stand on one side of the court with a supply of balls and hit groundstrokes to two students positioned in the middle of the opposite court. The students return the balls over the net as a soft drop and gradually move backward until they are returning drop shots from their baseline.
3. A version of the above has students alternate between hitting drops and hard groundstrokes to get a feel for the difference in stroke.
4. 3-D Drill (Deep-Deep-Drop) Follow a deep serve by a deep return and then a player on the serving side executes a drop for the third shot.

Junior drill: Developing the soft game. (Submitted by John Jessen, Ambassador, Brevard, North Carolina)

Purpose: To teach Juniors the importance of the "soft game" and that you don't hit every ball hard.

Drill:

1. Take four large boxes filled with candy and place them on the teacher's side of the net on the NVZ line.
2. Have four students line up across the NVZ line in the ready position with paddles up.
3. Feed balls to students, who try to return balls to hit or land in the box. Vary the feed so they all have to be in the ready position at all times during the drill. Balls are fed quickly.
4. A student hits the box = 1 piece of candy; ball in the box = 2 pieces of candy.
5. Do the drill until every student has earned some candy.

Results: Students gain understanding of ready position, paddle up, anticipation, touch and control verses power.

E. Pre- and Post-play exercises/stretchers [Videos to be added]

Back strain, and hamstring and shoulder pulls are the most common injuries in pickleball. They usually occur when reaching or twisting for a return shot set up by not moving to the ball.

- Warming Up: Spend 10 to 15 minutes before playing to get your heart pumping. Walk briskly or jog, ride a bike to the courts, side step around the perimeter of the courts, trace large circles with the arms while walking, etc. Then, once the muscles are warmed up, perform a few stretches for specific muscle groups.
- Foot and ankle stretches: Sitting on the ground with both feet straight in front, point the toes and hold (3 reps of 10 secs each). Then flex the ankle upward (3 reps of 10 secs each).
- Calf and Achilles stretch: Stand about 3 or 4 feet from a wall and lean forward with arms outstretched on the wall. Extend one leg backward, pressing the heel to the ground and bend the other knee; change legs (3 reps of 10 secs each).
- Quadriceps stretch: Stand about 3 or 4 feet from a wall. Extend one arm to the wall for support and grasp the opposite foot with the other hand. Pull that leg back toward the buttocks and hold (3 reps of 10 secs each). Repeat with other leg.
- Hamstring stretch: Stand with legs straight. Bend over at the hips, keeping knees straight and try to touch the toes. Don't force it; let your body relax downward.
- Arm and shoulder stretch: Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Raise arms straight out to the side, palms up. Pull arms backward as far as comfortable (squeezing shoulder blades together) and hold. (3 reps of 10 secs each).
- Cool down after playing by walking and/or gentle stretching. If you feel pain in any muscles or joints, take it easy and ice.

F. Selected Definitions

- IFP – International Federation of Pickleball. Members as of June 2016: All India Pickleball Association (AIPA), Pickleball France (associate member), Pickleball Canada Organization, Pickleball Spain Organization, UK Pickleball Association (associate member), USA Pickleball Association (USAPA).
- Cross-court – The side of the court diagonally opposite your court.

- Dead Ball – A ball is declared dead and play stops after a fault occurs.
- Dink Shot – A soft shot from the NVZ line that is intended to arc over the net and land within the opposite non-volley zone.
- Double Bounce – A ball that bounces more than once on one side of the net. It is declared dead.
- Drop Shot – A groundstroke shot that falls short of the opponent’s position. Typically intended to land in the opponent’s NVZ.
- Fault – Any action that stops play because of a rule violation.
- Feed – The act of throwing/tossing/hitting a ball to a student who has been instructed to return the ball using a specific stroke.
- Groundstroke – Hitting the ball after one bounce.
- Half Volley – A groundstroke shot in which the paddle contacts the ball immediately after it bounces from the court and before the ball rises to its potential height; a short hop or trap.
- Hinder – Any element or occurrence that affects play. Examples: a stray ball that enters the court or people who disrupt play by walking across the court.
- Let – A serve that hits the net cord and lands in the service court. Let may also refer to a rally that must be replayed for any reason.
- Lob – A shot that returns the ball as high and deep as possible, forcing the opposing side back to the baseline.
- Non-Volley Zone – The section of court adjacent to the net in which you cannot volley the ball. It includes all lines surrounding the zone. The NVZ is only two dimensional and does not rise above the court surface.
- Overhead Slam/Smash – A hard, overhand shot usually resulting from an opponent’s lob, high return, or high bounce.
- Rally – Continuous play that occurs after the serve and before a fault.
- Replays – Any rallies that are replayed for any reason without the awarding of a point or a side out.
- Service Court – The area on either side of the centerline, bounded by the non-volley line, the baseline and the sideline. All lines are included in the service court except the non-volley line.
- Side Out – Declared after one side loses its service and other side is awarded service.
- Technical Foul –The referee is empowered to add one point to a player’s score or a team’s score when the opponent violates one of the rules that warrant a technical foul or, in the referee’s judgment, the opponent is being overly and deliberately abusive.
- Volley – Hitting the ball in the air, during a rally before the ball has a chance to bounce onto the court.

G. Brief History of Pickleball

- Created in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, Washington as a game for the whole family to play.
- Castoff pieces of a badminton set were used and initial rules taken from that game.
- Accounts vary about the name. One version is from the wife of Joel Pritchard, one of the inventors: “The combination of different sports reminded me of the pickle boat in crew where oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats.” Another of the three founders, Barney McCallum (Bill Bell is the third), maintains that the Pritchards’ dog’s name was Pickles and he consistently chased the whiffle-type ball; hence, the name

“pickleball.” The “Pickles” version is most widely accepted, but the truth may encompass both.

- The original USA Pickleball Association was organized in 1984 to promote the growth and development of pickleball on a national level. It was reorganized in 2005 and is now a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. It is the principle founding member of the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP), which includes 5 other member countries.
- Today, estimates of the number of players vary from a few hundred thousand to more than two million. The USAPA lists approximately 5,000 places to play across all 50 states and has eight regions with more than 1,200 local ambassadors promoting the sport.
- The USA Pickleball Association is the National Governing Body (NGB) of the sport.

H. USAPA Pickleball Teacher Program

USAPA has developed a four-phase program to assist those members who are in a position to teach new and developing players. The newly released *Guidelines for Teaching Pickleball*, available only to USAPA members in good standing, are the first phase of this evolving program.

The *Guidelines* include, but are not be limited to:

- Prerequisites for teaching pickleball
- Code of Conduct for pickleball teachers
- Standard content for beginner/novice lessons (safety and rules of the game, court etiquette, basic strokes and strategies)
- Suggested stretches and drills
- Sample lesson plans for adults
- Considerations for teaching youth
- Appendices with selected definitions, brief history of pickleball, sample liability form, etc.

Phase II, when released, will offer USAPA members who teach pickleball the opportunity to become USAPA Registered Pickleball Teachers. This acknowledges that the individual has met the requirements for registration and has agreed to follow the *USAPA Guidelines for Teaching Pickleball*. However, it does not constitute endorsement on the part of USAPA of the teaching or pickleball playing skills of these teachers since, at present, we have no viable means of evaluating them.

Registration will consist of an online process that requires:

- Downloading the *USAPA Teaching Guidelines*
- Passing two online teacher tests: a teacher rules test and a *Teaching Guidelines* test
- Agreeing to adhere to the *USAPA Teaching Guidelines* when teaching
- Applying online to become a registered USAPA pickleball teacher
- Paying a nominal annual fee (which covers administrative costs and credentials)

Benefits of registering and renewing annually as a pickleball teacher:

- Direct support from the USAPA Training Department
- Registered Teacher Credentials
- Notification of *USAPA Teaching Guidelines* updates
- Confidence in having passed the current *Teacher Rules* and *Teaching Guidelines* tests

- Free listing in the online USAPA Registered Teacher Directory (see Phase III below)

Phase III will comprise a multi-tiered directory of registered teachers that will be available to the public on USAPA.org. The directory will:

- Establish an all-in-one-place source of registered pickleball teachers who have agreed to follow the *USAPA Guidelines for Teaching Pickleball* and passed the teaching tests. Inquiries and member surveys have indicated that there is a significant population of potential pickleball players across the country interested in learning the game from local teachers.
- List teachers by tier within each state/city (similar to Places to Play, but updated annually with re-registration).
- Be categorized as follows:
 - Tier I – Directory of Free Teaching Sources who do not charge a fee.
 - Consists primarily of recreational teachers of beginning and novice players who do not charge for their services.
 - Listing included with \$10 annual teacher registration fee (see Phase II above).

Tier II – Directory of Fee-based Teaching Sources

- Same as Tier I, but lists registered recreational teachers who do charge a fee for their services.
- Directory listing free with annual \$25 registration fee.
- Charging a higher registration/listing fee avoids perception of free advertising for those earning income teaching pickleball.

Tier III – Directory of Commercial Teaching Facilities/Certified Teachers

- Directory listing free with annual \$50 registration fee.
- Certified professional teachers/coaches would most likely make up the bulk of this group.
- Proof of certification required (e.g., IPTPA)

Phase IV – Certification of Professional Teachers

At this time USAPA does not intend to develop a professional teaching certification, but will concentrate resources on materials to support the greater population of recreational teachers who contribute substantially to the growing numbers of recreational pickleball players nationwide. USAPA member teachers who desire to earn professional pickleball teaching credentials will be referred to the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association (IPTPA).

###

I. Release of Liability Form

SAMPLE

RELEASE, PERMISSION, AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

Release. In consideration of being permitted to participate in any way in the [name of clinic] (“the Clinic”), I, for myself, my heirs or assigns, **hereby release, waive, discharge and covenant not to sue** [add necessary others such as facility name, city/private community name, plus names of Clinic directors] and the USA Pickleball Association, their officers, employees and agents from liability **from any and all claims** resulting in personal injuries, accidents or illnesses (including death) and property loss arising from, but not limited to, participation in the Clinic.

Assumption of Risk. Participation in the Clinic carries with it certain inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injuries. The specific risks vary but include 1) minor injuries such as bruises, sprains and dehydration, 2) major injuries such as eye injuries, joint or back injuries, heat stroke, heart attacks, and concussions, and 3) catastrophic injuries such as paralysis and death. **I have read the previous paragraphs and I know, understand and appreciate these and other risks that are inherent in playing pickleball. I assert that my participation is voluntary and that I knowingly assume all such risks.**

Indemnification and Hold Harmless. I also agree to indemnify and hold [add names] USA Pickleball Association harmless from any and all claims, actions, suits, costs, expenses, damages and liabilities, including attorney’s fees brought as a result of my involvement in the Clinic.

Use Permission. I also give [name] and its agents and designees permission to use or distribute, without limitation or obligation, my image, name, voice, and words for any purpose connected with the Clinic, including promotional, marketing, training, informational, and archival uses.

Signature of Participant Print Name of Participant Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian if Minor Print Name of Minor’s Parent/Guardian Date Minor’s Age

END of Guidelines