

British Columbia PICKLEBALL RULES
Revised: October, 2011

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INTRODUCTION...

Pickleball is a simple paddle game played with a special perforated plastic ball over a tennis type net, on a Badminton sized court. The ball is served **underhanded**, swinging the paddle **below the waist**, without bouncing it from the court. The ball is served to the opponent's service zone. Points are scored by the serving side only and occur when the opponent faults (see Section V. "Faults"). The server continues to serve, alternating service courts, until server faults. A game is **won** by the first team which **scores eleven (11)** points, but must continue until one team achieves a **two (2) point** margin.

I. Court Layout and Equipment

- a. The 20' x 44' court is standard for singles and doubles play. It includes a non-volley zone line that is seven (7) feet from the net, on each side of the net and runs across the 20' width of the court. A serving centerline splits the court running from baseline to non-volley zone line.

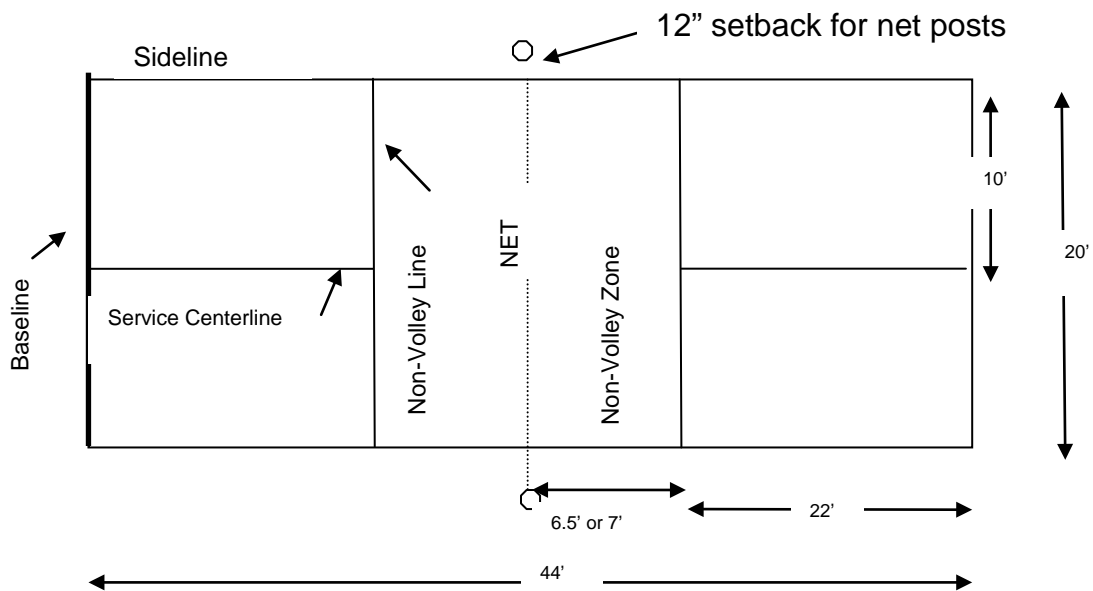


Figure 1

Note: Net height is 34" at center and 36" at support posts.

- b. The official paddle's combined length and width shall not exceed 24 inches. Most standard paddles measure 8 ¼ inches wide x 15 ½ inches long. The surface shall not contain holes, indentations, rough texture or any features designed to allow a player to impart abnormal spin on the ball. There are no limitations on thickness, type of material and weight.
- c. The official outdoor ball is made of a durable plastic with 40 holes. This ball has a smooth surface, free of texturing and weighs no more than 25 grams or 9/10ths of an ounce. Balls such as the Pickleball, Inc. ball, the Dura ball and the Singapore ball meet the required specifications for outdoor use. Cosom balls or jug balls, or the newly approved ball called the "Mach Z" can be used for indoor use.

II. Serving Rules

A. Service Sequence

- a. Players may use any variety of ways to determine where teams are positioned on the court and which team serves first, as long as there is mutual agreement of the teams.

- b. A possible determinant exists in the coin toss method utilized in tournament play.
 - i. The winner of the coin toss may choose; to serve, to receive, or which side of the court to play on.
 - ii. The loser of the coin toss selects a remaining option.
- c. The team serving the **initial serve of the game**, called the **Start**, is allowed only **one fault**, before passing the serve to the opposite team. After that, **each team member** must serve and fault before passing service to the opposing team.
- d. Serve always starts in the right hand court and alternates from right hand side of the court to left hand side of the court as long as the server holds the serve. The receiving team does not alternate positions.
- e. The server must serve crosscourt. (To the court diagonally opposite).

B. **Serving**

a. **Server's Responsibility**

- i. The server should call out the score and server prior to each serve. (your score, opponents score, server. Example – 5/5/2)
- ii. The receiver of a serve is not required to play the serve if the score is not called out.
- iii. There is no fault in this situation and the serve is replayed.

b. **Serve Position**

- i. The server must keep both feet behind the baseline during the serve with at least one foot on the ground at the time the ball is struck.
- ii. The serve must be made while the server's feet are behind the serving court baseline and inside the imaginary lines extending from the court centerline and each sideline.
- iii. The server's partner has no such restrictions and is free to establish position anywhere on or off the court.

c. **Serve Characteristics**

- I. The serve must be made with an underhand stroke so that contact with the ball is made below the waist.
- ii. Underhand defined: The arm must be moving in an upward arc with the paddle aligned vertically so that the paddle head shall be below the wrist when the ball is struck.
- iii. The serve must be made without bouncing the ball off the court.
- iv. The serve must clear the net and land in the service zone diagonally across from the server.
- v. Serves landing on the opposing side 1) Baseline, 2) Service Centerline 3) Sideline are good, however, serves landing on the non-volley line (Kitchen Line) are faults. See Section V. "Faults."
- vi. During the serve it is a fault if the server misses the ball when trying to hit it. If the ball lands on the ground without the server swinging at the ball, it is not a fault.

d. **Receiving Serve**

- i. The receiving player positioned diagonally across from the server must return the serve.
- ii. It is a point if the served ball is touched or struck by the receiver's partner.
- iii. The serve must bounce, only once, in the proper service zone before it is returned.

- iv. The receiving player may return the ball anywhere inside the serving team's court.
- v. Either of the serving team's members may play the returned ball after it has bounced, only once, inside the serving team's court.
- vi. Once the serve and return of serve have bounced, the ball may be volleyed or played off a bounce.

e. **Let Serve**

- i. A serve striking the net and landing within the service court is called a "let" and another serve is necessary.
- ii. There is no limit to the number of times a "let" can occur.

III. **Non-Volley Zone**

A. **Definition:**

The non-volley zone is defined as that area of the court extending seven (7) feet from each side of the net, including the non-volley zone line and that part of the sidelines extending from the net to the non-volley zone line. In the case of indoor play when existing badminton courts are being used, the non-volley zone (or Kitchen) line is 6 ½ feet instead of seven feet. This is acceptable. All other rules apply.

B. **Non-volley zone rules**

- i. A player, a player's clothing or a player's paddle are not allowed to touch the court on or over the non-volley zone while volleying the ball.
- ii. A player's momentum is considered part of a volley. Therefore, a fault will be declared if, in the act of volleying the ball, a **player's momentum** causes the player, their clothing, or paddle, to touch the court, **on or over** the non-volley line.
- iii. Players may enter or stand in the non-volley zone at **any time** as long as they do not volley the ball.
- iv. A player may step into the non-volley zone to hit a ground stroke.
- v. It is acceptable for a player's momentum to carry them into the non-volley zone following the player's groundstroke.

IV. **Other Rules**

- A. The ball shall only be played by one team member each time it is played across the net.
- B. **Hand hitting the ball:** Balls hit by the paddle hand below the wrist (toward the fingers) while holding the paddle are legal.
- C. **Double/Carry hits:** A ball hit during one continuous single direction stroke is legal even though the ball may be unintentionally hit twice or "carried".
- D. A player shall only play with **one paddle**.
PLEASE NOTE: It is strongly recommended that all players wear impact resistant protective glasses in all play. These are available (Head Brand) for approximately \$11.00. Similar to risk in other racquet sports, there is the possibility of eye injuries.
IN ADDITION: Court shoes are necessary as a precaution against foot, ankle or other injuries.
- E. **Switching hands:** The paddle may be switched from hand to hand at any time. Two-handed shots are also legal.
- F. **Catching the ball:** It is a fault to catch the ball before it bounces.

- G. **Around the net:** It is acceptable for a ball being played to land on the opponents' court by traveling around the net post and not passing directly over the net.
- H. **Between the net and net post:** It is a fault if a ball passes between the net and net post.
- I. **Net support post:** Any ball hitting the post holding the net is declared a fault.
- J. **Reaching over the net:** A ball that bounces onto your side of the court and spins back over the net (ie. Breaking the plane of the net) must be struck by your team before it touches your opponents' court. Reaching over the net to hit the ball is considered a valid return as long as you, your clothing, or your paddle do not touch the net.
- K. If the wrong team member accidentally serves the ball or if the ball is served from the wrong court, the serve stands. The next service is then given back to the correct server or is made from the correct side.

V. **Faults – It shall be a fault when:**

- A. A team fails to hit the ball over the net on service or return.
- B. A served ball hits the net and strikes the receiver or the receiver's partner. The serving team gets the point.
- C. A team fails to hit the ball before it bounces twice.
- D. A player strikes the ball and the ball lands out.
- E. The player, player's clothing or paddle touches the net during a stroke or on a follow through stroke.
- F. The ball strikes a player's paddle and is not returned, or the ball strikes a player or the player's clothing, whether the player is in or out of bounds.
- G. A team cannot be certain the ball was out of bounds and fails to return it. The fault is on the team that failed to return the ball.
- H. There is a violation of a serving rule (including if the ball strikes the non-volley line on service).
- I. There is a violation of a non-volley zone rule.
- J. There is a violation of any other rule.

VI. **Courtesy Rules**

A. **Calling lines**

- i. Players are responsible for making accurate line calls on their side of the net.
- ii. All questionable calls made by your team must be resolved in favour of the opponent.
- iii. A player may ask the opponents opinion if the opponent was in a better position to see the ball. The opponents' opinion, if requested, must be accepted. There is no replay.
- iv. A ball shall not be called "out" prior to it hitting the ground.

B. **Foot Faults**

Rallies at the non-volley zone are played so fast that foot faults are difficult to determine and are often not called. The player with the best opportunity to observe a foot fault is often the player that committed the fault, or their partner. You and your partner must be conscious of your foot location throughout rallies played near the non-volley zone and **call faults on yourselves.**

C. Distraction call

- i. Any player may claim a distraction any time there is some activity or event that breaks their concentration on the game. Examples of distractions include, but are not limited to; objects on the court, "ball on court" calls, people moving through or near your court, inaccurate score calling or server does not call the score, indecisive or confusing line calls, loud noises outside the court, etc.
- ii. No fault is assessed on an unintentional distraction. The ball is replayed.
- iii. A fault shall be called on a player creating an intentional distraction.

VII. Scoring

- A. The first team to score at least eleven (11) points and surpass the opposing team by two (2) points is declared the winner
- B. Points are only awarded to the serving team when the opposing team faults.

VIII. Singles Play

All rules for doubles play apply to singles play with the exception that players serve from the **right hand side** of the court when they have no score or **an even** number score, and from the **left hand side** of the court when they have an **odd number** score.

IX. **TOURNAMENT PLAY**

Possible Tournament Format

Tournament Formats: There are five (5) tournament formats that may be used. The particular format is typically the choice of the Tournament Sponsor or the Tournament Director.'

- A. **Single Elimination**
All players are guaranteed at least one (1) game. The loser is out of the tournament.
- B. **Double Elimination**
All players are guaranteed at least two (2) games. A loss will either put the loser into a consolation bracket for third place or put the loser into a loser bracket, where the winner of the loser bracket will play for the championship (the loser must win twice).
- C. **Drop Flight**
All players start at the Open level. A loss in the first round will drop you into the A level. A first round loss in the A level will drop you into the B level. If you win a first round match in any level then you stay at that level. There is typically a consolation bracket for the second-round losers of each level.
- D. **Round Robin**
All players will play each other. The player winning the most matches is declared the winner.
- E. **Point Award**
Similar to a Round Robin, but one (1) point is awarded for each win. No points are awarded for a loss. In addition, a player or team winning the match by winning the first two (2) games receives an additional point.
- F. **Draws**
 - i. If possible, all draws shall be made at least two (2) days before the tournament commences. The seeding method of drawing shall be approved by the BC Pickleball Association.
 - ii. The Tournament Director shall chair the Draw and Seeding Committee, which shall include at least one player representative. No other persons shall participate in the draw or seeding except by invitation of the Tournament Director.
- G. **Notice of Matches**
It is the responsibility of each player to check the posted schedules to determine the time and place of each match. If any change is made in the schedule after posting, the Tournament Director or his designated representative shall notify the players of the change.
- H. **Forfeited Matches**
A forfeit is a loss by default. It usually occurs because a player or team did not show up on time, because of player injury, or for misconduct. A player or team forfeiting a match for any reason shall lose the match as if that player or team lost the first two (2) games of that match. Therefore, the other player or team wins the match as if that player or team won the first two (2) games of that match. The winning player or team shall receive the appropriate point score or advance to the next level.
- I. **Consolation Matches**
In all BC PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION sanctioned tournaments, each entrant shall be entitled to participate in a minimum of two scheduled matches per event entered. This means that losers of their first match shall have the opportunity to compete in the event's

consolation bracket. The consolation matches may be modified at the discretion of the Tournament Director (e.g., one game to 15 points), but this modification must be established either verbally or in writing to all players before the tournament begins or on the tournament application. If a first match is scheduled with an opponent who, for any reason, must "forfeit," then that scheduled match is considered a "win." The Tournament Director is not at fault if a player or team wins their first match by forfeit and then loses a second match and, thus, only plays one match. This is known as "luck of the draw," and the person who falls into this category will not go into consolation play.

Tournament Handout – issued September, 2011

Note: This is as a reference only and is subject to tournament specifics

TOURNAMENT INFORMATION:

1. Mens and Ladies Doubles will be in a round robin format
2. Mixed doubles will be in compass draw format
3. There will be no referees – players will call their own games
4. USAPA rules will be followed. All paddles are welcome
5. All matches to play to 11 points
6. Water cooler on site
7. Coin toss will determine which team will start
8. No spectators allowed in gyms or lower floor
9. All bags and personal items to be stored in designated room (please note, door will be unlocked)
10. Please purchase a \$0.50 or \$0.25 locker for your valuables
11. Buzzer will announce the start of the tournament.
12. If you need immediate first aid treatment, please look for our first aid attendant. First aid station is located downstairs to the right of the elevator.

J. Referees

It is recommended that that semis and finals be refereed with a stipend paid to the referees.

If anyone in the competitive division wishes a referee, they have only to request in advance of their match and one will be provided at any stage of the competition.

In order to garner sufficient referees, it is recommended that a request go out to attendees 3 weeks before competition asking for experienced volunteers who are not playing or who are willing to referee between matches or if they get knocked out Or if their two allowed categories have been exhausted.