

# **MPC Standard Pickleball Rules**

# Chapter 1. Mechanics of the game

If you're new to racquet sports, you might find this information handy.

Pickleball, like tennis, is all about using your paddle to keep the ball moving back and forth in a controlled sequence.

The ball can only bounce once on each side of the court before being *returned*, or sent to your opponent's side. Under certain circumstances, you can also return the ball without it bouncing. This is called a *volley*.

When a player breaks the sequence, it is a *fault*. Common faults include hitting the ball into the net, letting it bounce twice in a row, or sending it out of bounds.

## Chapter 2. Serving basics

These serving guidelines apply to any form of pickleball.

All serves must be underhand, and from behind the baseline with at least one foot.

Serves must be cross-court diagonally, landing within the service court at the cater-corner to the server's own. The baselines, sidelines, and center line are considered in. The kitchen line is considered out.

You have only one attempt per rally to make a successful serve, unless there is a **let**. A let is when the ball touches the net on the serve and still lands in the correct service court. In this case, the server must try again.

If, on a serve, the ball hits the top of the net then lands on the kitchen line on the other side, it is out of bounds and not considered a let.

## Chapter 3. The singles serving sequence

In singles, the serving player will serve from the right court when their score is even, and from the left court when their score is odd. If the serving player faults, the ball goes to their opponent.

# Chapter 4. The doubles serving sequence

In doubles, the serving sequence ensures each player has fair opportunity to serve from both sides of the court.

1. Once a team gains possession of the ball, the first serve is made by the player on the right. We'll call them "Server 1," and their partner "Server 2." In this case, Server 1 must serve to the opposing team's right court.
2. If the receiving team faults, the serving teammates switch places. Server 1 must now send the ball to the opposing team's left court.
3. Server 1 will continue to serve and switch places until their team faults. "*Second serve*" may be announced. The serving teammates do not switch sides, and Server 2 must send the ball into the service court diagonal from their current position.
4. Once Server 2 faults, the ball goes to the opposing team to serve. This is called a **side-out**. The sequence repeats from Step 1.

# Chapter 5. Serving at the start of a doubles game

At the beginning of a doubles game, the sequence starts directly with Server 2. The starting score is always *0-0-2*. (Some clubs use the unofficial *0-0-start* to denote the unique sequence.

Once the starting team faults, this is a side-out and the serve goes to the right player on the opposing team.

# Chapter 6. The kitchen

For its simplicity, pickleball has quite a few rules regarding when you can volley.

The kitchen is sometimes called the *non-volley zone*. It is the space within 7 feet on both sides of the net. You cannot volley while standing in the kitchen for any reason; this is a surprisingly common fault.

USAPA keeps an exhaustive list of what constitutes a kitchen fault, but it can be boiled down to five basic principles.

1. If, when volleying, you have even one foot in the kitchen and/or on the kitchen line, it's a fault.
2. If momentum carries you or anything you are wearing or carrying into the kitchen while volleying, it's a fault.
3. If, right after volleying, you touch the kitchen, it's a fault. Even if the ball is declared dead before you touch the kitchen, it is still a fault.
4. You can stand in the kitchen at any time, *so long as you're not volleying*.
5. The kitchen is a two-dimensional rectangle, not a three-dimensional box. You can volley if the ball is over the kitchen, so long as your feet are not in the kitchen.

# Chapter 7. The two-bounce rule

A key difference between pickleball and other racquet sports lies in a mere two bounces.

When the ball is served, the receiving team **MUST** let it bounce in their court before returning the serve.

After the return, the serving team **MUST** then let the ball bounce in *their* court.

Only after the ball has bounced once in each court is it legal to volley. Otherwise, it's a fault.



# Chapter 8. Making line calls

How does one call an out in pickleball, and when?

*Line calls* determine whether the ball is in or out of bounds.

When a pickleball bounces, only a small fraction of its surface area makes contact with the ground. As such, line calls in pickleball must be incredibly precise.

Our club standard is that unless the ball is blatantly out of bounds, at least two players must declare the ball out, within a reasonable amount of time, for the line call to result in a fault.

- If the ball lands on a line, it's in.
- If the ball lands in the kitchen on the serve, even if on the correct side of the court, it's a fault.
- If the ball hits the kitchen line on the serve, it's out and a service fault.
- If you are otherwise in doubt, it's in.

## Chapter 9. Standard scoring

Play to eleven, win by two. No points for receiving; that is true.

A typical pickleball game is played to 11 points and won by two points.

Overtime starts when the score reaches 10-10. The rules for overtime play are the same as the rules for normal play.

Important to pickleball is that ***only the currently serving team can score points***. While this rule can make games a little longer, it also makes for some riveting comebacks and upsets.

Scores are announced before each serve. The server/serving team's score is announced first, then the receiver/receiving team's.

In doubles, a third number, either 1 or 2, indicates which teammate is serving. Refer to ["The doubles serving sequence" \(on page 5\)](#) for more information.

To comply with the doubles serving sequence, the very first serve of a doubles game is always scored 0-0-2. "2," in this case, is the player standing behind the right service court.