

# **Rulebook of the Minnesota Pickleball Club**

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# Chapter 1. Mechanics and serving

## Basic mechanics

Like most racquet sports, pickleball 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 before it bounces on your side of the court. This is called a *volley*.

When a player breaks the sequence, such as by hitting the ball into the net, letting it bounce twice in a row, or sending it out of bounds, they have committed a *fault* (sometimes called an *error*.)

The time from when the ball is *served* (set in motion) to the time a fault is committed is called a *rally*. If you fault, either the other team will gain points or you/your team will lose the opportunity to serve.

## How to serve

Regardless of the kind of pickleball you are playing, there are a few standard serving rules.

All serves must be underhand, and from behind your side's baseline with at least one foot. The baseline marks the very back of the court.

Serves must be cross-court diagonally. This means that they must land within the service court at the cater-corner of your own.

The baseline, sidelines, and center line are considered in. The kitchen line is considered out.

You only have 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. If you let, you must try again.

**There are many different methods of serving, but this is the best one for beginners.**

1. Determine your place in the serving sequence, then announce the current score of the game. See "The singles serving sequence," "The doubles serving sequence," and "Scoring basics" for more details.
2. Point your entire body in the direction you need to serve. Step slightly forward with your left foot. This will set you up for a driving "pivot" motion that will add depth to your serve.
3. With your left hand, hold the ball in front of your paddle. Hold the paddle so the handle is pointing toward your upper body (usually this is a 10:00 position.)
4. Let go of the ball with your left hand. At the same time, pivot with your right foot and drive the paddle forward, keeping your wrist straight.

## Flow of a singles game

The singles serving sequence is very much like other racquet sports.

**In singles, once you receive the ball, your first serve will always be from the right court.**

**If you score a point**, both you and your opponent will switch to the other service court, and you will be serving along the opposite diagonal.

**If you fault**, your opponent gets to serve from their own right service court. When this happens, it is called a *side-out*.

The general rule of thumb for singles is that you will serve from the right court when your score is even, and from the left court when your score is odd.

## Flow of a doubles game

In doubles, the flow of the game is fundamental to scoring. A strict serving sequence ensures each teammate has the opportunity to use both service courts.

Once a team gains possession of the ball after a side-out, the new serving teammates receive numbers based on their court position.

- The player on the right service court immediately after the side-out is *One*.
- The player on the left service court immediately after the side-out is *Two*.

To begin the next rally, *One* serves to the opposing team's right court.

**When *One's* team scores a point**, the serving teammates switch places with each other. *One* must now send the ball to the opposing team's left court. *One* will continue to serve and switch places until either they or their teammate fault.

**If *One's* team faults**, *One* will pass the serve to *Two*. The teammates do not switch places.

The sequence now proceeds to *Two*. They must serve from their current side of the court.

**When *Two's* team scores a point**, the serving teammates switch places with each other as before.

**If *Two's* team faults**, it is a side-out. The serve goes to the other team, and the sequence repeats.

## The exception: starting a doubles game

The only exception to the standard doubles flow is at the very start of the game.

At the beginning of a doubles game, only the right-hand player on the serving team has the opportunity to serve. They are *Two*.

If *Two* faults, it is a side-out. The sequence proceeds as normal, with *One* on the other team receiving the ball.

# Chapter 2. Faults and scoring

## The two-bounce rule

A large difference between pickleball and other racquet sports lies in just two simple bounces.

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

The serving team must then let the ball bounce in their own court.

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

## Kitchen rules

Pickleball's rules against close volleys are among the most numerous of any racquet sport.

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.**

USAPA, the governing body of American pickleball, keeps an exhaustive list of what does and does not constitute a kitchen fault. For sake of simplicity, we boil them down to five rules.

**A kitchen fault IS committed when:**

1. the volleying player has even one foot in the kitchen and/or on the kitchen line.
2. momentum carries the volleying player, or anything they are wearing/carrying, into the kitchen.
3. a player touches the kitchen right after volleying, even if the ball is declared dead beforehand.

**A kitchen fault IS NOT committed when:**

1. there is no volley. So long as the ball bounces before you hit it, you can stand in the kitchen at any time.
2. the ball is over the kitchen AND you are not standing in the kitchen. Remember that the kitchen is a 2D "rectangle," not a 3D "box."

## Making line calls

A few hard and fast rules can help determine if the ball is in or out.

*Line calls* are determinations regarding whether the ball is in bounds. A few hard and fast rules can help determine if the ball is in or out of bounds.

1. **Keep your eye on the ball.** When a pickleball bounces, only a small fraction of its surface area makes contact with the ground. As such, line calling requires a great degree of precision.
2. **Consider the stage of the rally.** If the ball hits the kitchen line on the serve, it is a service fault, even if the ball contacts the net before going over.
3. **Consider the lines of the court.** If the ball lands on an outside line, it is always considered in.
4. **Consult other players, including the opposing team.** A good standard is that at least two players must have seen where the ball landed within a reasonable amount of time for it to be considered out.
5. **What the opponent says usually goes.** Out of fairness, if both teammates on the calling side are in doubt, the ball is considered in.
6. **If everyone is in doubt, either redo the rally or call the ball in.** Both of these options are ideal. The important thing is that you offer ample courtesy and the benefit of the doubt to your opponents.

## Traditional scoring

The traditional mode of pickleball scoring is designed to fit with the flow of the game.

A typical pickleball game is played to 11 points and won by two points. Overtime starts when the score reaches 10-10. It is played by the same rules as normal time.

Important to pickleball is that **only the serving team can score points.**

Scores are announced before each serve as follows.

- First, announce the server/serving team's score.
- Next, announce the receiver/receiving team's score.
- If you are playing doubles, a third number is included representing which teammate is serving. It can be 1 or 2. Refer to [Flow of a doubles game \(on page 2\)](#) for more information.
- Remember that the very first serve of a doubles game is always scored 0-0-2. "2" in this case represents the player in the right service court.

## Rally scoring

If we're pressed on time, we may switch to rally scoring. Though this changes the flow of the game, it makes things faster and a bit more suspenseful.

- Under rally scoring, any player/team can score points, regardless if they are serving or receiving.
- **If the serving player/team scores a point,** you will change positions as normal according to the flow of the game. (See [Flow of a singles game \(on page 2\)](#) or [Flow of a doubles game \(on page 2\)](#).)
- **There is no second server in rally scoring.** If you or your team loses a rally, you do not change sides and the other player/team gets the serve.)