



# **2023 USA PICKLEBALL OFFICIATING HANDBOOK**

# 2023 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook

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1. [1.B.10.b](#): Clarified referee asking another referee for assistance.
2. [3.L](#): Added mini-singles.
3. [4.B.5](#): Added optional arm/hand signal.
4. [5.A.4.a.2](#): Deleted the Note.
5. [5.A.4.b and c](#): Added guidance on questions asked after the serve is hit.
6. [5.A.5](#), [5.A.5.c.1](#) and [Table 2](#): Clarified the time period for stopping play.
7. [5.A.5.b.2](#) and [5.A.5.c.2](#): Clarified type of question or comment to ignore.
8. [5.E.1.h](#): Added reference to the Casebook.
9. [5.E.3.b](#): Clarified player's withdrawal after a retirement.
10. [5.F](#): Added player verbally stopping play.
11. [5.G.4 and 4.a](#): Clarified referee's authority regarding degraded ball.
12. [5.G.4.d](#): Clarified applicability of a verbal warning.
13. [6.B.2.e](#): Added informing both teams of a score adjustment.
14. [7.B](#): Clarified Lead Referee's responsibilities during the serve.
15. [7.C.1.a](#): Added two calls to the list.
16. [7.C.1.b](#): Added two issues to the list.
17. [7.C.2](#): Added to the Second Referee positions.
18. [Appendix B](#): Added rule references throughout the table; revised footnote 1.
19. [Appendix D](#): Corrected referee call responsibilities in Sample Briefings 1 and 2; added match format to Sample Briefing 2.

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# 2023 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook



## Introduction and Purpose

The *2023 USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook* is intended as a guide for referees and line judges at all levels of officiated pickleball events and addresses both singles and doubles play. The procedures, techniques, and tips in this Handbook represent USA Pickleball officiating best practices, based on the [2023 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#).


The best practices presented in this Handbook are also based on the [USA Pickleball Official Referee Casebook](#), as well as the experiences of seasoned referees who regularly officiate USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournaments. The Casebook contains official rulings relative to certain situations that may be encountered during pickleball matches. This Handbook, the Rulebook, and the Casebook are all downloadable on the [Officiating Page](#) on the USA Pickleball Website.

This Handbook does not go into a detailed explanation of every rule but focuses on standardized officiating procedures and techniques. It assumes that readers already have a basic knowledge of the game, a good understanding of the rules, and at least some experience officiating, even if that experience is only refereeing or line judging recreational games for practice.

Following these best practices enables referees to interpret the rules uniformly, apply them consistently, and standardize how pickleball tournaments are officiated. This helps foster a positive and enjoyable experience for players and game officials alike during officiated competition.

This Handbook also serves as the official resource for use during USA Pickleball referee and line judge training courses. USA Pickleball referees and line judges are required to use the best practices set forth in this Handbook.

**NOTE:** Light blue shading used in this Handbook indicates changes for 2023, or substantive clarification of best practice procedures or rules.

Items that appear *in italics* are optional procedures. All other items are required best practice. The talking head symbol  indicates standardized words to be used for specific calls and announcements. **NOTE:** A compilation of standardized calls and announcements is contained in Appendix C.

## How to Use This Handbook

Referees should study this entire Handbook. Section 8 of this Handbook is the study guide for line judges.

In conjunction with studying this Handbook, you should review the [2023 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#). You should work to understand not only the language but also how the rules should be applied when refereeing or line judging a match. Also, take the [Referee Test](#), the [Line Judge Test](#), and the [Player Test](#) provided on the USA Pickleball website. You can take these tests as many times and as frequently as you like. Since new questions appear each time they are taken, it is highly recommended that you take the tests at least twice each year and before refereeing at an upcoming tournament.

## Training

You can find detailed program requirements on the [Officiating page](#) on the USA Pickleball website. Completion of a USA Pickleball referee training course, including line judge training, will help you learn standard tournament procedures and proper completion of the scoresheet. However, knowing the tournament rules and learning the best referee and line judge practices are only the start of effective refereeing. Most importantly, you need to get out on the court and practice using these procedures.

## Practice

Begin officiating in a non-tournament environment to build confidence and work your way up to more competitive matches. If there is no provision for scheduled practice at your home courts, consider asking recreational players if they mind having you referee or line judge one or two of their games. In addition, ask a local referee trainer, if available, to observe and critique your performance. Singles matches are, in general, easier to referee since it is not necessary to keep track of first and second servers, making these matches a good choice for initial referee practice. Blank USA Pickleball/PickleballTournaments.com scoresheets to use for practice can be downloaded from the [Officiating page](#). When you are comfortable using the scoresheet, calling the correct score, watching for foot faults, and keeping the game moving at a smooth, consistent pace, volunteer to referee in a local tournament. Those interested in line judging should also practice and gain confidence before volunteering at a local tournament.

Training and practice opportunities are available at sanctioned tournaments where referees and line judges can shadow experienced officials and discuss best practices with them. The referee coordinator can also arrange for an experienced official to shadow you for the first few matches you officiate; this provides an immediate resource should a question arise and ensures a well-officiated match. Continue to work with an experienced official and build your confidence through officiating a variety of events at tournaments.

## Terminology

This Handbook is written using certain terms that you should be aware of in order to fully understand the information presented.

**“Starting server” and “first server”:** The term “starting server” is used consistently throughout this Handbook to refer to the player who starts serving for their team at the beginning of the game (i.e., the player who wears the starting server identification). The term “first server” refers only to the player who serves first after a side out (who may or may not be the player wearing the starting server identification).

**“Team”:** This Handbook is written in the context of doubles play, using the term “team.” However, much of the information is equally applicable to singles play, so in singles context the term “team” means “player.”

## Navigating this Handbook

Hyperlinks are provided to facilitate online navigation in this Handbook. Each entry in the Table of Contents is a hyperlink. Click anywhere on a title and you will jump to the beginning of that section. A hyperlink is provided at the end of each lettered subsection to return to the Table of Contents.

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## Section 1: Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Referees

The referee's main responsibility is to ensure that USA Pickleball rules set forth in the [2023 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook](#) are followed. The Rulebook provides the rules necessary for social and organized play and "preserves the traditional nature and character of the sport and the skills traditionally required to play the sport."

The rules are updated as necessary but not less than on an annual basis. **It is your responsibility to stay current on the rules.** Changes to the rules for 2023 are explained in the [2023 Rules Change Document](#) on the USA Pickleball website. Knowing the rules thoroughly protects the integrity of the sport and ensures matches are conducted fairly.

### A. Primary Responsibilities [Rule 13.C]

During an officiated match, your primary responsibilities are to:

1. Interpret and enforce the rules.
2. Keep and announce the correct score.
3. Speak clearly and audibly. Use a clear, distinct and measured cadence when making calls and announcements.
4. Recognize whether the server and receiver are the correct players in the correct positions.
5. Call service, non-volley zone (NVZ), short serve, and other faults.
6. Maintain control and keep the match moving efficiently.
7. Resolve disputes.
8. Enforce fair play and sportsmanship by issuing verbal warnings, technical warnings and technical fouls, as appropriate.
9. Rule on line calls when appealed by a player or not seen by a line judge.
10. Make sure the court environment is safe for play.

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### B. Code of Conduct

Referees develop their own officiating style, but all must adhere to the best practices presented in this Handbook. Referees must also abide by the [USA Pickleball Compliance Policy and Procedure for Credentialed Officials](#) and the following Code of Conduct. It is important that you:

1. **ALWAYS** enforce all rules **impartially, fairly, and consistently**, even if you do not agree with a particular rule or if your ruling is made at a critical time (e.g., a fault called on match point).
2. Use common sense and good judgment to address situations not expressly covered by the Rulebook, the Casebook or this Handbook. Because the Rulebook and this Handbook do not predict every circumstance you may encounter on the court, your "best friend" in these situations may be Rule 13.C.



3. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor at all times.
    - a. Maintain control without being dictatorial.
    - b. Display confidence in your actions and rulings.
    - c. Treat players, line judges, other referees, and spectators with respect.
    - d. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while at the court.
    - e. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of any player.
    - f. Acknowledge and comply with reasonable player requests (e.g., to speak louder, stop moving around, slow the pace of the game, etc.)
  4. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Devote full attention to the match being refereed.
  5. Be sure your personal electronic devices are on silent or are turned off.
  6. Wear neat, clean attire that is comfortable and suitable for the weather conditions and meets the requirements for referee apparel at tournaments.
  7. Keep an upright stance for a professional appearance (i.e., avoid leaning on a fence or against a wall).
  8. Avoid using any device that could interfere with play (e.g., umbrella as a sunshade). **NOTE:** Tournament Directors may authorize use of a chair if required for medical reasons and as space allows. They may also authorize use of a small mat (approximately two-feet by two-feet) for comfort and to reduce body fatigue, if space permits.
  9. Excuse yourself from refereeing a relative, close friend, doubles partner, or any match where you have a conflict of interest.
  10. Refrain from intervening in a match in progress during a tournament (including during time-outs and between games), except in the following circumstances:
    - a. You respond to an immediate safety issue.
    - b. The assigned referee requests your assistance, such as with answering a question, observing a serve, or taking over the match. Otherwise, do not become involved in officiating the match.
    - c. You are the assigned referee and provide necessary assistance to a trainee whom you are allowing to referee your match.
    - d. The Tournament Director requests that you assist the assigned referee.
    - e. In a non-officiated match, the Tournament Director requests that you assist the players or assigns you to referee the match.
- NOTE:** When observing a match, if you see a referee make a clear and significant error or an incorrect rule interpretation, especially repeatedly, you may discuss it discretely with the referee **after** the match is finished.
11. **Do not make derogatory comments about or critique any on-court matters, decisions, or the performance of another referee in public, including on social media.**

12. **Refrain from commenting on any player in public, including on social media.** Such comments, positive or negative, can be seen as lacking in impartiality and may give a player reason to ask that you not referee a future match of theirs. Additionally, others may take a referee's comment out of context.

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## Section 2: Referee Tools

### A. The Scoresheet

The scoresheet is the official document used to record game activity and transmit match results to the event desk. Scoresheets may be designed to accommodate one match format, or all formats (i.e., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, 3 out of 5 games to 11 points, 1 game to 11 points [round robins only], 1 game to 15 points, or 1 game to 21 points). The scoresheet design used in your area may differ from the official [USA Pickleball scoresheets](#) utilized in this Handbook, which are available on the USA Pickleball website.

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**Figure 1 - USA Pickleball/PickleballTournaments.com Scoresheets**

**Scoresheet – 2 of 3 to 11 Points**

This is a form for a 2 out of 3 games to 11 points match. It includes fields for Event, Match, Court, Referee, and Format. There are checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each team. The score is recorded in a grid with columns for points 0-10 and 11-17. There are also checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each game.

**Scoresheet – 1 to 15 Points Scoresheet – 1 to 21 Points**

This is a form for a 1 game to 15 points match. It includes fields for Event, Match, Court, Referee, and Format. There are checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each team. The score is recorded in a grid with columns for points 0-10 and 11-15. There are also checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each game.

This is a form for a 1 game to 21 points match. It includes fields for Event, Match, Court, Referee, and Format. There are checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each team. The score is recorded in a grid with columns for points 0-10 and 11-21. There are also checkboxes for 'W' and 'L' for each game.

### B. Scoresheet Information

1. Information entered by the event desk or referee coordinator, or pre-printed on the scoresheet, before the referee receives the scoresheet includes the following:
  - a. Date and time
  - b. Computer ID tags (i.e., SYSID, barcode)
  - c. Type of event
  - d. Player names ["(W)" will precede the names of the undefeated team for a gold medal match]

- e. Match number
  - f. Assigned court number
  - g. Referee name
  - h. Match format
  - i. Pre-medal, medal (bronze) or gold medal match (if applicable)
  - j. Handwritten number on back (“1” or “2”)
  - k. Reference marks for changing ends
2. Information entered by the referee before, during, and after the match includes the following:
- a. Circle around the name of the starting server on each team
  - b. Notes to help distinguish the players from one another
  - c. A mark to indicate the team serving first for each game
  - d. Reference marks ( $\Delta$ ) for changing ends (if not preprinted)
  - e. Points scored and side out marks
  - f. Standard time-outs
  - g. Medical time-outs
  - h. Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls
  - i. Final game scores and circle around the winners’ names with the word “WINNERS” inside the circle

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### c. Other Tools

1. Timer (for timed procedures)
2. Pencils (at least one with eraser)
3. Clipboard (for holding the scoresheet)
4. Numbered server clips (for keeping track of first and second servers in doubles matches) (Figure 2)
5. Measuring device for measuring net height.

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**Figure 2 – Numbered Server Clip Styles**



## Section 3: Referee Match Preparation and Scorekeeping Procedures

The procedures in this Handbook are proven methods for ensuring you are best prepared to thoroughly carry out the required steps for officiating matches. These procedures are referred to as “best practices.” You must know the standardized on-court procedures and techniques thoroughly to avoid on-court mistakes that delay play, frustrate players, and cause them to lose confidence in your ability to referee. **NOTE:** The on-court procedures shown here may be modified by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating to accommodate public health concerns.

### A. Before a Tournament

1. Review the most recent editions of the [Official Rulebook](#) and [Casebook](#).
2. Reread this Handbook.
3. Retake the online tests for referees, line judges and players.  
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### B. Before You are Called for a Match

1. Take care of your restroom and hydration needs.
2. Don appropriate clothing.
3. Wear your referee credentials.
4. Stretch to prepare muscles for standing for the duration of the match.
5. Gather personal items such as water, lip protection, and sunglasses, as needed.
6. Pick up tools and supplies:
  - a. Pencils (2)
  - b. Numbered server clips (2)
  - c. Game balls, including a spare (if not provided on the courts)
  - d. Timer
  - e. Starting server identification items (e.g., wristbands)
  - f. Band-aids (if available) so that first aid can quickly be provided for minor cuts and scrapes
7. Know where a Rulebook and USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List can be easily accessed. Consider keeping a copy of both on your smart phone.
8. Learn the venue layout including where to enter/exit courts, court hindrances, and possible safety issues.
9. Consider how weather, lighting, court conditions, etc., might affect play.
10. Note special procedures applicable to this tournament (e.g., warm-up time, no bags on court).

11. Know the number of minutes established to start the match after the match is called and/or the specific number of minutes set by the Tournament Director for warm-up time.
12. Know what written pre-match instructions were issued to the players by the Tournament Director. This will determine what information listed in Section 3.E needs to be covered in your pre-match briefing.

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### **C. When Your Name is Called to Referee**

1. Immediately proceed to the referee desk to collect the match scoresheet and clipboard.
2. Start your timer after the match is announced for the players to report to their court.
3. Quickly review the information on the scoresheet to ensure the match is assigned to you and shows all pertinent information for the match (i.e., event type, match format, match number, court number).
4. Note the match number on the scoresheet. A low match number indicates the start of a new event, so make sure to have starting server identification for the players if the match number is low (e.g., 1, 2, 3) as this will likely be the players' first match of the event.
5. If necessary, ascertain the proper pronunciation of player names.
6. Verify that "1" or "2" has been written on the back of the scoresheet. If not, write a "1" or "2" prior to getting to the court. The number will be used to determine which team will have first choice to serve or receive, to select at which end of the court to start the match, or to defer these choices to the opponent.
7. Try to arrive at the court before the players. Wait for all players at the court entryway if the tournament venue requires that you cross a match in progress to reach your court. Enter and exit the court as a group.

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### **D. Pre-Match On-Court Checklist** [Rules 13.C.3.a, 13.C.3.b]

1. Confirm net height and positioning, especially for temporary net systems. (The net height should be checked by the tournament crew at the start of each day.)
2. Look for safety hazards such as debris or liquid on the court. Ensure players comply with applicable tournament venue restrictions, such as not allowing equipment bags within the playing area. Do not allow drink containers to be placed too close to the court.
3. If tournament balls are kept at the court for players, make sure there are two or more balls for the match.
4. To determine on which side of the court you should stand, consider sun, lighting, shadows, line judge positions, spectators, etc. Also, consider proximity to other courts, walls, reflections, etc.
  - a. If there are line judges, it is preferable that you stand opposite the two baseline judges.
  - b. If there are spectators, it is preferable to stand facing the majority so they can best hear you unless you are using a microphone. However, placement to see line judges takes priority.



- c. If you must stand where your shadow is visible on the playing surface, move as little as possible during rallies to avoid the shadow distracting the players.
  - d. If a match is in progress on an adjoining court, only consider standing back-to-back with the referee on the adjoining court if other conditions warrant your position there and your voices are sufficiently distinctive so players do not get confused as to who is making their calls.
5. If you have one or more wheelchair players, make sure you are familiar with the applicable rule modifications for wheelchair players. [Rules 3.A.45, 4.A.4.d, 7.E, 9.A – 9.D, 12.A.3]  
**NOTE:** Do not say or do anything during the pre-match briefing to highlight or acknowledge a player's disability. You may answer any relevant questions that players ask about wheelchair rules, but you must otherwise treat wheelchair players the same as any other player.  
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## E. Pre-Match Briefing and Warm-Up

Begin the following pre-match briefing when all players are present at the court. The required items do not necessarily have to be conducted in the order listed here, but you must develop a logical and consistent presentation. Do not include additional information unless directed by the Tournament Director or the USA Pickleball Director of Officiating or requested by a player. *OPTION: If a player will be delayed in arriving at the court, you may proceed with the briefing to the extent possible so as not to deprive the players at the court of warm-up time.* **NOTE:** Keep conversation with players to a minimum. Do not engage in unnecessary or casual conversation, especially with players you know personally. Refrain from making comments to individual players that can be construed as coaching.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Confirm each player's identity. Note distinguishing characteristics next to the names of players if helpful for identification (e.g., beard, red hat, blue shirt). If a player indicates a hearing impairment, determine what level of support is needed (e.g., lip reading, sign language interpretation, speech-to-text translation) (See Section 5.B.2).
3. If you notice any player is wearing earbuds, headphones or other listening device, other than a hearing aid, advise the player that such devices are not allowed during play and must be removed.
4. For doubles matches, identify the starting server on each team and ensure that each wears the prescribed starting server identification. Circle the names of the players wearing the starting server identification.
  - a. Only one player on each team may wear the starting server identification prescribed by the Tournament Director. [Rule 5.A.3]
  - b. Make sure the starting server identification is visible to both you and the opponents.
  - c. To avoid confusion, do not allow the partner of the starting server to wear anything similar in color or design to the starting server identification that makes it hard to distinguish.

5. Confirm with players that their paddles are listed on the [USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List](#). Inspect each player's paddle to determine that it complies with current paddle specifications and has been approved by USA Pickleball. [Rule 13.C.4.a] **(NOTE: If a player switches paddles at any time during the match, inspect the new paddle for compliance prior to play.)** Visually look for the following:
  - a. A manufacturer's name and model name or number applied by the manufacturer. [Rule 2.E.7] The manufacturer name information may be located any place on the paddle, including on the grip tape, end cap, or edge guard. Some paddle manufacturers use factory-applied adhesive labels to indicate the make and model name/number. If either is absent, do not allow the paddle for sanctioned play. Homemade labels with manufacturer information are not acceptable.
  - b. A manufacturer's applied "USA Pickleball Approved" (or similar) mark. If absent, refer to the [USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List](#) to check whether the paddle is approved. If it is not on the list, do not allow the paddle for sanctioned play.

If the preceding conditions are met, take each paddle between both hands and look and feel for the following:

- c. Distinct aftermarket alterations other than to the handle. Tape or adhesive decorations may be used as an edge guard, provided that the dimensions of the paddle, including the applied edge guard, are compliant. [Rules 2.E.3, 2.E.5.a]
- d. Anything affixed to the paddle face, such as identification labels, that extends inward more than ½" from the edge (or ½" inside the edge guard if installed) or 1" above the paddle handle. [Rule 2.E.5.b] Any additions that extend beyond these limits must be removed prior to sanctioned play. However, autographs and other markings that do not impact the surface texture on paddles are acceptable. [Rule 2.E.5.c]
- e. Indentations, holes, cracks, and delamination (visibility of one or more underlayers), which are prohibited.
- f. Foreign substances and unusual texture.

If your inspection identifies a violation of any paddle requirement, do not allow the paddle for sanctioned play. If the surface is in question, have the Head Referee or Tournament Director make the final decision on whether the paddle can be used for play.

If a paddle does not appear on the approved list or has prohibited features, require the player to switch to an approved paddle, which must also be inspected as indicated above. Otherwise, the player must forfeit the match. [Rules 2.F.1.a.1, 2.F.1.a.2]

6. Inform the players of the match format (e.g., 2 out of 3 games to 11 points, win by 2 points). For double elimination gold medal matches, explain the procedure for the tiebreaker match.
7. Select a player to choose the number "1" or "2" (written on the back of the scoresheet). The winner of that choice will be the first to select "serve, receive, end, or defer." After the first choice is made, the other team cannot defer and must choose from the remaining option(s). Once a team makes its choice, it cannot be changed. Mark the team that will be serving first in each game (see Section 3.F.2). *OPTION: You may also annotate the scoresheet with the end of the court selected (e.g., "low fence," [compass direction](#), or other unique identifier). This*

*annotation will document the end at which each team will start the match. The documentation of end is also helpful in the event of a rain delay or other suspension of play for knowing on which ends the teams will resume play. [Rule 5.A.1]*

8. Advise players of any court abnormalities, non-standard court conditions, and approved rule modifications. [Rule 13.C.4.b]
9. Review the line calling responsibilities of the referee, players, and (when applicable) line judges, including appeal procedures. **NOTE:** This step may be omitted if this information is provided to players by the Tournament Director in advance.
10. Remind players to make their calls loudly, clearly, and promptly.
11. Ask the players if they have any questions about the player instructions or the rules. **NOTE:** When new rules are released, Tournament Directors may direct referees to quickly review the significant rule changes during the pre-match briefing.
12. Do not allow players to carry any spare balls during play.
13. Allow players to warm up for the designated warm-up time or the remainder of the established time to start the match, remembering to allow time to choose the ball and position the players to begin play. If the players are ready to play prior to the established start time, begin play early. If circumstances beyond a player's control prevent the player from reporting promptly to the court (e.g., non-receipt of match assignment text message due to wi-fi issues), you may allow the full designated warm-up time, even if that extends the established start time slightly. Notify the players when one minute of warm-up time is left so they can practice serving if they desire.
  - a. Serving is not mandatory during warm-up.
  - b. If practice serves are taken, observe players' serves for potential illegal service motions, but do not give any warnings.
14. If any players have not arrived at the court by half of the allotted time to start the match, have them re-called.

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## **F. Preparing the Scoresheet Before the Start of a Match** (Figure 3)

1. Verify that you have circled the names of the players wearing the starting server identification.
2. Verify that you have placed a mark (e.g., "X" or the starting server's name) in the spaces provided on the scoresheet for indicating which team is serving first in each game. *OPTION: You may also use "L" or "R" or a directional arrow to indicate whether the serve will begin on your left or right.*
3. If not preprinted on the scoresheet, add end-change marks ( $\Delta$ ) beneath the appropriate score number:
  - a. At 6 of the last game to 11 points,
  - b. At 8 for games to 15 points,
  - c. At 11 for games to 21 points.

Marking this at the start of the match avoids missing the change of ends later.

**Figure 3 – Preparing the Scoresheet**

**Team 1: Example of using “X” for Serve**  
**Team 2: Example of using a server name for Serve**  
**Example of end annotation (Compass direction)**

Event: **Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+** Match: **#5** SYSID: **999999**  
 Court: **7** 11/24/20 18:24(PST)  
 Referee: **Your Name**  
 Format: **2/3 to 11**

Team 1: **Smith, Mary** - **Jones, Bob** (circled)  
 MT ☐ **Red Hat** MT ☐

Team 2: **Baker, Diane** - **Olsen, Jim** (circled)  
 MT ☐ **Blonde** MT ☐

Serve: **X** (for Team 1) **Jim** (for Team 2)

TimeOuts: TW / TF

End Annotation: **North** (Compass direction)

## G. Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up Before the Start of Each Game (Figure 4)

1. Position the scoresheet on the clipboard, making sure the clipboard clamp is pointing toward the serving end when the starting server's name is at the top of the scoresheet. When out-of-the-ordinary situations occur, having the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team is an additional means of quickly confirming which team should be serving.
2. For doubles matches, place the numbered server clip over the name of the starting server of the game with the number 2 facing up. This will be the circled name for the team that will serve first. **NOTE:** The starting server for the first serving team begins the game as the second server since only one server serves before the serve passes to the opponent.

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**Figure 4 – Scoresheet and Clipboard Set-Up**

Event: **Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+**

Team 1: **Smith, Mary** - **Jones, Bob**

Match: **55** SYSID: 999999  
 Court: **7** 11/24/20 18:24(PST)  
 Referee: **Your Name**  
 Format: **2/2 to 11**

Serve

X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

Note: Starting serving team is on the left.


TimeOuts: TW / TP

Team 2: **Baker, Diane** - **Olsen, Jim**

Match: **55** SYSID: 999999  
 Court: **7** 11/24/20 18:24(PST)  
 Referee: **Your Name**  
 Format: **2/2 to 11**

Serve

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

TimeOuts: TW / TP

## H. Tracking First and Second Servers

In doubles matches, keeping track of first and second servers and which player is the correct server are common stumbling blocks for referees. Using the system described here, you will quickly and accurately track servers without interrupting the flow of the game.

1. Prior to a team's first server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "1" facing up (Figure 5).
2. Prior to the second server serving, place the numbered server clip over that player's name with the "2" facing up (Figure 6).
3. When the team loses its serve to the opponent, **first mark the side out** and then rotate the clipboard to point the clamp toward the new serving team. Place the numbered server clip over the new first server's name with "1" facing up.

For singles matches, no server tracking is required. Only the server's position is tracked, which is determined by the server's score.

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## I. Marking Points Scored

1. Use diagonals to mark each point scored. Mark the appropriate diagonal over the numbered box of the point scored, as follows for doubles matches:
  - a. Mark points scored when the first server is serving with an upper-right-to-lower-left diagonal line (forward slash /)(Figure 5).
  - b. Mark points scored when the second server is serving with an upper-left-to-lower-right diagonal line (backslash \)(Figure 6).
2. For singles matches, mark all points with the forward slash (/).

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**Figure 5 – Numbered Server Clip and Marking Points – First Server**

The image shows a USA Pickleball scorekeeping sheet for a doubles match. A yellow clip with the number 1 and a forward slash is attached to the top. A blue arrow points to the first server's serving box, which contains a forward slash. The sheet includes various scorekeeping tables and fields for match details.

**Team 2:** Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim  
 MT ☐ Blonde MT ☐

**Event:** Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ **Team 1:** Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob  
 MT ☐ Red Hair MT ☐

**Match:** 85 **Referee:** Your Name **Score:** 7 **Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Serve:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

**Timeouts:** TW / TF

**Score:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				





**Figure 7 – Marking Side Outs**

The image shows a USA Pickleball scorekeeping sheet on a clipboard. A yellow sticky note with the number '2' is attached to the top left. Blue arrows point to the '2' on the sticky note and the '4' in the score grid for Team 2, indicating the correct court side for marking side outs. The score grid shows Team 1 scores of 0, 1, 2 and Team 2 scores of 0, 1, 2. The sheet also includes fields for referee name, count, match number, and event information.

## K. Player Positions (Doubles Play)

As a referee, you must understand the correlation between the starting server identification and the score in determining a player's correct court position.

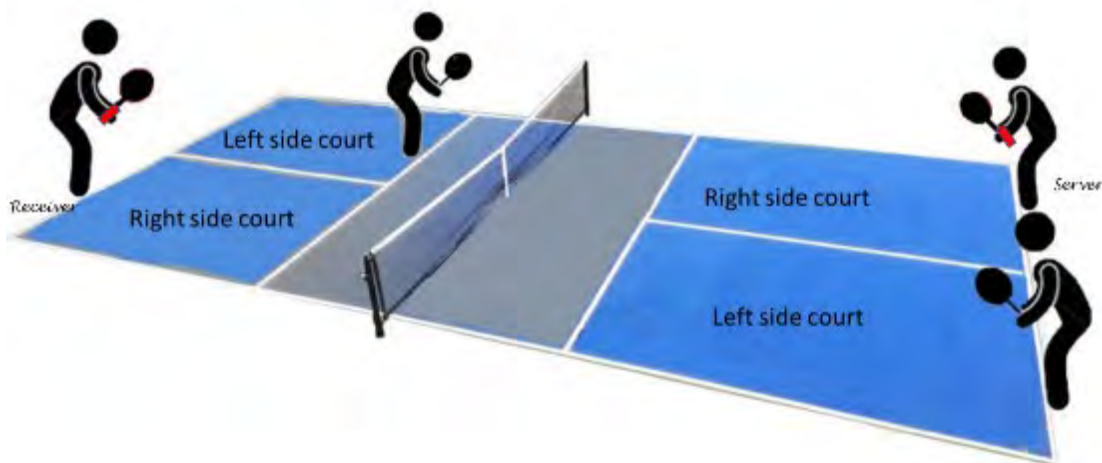
1. The starting server for each team at the beginning of each game wears the starting server identification.
2. The court has a right/even side and a left/odd side as the players face the net. (Figure 8.)
3. The correct server and receiver and their positions are determined by the score and the players' starting positions in the game.
4. At the start of each game (0-0-2), the correct position for the players with the starting server identification is the right/even side of the court on their respective ends of the court. [Rules 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 4.B.6.b] These players are the correct server and correct receiver for starting the game (Figure 8).
5. When a team's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position for the team's player wearing the starting server identification is the right/even court. When a team's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position for the player wearing the starting server identification is the left/odd court. [Rule 4.B.6.b]

6. While the correct server and receiver should be in their proper positions to start each point, their partners can stand anywhere on or off the court as long as they remain at their respective ends. [Rule 4.B.7] After the return of serve, either of the teams' players may hit the ball from any position.

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### **Figure 8 – Correct Player Positions at the Start of The Game**

The players in the even courts are wearing the starting server identification (red wristband), indicating they are the starting server and starting receiver. The score is 0-0-2.



## **L. Player Positions (Singles Play)**

### **1. Standard Singles**

- a. The server's correct position is determined by the score (i.e., even or odd).
- b. At the start of each game (i.e., score 0-0), the correct position for the server is the right/even side of the court.
- c. When the server's score is even (i.e., 0, 2, 4...), the correct position is the right/even court. [Rule 4.B.5.a] When the server's score is odd (i.e., 1, 3, 5...), the correct position is the left/odd court. [Rule 4.B.5.b]
- d. The receiver will mirror the server's position diagonally to return the serve.

### **2. Mini-Singles**

- a. Mini-singles is a unique format for singles play where only half the court on each side of the net is used for each rally.
- b. Each player's correct position is determined by their score (i.e., right/even or left/odd), and only those respective sides of the court on each end are in play during each rally. As such, the receiver is not always positioned diagonally opposite the server to start each rally.
- c. For detailed rules governing mini-singles, see [Mini-Singles Format Instructions](#) on USA Pickleball Officiating page.

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## Section 4: Refereeing a Match (Doubles Play)

The best practices in Section 4 are presented in a straightforward fashion without any complications from rule violations or unusual situations. Section 5 addresses the handling of rule violations and other on-court situations.

### A. Beginning a Match

1. Begin play when specified by the Tournament Director or no later than 10 minutes after the match was called.
2. All players must be present on the court to start playing a match. Players may not use timeouts to delay the start of the match (e.g., if their partner has not yet arrived). [Rule 10.H.1]
3. Allow the serving team to select the game ball from the provided tournament balls, using whatever technique they desire, and remove all other balls from the playing surface. This step also allows you to confirm the identities of the players and ensure that you have them properly recorded on the scoresheet.
4. Announce a 15-second warning to ready the players to start the match. **NOTE:** The 15-second warning is used in a variety of situations to alert players that play is getting ready to begin or resume. Announcing “Time in” is the established procedure to end the 15-second timed period and start the play.

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### B. Beginning a Game

1. The game begins on second serve at 0-0-2 since only one player will serve for the starting serving team. The names of the players on the serving team should be at the top of the clipboard and the clamp on the clipboard should be pointing toward the serving team. The starting server will be the player on the first serving team whose name is circled. Place the numbered server clip with the number “2” facing up over the circled starting server’s name (Figure 4). The correct receiver will be the player on the opposing team whose name is circled. These two players should be wearing the starting server identification.
2. To begin each game and before calling the score, visually and mentally confirm whether or not the correct server and receiver are in the proper positions. This is indicated by the score, numbered server clip, and starting server identification.
3. *OPTION: At the start of the first game of the match, you may announce the names of all players to verify that you have the teams correctly indicated on the scoresheet and the clipboard clamp pointing toward the serving team.* **NOTE:** Do not identify the starting server or starting receiver by name.
4. Stand aligned with the net plane and maintain a stationary position at the net. Stay within good viewing distance of the NVZ on both sides, typically two to six feet from the net post. Allow sufficient space for around the post shots.
5. When all players are in position and ready to play, start the game: 🏸 “Time in. 0-0-2.” Allow extra seconds, if necessary, for players to get into position before announcing time in. If you are refereeing a multiple game match, also announce the game number before calling time-in: 🏸 “Game [number]. Time in. 0-0-2.” Play may start before 15 seconds expire if all players are ready to proceed. *NOTE: Use of an arm or hand signal when calling the score is encouraged (see Section 5.B.2).*

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## C. Calling the Score

1. Before calling the score to start each rally, quickly glance at the scoresheet, as necessary, to ensure you know the correct score, correct server and correct receiver. Then hold the clipboard at your side or behind you so you won't be tempted to look at it during play or give the appearance of not being focused on the play.
2. Call the score after determining that **all players** are in position, or **should** be in position, and **all players** are ready, or **should** be ready, to play, and that: [Rule 4.D]
  - a. No player is using one of the "not ready" signals, [Rules 4.C, 4.C.1] which are:
    - 1) Raising the paddle above the head.
    - 2) Raising the non-paddle hand above the head.
    - 3) Completely turning the back to the net.
  - b. A player has the ball in hand and is in position to serve or should be in position to serve.
  - c. The player diagonally across the court from the player in serving position is ready, or should be ready, to receive.
3. Announce the score as three numbers, enunciating each number clearly with a steady cadence, (e.g., "Zero, zero, two.") Do not use "Zero, zero, start," "Zero, zero, second server," "Oh-Oh-two," or any other non-standard variation to start the game. It is good practice to look at the receiver when you start calling the score to ensure the receiver is ready, then rotate your head as you continue calling the score so by the time you say the last number you are looking at the server.
4. Do not vary your cadence or volume or give any other indication when a potential service or receiver fault is imminent.
5. Do not say "Possible game point" when the serving team will win if it scores the next point.

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## D. Watching the Serve

1. The server may use either the volley serve or the drop serve interchangeably. The server is not required to declare which serve will be used; therefore, you will not know in advance. Watch how the server releases the ball for each serve. If the server does not hit the ball on the first release, the server can retrieve the ball and start the serve again within the 10-second count.

It is important to understand the rules for each serve to effectively determine whether the serve is legal.

- a. **For a volley serve** [Rule 4.A.7] (See also Section 5.A.10.):
  - 1) The ball must be released using only one hand. **NOTE:** A player who has the use of only one hand may use their paddle to release the ball to perform the serve.
  - 2) The server is not allowed to impart spin to the ball before hitting it to make the serve. [Rule 4.A.5]
  - 3) The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 4.A.6]



- 4) The ball must be hit before it bounces on the playing surface.
- 5) The three service motion components must be met. (Rules 4.A.7.a – 4.A.7.c)
- b. **For a drop serve** [Rule 4.A.8] (See also Section 5.A.11.):
  - 1) The ball must be dropped from one hand or dropped off the paddle face.
  - 2) The server is not allowed to impart any force to the ball before hitting it to make the serve. The ball cannot be propelled or spun in any manner during its release.
  - 3) The release of the ball must be visible to the receiver and the referee. [Rule 4.A.6]
  - 4) There is no restriction on the number of times the ball may bounce before the server hits the ball to make the serve.
  - 5) The server may use any service motion to hit the ball.
2. Watch the server for service foot faults. (See Sections 5.A.12.)
3. Watch the served ball to see where it lands. The ball must land beyond the NVZ line in the correct service court to be legal.

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## E. During Play

1. After you start calling the score, ignore all “not ready” signals made, unless a hinder occurs. [Rule 4.C.2]
2. When it is necessary to stop play, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to announce the situation (e.g., “Stop play”, “Fault”, “Ball on”) and explain as necessary. Resume play as quickly as possible by calling the score.
3. When players are anywhere near the NVZ or a volley has occurred from anywhere on or off the court, **your main focus is watching for foot faults and other NVZ faults**, not watching the ball to make line calls on appeal. Ruling on appealed line calls is a low priority.
4. Make no call or physical indication that a ball is in or out of bounds, **unless appealed** by a player.
5. Avoid looking at the scoresheet during rallies; concentrate on the action on the court, particularly with respect to the NVZ.

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## F. At the End of Each Rally

1. At the end of each rally, immediately state the result clearly and audibly: “Point,” “Second server” (or “Second serve”), or “Side out.”
2. If you do not hear a line call or notice any other indication from the players that the ball is out of bounds, consider the ball in, unless the ball is obviously out to you and the players. Do not prompt the players for a line call or ask whether the ball was in or out, possibly suggesting what call should be made. If players immediately indicate the ball was out after you announce the result based on the ball being in, remind them to make their “Out” calls loudly, clearly, and promptly so you can hear them and see their signals. If necessary, correct your scoresheet before proceeding.



3. If a rally ends due to a fault other than the ball being hit out of bounds or into the net, announce “Fault” or the type of fault before announcing the result (e.g., “Foot fault, right foot, point”; “Service fault, side out”). Explain the fault if requested by a player. (See Section 5.)
4. Mark every point on the scoresheet as it occurs. Use a diagonal line corresponding to the server number on the numbered server clip. (See Section 3.I.)
5. Track when play goes to the second server by turning the numbered server clip to “2” and moving it over the second server’s name.
6. After each rally, remind yourself of the scores and check for correct player positions and correct server and receiver.

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## G. At a Side Out

1. Indicate the side out on the scoresheet by drawing a vertical line on the right side of the last point scored. It is not necessary to mark successive side outs in the same place when no points are scored.
2. If no points have yet been scored in the game, place the side out mark to the left of the “1” point.
3. Rotate the clipboard so the clamp is pointing toward the new serving team.
4. Reposition the numbered server clip over the name of the correct first server based on the serving team’s score, simultaneously flipping the server clip so the number “1” is facing up.
5. At each side out, rotate the clipboard and server clip efficiently to avoid delaying the game.
6. Ensure that the correct team takes possession of the ball for the next serve.

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## H. Standard Time-Out [Rule 10.A]

Players may call standard time-outs after the match starts. Time-outs are usually called between rallies but may also be called between games. A time-out must be called before the ball is hit to make the next serve. If no portion of the time-out is used, do not record it; the team gets to retain the time-out for later use.

When a standard time-out is called by a player:

1. Announce the time-out, indicate which team called the time-out, state the score, and the duration of the time-out: 🗣️ “Time-out [receivers/servers]. [Score]. One minute.”
2. Start the one-minute count on your timer.
3. Move to the center of the court to avoid interaction with players.

**NOTE:** Do not advise players to put their paddles down or place the ball under the server’s paddle.

4. Mark the current score in the appropriate time-out box for that game on the scoresheet, separating the team scores with the appropriate diagonal line that mirrors the diagonal on the server clip indicating first or second server (Figure 9). If a time-out is called between

games, record the time-out for the next game with the score as 0-0-2. Always write the serving team's score above the diagonal and the receiving team's score below the diagonal (e.g., 6/4 for 6-4-1, 7\8 for 8-7-2). There is no need to record the server number as that information is indicated by the direction of the diagonal. **NOTE: To avoid potential errors, when a time-out is called by the receiving team, do not rotate the scoresheet.** Enter the time-out score right-side up even though the receiver's part of the scoresheet will be upside down (Figure 10).

5. If a player leaves the immediate playing area with his or her paddle, re-inspect the paddle before play resumes.
6. Play may begin before the expiration of the time-out if all players are ready. Otherwise, advise players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
7. Prior to moving back into position, advise each team of its remaining number of time-outs: 🗣️ "[Receivers/Servers], [number] time-outs remaining. [Servers/Receivers], [number] time-outs remaining." (e.g., "Receivers, two-time-outs remaining. Servers, one time-out remaining.") **NOTE:** Players may be more attentive if this step is done closer to the resumption of play than when the time-out is called.
8. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
9. At or before one minute, as appropriate, promptly announce "Time in" and call the score if the players are in position and ready to play: 🗣️ "Time in. [Score]." After calling "Time in," if the players are not ready at one minute but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score.

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**Figure 9 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Serving Team**  
(Score 6-4-1)

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: #6 SYSID: 999999  
 Court: 7 11/24/20 16:24PST  
 Referee: Your Name  
 Format: 20 to 11

Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob  
 HT ☐ Red Hat HT ☐

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim  
 HT ☐ Blue Hat HT ☐

Serve: X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17  
 X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

TimeOut: TW / TR

Score: 6-4-1

**Figure 10 – Standard Time-Out Marking – Receiving Team**  
(Score 8-7-2)

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: #6 SYSID: 999999  
 Court: 7 11/24/20 16:24PST  
 Referee: Your Name  
 Format: 20 to 11

Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob  
 HT ☐ Red Hat HT ☐

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim  
 HT ☐ Blue Hat HT ☐

Serve: X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17  
 X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

TimeOut: TW / TR

Score: 8-7-2

## I. At the End of a Game

1. After the final point, announce the end of the game, the score, and the last names of the winners. Then call the between-games time-out and start your timer: 🕒 “Point. Game. [Score]. [Last names]. Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes.” **NOTE:** See Section 4.L for the end of match procedure.
  2. Clearly circle *or lightly shade* the final score of both teams to make it easier for players and the event desk to verify the correct scores (Figure 11). If no points are scored for the game, circle/shade “0” for the score.
  3. If an additional game will be played, draw a line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the completed game to avoid using the unmarked boxes during the next game (Figure 11). **NOTE:** The “TW/TF” boxes apply to the entire match; do not line them out.
  4. Collect the ball or stow it to facilitate a prompt start of the next game with the same ball.
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**Figure 11 – Final Scoring Highlighting**

Team 1: Circle Example  
 Team 2: Shading Example

Event: Mixed \ oles 4.5: 50+ Match: #0 SYSID: 999999  
 Court: 7 11/24/20 1824(PST)  
 Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob  
 MT ☒ Red Hat MT ☐  
 Referee: Your Name  
 Format: 2/3 to 11

Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X											10									
X																				

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim  
 MT ☐ Blonde MT ☒  
 SYSID: 999999

## J. Between Games [Rule 10.E]

There are several important steps to follow between games:

1. After announcing the end of the previous game (see Section 4.I.1), move to the center of the court. This position helps alert spectators and players that the match is still in progress and helps you avoid unnecessary interaction with the players and spectators.
2. Remove the numbered server clip, then rotate the scoresheet (NOT the clipboard) 180 degrees and reaffix the scoresheet to the clipboard.
3. If necessary, rotate the clipboard so the next game's serving team is rightside up with the clamp pointing to their end of the court.
4. Place the numbered server clip, with the number 2 facing up, over the circled name for the team that will serve first in the next game.
5. If the players notify you of a change in starting server or you notice that the starting server identification has been switched between partners, change the starting server on the scoresheet by erasing the circle from around the name of the previous starting server and circling the name of the new starting server.
6. If a player leaves the immediate playing area with his or her paddle, re-inspect the paddle before play resumes.
7. Notify the players when the time remaining is 15 seconds, move to your referee position, and provide the ball to the serving team without identifying the correct server, unless asked.
8. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
9. At or before two minutes, as appropriate, promptly start the next game if the players are in position and ready to play: 🏓 “Game [number]. Time in. [Score].” After calling “Time in,” if the players are not ready at two minutes but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score.

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## K. End Change Time-Out [Rule 5.B]

An end change occurs at 6 points in the last game to 11 points, at 8 points in games to 15 points, and at 11 points in games to 21 points. **NOTE:** In the third game of a 2 out of 3 match, no end change occurs if the first game was forfeited due to a late arrival.

1. Prior to starting a game with an end change, remind players when the end change will occur.
2. When the first team scores the end-change point, call the end change time-out and state the score and duration: 🏓 “Time out. Change ends. [Score]. One minute.”
3. Start your timer and announce “One-minute” for the time-out.
4. Move to the center of the court.



5. Prior to removing the numbered server clip to rotate the scoresheet, **write the number of the server ("1" or "2") above or below the name of the correct server** (Figure 12). This notation enables you to accurately re-place the numbered server clip over the correct server's name with the correct number showing after rotating the scoresheet on the clipboard.
6. *OPTION: You may shade the end-change mark of the team that scored the end-change point and record the score below the end-change mark.*
7. Rotate the scoresheet and then the clipboard so that they will be properly oriented after the teams change ends. The names of the serving team will be right-side up at the top of the scoresheet and the clamp will be facing the serving team.
8. Place the numbered server clip over the server's name that you noted with the appropriate number (1 or 2) facing up.
9. Notify the players when the time remaining is 15 seconds and move to your referee position.
10. Check readiness of the officiating team (if applicable).
11. At or before one minute, as appropriate, promptly announce "Time in" and call the score if the players are in position and ready to play: 🏓 "Time in. [Score]." After calling "Time in," if the players are not ready at one minute but are making an effort to get into position, allow a reasonable number of extra seconds for the players to get into position before announcing the score.

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**Figure 12 – Marking Correct Server and Server Number at End Change Time-Out**

Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ Match: #6 SYSID: 999999  
 Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)  
 MT ☐ Red Hat MT ☒ 1 Referee: Your Name  
 Format: 2/3 to 11

Serve	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TimeOuts	TW / TF
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	6	4
X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim  
 MT ☐ Blonde MT ☐ 1



## L. At Completion of a Match

1. Announce the end of the match, the final score, and last names of winners, when the winning point of the match is scored: 🏸: “Point. Game. Match. [Score]. [Last names].”
  2. Thank the line judges (if applicable).
  3. Ensure the clipboard is oriented with the names of the winning team positioned right-side up.
  4. Circle the names of the winning team and write “WINNERS” in the circle (Figure 13).
  5. Record the scores of all games played **in the order they occurred, with the scores of the match winner first** (e.g., 11-3, 7-11, 11-2). If there are lines or a space in the center of the scoresheet, record the scores there. If not, record the scores at the top of the scoresheet next to the winners’ names.
  6. Have one of the winners confirm that the correct team is circled and the scores are correct, and sign (or initial) next to the scores. **Complete this step carefully to ensure the signing player acknowledges the correct results.** An error here can cause confusion at the event desk and delays in the tournament.
  7. Promptly return the scoresheet on the clipboard to the referee desk.
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Figure 13 – Marking Winner and Scores

Event: **Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+**

Match: #6 SYSID: 999999

Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)

Referee: Your Name

Format: 2/3 to 11

Team 1: **Smith, Mary** - **Jones, Bob**

MT ☐ Red Hat MT ☐ 1

Serve

X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

TimeOuts TW / TP

11-8 7-11 11-4 11-4

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim

MT ☐ Blonde MT ☐ 2

Serve

X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

TimeOuts TW / TP

SYSID: 999999

## **M. Important Points to Remember**

1. You are responsible for the conduct of the match.
2. Keep games moving smoothly by:
  - a. Promptly announcing points, second servers, and side outs.
  - b. Appropriately marking the scoresheet.
  - c. Efficiently moving the numbered server clip.
3. Communicate with players using a professional tone and avoid unnecessary conversation.
4. Maintain an attentive, confident, relaxed demeanor.
5. Stay alert and focused on what is happening on your court. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by activities on adjacent courts or spectator areas.

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## Section 5: Key Situations and Rules Violations

### A. Serving and Receiving

1. Incorrect Server or Incorrect Server Position [Rules 4.M.2, 4.M.1]

When the serve is hit by the incorrect player or from the wrong service court, announce “Service fault” or “Fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary. Do not make the call until **after the player hits the ball to make the serve.**

2. Incorrect Receiver [Rule 4.N.1]

When the incorrect receiver returns the serve, announce “Receiver fault” or “Fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary. Do not make the call until **after the incorrect receiving player hits the ball.**

3. Stacking [Rules 4.B.6, 4.B.7]

There are several variations of the stacking technique. The serving team may stack; the receiving team may stack; or both may use the technique, but not necessarily at all times. To avoid confusion, concentrate only on the correct server and correct receiver based on the score (even or odd) that you have marked on the scoresheet. Ignore where either partner is positioned.

a. Serving team stacking:

- 1) If a team’s **score is even** at side out, the partner **with** the starting server identification must serve first from the **right-hand court** (first server). If the team scores a point, the score will become odd, and the same player must then serve from the left-hand court. As long as the team continues to score, concentrate only on the position of the correct server (player with the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 2) If a team’s **score is odd** at side out, the partner **without** the starting server identification must serve first from the **right-hand court** (first server). If the team scores a point, the score will become even, and the partner without the starting server identification must serve from the left-hand court. As long as points are being scored, concentrate only on the position of the correct server (player without the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 3) When the serving team faults, the serve goes to the second server; move the numbered server clip and concentrate only on the position of the correct second server (with or without the starting server identification). Ignore where the partner is positioned.

b. Receiving team stacking:

- 1) If a team’s **score is even** at side out, the player **with** the starting server identification must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.
- 2) If a team’s **score is odd** at side out, the player **without** the starting server identification must receive in the **right-hand court**. Ignore where the partner is positioned.

- 3) The correct player must receive from the correct position based on their team score (even or odd) until a side out occurs and they re-gain the serve. Ignore where the partner is positioned when not receiving.
4. Questions and Challenges Regarding Correct Position, Server, and Receiver [Rules 4.B.8-4.B.9]

- a. **Before the ball is hit to make the serve**, any player may ask you to identify the:
  - Correct server
  - Correct receiver
  - Correct player position(s)

The rules do not limit the number of times a player may ask any of the questions. Specific wording of the questions is not required. Proceed as follows:

- 1) Provide a brief response to the question asked. If a player asks a generic question, such as “Am I good?” or words to that effect, consider that the question relates to server/receiver **and** positions and state which, if any, is incorrect (or respond to all conditions).

**TABLE 1 – EXAMPLE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Am I the correct server ?	“Yes.” “No.”
Who is receiving?	“You.” “Your partner.”
Is my partner in the correct position?	“Yes.” “No.”
Where should I be?	“On the right.” “On the left.”
Are we good?	“Yes.” “No, you are in the wrong position.” “No, your partner should be serving from the left side.”

- 2) **However, if you have already called the score**, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play. Before or after answering the question, announce “I will re-call the score” to prevent the server from serving before you re-call the score.
- 3) Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
- 4) Call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed. This begins a new 10-second count if you had previously called the score.
- b. **After the ball is hit to make the serve**, if a player stops play to ask a question regarding **their own team’s** correct server or receiver or correct position, call a fault on the player for stopping play. [Rule 7.I]
- c. **After the ball is hit to make the serve**, if a player stops play to question or challenge **their opponent’s** correct server or receiver or correct position:
  - 1) If a player is the incorrect server or receiver or out of position, call a fault against the incorrect player [Rule 4.B.9]. However, if the players are out of sequence or

position due to your incorrect score call, replay the rally. NOTE: Do not assess a fault for the play stoppage in either situation since the incorrect player issue occurred before play was stopped.

- 2) If no player is incorrect or out of position according to the correct score, call a fault against the player who stopped play. [Rule 7.I]

5. Questions and Challenges Regarding the Score [Rules 4.B.8, 4.K]

The opportunity to question or challenge the score ends when the ball is hit to return the serve or the ball becomes dead, whichever occurs first. If a player questions or challenges the score:

a. **Before you call the score:**

- 1) Respond in a manner that does not sound like you are calling the score to start a rally. Say the score with a different volume, cadence, and with different words. When appropriate, respond with only the relevant part of the score.
- 2) To avoid confusion, it is better to include additional words, such as “It’s 4 to 2,” or “You have 4, they have 2.”
- 3) If a player asks specifically for their score, such as “What’s my score?” or “What do we have?”, say simply “4” or “You have 4.”
- 4) If or when you do give the full score, hold up your hand, step forward, and say the score in a way that is distinctly different than calling the score to start a rally (e.g., “It’s 4 to 2 and it’s first server.”)

b. **After you call the score – score called correctly:**

- 1) **Before the ball is hit to make the serve:**
  - Immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, acknowledge the correct score, and announce that you will re-call the score.
  - Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
  - Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.
- 2) **After the ball is hit to make the serve:**
  - Ignore a player’s question or comment that you do not interpret as stopping play and allow play to continue to the end of the rally.
  - If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.

c. **After you call the score – score called incorrectly:**

- 1) **Before the return of serve or the ball becomes dead (whichever occurs first):**
  - You or any player may stop play to correct the score.
  - Immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play and announce “Correction.”
  - Acknowledge the correct score and announce that you will re-call the score.
  - Allow the players to adjust positions, if necessary.
  - Re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.

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2) **After the return of serve:**

- Ignore a player's question or comment that you do not interpret as stopping play and allow play to continue to the end of the rally.
- If a player stops play, call a fault against the player.

3) **At completion of the rally:**

- The rally stands if the players played the rally in their correct positions according to the correct score. Announce the result of the rally and correct the score for the next rally.
- Replay the rally if the players played the rally incorrectly according to the correct score.

**TABLE 2 – QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES REGARDING THE SCORE**

SITUATION	Before the serve is hit	Before the return of serve or ball becomes dead <sup>1</sup>	After the return of serve	At completion of rally
Score called correctly	Stop play; re-call score	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	Confirm score
Score called incorrectly	Stop play; state "Correction"; re-call score	Stop play; state "Correction"; re-call score	Ignore if play continues, or fault if play is stopped	State "Correction"; replay only if sequence/positions incorrect based on correct score

<sup>1</sup> Whichever occurs first

6. Serving Before the Score is Called

- If the server hits the ball **before you start calling the score**, there is no rule violation since the ball is dead at that time. [Rules 3.A.5, 3.A.19, 8.E]
- If the server hits the ball **while you are calling the score**, call "Service fault" or "Fault." [Rule 4.M.11] **NOTE:** If you severely deviate from your normal cadence when calling the score, you may contribute to the server violating the rule. In that case, announce that you will re-call the score and allow the player to re-serve without penalty.

7. Service Court Change After the Score is Called [Rule 4.E.2]

After you call the score, if the player with the ball on the serving team either 1) switches service courts to serve or 2) gives the ball to the partner in the other service court, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play and announce "Stop play. I will re-call the score." Allow the receiver time to get in proper position to receive and then re-call the score when all players are, or should be, ready to proceed.

8. Time-Out Called After the Serve is Hit [Rules 4.M.10, 4.N.3]

If a player calls a time-out **after the server hits the ball to make the serve**, call "Fault." Explain briefly, as necessary.

9. 10-Second Violation [Rules 4.E, 4.E.1]

The server has 10 seconds to serve the ball once the complete score has been called. The 10-second count starts immediately after the third number of the score is called and stops

at the moment the ball is hit or when 10 seconds is reached. If the server takes longer than 10 seconds to hit the ball, call “Fault.” Explain briefly, as necessary.

- a. *OPTION: Timing 10 seconds may be measured with a silent count at normal speaking cadence (e.g., one thousand one, one thousand two, etc.) or with a subtle hand motion for each second of the 10-second count.*
- b. *OPTION: For more accuracy, when you expect there is a chance of a 10-second violation, you may use the timer. Start the timer immediately after calling the score.*

#### 10. Illegal Service Actions: Volley Serve [Rules 4.A.7, 4.M.9]

While a small percentage of volley serves violates one or more of the three components, the serves of most players, both recreational and competitive, are legal. Recognizing an illegal volley serve can be difficult, but if you are certain that a violation occurred, make the call. If you are uncertain, call for a re-serve without penalty to the player. In addition, between games or during a time-out, you may ask an experienced referee to observe and provide an additional opinion. Failing to recognize an illegal serve, and therefore not calling it, may create an issue when another referee calls it in a later match.

- a. Service motion – fault: A volley serve must meet the three service motion requirements. Call a fault when the server hits the ball to make the serve:
  - 1) If the server’s arm is not moving in an upward arc. **NOTE:** It is not required that the arm-swing be straight back and straight forward. The server’s arm can move sideways as long as it is also upward.
  - 2) If any part of the paddle head is above the server’s wrist.
  - 3) If the ball is above the server’s waist. **NOTE:** If you cannot discern the waist of the player, consider the player’s belly to be the area of the waist since the belly can usually be discerned despite clothing.
- b. Service motion or spin – re-serve: If you suspect that one or more components of a specific volley serve may have been illegal but are not 100% certain, you may call for a re-serve. Immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 📣 “Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”
- c. Spin on the release – fault: The ball must be released from only one hand without manipulating the ball to create spin. Call a fault if you discern the player has imparted spin on the ball during the release for the serve. **NOTE:** A player who has the use of only one hand is allowed to release the ball from their paddle.
- d. Release questionable or not visible – re-serve: If you were not able to see the release of the ball or discern whether or not the ball was properly released, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 📣 “Stop play. [State the issue]. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.” The receiver may stop play before returning the ball to request a re-serve because they could not see the release. If you agree the release of the ball was not visible to the receiver, call for the ball to be re-served.

#### 11. Illegal Service Actions: Drop Serve [Rule 4.A.8]

A drop serve does not have to comply with the three service motion components required for a volley serve.



- a. Added force – fault: If the server uses force to release the ball (i.e., tosses the ball up, throws the ball down, or spins the ball) and then lets it bounce, call a fault after the server hits the ball. Explain briefly, as necessary.
- b. Service action – re-serve: If you suspect that force has been applied to the ball before a specific drop serve is hit but you are not 100% certain, you may call for a re-serve. Immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve: 📢 “Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”
- c. Release not visible – re-serve: If you were not able to see the release of the ball, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, identify the issue, and call for a re-serve 📢 “Stop play. Ball release not visible. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.” The receiver may stop play before returning the ball to request a re-serve because they could not see the release. If you agree the release of the ball was not visible to the receiver, call for the ball to be re-served.

## 12. Service Foot Faults [Rules 4.A.4, 4.L]

The server’s feet cannot be in contact with the court or the playing surface outside the serving area, and at least one foot must be grounded in the service area when the ball is hit to make the serve.

For a wheelchair player, the rear wheels must be positioned within the serving area when the ball is hit to make the serve, but the casters are allowed to contact the baseline and extend into the court.

When the server hits the ball to make the serve, call a fault immediately and identify which foot or wheel (e.g., “Service fault, left wheel”) if:

- a. A server’s foot or a rear wheel is in contact with the court, including the baseline.
- b. A server’s foot or any wheel is in contact with the playing surface outside the imaginary extension of the sideline or centerline.
- c. Neither of a standing server’s feet is grounded in the serving area.

## 13. Serve Hits the Net [Rule 4.A.2]

If a serve hits the net and then lands anywhere in the correct service court, play continues and the receiver must return the serve.

## 14. Short Serves [Rule 4.M.5]

If the serve bounces in the receiver’s NVZ (including on the NVZ line), call a service fault against the serving team.

## 15. Change of Starting Server [Rule 5.A.2]

The starting server identification must always be worn by the starting server. It is the player’s responsibility to be fully compliant with the starting server identification requirements. If a player refuses to wear the starting server identification, impose a match forfeit against the player [Rule 13.A.2]

Teams may change starting server between games. **The players are not penalized if they do not notify you that they have switched the starting server identification.** However,

they are to be penalized if they do not switch the starting server identification to the player who starts serving in a game.

- a. If players notify you that they have changed the starting server, erase the circle around the name of the player who is no longer the starting server and circle the name of the new starting server. Instruct the players to change the starting server identification if they have not done so. Be sure to notify the other team of the starting server change.
- b. If the players do not notify you that they have changed the starting server, proceed according to which player is wearing the starting server identification. At the start of a game, the players wearing the identification must be in their proper positions based on the score.
  - 1) **Before calling the score to start a game**, if you notice that the player wearing the starting server identification is not the player whose name is circled on the scoresheet, correct your scoresheet to indicate the new starting server. There is no penalty against the players for failing to notify you.
  - 2) **After calling the score to start a game**, if you notice that the player who starts as server or receiver is wearing the starting server identification but is not the player whose name is circled on the scoresheet, correct your scoresheet to indicate the new starting server **after the rally**. There is no penalty against the players for failing to notify you.
- c. If the player who starts as server or receiver is not wearing the starting server identification, call an incorrect server or incorrect receiver fault, as appropriate, after the incorrect player hits the ball. Allow the players to change the player who wears the starting server identification after the fault is called. (See Sections 5.A.2 and 5.A.3.)

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## B. Player Issues

1. Late Reporting [Rule 13.H.4]  
Impose a game or match forfeit, as appropriate, when a player fails to report to the match on time. (See Sections 6.B.3 and 6.B.4.)
2. Dealing with Players with a Hearing Impairment and Noisy Venues  
Players may have difficulty hearing you when a venue is noisy or the acoustics are not conducive to clear communications. In addition, players may have a hearing impairment or may remove their hearing aids before a match. It is reasonable in these situations for players to ask you to announce the score extra loudly or to request other accommodations that will meet their specific needs. Be sensitive to these types of requests and tolerant of a player asking you to repeat the score more often than normal. Be ready to adjust your practices accordingly. Incorporating a hand signal into your normal score calling procedure will make it easier for you to execute the procedure when necessary in situations where hearing is difficult.
  - a. Calling the score: Make sure all players understand how you will call the score and be consistent. Follow the procedure below each time you call the score, even when the person asking for the accommodation is not serving or receiving.
    - 1) Lean toward the net post to be better seen and heard when calling the score.
    - 2) Extend one arm towards the net.

- 3) Look directly at the player with the hearing impairment and enunciate clearly, as many players are able to read lips even if they are not trained at lip-reading.
  - 4) Drop your arm when the last number of the score is announced to indicate the completion of the score call and the start of the 10-second clock for the serve to be made.
  - 5) If requested to indicate the score visually:
    - a) Point to the serving team, then call their score while signaling the number using one hand.
    - b) Point to the receiving team, then call their score while signaling the number using one hand.
    - c) Hold your hand straight out in front of you, call and signal the server number.
    - d) Drop your arm to indicate completion of the score call.
  - b. Time-Outs: When a time-out is called, step into the court of the team that called the time-out and signal a "T" to both teams while making the standard announcement.
  - c. Calling Faults: When calling faults, step forward to announce the fault and indicate the violation visually to the extent possible.
3. **Inappropriate Apparel** [Rule 2.G]  
Only the Tournament Director has the authority to require apparel changes. Apparel changes required by the Tournament Director are handled as a referee time-out. Advise the players of the reason for the delay. The Tournament Director may declare a match forfeit if a player refuses to comply with a request to change apparel. [Rule 2.G.4]
- a. Color: If a player complains that the color of an opponent's apparel approximates the color of the ball, summon the Tournament Director to address the complaint. [Rule 2.G.1]
  - b. Depictions: If you or a player believe that the graphics, insignias, pictures, or writing on a player's apparel are not in good taste, summon the Tournament Director to address the issue. [Rule 2.G.2]
  - c. Footwear: If a player's shoes have soles that may mark or damage the playing surface, summon the Tournament Director to address the issue. [Rule 2.G.3]

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## **C. The Non-Volley Zone (NVZ)** [Rules – Section 9]

Watching for NVZ faults is one of your primary responsibilities. Whenever a player is near the NVZ, keep your eyes on the NVZ lines to determine a volleying player's foot placement.

1. **Watching for and Calling NVZ Faults**
  - a. Make all NVZ violation calls immediately and definitively and identify which foot (or wheel, or other item) contacted the NVZ. (e.g., "Foot fault, left foot."; or "Fault, paddle touched the non-volley zone on the volley.") For a wheelchair player, the casters are allowed to contact the NVZ at any time. All fault rules related to contact with the NVZ only apply to the rear wheels of the wheelchair.

- b. If a NVZ fault occurs and you are certain of the fault, but additional exchanges take place before you can voice the call, go ahead and make the call; do not ignore the fault. It is better to make a late call than to not make the call at all.
  - c. If you erroneously call a foot fault on a ball that bounced, immediately announce a referee correction and replay the rally.
2. Momentum and the NVZ [Rule 9.C]  
When a ball is volleyed near the NVZ and the volleying player has momentum from the volley, **keep your eyes on the volleying player until he or she either foot faults or regains control of their momentum.** A player volleying a ball is subject to a NVZ violation until the momentum associated with the volley no longer exists. Even if a fault or dead ball occurs elsewhere between the time when the player contacts the ball and when he or she loses control, **the NVZ fault takes precedence.**
3. Contacting the NVZ [Rule 9.B]  
Call a fault if the player, anything the player is wearing or carrying (e.g., paddle, hat, glasses), or any rear wheel contacts the NVZ while the player is in the act of volleying the ball.
4. Faults Involving the Volleying Player's Partner [Rules 9.B-9.C]  
There are two ways a NVZ fault can involve the partner of the player who hits a volley.
- a. Call a fault if the volleying player and the partner contact each other during the hitting of the volley while the partner is in contact with the NVZ.
  - b. Call a fault if the partner makes any contact with the volleying player during the hitting of the volley (e.g., colliding with the player who volleyed, hitting the paddle of the player who volleyed) and the momentum created as a result of the volley causes the partner or anything the partner is wearing or carrying to contact the NVZ.
5. Stepping Into, Stepping Through, and Pushing Off from the NVZ [Rule 9.D]  
If a player, or any rear wheel, has contacted the NVZ, call a fault if the ball is volleyed before both of the player's feet, or both rear wheels of the player's wheelchair, have contacted the playing surface outside the NVZ.

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## D. The Net

1. Contacting the Net System
- a. If any player, or anything the player is wearing or carrying, contacts any part of the net or net support system while the ball is in play, including the cross bar or a support base, call a fault. [Rule 7.G]
  - b. If the ball hits the net post while the ball is in play, call a fault. [Rules 3.A.24, 7.J]
2. Crossing the Plane of the Net  
The plane of the net extends vertically above and below the net and laterally beyond the net posts on each end of the net.
- a. The ball must cross over to the hitting player's side of the net before the player hits the ball. Call a fault if the player hits the ball before it completely crosses the net. [Rules 7.K, 11.I]

- b. Below the net: If a player's foot or anything that the player is wearing or carrying extends under the net and onto the opponent's court at any time the ball is in play, call a fault. This applies to both players on a team, including the player who is not attempting to make a shot. [Rule 11.I]
  - c. Above the net or around the net post: If a player does not hit the ball before any part of the player's body or anything worn or carried by the player crosses the plane of the net, call a fault. After hitting the ball, a player is allowed to follow through across the plane of the net. [Rule 11.I]
  - d. A player may legally break the plane of the net (without contacting the net or contacting the surface of the opponent's court) to hit a ball **after it has bounced on the player's side of the net and traveled over or around the net back to the opponent's side of the net** without being touched. [Rule 11.I.1]
3. Shots around the Net Post
- a. A player may return a ball around the net post below the height of the net. [Rule 11.M]
  - b. Call a fault against a player who hits a ball that passes in the space between the net and the net post. [Rules 7.C, 11.L.2]
4. Net Systems with Crossbars
- Many net systems include a crossbar across the lower part of the net and a support base ("foot") at the ends and sometimes at the center of the net width. Situations that may arise during play include the following:
- a. On the serve, call a fault if the ball hits the crossbar or center support base or gets caught between the net and the crossbar, before or after going over the net. [Rules 11.L.5.a, 11.L.5.c]
  - b. On other than a serve, call for the rally to be replayed if, after the ball goes over the net and before or after bouncing, one of the following occurs: [Rule 11.L.5.b]
    - 1) The ball hits any part of the crossbar, including the part of the bar that extends outside the sideline.
    - 2) The ball hits the center support base or any support base positioned within the sidelines.
    - 3) The ball gets caught between the net and the cross bar.
  - c. Call a fault if the ball hits the crossbar or a support base before going over the net. [Rule 11.L.5.a]
  - d. Replay the rally if the net system malfunctions during play. [Rule 11.L.5.d]
5. Draping Net [Rule 2.C.6]
- Replay the rally if the ball bounces on a net that drapes on the court.

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## E. Non-Standard Time-Outs

### 1. Medical Time-Out [Rule 10.B]

If a player suffers an injury or medical condition (including muscle cramping) during play, the player may request a medical time-out. **NOTE:** A player may rescind the request before medical personnel arrives.

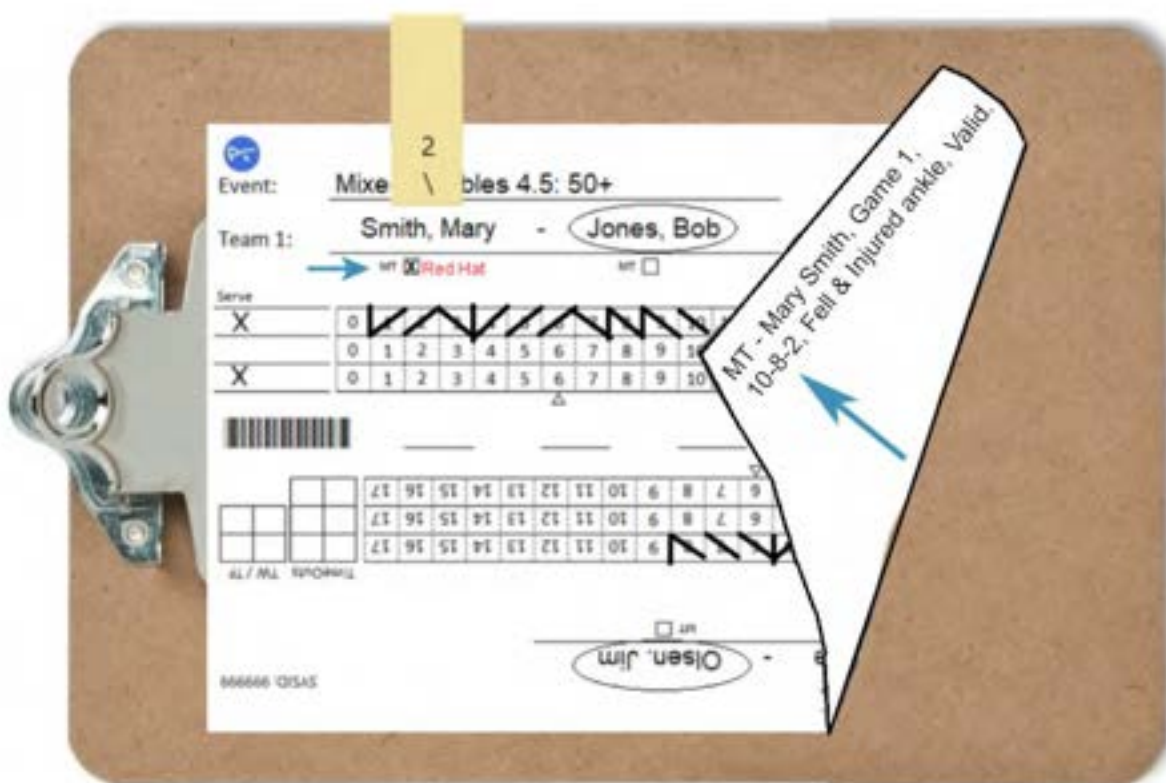
- a. One medical time-out of 15 minutes maximum may be requested by each player per match.
- b. Play continues to the conclusion of the rally. [Rule 11.F]
- c. Announce “Medical time-out” and announce the score.
- d. Summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) to evaluate whether the player’s condition warrants medical attention. Send a medical alert electronically or by a tournament volunteer or spectator.
- e. Summon clean-up assistance if there is any sign of blood on the player or the court. Do not resume play until the bleeding has been controlled, bloody clothing has been removed, and the court has been cleaned. There is no time limit for blood clean-up. (See Section 5.F.2.)
- f. Advise all players that once the injured player is ready, play will resume.
- g. Collect the ball if the ball has not been placed on the court under one of the player’s paddles.
- h. When medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) arrives, start your timer and allow up to 15 continuous minutes for medical attention. If medical attention needs to be rendered off-court at another location at the venue, pause your timer and accompany the player. Resume your timer upon arrival at the place where medical attention will be provided. **NOTE:** See [2023 Official Referee Casebook](#), Case 11-23. If fewer than 15 minutes are required to ready the player to resume play, the remaining time is lost.
- i. Advise medical personnel if a player’s head had forceful contact with a hard object, such as the court, a paddle, the net post, etc., to determine if the player may have suffered a concussion. In accordance with the USA Pickleball [Concussion Protocol](#), such a player must be immediately removed from play and not permitted to return until a written release from a licensed health care professional is provided to the Tournament Director.
- j. Record the medical time-out by marking an “X” in the MT box under the player’s name and, on the back of the scoresheet, write “MT”, the player’s name, game number, score, details of the medical time-out, and validity. To avoid having to remove the scoresheet and the server clip from the clipboard, write the details across the loose end of the scoresheet (Figure 14).
- k. If medical personnel (or the Tournament Director in the absence of medical personnel) determine that there is not a valid medical condition, then also charge a standard time-out (see Section 4.H.4) and issue a technical warning (see Section 6.B.2) to the player. If no standard time-out remains, issue a technical foul (see Section 6.B.2). The medical



time-out for the player is considered used and is no longer available. Advise the player of the situation.

- l. Resume play when the player is able to continue playing by giving a 15-second warning, checking readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), followed by announcing “Time in” and calling the score.
- m. If the player is not able to resume play after the timed 15 minutes, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent. (See Section 5.E.3.) Advise the Tournament Director of a retiring player so the USA Pickleball Report of Accident or Incident form can be appropriately completed and filed.

**Figure 14 – Medical Time-Out Marking**



## 2. Referee Time-Out [Rule 10.H.2]

A referee time-out may be used to address extenuating circumstances, such as active bleeding, a potential medical situation, any foreign substance on the court. There is no time limit for a referee time-out.

- a. Allow the rally to complete and then hold up your hand and step forward to stop play and announce “Referee time-out.” [Rule 11.F]
- b. Call a referee time-out if no player calls a time-out. Announce the reason for the time-out and the score. **NOTE:** No time-out will be charged to the affected player.
- c. If the situation involves a potential medical issue with a player (e.g., heat exhaustion, excessive panting, dizziness), summon medical personnel (or the Tournament Director

in the absence of medical personnel) to determine if the player needs medical treatment. [Rule 10.H.2.a]

- 1) Allow medical treatment as necessary and resume play if the player is able to continue.
  - 2) If the player is not able to resume play, call a match retirement in favor of the opponent. Also, advise the Tournament Director of a retiring player so the USA Pickleball Report of Accident or Incident form can be appropriately completed and filed. (See Section 5.E.3.)
- d. If the situation involves active bleeding that can be controlled without medical assistance (e.g., minor cut, nosebleed), do not summon medical personnel. Allow the player to control the blood using personal resources.
  - e. If the situation involves blood, debris, water, fluids, or other foreign substances on the playing surface, seek assistance as necessary and have the substance removed or cleaned up. [Rules 10.B.5.a, 10.H.2.c]
  - f. Collect the ball if the ball has not been placed on the court under one of the player's paddles.
  - g. No annotations are required on the scoresheet for a referee time-out.
  - h. When the situation has been resolved and it is safe and appropriate to resume play, give a 15-second warning, check the readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), followed by announcing "Time in" and calling the score.
3. Match Retirement [Rule 12.F]
- A team may decide to retire from a match due to medical issues or other circumstances. When a team retires, the opponent will be awarded the match. A winning score for the match will be recorded in favor of the opponent showing the actual scores for all completed games and for the remaining games that would have been required for the opponent to win the match. If a game was in progress, the retiring team will retain all points scored and the opponent will receive a winning score with at least a two-point margin. A score of 0 will be shown for the retiring team for any game not started.
- a. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the opponent. Make sure to record the result of the last rally.
  - b. Determine whether the team is retiring only from the current match. If the team indicates that they will also be withdrawing from all remaining matches, inform the players to report their withdrawal to the tournament desk. If the players are unable to inform the tournament desk themselves, report their withdrawal when you return the scoresheet.
  - c. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows (Figure 15):
    - 1) For any game in progress, circle *or lightly shade* the actual score of the retiring team and the winning score for the game format (e.g., 11 for an 11-point game) for the winning team. Include a two-point margin over the retiring team's score if it is 10 or more. Line through all unused points of the winning team.

- 2) For any game that is not started, circle *or lightly shade* the winning score for the game format (e.g., 11 for an 11-point game) for the winning team and 0 for the retiring team.
- 3) Circle the non-retiring team. Write “WINNERS” in the circle.
- 4) Write “RETIREMENT” under the scores.

**Figure 15 – Documenting a Match Retirement**

**Team 2 retires with a lead: 11-2, 4-1  
Win recorded for Team 1: 2-11, 11-4, 11-0**

Event: **Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+** Match: #6 SYSID: 999999  
 Team 1: **Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob** Court: 7 11/24/20 18:24(PST)  
 Referee: Your Name  
 Format: 2/3 to 11

Serve X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17  
 X 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

**2-11 11-4 11-0**  
**RETIREMENT**

Team 2: **Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim**

4. Equipment Time-Out [Rule 10.D]  
 Players are expected to keep all clothing and equipment in playable condition. If you determine that a clothing or equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of play, call an equipment time-out for a reasonable duration to correct the issue.
  - a. Equipment time-outs are not required to be annotated on the scoresheet.
  - b. There is no restriction on the number of allowable equipment time-outs.
  - c. Valid reasons for an equipment time-out include broken paddle, broken shoestring, ripped shorts, dislodged contact lens, etc.
  - d. When the situation has been remedied, resume play by giving a 15-second warning, checking readiness of the officiating team (if applicable), followed by announcing “Time in” and calling the score.

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## F. Stoppage of Play

Once the ball has been hit to make the serve, do not stop play unless you recognize a:

- Fault
  - Referee error
  - Hinder
  - Questionable service motion
  - Questionable ball release for serve
  - Player physically or verbally stopping play
1. To stop play, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to announce the situation (e.g., “Stop play,” “Fault,” “Ball on.”)
  2. Most play stoppages are resolved in a matter of seconds and play is quickly resumed by readying the players and calling the score. (Referee time-outs are reserved for resolving lengthy situations.)
  3. You may use a 15-second warning to avert a potential delay of game in situations where the players are slow to get in position.

### TABLE 3 – ACTIONS THAT CAN INTERRUPT PLAY

Actions other than faults that can result in a stoppage of play are summarized below.

If a player's action occurs within the allowable time limit and the ball is in play (i.e., after the start of the score call), stop play to respond.

Player Action	When Action is Allowed	Rule
Hinder call	At time of occurrence	8.C
Not ready signal	Before start of score call	4.C
Time-out request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.M.10, 4.N.3
Score confirmation	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8
Correct server or receiver request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8
Correct player position request	Before server hits ball to serve	4.B.8
Score correction request	Before receiver hits return of serve	4.K
Incorrect server or position appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	4.B.10
Line call appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	6.D.5
Damaged ball appeal	Before server hits ball to start next rally	11.E

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## G. Judgment Calls

### 1. Deciding When to Call the Score

After each rally, players are expected to move to their respective positions without delay to begin the next point. Calling the score prior to all players, especially the server and receiver, being in position requires careful judgment. Allow players a reasonable amount of

time for their team to be ready to receive or initiate the serve. After you call the score, the server is entitled to serve immediately. [Rule 4.E] Things to remember:

- a. Be generous in allowing time for the players to be ready, as long as they maintain a continuous pace. [Rule 10.C]
- b. Allow players to quickly hydrate and towel off between rallies or when there is an interruption in play that does not require their attention. [Rule 10.C]
- c. Allow sufficient time to a player who retrieves the ball after a rally to return to position before continuing play.
- d. Call the score prior to all players being in position if:
  - 1) Players carry on a conversation without moving toward position.
  - 2) Players take an excessive amount of time towel off or taking a drink.
  - 3) Players, typically those who are stacking, take an excessive amount of time determining their positions.

## 2. Line Calls

The standard used by officials to make line calls is different from the criteria players must use when making line calls. Officials do not need to clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground in order to call a ball “out.” Officials must make impartial judgment calls based on whether or not they see that the ball contacted the playing surface in or out of the court bounds. [Rules 6.A-6.D, 6.D.6]

- a. Make the following line calls without an appeal by a player:
  - 1) Service foot faults. (See Section 5.A.12.)
  - 2) Short serves. (See Section 5.A.14.)
  - 3) NVZ infractions. (See Section 5.C.)
  - 4) Line calls at the end of a rally when the view of the responsible line judge is blocked, but only if you clearly saw where the ball landed. You must canvass the other line judges if you cannot make the line call. (See Section 8.G.3.)
- b. You must wait for an appeal before ruling on any other line calls. [Rule 13.F]
  - 1) Players must appeal line calls made at the end of a rally before the server hits the ball to start the next rally. [Rulebook Section 1 – The Players]
  - 2) Players are not required to make a line call on a ball before appealing to the referee to make the call. [Rule 6.D.3]
  - 3) **Respond to the question asked to make the appeal** before making your ruling, (e.g., Ref, did you see it? Respond “Yes” or “No.”)
  - 4) When a player appeals a line call **made by a player or a line judge**, you will either confirm the call, overrule the call, or let the call stand. Do not overrule a call unless you are certain the player’s or line judge’s call was incorrect.
    - a) **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🏸 “The ball was in.” or 🏸 “The ball was out.”



- b) **If you did not see where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the call stands.”
- 5) Upon appeal when **no call is made by a player or a line judge**, you will make the call.
  - a) **If you saw where the ball landed**, announce: 🗣️ “The ball was in.” or 🗣️ “The ball was out.”
  - b) **If you did not see where the ball landed and no call was made by a player**, announce: 🗣️ “By rule, the ball is in.”
  - c) **If you did not see where the ball landed and no call was made by a line judge**, canvass the other line judges to determine whether any of them can make a definitive call. If so, accept their call and announce the ruling. If not, announce a replay.
- 6) If asked why you cannot make a call, give a response that indicates you did not see the ball clearly or that your view was blocked. Do not routinely say you were watching the NVZ, especially when there was no action at the NVZ, as that gives the impression you are not focusing on the rest of the game.
- 7) **You cannot make an accurate call when the ball landed between you and the line and prevented you from seeing whether the ball actually touched the line.**
- 8) Do not make a definitive “Out” call if a ball landed on the opposite side of the court from you and you did not see a space between the ball and the line. The call is too close for you to make from your position.
- 9) If you overrule an “In” call as out of bounds, the team that hit the ball in question loses the rally.
- 10) If you overrule an “Out” call as “In”, the team that made the “Out” call loses the rally. [Rule 6.D.11] However, if the call was made by a line judge, replay the rally.
- 11) A player may override any line call to favor the opponent, whether the call was made by another player, a line judge, or you. The player override (to favor the opponent) takes precedence over line judge and referee calls.

**TABLE 4 – LINE CALL APPEAL ACTIONS**

<b>Results of Player Line Call Appeal</b>	<b>Without Line Judges</b>	<b>With Line Judges</b>
Referee makes call	Referee’s call stands	Referee’s call stands
Referee cannot make call	Player’s call stands	Line Judge’s call stands
Referee overrules “In” call	Referee’s call stands	Referee’s call stands
Referee overrules “Out” call	Fault against player	Replay*
Player overrides “In” call	Opponent wins rally	Opponent wins rally
Player overrides “Out” call	Opponent wins rally	Replay*
No call by players, referee, or line judges	Ball is “In”	Replay

\* **NOTE:** An officiating error occurs when an official’s “Out” call is overruled or overridden, resulting in the opponent being given an opportunity to replay the rally.

### 3. Hinders [Rules 3.A.15, 7.M, 8.C]

When an object, person, or other occurrence disrupts play or poses a threat to the safe continuation of play, (e.g., stray ball, temporary net toppled by the wind), immediately hold



up your hand and step forward to stop play, announce the hinder (e.g., “Stop play, ball on”), and replay the rally after clearing the obstruction. It does not matter where a ball in play at the time of the hinder call lands; the ball is declared dead at the time the hinder call is made, whether or not the hinder is valid. Do not stop play for a stray ball entering the court, unless you consider it a safety issue. Players may call a hinder if they are distracted by a ball, person, or other object coming into the playing area. If you disagree with a player’s hinder call, call a fault against the offending player.

4. Damaged and Degraded Balls [Rule 11.E]

Despite a ball being damaged or degraded, play continues to the completion of the rally.

- a. Between rallies and before the ball is hit to make the serve, any player may appeal a ball as damaged or degraded and request a replacement ball. Examine the ball to determine whether it is damaged and, if so, issue a replacement ball. If both teams agree that a ball is degraded and should be replaced, issue a replacement ball. Any player may inspect a replacement ball. However, the player who will serve next may select the ball if there is more than one ball from which to choose. Re-call the score if you had called it before the appeal.
- b. Call a fault against a player who stops play due to a suspected damaged ball.
- c. If you determine that a damaged ball affected the outcome of the rally, replay the rally.
- d. Issue a verbal warning or a technical warning, depending on the circumstances, to a player who crushes the ball without allowing it to be examined.

5. Double or Triple Bounce [Rule 7.E]

Accurately detecting whether the ball bounced too many times can be difficult.

- a. When you clearly see a ball bounce twice, or three times for a wheelchair player, before being returned to the opponent, call a fault.
- b. If you cannot definitively determine whether the ball bounced more than the allowed number of times, allow play to continue.
- c. If any player stops play to make an appeal, you may ask the alleged offending player whether a violation occurred, giving the player an opportunity to make an honor call against themselves.
- d. If the opponent stops play to claim a violation, issue a fault if you determine that no violation occurred. [Rule 7.I]

6. Ball Hitting a Player [Rule 7.H]

Accurately detecting whether the ball touched a player, other than being legally returned during play, can be difficult.

- a. When you clearly see a ball touch a player, or anything the player is wearing or carrying, call a fault.
- b. If you cannot definitively determine whether the ball touched a player, allow play to continue.
- c. If any player makes an appeal, you may ask the alleged offending player whether a violation occurred, giving the player an opportunity to make an honor call against themselves.

- d. If the opponent stops play to claim a violation, issue a fault if you determine that no violation occurred. [Rule 7.I]
7. Distractions [Rules 3.A.6, 11.I]  
Players are not allowed to create a distraction to interfere with their opponent's concentration or physical ability to hit the ball. Call a fault on any player for actions or vocalizations **while an opponent is preparing to hit or is hitting the ball**, such as waving their arms or paddle, stomping their feet, or unusual shouting. However, if you do not call a distraction fault immediately and the opponent continues to play, then you may assume the player is not distracted. Similar actions and vocalizations that are common to the game made by players at other times, such as grunting while they are hitting the ball and routine partner communication, are not faults. Although the specific rule allowing players to appeal a distraction at the end of a rally has been rescinded, players can appeal any judgement call.  
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## H. Enforcement Issues with Players and Spectators

1. Faults
  - a. Call faults immediately, definitively, and audibly. Do not elaborate excessively or argue with the guilty player.
  - b. Occasionally, violations will occur simultaneously. When simultaneous violations occur, call both violations. If the penalty for the violations is the same (e.g., loss of rally), assess only one penalty. If the penalties are different for the violations (e.g., technical foul and loss of rally), assess all penalties.
2. Referee Errors  
The most common errors are calling the wrong score and calling a NVZ foot fault on a bounced ball. If you make a mistake, immediately hold up your hand and step forward to stop play, announce "Correction," and replay the rally. This includes if you incorrectly identify the correct server when asked by a player.
3. Questioned Calls  
When a call is questioned by a player and the issue is not resolved quickly, **call a referee time-out** and summon all players to the net to calmly discuss a resolution.
  - a. Ignore spectator comments. Spectators are not part of the match and must not be permitted to become involved. [Rule 13.C.2.a]
  - b. Consult line judges, if appropriate.
  - c. Avoid replays, if possible. If a situation is not addressed by a rule or the Casebook and all players agree to a replay, grant the replay. [Rule 13.F.2]
4. Coaching and Spectator Comments [Rule 13.G.1.j]  
Coaching is instructing or directing a player or team so they can gain an advantage or avoid violating the rules (i.e., win a rally or not commit a fault). Coaching by non-players is only permitted during time-outs.
  - a. Do not allow spectators to coach by calling out tactics, making line calls, giving non-verbal signals, or otherwise interfering with the match while a game is in play. Control the crowd politely, yet firmly. If a spectator is suspected of coaching a player, make a general announcement to the spectators that coaching is only allowed during time-outs.

Before administering a penalty, you should be certain that illegal coaching is taking place, that you know to which team the coaching is being directed, and that the coaching is not for the purpose of eliciting a penalty against one team for the benefit of the other team. Call a verbal or technical warning against a player or team that you can determine is being coached (see Section 6.B.2).

b. Verbal Coaching: Examples of coaching comments by spectators:

*"Get to the line."*

*"Down the middle."*

*"Call time-out."*

*"Take your time."*

*"Hit to his backhand."*

*"Play the soft game."*

Examples of comments that are not actionable and do not constitute coaching:

*"Great shot."*

*"Keep it going."*

*"Come on."*

*"You can do this."*

- c. Nonverbal Coaching: Examples of signals and gestures: making a time-out "T" signal, a gesture pushing toward the net to signal "move up", or some other prearranged signal.
- d. Electronic Coaching: Electronic coaching consists of texts, emails, or other electronic communications received by a player via a smart watch, listening device, or any other electronic apparatus. Players are prohibited from wearing listening devices (e.g., headphones, ear buds) other than hearing aids. [Rule 11.P] You must be careful to avoid invading any player's privacy. However, if you suspect that electronic coaching has taken place, report the situation after the match to the Head Referee or Tournament Director.

5. Coaching by the Referee

It is possible for a referee to inadvertently engage in coaching by making comments to players in an effort to be helpful. You must remain impartial and not give any advantage to either team. You may make comments that apply equally to both teams to help control or facilitate the match, including issuing verbal warnings to both teams. You may explain the nature of a fault when making a call (e.g., "Foot fault, left foot"), and you may answer a question from a player about a ruling, but it is best to keep any explanations brief and factual to avoid inviting a discussion. Avoid offering advice about how to avoid a future infraction as that is coaching.

6. Keeping Both Sides Equally Informed

If you engage in conversation with a player regarding a challenge or to clarify a rule or procedure, make sure the opposing team is equally informed. Call a referee time-out, move to center court, and invite a player from the opposing team (or all players) to join you to hear the conversation. This demonstrates fairness and avoids one team perceiving that the opponent is gaining an advantage. If an intense discussion begins to develop, cut it off, send all parties to their playing positions, and resume play. Announcing a 15-second warning to indicate that you are going to call the score can be an effective way to end the discussion.

7. Obtaining Assistance

You may call for the assistance of the Head Referee or Tournament Director at any time. Players also have the right to request a ruling from the Tournament Director. Honor such a request by calling a referee time-out and summoning the Tournament Director or Head Referee. [Rule 13.A.1]

- a. If assistance is rendered at the request of a player and your ruling is found to be correct, charge the challenging player a time-out and issue a technical warning. If no time-outs are available, issue the player a technical foul. [Rules 13.G.1.g. 13.G.2.d, 13.J]
- b. If your ruling is incorrect, reverse the ruling and, if appropriate, replay the rally.

## **I. Error in Match-Winning Rally**

In the rare event that a player or team appeals to you that there was an error in correct server or correct player position during the match-winning rally, you can correct the error up until the time the scoresheet is handed off to the tournament desk. Within that period, if you confirm an error, the match must be reconvened and completed with the error corrected. [Rule 4.B.10]

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## Section 6: Player Behavior and Remedies

### A. Dealing with Unruly Players

There will be rare occasions when a player becomes angry during a match. It may be triggered by an action of yours, the opponent, or a spectator. Regardless of the cause, such situations must be dealt with immediately and in a professional manner.

The challenge of preventing conflict escalation requires walking the fine line between warding off problems before they happen and coaching the players. On rare occasion when you feel the need to settle an issue with a player once and for all, be careful to avoid actions and words that might be construed as coaching or drawing unnecessary attention to yourself.

Remember, it is your job to control the match and keep peace on the court. You are not a dictator, but you do have the authority and responsibility to apply the rules in a fair and professional manner.

1. Most importantly, maintain a calm demeanor and open mind.
2. Call a referee time-out and summon all the players to center court, away from spectators, and calmly discuss the source of irritation.
3. Avoid argument.
4. Take time to understand the complaint; it may be a simple misunderstanding.
5. If the issue is a rule or rule interpretation, summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director for clarification.
6. If a player becomes verbally abusive, issue a technical warning. If the conduct continues or intensifies, issue another technical warning, which will then result in the loss of a point or a point issued to the opponent, a game forfeit, or a match forfeit depending on what prior penalties have been assessed against the team. (See Figure 21).
7. If a player makes threats against you, a player or a spectator, issue a technical foul.
8. If a player's conduct becomes detrimental to the tournament, advise the Tournament Director, who can eject or expel a player from the tournament. [Rules 13.A.4, 13.M]

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### B. Penalties for Inappropriate Player Behavior

A progressive system of penalties, ranging in severity from technical warning to expulsion, is used to address inappropriate player conduct. In addition, one verbal warning, which is a non-punitive caution, may be issued to each team during a match as a pre-emptive measure against behavior that appears headed toward punitive level. Technical warnings and technical fouls accumulate during a match and result in a harsher penalty for each successive infraction until a game or match is forfeited.

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**TABLE 5 – PENALTY SYSTEM**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Penalty</b>	<b>Issued by</b>
0	Verbal Warning	Referee
1	Technical Warning	Referee
2	Technical Foul	Referee
3	Game Forfeit	Referee
4	Match Forfeit	Referee or Tournament Director
5	Ejection	Tournament director only
6	Expulsion	Tournament director only

Referees are empowered and expected to call verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls to address unsportsmanlike conduct. Be careful not to interject yourself into a match by penalizing players for actions that are not prohibited by the rules (e.g., asking for correct position frequently or using a rule to their advantage).

Warnings and fouls may be called from the time the players arrive at the court for a match until the completion of the match. Do not stop play to assess a warning or foul; wait until the rally is completed. Report infractions observed after the completion of the match to the Tournament Director.

**NOTE:** A table summarizing actions associated with penalties is provided in Appendix C. For infractions that have more than one penalty level, if you are unsure of which level to apply, err on the side of caution and use the lesser of the available options.

**NOTE:** In doubles play, technical warnings and technical fouls are assessed to a team, not an individual player.

**NOTE:** Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls do not result in a loss of serve.

1. Verbal Warnings [Rules 13.G, 13.G.1]

Issue a verbal warning to prevent inappropriate behavior from escalating to a more problematic state warranting a technical warning or technical foul. Any situation that could result in a technical warning may instead be addressed by the referee as a verbal warning as a first warning. One verbal warning may be issued to each team during a match. **NOTE:** Once a technical warning or a technical foul has been issued to a team, a verbal warning to that team is no longer appropriate. Issue an additional technical warning or technical foul for subsequent behavior that warrants a penalty.

- Allow the rally to complete, if applicable, and then advise the players that you are issuing a verbal warning. You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.
- Document a verbal warning on the scoresheet by marking “VW” under the “TW/TF” area of the scoresheet for the offending team. Do not rotate the clipboard (Figure 16). Write the details of the verbal warning on the back of the scoresheet as is done for technical warnings and technical fouls (see Section 6.B.2.b and Figure 18).
- If a first incidence of an infraction is egregious enough in your judgement to warrant a more severe penalty, issue a technical warning or technical foul as you deem appropriate.



- d. Continue play by announcing a 15-second warning. Call “Time in” and announce the score when the players are or should be ready to play.

**Figure 16 – Documenting a Verbal Warning**

The image shows a USA Pickleball scoresheet on a clipboard. The match is between Team 1: Smith, Mary and Jones, Bob, and Team 2: Baker, Diane and Olsen, Jim. The format is 20 to 11. A yellow sticky note with the number '2' is attached to the top left. A blue arrow points to the 'TW/TF' box on the right side of the scoresheet, indicating where to document a technical warning.

## 2. Technical Warnings and Technical Fouls [Rule 13.G]

The assessment of a technical warning is the normal means used to address unsportsmanlike conduct of a relatively minor nature. However, a technical foul (equivalent to two technical warnings) should be assessed if a player’s behavior is extreme and warrants a more severe penalty. Assessment of a technical foul, or two consecutive technical warnings, results in one point being deducted from the score of the offending team, unless the offending side’s score is zero, in which case one point is awarded to the non-offending side. **NOTE:** The “TW/TF” boxes apply to the entire match, not to specific games.

- a. Allow the rally to complete, if applicable, and then assess a technical warning or technical foul by announcing the infraction (e.g., “Technical warning for use of profanity”). You may quickly call all players together at the net if a brief explanation is necessary.
- b. Write “TW” or “TF” (as applicable) in one of the “TW/TF” boxes for the offending team (Figure 17). Do not rotate the clipboard if the annotation is for the receiving side; make the annotation right-side up next to the receiver’s upside-down time-out boxes. On the back of the scoresheet, write “TF” or “TW” (as appropriate), the player’s name, game number, score, and details of the warning or foul. To avoid having to remove the scoresheet and the server clip from the clipboard, write the details across the loose end

of the scoresheet (Figure 18). *OPTION: To avoid a lengthy delay in the resumption of play, you may annotate the particulars on the back of the scoresheet during the next time-out or at the end of the game.*

**Figure 17 – Documenting a Technical Warning (Front)**

The image shows a USA Pickleball scoresheet on a clipboard. The scoresheet is for a mixed doubles match. At the top, it says "Event: Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+" and "Match: #8". The court is "7" and the date/time is "11/24/20 18:24(PST)". The referee is "Your Name" and the format is "2/2 to 11".

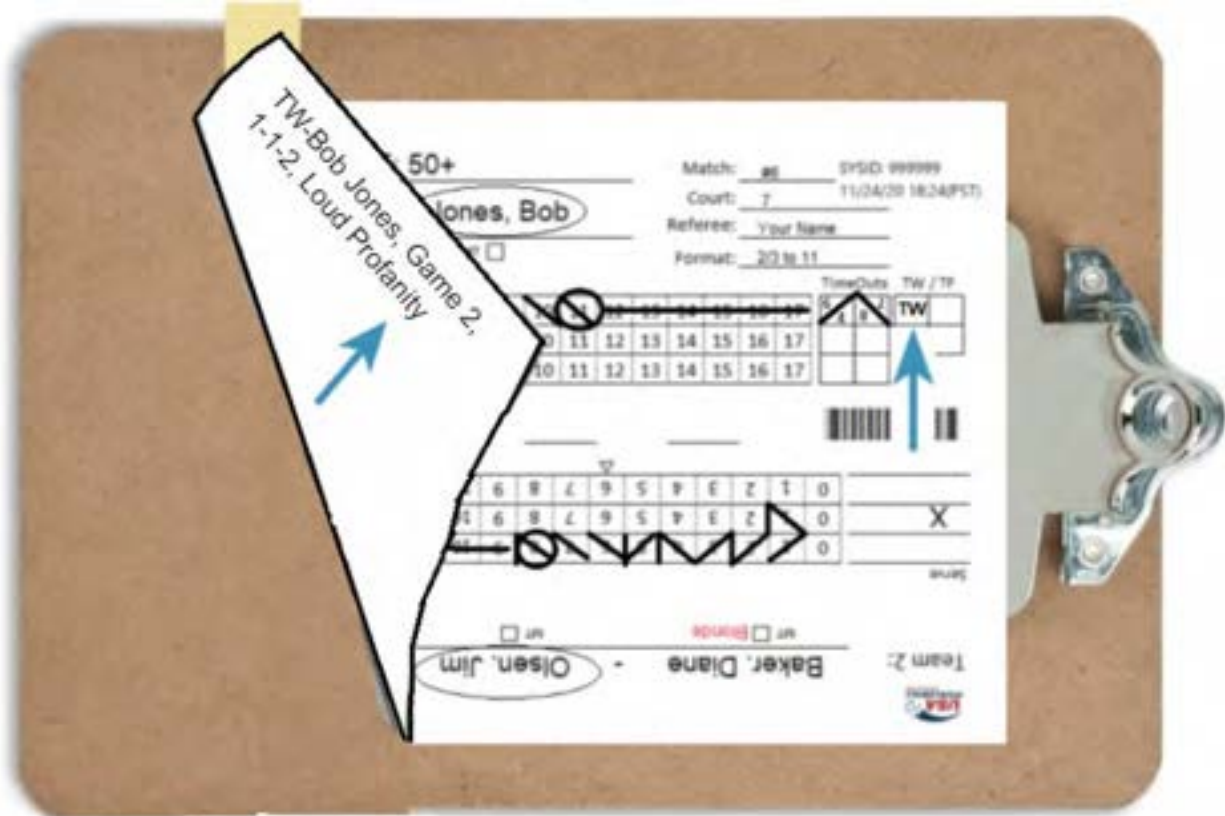
Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob. Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim.

The scoresheet has two large score grids. The top grid is for Team 1 and the bottom grid is for Team 2. Each grid has a "Serve" column and a "TimeOuts TW / TP" column. A blue arrow points to the "TW" box in the "TimeOuts TW / TP" column for Team 1.

There are also "MT" (Missed Shot) checkboxes for each team. For Team 1, the "MT" checkbox is checked and labeled "Red Hill". For Team 2, the "MT" checkbox is checked and labeled "Bonds".

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**Figure 18 – Documenting a Technical Warning (Back)**



- c. To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is one or more points:**
- 1) Erase the last marked point and any following side out mark from the score of the offending team. If the erased point is followed by a side out mark, place a side out mark at their new (lower) score if the new score does not already have one.
  - 2) Write "TF" in the box with the new (lower) score (Figure 19).
  - 3) When the team scores its next point, mark the appropriate diagonal line in the scorebox of the point that was erased (Figure 20).

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- d. To document the point adjustment **when the score of the offending team is zero**, add one point to the score of the non-offending team by marking “TF” in the appropriate score box.

  - 1) If the technical foul is committed by the receiving team, mark “TF” right-side-up in the appropriate score box of the serving team (Figure 21).
  - 2) If the technical foul is committed by the serving team, mark “TF” right-side up in the appropriate score box of the receiving team (which will be upside down) followed by a side out mark.

- e. Inform the team whose score has been adjusted that a point has been deducted or added, (e.g., “Your score is now ...”). The player(s) must adjust their positions on their own to match the new score. Do not provide assistance unless you are asked by a player. Ensure that the other team is aware of their opponent’s score adjustment.
- f. Continue play by announcing a 15-second warning. Call “Time in” and announce the score when the players are or should be ready via to play.

### Figure 21 – Adding a Point for a Technical Foul (Front and Back)

This scoresheet shows the issuance of a point to the opponent for a technical foul (resulting from two technical warnings) when the offending team has no points.

The scoresheet is for a Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ event. Team 1 consists of Smith, Mary (MT) and Jones, Bob (MT). The scoresheet shows a game in progress with a score of 0-11. A yellow tab with the number 2 is placed over the score. A blue arrow points to the 'TF' (Technical Foul) box in the score column. A white card is placed over the scoresheet, showing the back of the scoresheet with the text: 'TW - Baker/Olsen, Game 1, 6-0-1. Being coached by friends' and 'TF: 2nd TW, Olsen, Game 1, 9-0-2. Excessive arguing with ref about line calls'. A blue arrow points to the 'TF' box on the back of the scoresheet.

### 3. Game Forfeit [Rule 13.H]

A game forfeit is imposed when a team accumulates three technical warnings or a combination of a technical warning and technical foul during a match (see Appendix B).

A game forfeit is also imposed when a player arrives more than 10 minutes late for a multiple-game match. (A match forfeit occurs at 15 minutes.) **NOTE:** A game forfeit that is imposed for reporting late does not contribute toward a match forfeit.

- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the game forfeit, follow the procedure in 6.B.2.b to annotate the technical warning or technical foul. However, do not make a point adjustment in the score for a technical foul since the score will be recorded as X-0 (where X is the winning score for the game format).
- b. Document a game forfeit on the scoresheet by writing “GF” in the space next to “0” for the game in which the infraction occurs for the offending team (Figure 22). If the game forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the forfeit (Figure 23). It is recommended that you check with the Head Referee or Tournament Director before declaring the game forfeit to the opponent to determine if there are any circumstances of which you are not aware that will nullify the forfeit.
- c. End a game in progress.
- d. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows:
  - 1) Circle *or lightly shade* the winning score for the non-offending team.
  - 2) Circle *or lightly shade* zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
  - 3) Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes of the forfeited game.

**Figure 22 – Documenting a Game Forfeit**

This scoresheet shows the documentation of a Game 1 forfeit against the receiving team for a technical foul that followed a technical warning

The scoresheet is for a Mixed Doubles 4.5: 50+ match. Team 2 (Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim) is the non-offending team, and Team 1 (Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob) is the offending team. The scoresheet shows a game forfeit (GF) for Team 1. Annotations include a circled '11' for Team 2's score, a circled '0' for Team 1's score, and a line through Team 1's points and time-out boxes. A yellow tab with the number '2' is visible at the top.

Team 2: Baker, Diane - Olsen, Jim	MT <input type="checkbox"/> Blonde	MT <input type="checkbox"/>
Serve	0	11
X	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
TimeOuts		
TW / TF		
GF		
Team 1: Smith, Mary - Jones, Bob	MT <input type="checkbox"/> Red Hair	MT <input type="checkbox"/>
Serve	0	0
X	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
TimeOuts		
TW / TF		
GF		



4. Match Forfeit [Rule 13.I]

A match forfeit is imposed against a team when:

- A second technical foul is assessed after a previous technical foul (point adjustment) was assessed against the team during a match, or
- A technical warning or technical foul is assessed after a team has forfeited a game in the match.

**NOTE:** A game forfeit that is imposed for reporting late does not contribute toward a match forfeit.

A match forfeit is also imposed when a player:

- Arrives more than 10 minutes late for the start of a single-game match,
  - Arrives more than 15 minutes late for the start of a multiple-game match,
  - Refuses to wear the starting server identification, or
  - Is discovered playing with a paddle that is not approved by USA Pickleball or has illegal alterations.
- a. If the assessment of a technical warning or a technical foul triggered the match forfeit, follow the procedure in 6.B.2.b to annotate the technical warning or technical foul. However, do not make a point adjustment in the score for a technical foul since the score will be recorded as X-0 (where X is the winning score for the game format).
- b. Document a match forfeit on the scoresheet by writing “MF” in the space next to “0” for the game in which the infraction occurs for the offending team (Figure 23). If the match forfeit is due to tardiness, also write the time of the game and match forfeit (Figure 24). **NOTE:** It is recommended that you check with the Head Referee or Tournament Director before declaring the match forfeit to the opponent to determine if there are any circumstances of which you are not aware that will nullify the forfeit.
- c. End a game in progress by awarding the match to the non-offending team.
- d. Finish annotating the scoresheet as follows (Figures 23 and 24):
- 1) Circle *or lightly shade* the winning score for the non-offending team.
  - 2) Circle *or lightly shade* zero as the score and line through all scored points for the offending team.
  - 3) Line through all unused points and unused time-out boxes for all games started.
  - 4) Circle the non-offending team and write “WINNERS” in the circle.
  - 5) Write “FORFEIT” under the scores.

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5. Ejection and Expulsion [Rule 13.M]

If you observe any egregious conduct by a player that you judge worthy of ejection or expulsion, immediately notify the Tournament Director. If the player is ejected or expelled during a match:

- a. Follow the match forfeit procedure (see Section 6.B.4) to end the match, awarding the match to the non-offending team.
- b. Write “FORFEIT - EJECTION” or “FORFEIT- EXPULSION,” as applicable, under the scores and indicate which player was ejected or expelled.

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## Section 7: Dual Referee Option

A refereeing option is available for tournaments that employs two referees selected by the Tournament Director or Head Referee, one as the Lead Referee and the other as a Second (or Supporting) Referee to assist the Lead Referee. A referee should have experience as a Second Referee before serving as a Lead Referee. **Teamwork between the two referees is essential to the success of the dual referee system.** This refereeing option can be used, with or without line judges, to officiate matches designated by the Tournament Director.

### A. Goals

The goals of the dual referee system are:

1. To increase the accuracy of calls involving the NVZ and players crossing the plane of the net.
2. To support the Lead Referee in officiating all aspects of the match.
3. To assure the accuracy of referee calls.

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### B. Lead Referee Responsibilities

The use of the dual referee option does not alter any of the responsibilities of the Lead Referee in officiating and managing the match. However, during the serve, the Lead Referee's primary focus will be on the server complying with the service motion elements and the proper ball release. The Lead Referee will make all final decisions regarding the resolution of disagreements and the assessment of penalties. The Lead Referee will also check the readiness of the Second Referee before resuming play after any lengthy interruption.

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### C. Second Referee Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the Second Referee is to assist the Lead Referee in calling faults for non-volley zone and plane of the net violations **occurring on both sides of the net.** The Second Referee will assist the Lead Referee in observing all other player activity on and around the court during the match and specifically during dead ball times. During the serve, the Second referee will focus on the placement of the server's feet **or rear wheels.**

#### 1. Calls

- a. The Second Referee will immediately call any of the following situations when observed:
  - 1) NVZ faults
  - 2) Plane of the net faults
  - 3) Service foot faults
  - 4) Short serves
  - 5) Player safety issues
  - 6) Double bounces (or triple bounces for wheelchair player)
  - 7) Player hit by the ball
- b. The Second Referee will signal other violations, in particular any of the following, by a raised hand after the rally:
  - 1) Out of position players
  - 2) Incorrect server or receiver
  - 3) Paddle thrown by player

- 4) Ball deliberately damaged by player
- 5) Unsportsmanlike behavior
- 6) Service motion violations
- 7) Server applying spin to the ball

2. Positioning

The Second Referee will stand on the opposite end of the net from the Lead Referee. The Second Referee may kneel, if necessary, to accommodate video equipment, spectators, etc. The Second Referee will join the Lead Referee at the center of the court during time-outs and between games.

3. Scorekeeping

The Second Referee will not maintain a scoresheet.

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## D. Appeals

All player appeals will be directed to the Lead Referee. If the Lead Referee did not clearly see the action being appealed and cannot make a decisive call, the Lead Referee will then solicit the opinion of the Second Referee. If the Second Referee can make a decisive call, the Second Referee's call will stand.

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## E. Conflicting Calls and Disagreements

In situations where there are simultaneous or conflicting calls (e.g., the Lead Referee calls a fault on one team at the same time the Second Referee calls a fault on the opposing team), or in situations where the Second Referee makes a fault call with which the Lead Referee disagrees, the Lead Referee will call a referee time-out and both referees will meet at the center of the net to discuss a solution. The Lead Referee will make the final decision on the outcome and notify all players of the resolution. **NOTE:** Situations where the Lead Referee overrules the Second Referee are expected to be extremely rare and only occur if the Lead Referee is absolutely certain that the Second Referee made an error, in which case the rally must be replayed.

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## F. Pre-Match Briefings

1. Referees

Prior to the pre-match briefing with the players, the Lead Referee will brief the Second Referee on the expectations for how they will work together as a team. The Head Referee should observe this briefing to make sure both referees (who may have never worked together) understand their respective responsibilities and their obligation to get each call correct and to uphold the professional reputations of each other and the referee community as a whole.

2. Players

The Second Referee will attend the pre-match briefing with the players where the Lead Referee will review the dual referee procedures. The Lead Referee will explain the role of the Second Referee and advise that the players must direct all questions and appeals to the Lead Referee.

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## Section 8: Medal Matches with Line Judges

Line judges are generally used for gold medal matches and sometimes for bronze medal matches. They are an integral part of the officiating team, and their proficiency is critical to the smooth operation of a match. Their primary responsibility is to call their assigned lines, which fosters more accurate line calling and fair play. This relieves players of line-calling responsibility, except for the center service line. [Rules 13.D.3, 13.E]

This section establishes standardization and consistency in how line judges perform their duties on the court. It presents the USA Pickleball Association best practices for line judging and the responsibilities of referees working with line judges. Knowledge of line judging best practices and procedures can be tested by taking the [USA Pickleball Line Judge Test](#). Line judge training is included as part of the referee training curriculum.

### A. Referee Responsibilities

1. The referee is responsible for all aspects of a match, including calls made during the match. As such, the referee is responsible for the line judges, their actions, and their role in the match.
2. The referee will brief the line judges prior to the start of the match. (See Section 8.E.)
3. The referee will check the readiness of the officiating team before starting play at the beginning of each game and after each extended interruption of play (e.g., time-out, end change, technical warning, technical foul) by asking “Line judges ready?” and receiving an audible or visual response from each.
4. The referee will not allow players or spectators to confront or otherwise interact with line judges.
5. If line judges do not make their calls loud, clear, and immediate (both verbally and visually), the referee will call “Referee time-out” and remind the line judge(s) of the proper procedures.
6. The referee has the authority and responsibility to replace any line judge who does not perform to standards.
7. If all players agree and request replacement of a line judge, the referee will arrange a replacement or summon the Tournament Director to make the final decision. [Rule 13.K]

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### B. Line Judge Responsibilities and Code of Conduct

Line judges must possess certain characteristics and skills. They need to have a good understanding of pickleball and the general rules. They must be able to work under pressure to make split-second decisions, sometimes at crucial moments in key matches. They must be able to concentrate for extended periods of time. Like referees, line judges must adhere to a code of conduct. It is important that they:

1. Make all calls impartially, fairly, and consistently.
2. Use a professional and pleasant demeanor.
  - a. Treat players, referees, other line judges, and spectators with respect.



- b. Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while on the court.
- c. Avoid comments and emotional reactions, either positive or negative, regarding the play of either side.
3. Devote full attention to the match.
4. Not converse with others during the match.
5. Ensure that their personal electronic devices are in silent mode or turned off.
6. Not wear earbuds or carry any device that could distract them or give the appearance of distracting them from the match.
7. Excuse themselves from line judging the match of a relative, close friend, or doubles partner.

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## C. Line Judge Options

1. The Tournament Director determines the number of line judges for each match.
  - a. Six Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and half of each sideline. (Recommended for major tournaments and tournaments with prize money.)
  - b. Four Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline and each full sideline.
  - c. Two Line Judges: A line judge for each baseline. (The referee and a supporting referee call their respective sidelines. This is the least accurate technique.)
2. A passive line judge option is available to tournament directors which allows players to make their own line calls.
  - a. Passive line judges make line calls and line call signals **only when requested by the referee** after an appeal by a player. They make all other line judge calls as required in Sections 8.G.4 and 8.H.
  - b. If the referee is not able to make a definitive call on an appealed line call, the referee will request the responsible passive line judge to make the call. If the line judge cannot make the call, the referee will canvass the other passive line judges.
3. No Line Judges

Players make all perimeter line calls and the center line on the serve. The referee calls service faults, short serves, and NVZ faults.

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## D. Line Judge Positioning

1. The referee will position line judges according to circumstances (e.g., position of sun, location of spectators, actions on adjacent courts).
2. Line judges should align themselves just inside their assigned boundary line with an unobstructed view down the line. This will make it easier to see any space between the ball and the line when the ball is out.

3. If possible and it can be done safely, line judges should look over a fence rather than through it.
4. The Tournament Director will determine if conditions warrant any line judge to sit.  
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## **E. Line Judge Briefing by the Referee**

Prior to the match, the referee will normally gather all line judges for instruction. If circumstances warrant, they may be instructed separately.

1. The referee and line judges will introduce themselves.
2. The referee will assign each line judge to a baseline or a sideline (during the briefing or at the court).
3. The referees will instruct line judges to:
  - a. Take care of their restroom and hydration needs prior to the match.
  - b. Silence or turn off their electronic devices and not use them while on duty to stay fully focused on their responsibilities.
  - c. Walk to the court as a team.
  - d. Not leave the court until released by the referee. (A tie-breaker match may have to be played following the initial championship match.)
  - e. Ignore line calls made by players or spectators, even though players often continue to make their own line calls.
  - f. Not solicit or acknowledge the opinions of players or spectators.
  - g. Be consistent, confident, clear, and accurate in their calls.
4. The referee will review procedures and demonstrate the line-calling procedures to be used (see Sections 7.F-7.H):
  - a. How to determine in and out balls.
  - b. “Out” call (visual and verbal)
  - c. “In” call (visual)
  - d. View Blocked (visual)
  - e. Foot Fault call (visual and verbal)
  - f. Out Of Position Player, Incorrect Server or Receiver (visual, at the end of the rally)
  - g. Coaching (visual)
  - h. Other Violations or Questions (visual, at the end of the rally)
  - i. Ready (visual). Line judges should signal to the referee with a raised arm to indicate they are ready before the start of each game and after each extended interruption of play. Line judges should become ready for the start of play when they hear the referee announce a 15-second warning before starting play.

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## F. Judging In and Out Balls

The criteria for line judges and referees when making line calls are different from those assigned to players. The standard for line judges and referees is Rule 6.C: A ball contacting the playing surface completely outside of the court is out of bounds (Figures 25 and 26). (Players are bound by Rule 6.D.6 to only call a ball out of bounds if they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball when it hits the playing surface.)

Consistency in judging in and out balls by the entire officiating team is imperative. Line judges must make “Out” calls confidently, without hesitation, and as accurately as possible, but accuracy on close shots can be difficult because they happen quickly. During rallies, line judges should follow the ball so they can anticipate when they may have to make a call, at which point their focus should be on the outside of the line. Line judges must not call a ball out of bounds unless they clearly saw the ball land outside the court. If there is doubt, they should consider the ball in. Therefore, it is important that line judges understand what constitutes an in ball and an out ball.

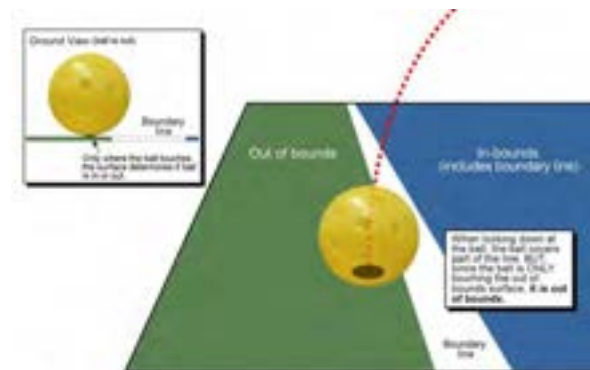
1. A pickleball does not compress like a tennis ball. Only a very small area at the bottom of the ball—the mid-point—contacts the ground.
2. Where the ball physically touches the court determines whether it is in or out of bounds. If the ball touches the line, the ball is in.
3. A close out ball can overhang the edge of the line. The ball is out of bounds if its point of contact with the playing surface is outside the edge of the line.

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**Figure 25 – In and Out Illustrations**



**Figure 26 – Out Illustration**



## G. Communicating the Call

Line judges will make verbal calls only for out balls and foot faults. The referee is dependent on hearing “Out” calls to promptly stop play. **NOTE:** Line judges will normally make “Out” calls when they occur; however, passive line judges will only make “Out” calls and “In” signals when requested by the referee.

1. “Out” Calls
  - a. Line judges must make “Out” calls immediately, loudly, and confidently, regardless of how far out of bounds the ball lands, because the referee’s attention may be elsewhere. The call must be made **only after the ball lands outside the court**. Hearing the line

judge “Out” call is also important for players and spectators to know the result of a play. A delayed line call raises doubts about the line judge’s reliability.

- b. While making a verbal call, line judges must also raise their arm in the out-of-bounds direction (Figure 27). Arm signals are important for the referee to confirm that the “Out” call came from a line judge and not from a player or spectator. Line judges should hold their arm signals for several seconds to give the referee and players an opportunity to see the signal.

## 2. “In” Calls

- a. Line judges will signal a ball as in (**with no verbal call**) only if the ball contacted the court close enough to the line that players or the referee may want confirmation that the ball was in. The “In” signal can be made immediately or when the referee asks the line judge for confirmation (which may just be a glance in the line judge’s direction).
- b. The signal for an in ball is both arms outstretched forward with the palms facing down (Figure 28). Line judges should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

**Figure 27 – “Out” Call**



**Figure 28 – “In” Call**



## 3. View Blocked

- a. If a line judge does not clearly see the ball contact the playing surface, the line judge will immediately signal by placing both hands over the eyes, indicating that the ball was blocked from view (Figure 29). They should hold this signal for a few seconds to give the referee a chance to look for it.

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**Figure 29 – Blocked View**



- b. The referee will immediately make the call if he or she clearly saw the ball land.
- c. If the referee did not clearly see the ball land **and the shot ended the rally or a player appealed the line call**, the referee must canvass the other line judges to see whether any clearly saw the ball land and can make the call.
- d. If none of the line judges nor the referee is able to make the line call, the referee will order the point replayed.

#### 4. Foot Faults

Calling foot faults is the primary responsibility of the referee, but baseline and sideline judges may also call service foot faults and sideline foot faults for their assigned line since they should have a clear view. A line judge will raise their hand when making the following calls:

- a. Baseline service fault: If a server's foot or rear wheel is touching the baseline or court surface **when the ball is hit to make the serve**, a baseline judge will call "Fault" and identify which foot or wheel touched.
- b. Sideline extension fault: If a server's foot or rear wheel is touching **outside** the imaginary extension of the sideline **when the ball is hit to make the serve**, a sideline judge will call "Fault" and identify which foot or wheel touched.
- c. Sideline NVZ fault: If a player's foot or rear wheel touches the sideline of the non-volley zone **while volleying the ball or as a result of volleying the ball**, a sideline judge will call "Fault" and identify which foot or wheel touched.
- d. Sideline re-establishment fault: If a player's foot or rear wheel touches the sideline of the non-volley zone and the sideline judge clearly sees that the **player does not re-establish contact outside the non-volley zone before volleying the ball**, the sideline judge will call "Fault" and identify the failure to re-establish.

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## H. Other Line Judge Responsibilities

Because line judges are part of the officiating team, they may also provide the referee with information regarding actions other than line calls and foot faults that occur during the match. Line judges are a second set of eyes for the referee. While the referee is responsible for all aspects of a match, he or she may seek the opinion of line judges before making a final ruling on certain calls. The referee will determine whether there has been an infraction after observing a line judge signal for any of the following:

1. Incorrect Server, or Incorrect Receiver, or Player Out of Position

When a line judge notices that the wrong player is serving or receiving, or a player is out of position, **at the end of the rally** the line judge should clasp their hands over their head (Figure 30).

2. Coaching

When a line judge notices coaching by a spectator other than during time-outs and between games, the line judge should extend their arms upward in a “V” position **at the end of the rally** (Figure 31).

**Figure 30 – Wrong Server, Out of Position, or Wrong Receiver**



**Figure 31 – Coaching by a Spectator**



3. Net System and Other Common Violations

Line judges should raise their hand **at the end of a rally** to get the referee’s attention if they **clearly** see any other violation or have a question.

- a. Sideline judges should be alert for players, paddles, and apparel touching the net, a net post, or any net support component that extends outside the sideline when players are attempting to hit the ball while positioned to the side of the net.
- b. All line judges should be alert for double bounces (triple bounces for wheelchair players).



- c. All line judges should be alert for a ball in play touching a player or anything a player is wearing or carrying.
- d. All line judges should be alert for player misconduct.

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## **I. Overrule or Override of a Line Judge’s Call**

A player can ask the referee to rule on a line call made by a line judge. If the referee **clearly** sees a ball differently than the line judge, he or she has the authority to overrule the call. A player can also override a line judge call to favor the opponent. This should rarely occur if the line judges are performing their duties diligently. However, if the referee does overrule or a player overrides a line judge’s call, the line judge should not let it impact their performance and should continue making calls to the best of their ability.

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## **J. Tiebreaker Match**

For double-elimination gold medal matches, a tie-breaker match will be required if the challenger wins the initial championship match. Therefore, line judges must remain at the court at the completion of the initial gold medal match and wait for the referee’s instructions.

1. At the end of the initial match, the referee will promptly instruct the line judges to remain for the tie-breaker match.
2. The referee will allow a maximum of 10 minutes between these matches.
3. The referee will conduct a new selection of serve, receive, end, or defer for the tie-breaker match.

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## Section 9: Summary

The best referees have their own styles of refereeing. Individual refereeing traits are allowable as long as they do not conflict with the best practices set forth in this Handbook. Good referees demonstrate professionalism by not drawing attention to themselves. A competent referee:

1. Knows the rules.
2. Is relaxed but confident.
3. Maintains a ready, upright position aligned with the net post.
4. Speaks clearly and audibly, using an even tone and steady pace.
5. Checks the players for readiness before calling the score.
6. Tracks the ball during play until players are near the NVZ line and then concentrates on potential NVZ faults.
7. Makes line calls only when appealed by a player (unless the assigned line judge is blocked) and having clearly seen the ball land in or out of bounds.
8. Demonstrates “court awareness” by being aware of everything on and around the court.
9. Avoids looking at the scoresheet during rallies.
10. Marks every point and side out, moves the numbered clip promptly and efficiently, and maintains eyes and attention on the court and the players.
11. Is not discouraged by occasional mistakes, observes what was done wrong, corrects it, if possible, then puts it aside and moves on. Pondering mistakes during a match is distracting and may lead to additional mistakes.
12. After a match, continues to study the rules and practice the procedures in this Handbook, take the online tests, and learns from any errors.

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## Appendix A: USA Pickleball Referee Training and Certification Program

The goal of the USA Pickleball Referee Training and Certification Program is to develop and recognize referees who have mastered the basic skills of officiating pickleball. It is a step in building a cadre of competent referees to officiate competitive sanctioned tournaments across the country and around the world.

Being a certified referee is rewarding and fulfilling. As a certified referee, you will find personal pride in being acknowledged as a competent referee who has met USA Pickleball certification standards. Certified referees have priority in refereeing at USA Pickleball-managed events (national championships and regional tournaments) and other prestigious tournaments such as the Huntsman World Senior Games, the National Senior Games, etc. They are first choice to referee medal and professional matches at sanctioned tournaments. In addition, certified referees are most times financially compensated at a higher rate than non-certified referees.

With the proper training, practice, and experience, you can qualify to apply for USA Pickleball Referee Certification. Becoming a USA Pickleball certified referee requires commitment. You must be proficient in refereeing matches for all player skill levels and ages. Ideally, before you apply for certification, you should attend a USA Pickleball referee training class, develop your skills through refereeing hundreds of practice matches, obtain Level 1 and/or Level 2 referee skill ratings, and be mentored by a certified referee to prepare for evaluation. Once you are well-prepared for evaluation, you may submit your application to the program. The [certification application](#) can be accessed on the USA Pickleball website. After acceptance into the program and paying a nominal fee, applicants undergo a comprehensive evaluation during which they are required to demonstrate their proficiency of the best practices set forth in this Handbook and their knowledge of the rules, both on-court and in an oral exam setting. After passing the evaluation, you will receive your certified referee credentials and official certified referee shirts to wear proudly. Recertification is required every three years.

For more information on the [Referee Training and Certification Program](#) process, go to the USA Pickleball website.

Good luck and have fun!

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## Appendix B: Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Inappropriate Behavior

Subject	Verbal Warning (VW) or Technical Warning (TW)	Technical Foul (TF)	Game Forfeit (GF)	Match Forfeit (MF)	Ejection from Competition or Expulsion from Venue (TD Discretion)
OBJECTIONABLE LANGUAGE	Objectionable language directed at another person (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.b]	Extreme objectionable language [Rule 13.G.2.b]			Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs [Rule 13.M.1]
PROFANITY	Profanity (audible or visual) (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.b]	Extreme profanity (audible or visual) [Rule 13.G.2.g]			
BALL	Damaging or aggressively striking dead ball – no danger (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.d]	Striking or throwing dead ball with negligence – person hit [Rule 13.G.2.g]		Striking or throwing dead ball in frustration or anger – person hit or property damage [Rule 13.I.3.b]	Striking or throwing dead ball – injury [Rule 13.M.2]
PADDLE	Tossing paddle in a minor unsportsmanlike manner <sup>1</sup> (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.i]	Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – no person hit or property damage [Rule 13.G.2.a]		Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – person hit or property damage [Rule 13.I.3.b]  Use of non-compliant paddle [Rule 2.F.1.a.2]	Aggressively or recklessly throwing paddle – injury [Rule 13.M.2]
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR	Arguing excessively with official, player, spectator (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.c]	Threat or challenge to any person [Rule 13.G.2.c]		Deliberate, aggressive physical contact with official, player, spectator [Rule 13.I.3.a]	Intentionally spitting or coughing on any person [Rule 13.M.3]
CHALLENGES/ REFUSAL	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (plus loss of TO) (TW only) [Rule 13.G.1.g]	Loss of challenge to referee ruling (no TO available) [Rule 13.G.2.d]		Refusal to wear starting server ID [Rule 13.A.2]	
INVALID MEDICAL TIME-OUT	Invalid medical TO (+loss of TO) (TW only) [Rule 13.G.1.h]	Invalid medical TO (no TO available) [Rule 13.G.2.f]			
FAILURE TO REPORT ON TIME			10 minutes after 2/3-game match called [Rule 13.H.4]	10 minutes after 1-game match called  15 minutes after 2/3-game match called [Rule 13.H.4]	

<sup>1</sup> Excluding commonly accepted practices (e.g., dropping or tossing paddle to position for time-out call).

Subject	Verbal Warning (VW) or Technical Warning (TW)	Technical Foul (TF)	Game Forfeit (GF)	Match Forfeit (MF)	Ejection from Competition or Expulsion from Venue (TD Discretion)
OTHER	Delay of game (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.e/f] Illegal coaching (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.j] Other minor unsportsmanlike conduct (VW or TW) [Rule 13.G.1.i]	Other extreme unsportsmanlike conduct [Rule 13.G.2.e]		Failure to comply with venue rules, improper conduct, abuse of hospitality, other rules & procedures (TD Discretion) [Rule 13.I.4]	Flagrant or injurious behavior impacting tournament [Rule 13.M] Not exhibiting best effort [Rule 13.M.4]
EQUIVALENT PENALTIES		TW + TW	TW + TW + TW TW + TF TF + TW	GF + TW GF + TF TF + TF	

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## Appendix C – Standardized Calls and Announcements

**Review the referenced sections** for the context in which each script is required to be used.

Situation	Section	Script
Start of Single-Game Match	4.B.5	"15 seconds. ... Time in. 0-0-2."
Start of First Game of Multiple-Game Match	4.B.5	"15 seconds. ... Game 1. Time in. 0-0-2."
Standard Time-Out	4.H.1	"Time-out [receivers/servers]. [Score]. One minute." Example: "Time-out receivers. 4-6-1. One minute."
Remaining Time-Outs	4.H.7	"[Receivers/Servers], [number] time-outs remaining. [Servers/Receivers], [number] time-outs remaining." Example: "Receivers, no time-outs remaining. Servers, one time-out remaining."
Resuming Play after Time-Out	4.H.9	"Time in. [Score]." Examples: "Time in. 8-4-2." "15 seconds. Time in. 9-8-1" (when 15 seconds remain)
End of Game with Game to Follow	4.I.1	"Point. Game. [Score]. [Last names]. Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes." Example: "Point. Game. 11-9. Smith and Jones. Time-out. Change ends. Two minutes."
Start Next Game	4.J.9	"Game [number]. Time in. [Score]." Examples: "Game 3. Time in. 0-0-2." "15 seconds. Game 2, Time in. 0-0-2." (when 15 seconds remain)
End of Match	4.L.1	"Point. Game. Match. [Score]. [Last names]." Example: "Point. Game. Match. 15-8. Johnson and Adams."
End Change Time-Out	4.K.2	"Time out. Change ends. [Score]. One minute." Example: "Time out. Change ends. 6-4-2. One minute."
End Change Time-In	4.K.2	"Time in. [Score]." Examples: "Time in. 8-7-1." "15 seconds. Time in. 6-5-2." (when 15 seconds remain)
Questionable Volley Serve	5.A.10	"Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. Re-serve. I will re-call the score." Examples: "Stop play. Questionable whether the ball was hit above the waist. Re-serve. I will re-call the score." "Stop play. Questionable whether the paddle head was above the wrist. Re-serve. I will re-call the score." "Stop play. Questionable whether the swing was not upward. Re-serve. I will re-call the score." "Stop play. Questionable whether the ball was spun on release. Re-serve. I will re-call the score." "Stop play. Questionable whether the ball was visible on release. Re-serve. I will re-call the score."



<b>Situation</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Script</b>
Questionable Drop Serve	5.A.11.b	<p>“Stop play. Questionable whether [state the issue]. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>“Stop play. Questionable whether force was added on release. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”</p> <p>“Stop play. Questionable whether the ball was spun on release. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”</p>
Ball Release Not Visible, Volley Serve or Drop Serve	5.A.10.d 5.A.11.c	“Stop play. Ball release not visible. Re-serve. I will re-call the score.”
15-Second Warning	5.F.3 6.B.1.d 6.B.2.f	“15 seconds. ... Time in. [Score].”
Line Call Appeal, Definitive Call	5.G.2.b.4)	<p>“The ball was in.”</p> <p>“The ball was out.”</p>
Line Call Appeal, No Call	5.G.2.b.5) 5.G.2.b.6) 5.G.2.b.8)	<p>“By rule, the call stands.”</p> <p>“By rule, the ball is in.”</p>

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## Appendix D – Sample Pre-Match Briefings

Each script presents the required elements in a slightly different sequence and use slightly different language.)

**Sample Briefing 1** (Sequence – Intros, format, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, coin toss, questions, warmup):

- “My name is \_\_\_\_\_; who are my players/teams?”
- “Who is the *starting* server?”
- “This match is [insert format].”
- “May I check your paddles? Is your paddle on the USA Pickleball approved paddle list?”
- “I will be calling short serves, service and non-volley zone faults.”
- “You are responsible for all other line calls including the center line on the serve. Please make your ‘out’ calls immediately and loudly.”
- “You may appeal any call to me.”
- [Advise players of court abnormalities, non-standard conditions, approved rule modifications.]
- “Choose a number, 1 or 2.”
- “Would you like to *serve, receive, choose end* [identify] or *defer*?”
- “Are there any questions? You have \_\_\_\_ minutes remaining for warm up.”

**Sample Briefing 2** Gold Medal Match (Sequence – Referee intro, format, player intros, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, questions, coin toss, warmup):

- “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ I will be officiating this match.”
- “This match is [insert format].”
- Who are my teams?” [Confirm with names printed. If a Gold Medal match, identify winner bracket team and opportunity bracket team]
- “Who will be your starting server?” [Circle name/ give starting server ID.]
- “May I see your paddles?” [Check by sight and feel.] “Are your paddles USA Pickleball approved?”
- “I will be calling any short serves. I will be calling service faults as well as non-volley zone faults.”
- “You are responsible for all other lines including the center line on the serve. Please make your out calls immediate, loud and clear. You may appeal any call to me.”
- [Advise players of court abnormalities, non-standard conditions, approved rule modifications.]
- “Are there any questions?”
- [To any player:] “Please choose a number, 1 or 2.” [Show the number on the back of your score sheet to all players.]
- [To the winning team/player:] “Would you like to serve, receive, choose end or defer?” [If serve/receive is chosen, ask the remaining team to pick an end. If end is chosen, ask the remaining team to choose serve or receive.]
- “You have \_\_\_\_ minutes to warm up.”

**Sample Briefing 3** (Sequence – Intros, paddles, line calls, abnormalities, questions, format, coin toss, warmup):

- “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “Who is [Team 1 names \_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_]? Who is your starting server?”
- “Who is [Team 2 names \_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_]? Who is your starting server?” [Distribute starting server IDs, if necessary, and check that they are visible.]
- “Have you confirmed that your paddle is on the USA Pickleball Approved Paddle List?”
- “Please hold onto your paddles while I do a paddle check.”
- “I will be calling service faults, NVZ faults and short serves.” [Point to each line you mention]. “You are responsible for all other line calls on your end of the court. I will consider all balls ‘in’ unless I hear a loud, prompt ‘out’ call. At the end of a rally, if you would like to appeal a line call, you can ask me what I saw.”
- [Advise players of any court abnormalities, non-standard court conditions, and approved rule modifications. If there aren’t any approved Rule Modifications, don’t mention this item.]
- “Do you have any questions about the player instructions or rules?” OR (If pre-match instructions were sent out) “You have all received the email with the tournament instructions. Do you have any questions?”
- “This match is [match format & end change info].”
- [Select a player, and say:] “Please choose a 1 or 2. Would you like to serve, receive, choose an end, or defer?”
- [If *serve/receive* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *pick an end*.]
- [If *end* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *choose serve or receive*.]
- “You have \_\_\_\_ minutes left to warm up. I will let you know when you have 1 minute remaining.”

**Sample Briefing 4** (Sequence – Intros, paddles, format, line calls, abnormalities, coin toss, questions, warmup):

- [Introduce yourself and ask players for their names.] “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_. I’ll be your referee.”
- [Identify starting servers and circle their names on the scoresheet.] “Who will be your starting server?” “Please make sure your starting server identification is visible to me and your opponent.”
- [Ask players if their paddles are USA Pickleball approved.]
- [Check both surfaces of each paddle.]
- [State the match format.] “This is a Mixed Doubles 3.5 match, best 2 out of 3 games, win by 2.”
- [State fault and line calling responsibilities.] “I’ll be calling service faults, non-volley zone faults, and short serves. You’ll make all perimeter lines out calls and center service line faults. Please make your calls loudly.”
- [Remind players of their right to appeal.] “You can appeal to me and I will make a ruling.”
- [Point out any non-standard playing surface conditions, court abnormalities, and approved rule modifications, if applicable.]
- [Ask any one player to choose a 1 or a 2 (written on the back of the scoresheet).]

- [Ask the winner(s) of the choice if they would like to serve, receive, choose a court end, or defer the choice to the opponent.] "Would you like to serve, receive, choose an end, or defer?"
- [If *serve/receive* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *pick an end*.]
- [If *end* is chosen, ask the remaining team to *choose serve or receive*.]
- [Ask if there are any questions.]
- [Announce the number of approved minutes remaining to complete their warmup.]
- [Announce when 1 minute remains.]

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