



Pickleball Skill Level Guidelines

The following skill level descriptions are a guide for evaluating your own playing level. They were developed utilizing both [existing guidelines](#) listed by the USA Pickleball Association and refinements by larger Pickleball clubs.

2.5 Skill Level

- Able to serve a ball "in" regularly
- Knows two-bounce rule and demonstrates it routinely
- Knows where to stand on the court during serve, receipt of serve and during general play
- Is mastering keeping score
- Attempts to dink but not always effective at it
- Working on their form for ground strokes, accuracy still needs work
- Can keep the ball in play longer
- Sometimes lobs with forehand with varying degrees of success

3.0 Skill level

- Knows the fundamental rules and has mastered keeping score
- Dinks mostly in opponent's kitchen and dinks lower over the net
- Able to sustain dinking in the game
- Using both forehand and backhand on returns and forehands on overheads
- Working at keeping the serve deep and return of serve deep
- Moves quickly towards the non-volley zone when opportunity is there
- Aware of partner's position on the court and moving as a team
- Developing a mix of power and softness in their shot selections

3.5 Skill level

- Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the rules of the game
- Gets a high majority of serves "in" deep and return of serves deep
- Often hits to the weak side of opponent
- Demonstrates strategies of playing during games
- Actively works with partners in communicating, covering court, moving to net
- With varying consistency executes: lobs, forehand/backhand ground strokes, overheads, net volleys, and sustained dinking
- Beginning to learn the 3rd shot drop
- Becoming comfortable playing at the non-volley zone
- Specifically places shots rather than just hitting shots anywhere
- Selective mixing up soft shots with power shots to create an advantage
- Maintains a moderate number of unforced errors per game
- Demonstrates ability to intentionally play in offensive mode

4.0 Skill Level

- Primarily plays in a more aggressive, offensive mode
- Strategically places serves and return of serves to a competitive advantage
- Puts advanced playing strategies into the game, particularly when dinking
- Consistently varies shots for competitive advantage, uses power shots selectively
- Communicates and moves well with partner — easily “switches” court positions
- Learning to master the 3rd shot drop
- Very comfortable playing at the non-volley zone
- Works with partner to control the line, keeping opponents back and driving them off the line
- Can block hard volleys directed at them
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward with ease.
- Hits overhead shots consistently, often as kill shots
- Ability to change a hard drive into a soft shot
- Consistently executes effective drop shots that are not easily returned
- Can effectively poach
- Hits a low number of unforced errors per game
- Regularly demonstrates “anticipation of play”
- Self-correcting during play
- Consistently is a multi-dimensional player

4.5+ Skill Level

The 4.5+ player is distinguishable from the 4.0 player by increased athleticism, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots and consistently fewer unforced errors.