



Skill Descriptions

Newbie

Level 1.0 & 1.5

1.0 Beginner: New to Pickleball, learning scoring and rules. Can hit some slower balls with forehand. Have a hard time playing games because they are unable to sustain a rally.

1.5 Beginner: These players keep some short rallies going but still fail to return balls frequently. Have played a few games, know how to keep score, and know the basic rules of the game.

- Are developing eye/hand coordination
- Vary between frequently and occasionally missing the ball entirely
- Can keep some short rallies going with forehand
- Are learning backhand, volleys, lobs, and dinks, but unable to do well when attempted
- Are learning to hit higher returns of service as they are thinking about moving to the NVZ
- Should be allowed some freedom to stay back in play as opposed to trying to hit it low and hard or trying to place it better than the player's skill allows
- Are learning to serve for regularly
- Are learning to move around the court in a safe and balanced manner
- Know how to keep score and where to stand at the beginning of each point -- that is, serving, returning, and point play



Skill Descriptions

Novice

Level 2.0 & 2.5

2.0 Novice: These players are learning to judge where the ball is going, and can sustain a short rally with players of equal ability. They have obvious weaknesses in their strokes and are working to improve these weaknesses.

2.5 Novice: These players are able to keep quite a few balls going with their forehands, make most of the easier volleys, and are beginning to make more backhand shots, but still need to work more on developing their strokes. They are thinking more about coming up to the NVZ to hit volleys and are making an effort to be more aggressive. They are thinking more about the use of dinks and lobs.

- Are able to get most of their serves in
- Are working on placing their serves to both sides of the opponents and on returning serves deep
- Are working on developing ALL of their strokes: forehands: should be able to keep long rallies going; backhands and volleys need to be more consistent
- Are working on dinks, lobs, and overhead slams
- Are working on making returns flatter, not popping them up in the air; and eventually lower and harder
- Moves to behind the baseline for the return of serve
- Are working on the nuances of playing at the NVZ --- approaching it, how to move along it, and knowing when and where to move
- Knows many of the rules and how to score after losing track
- Knows where to stand on the point during play --- including "no-man's land" and the ability to stay out of it most of the time.



Skill Descriptions

Intermediate Level 3.0

Intermediate 3.0: These players are fairly consistent when hitting medium-paced shots, but are not yet comfortable with using all strokes and lack control when trying for direction, depth, or power on their shots. They are using dinks and lobs on a regular basis as an important part of their game.

- Should know most of the rules of pickleball
- Are serving successfully 75% of the time
- Are generally able to control and place both the serve and return of serve
- Are generally consistent in their play and understand the strategy of the game and when to use specific shots
- Can move effectively with a partner and can generally switch court positions to cover their partner's side when required
- Are comfortable with playing at the NVZ and work with their partner to control the non-volley line
- Can usually block strong volley directed at them at the NVZ, and are developing their skill to place their volleys
- Are developing better footwork to move forward, backward, and sideways with ease and quickness
- Can generally sustain dinks and at times "Put Away" their shots
- Can generally hit overheads and are striving to place them
- Are striving to be able to change from a soft shot to a hard shot during any given point in the play and vice versa
- Are working towards mastering the drop shot as a tool to effectively approach the NVZ
- Should generally be able to initiate a drop shot from mid-court and from the baseline
- Are very good at NOT attempting to hit shots that may be going out-of-bounds or into the net



Skill Descriptions

Intermediate Level 3.5

Intermediate (Beginning to be Advanced): These players have achieved improved stroke dependability with directional control on most medium balls and some harder hit balls. They still need to develop more depth and variety with their shots, but are exhibiting more aggressive net play, are anticipating their opponents' shots better, and are developing teamwork in doubles. They are beginning to use the third shot drops, dinks, and a mixture of pace, angles, and lobs in their game.

- These players serve deep and return deep 90% of the time
- They possess all shots and hit them with a level of consistency --- forehand, backhand, lob, overhead and continued dink
- Have success hitting medium paced shots but lack a consistency to control ball hit with depth and power
- Are improving in knowing where and when to make specific shots and being able to execute them with some success
- Are beginning to learn when to use soft shots vs. power shots to team's advantage
- Can successfully avoid returned shots going out of bounds and will "go for" shots that are in
- Are beginning to use drop shots from mid-court and back court in order to get to the NVZ
- Are developing more aggressive play at the net
- Developing a greater ability to move forward, backward, and sideways around court
- Improving ability to move with partner effectively
- Once at NVZ, will not drift backward unless specific shot hit to them calls for it
- Understands most match strategy and tactics that apply to skills they possess or are learning; anticipates opponents shots better



Skill Descriptions

Advanced

Level 4.0+

The Advanced Player: This player has accomplished getting 90% or more of their serves in and with depth and placement, demonstrates stroke dependability with direction on most medium and fast paced balls, using a wide variety of specialty shots including the lob, overhead, dink, and “soft shot” with consistency, when to use the soft shots versus power shots to their advantage, improved court coverage and communication with partner, and is able to sustain a “dink” exchange at the net.

- Consistent and dependable forehand and backhand groundstrokes, including directional control, depth and placement
- Consistent and dependable volleys and overheads, including directional control, depth and placement
- Reliable serves, lobs, overheads, approach shots and volleys and can use spin shots with some success
- Controls and places both the serve and the return and can occasionally force errors when serving
- Utilizes both forehand and backhand lobs, striving to employ lobs from anywhere on the court. Has good accuracy in placing lobs
- Can block strong volleys directed at them at the non-volley line or elsewhere, and can place their volleys with a good degree of accuracy
- Hits overheads consistently “in”, often with velocity and placement, and developing the ability to return overheads hit at their feet
- Fair to good ability to change from a soft shot strategy to a hard shot strategy during any given rally or vice versa
- Can handle speed on shots without over-hitting or hitting out-of-bounds
- Comfortable playing the non-volley line with their partner to control the line by keeping their opponents back, driving them off the line, or controlling the speed or placement of the ball
- Uses the strategy of “dinking”, employs it regularly, can sustain a “dinking” session until receipt of a “put away” shot, and succeeds in ending the rally
- Consistently makes drop-shots (soft shots) successfully from 3/4 court and frequently from the baseline as their way of gaining control of the net
- Usually recognizes and exploits the weaknesses in their opponent’s game
- Moves effectively with a partner and easily switches courts to cover partner’s side when required
- Developing their use of spin on a variety of shots
- Maintains patience in rallies