

# Pickleball First Steps

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# About Pictona Prime

Pictona Prime is the junior development program at Pictona at Holly Hill. This program seeks to advance pickleball for youths by encouraging and improving instruction and facilitating opportunities for young people to play. *Pickleball First Steps* is our first step in providing a comprehensive curriculum to teach the sport of pickleball to young people in grades 4 through 8 (ages 8 through 14). It is for use by physical education teachers and pickleball instructors teaching in a variety of settings. If you are a physical education teacher, you'll find *Pickleball First Steps* easy to incorporate into your curriculum, and if you are a pickleball instructor, *Pickleball First Steps* will help you adapt your teaching methods to be developmentally appropriate for children.

*Pickleball First Steps* is endorsed by the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association (IPTPA), the worldwide leader in preparing instructors to teach this lifetime sport. IPTPA is launching its national Junior Development Program. One segment of the program is a series of workshops for those wishing to get certified to teach pickleball to young people.

If you are a physical educator and have not played pickleball, find a place to play so you are familiar with the game. It will help you be a better teacher of the sport. If you are a pickleball instructor who has played lots of pickleball, you will appreciate the experience of our authors—who are veteran physical education teachers and highly skilled pickleball players—reflected in how they introduce the sport to young people.

Through Pictona, our home club, and Human Kinetics, our publisher, we are developing a curriculum for 9th to 12th graders, adapting *Pickleball First Steps* for developmentally advanced young people. Our goal is to help teens have a positive experience when learning the sport so they will want to continue to play, and play, and play in order to gain the benefits of this wonderful lifetime sport.

It would be a shame to get youths excited about pickleball and then not provide them with opportunities to play. As part of Pictona Prime we are providing young people the opportunity to play regularly at Pictona, and we hope to be a catalyst across the country to help young people have more opportunities to play.

# Preface

Pickleball is a 50-year-old sport, but it has exploded onto the American sporting scene in the last 10 years. Like many people, we (this text's authors) are addicted to pickleball. We play almost every day when time permits. We are both retired physical education teachers. Lu Kandt retired in November 2020 after 14 years of teaching physical education in schools in Volusia County, Florida; conducting many pickleball workshops to teach physical educators how to teach pickleball; and 20 years as a PGA golf professional specializing in private, group, and junior instruction. Mary Burns taught physical education for 24 years at Chisholm Elementary School in Edmond, Oklahoma, and has been playing pickleball competitively for the last eight years.

Pickleball is an outstanding sport for young people to play. It's easy to learn but challenging to master. It requires little equipment and thus is inexpensive. The game can be played anywhere there is a smooth paved surface, either indoors or outdoors. It's safe, with few injuries, and it's loads of fun.





Pickleball is a sport that young people can play for a lifetime, reaping the benefits of an active lifestyle.

After many years of teaching pickleball, we have combined our experience to create an introductory curriculum for children in grades 4 through 8 (ages 8 to 14). We hope you find our teaching plans, along with photos, diagrams, and video links, easy to follow. The curriculum is standards based and fits into the overall goal of physical education—to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

You likely will be eager to jump forward to the lesson plans, but we urge you to review the introductory material first in order to make more effective use of the lesson plans. Let's get started helping young people get positively addicted to pickleball!

# Our Stars



William, age 14



Lexi, age 12



Fela, age 14



Mya, age 11



Carter, age 11



Chase, age 9



Trace, age 12



Avi, age 13



Grayson, age 11



Rylee, age 11



Sebastian, age 11



Kendall, age 11

# Terminology

**ace**—A serve that is not returned by the opponent.

**backswing**—The motion of swinging the paddle back from ready position before following through with a forward swing.

**baseline**—The line that forms the back end of the court; it is 22 feet back on either side of the pickleball net.

**centerline**—The line that extends from the non-volley zone to the baseline and divides the service court into two equal halves (see the court diagram on page 40).

**cross-court**—The court diagonally opposite from your side of the court.

**dink shot**—A soft shot that arcs over the net and falls into the opposing non-volley zone.

**drop shot (long dink)**—A dink shot executed from deeper in the court and landing in the opponent's non-volley zone. It is often the third shot in pickleball.

**face**—The broad surface of either side of the paddle; it is used to strike the ball.

**fault**—Any action that stops play because of a rule violation.

**foot fault**—A violation of the rules about foot placement. When serving, neither foot may contact the baseline or court until the ball is struck. Breaking this rule is a *-serving* foot fault. A foot fault also occurs when a player steps on the line or into the non-volley zone and hits the ball without it bouncing (a volley).

**follow-through**—On the swing, the continuing forward motion (after the back swing) in the direction you want the ball to travel.

**forehand**—A paddle stroke on the same side of the body as you are holding the paddle.

**game**—A series of points played until one team has accumulated 11 points and is winning by 2 points.

**grip**—The manner in which you hold the paddle with your hand.

**ground stroke**—Hitting the ball with the paddle after one bounce.

**head**—The part of the paddle above the handle; it includes the paddle face.

**kitchen**—A slang term for the non-volley zone.

**lob**—A shot hit high and deep, forcing the opposing players back off the non-volley zone line.

**mid-court**—The middle area on the court, between the non-volley zone and the baseline.

**non-volley zone (NVZ)**—The seven-foot section of court on either side of the net. It is also called the *kitchen*.

**open face**—Holding the paddle tilted slightly upward.

**overhead shot**—Any shot in which the paddle starts above your head and drives downward.

**rally**—Continuous play that occurs from the time the ball is served until play ends in a fault.

**ready position**—The ideal position to receive the ball for a return: The paddle is out in front of the player's body and up at chest height; weight is evenly balanced, on the balls of the feet; and the knees are slightly bent, ready to move in any direction.

**serve**—An underhand stroke used to put the pickleball in play.

**side-out**—Declared after one side loses its service and the other side is awarded the serve.

**stroke**—The swinging motion of striking the pickleball with the paddle.

**two-bounce rule**—After the ball is served, the receiving team must let the ball bounce before returning, and the serving team must also let the ball bounce before returning. After the third hit, the ball can be volleyed.

**volley**—Hitting the ball in the air before the ball has a chance to bounce onto the court.

# PART I



# Preparing to Teach

# INTRODUCTION

We know how to teach pickleball and, more importantly, how to teach it to young people! We don't say that boastfully but so that you know we understand the complexities and realities of teaching pickleball in different learning environments. We encourage you to take this set of lesson plans and adapt them to fit the unique time, space, and scheduling needs of your school, club, or organization.

Our goals for your organization are as follows:

- Be flexible enough to handle various numbers of students, from small groups to large groups
- Be adaptable to any environment
- Make instruction engaging and challenging for all students

Our goals for the students are these:

- Be safe
- Learn a lifetime sport
- Understand appropriate behavior when playing pickleball and develop positive character traits
- Develop a love for a healthy lifestyle
- Have fun and succeed

Our goals for you are as follows:

- Be adaptive to all learning environments: small or large, indoor or outdoor, concrete or asphalt areas

- Be able to modify lessons with alternative equipment (e.g., ropes instead of lines, caution tape attached to chairs instead of nets, beanbags instead of the standard ball)
- Have universal design components in the lessons to eliminate instructional barriers (see the next section)
- Make learning pickleball easy and enjoyable



# UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design is a strategy for eliminating instructional and environmental barriers in order to meet the needs of all students across the continuum of physical, intellectual, and emotional abilities. Although it is not possible to build a one-size-fits-all curriculum, by using universal design adaptations you will be able to teach pickleball to most young people. The following are some of the adaptations that you can make in teaching pickleball. We have included some of these in our lesson plans.

## Rules

- Allow multiple bounces
- Allow multiple hits on each side
- Remove boundary lines
- Allow serves from mid-court or the non-volley zone
- Play for time instead of score
- Do not allow overhead smashes

## Instruction

- Provide peer mentors
- Provide one-on-one instruction
- Provide multiple visual examples (e.g., videos, photos, graphics, posters)

## Environment

- Play on a smaller court as needed
- Use a shorter net or lines



- Use bright lines to mark the court
- Use auditory cues near target (make a sound near the target for visually impaired students)
- Use tactile lines for boundaries (e.g., raised rubber boundary lines for visually impaired students)
- Practice paddle skills and volley skills in the grass or sand to keep the ball from rolling away

### Equipment

- Provide low-bounce balls (which are softer and slower) to assist students struggling to master the basic skills
- Use beeper balls (which have a sound mechanism inside the ball to help visually impaired students)
- In place of nets, use lines or ropes tied to chairs, poles, or cones
- Use brightly colored balls
- Provide larger balls, beach balls, and beanbags to students who struggle with a skill

# NATIONAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION STANDARDS

SHAPE America, the Society of Health and Physical Educators, has developed national standards and grade-level outcomes for physical education that define what a student should know and be able to do as result of a highly effective physical education program. The learning outcomes of each lesson align with these SHAPE America standards, so take time to review these national standards.

## Grades 4-5

### **Standard 1: Demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns**

**S1.E24.4a** Strikes an object with a short-handled implement while demonstrating a mature pattern.

**S1.E24.4b** Strikes an object with a short-handled implement, alternating hits with a partner over a low net or against a wall.

**S1.E24.5** Strikes an object consecutively, with a partner, using a short-handled implement, over a net or against a wall, in either a competitive or cooperative environment.



## **Standard 2: Applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance**

**S2.E3.4a** Applies the movement concepts of speed, endurance, and pacing for running.

**S2.E3.4b** Applies the concepts of direction and force when striking an object with a short-handled implement, sending it toward a designated target.

**S2.E3.5a** Applies movement concepts to strategy in game situations.

**S2.E3.5c** Analyzes movement situations and applies movement concepts (e.g., force, direction, speed, pathways, extensions) in small-sided practice tasks in game environments, dance, and gymnastics.

**S2.E5.5a** Applies basic offensive and defensive strategies & tactics in invasion small-sided practice tasks.

**S2.E5.5b** Applies basic offensive and defensive strategies & tactics in net/wall small-sided practice tasks.

**S2.E5.5c** Recognizes the type of throw, volley, or striking action needed for different games & sport situations.



**Standard 3: Demonstrates the knowledge, and skills to achieve and maintain a healthy-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness**

**S3.E1.4** Analyzes opportunities for participating in physical activity outside physical education class.

**S3.E1.5** Charts and analyzes physical activity outside physical education class for fitness benefits of activities.

**S3.E2.4** Actively engages in the activities of physical education class, both teacher-directed and independent.

**S3.E2.5** Actively engages in all the activities of physical education.

**S3.E3.4** Identifies the components of health-related fitness.

**S3.E3.5** Differentiates between skill-related and health-related fitness.

**S3.E4.4** Demonstrates warm-up & cool-down relative to the cardiorespiratory fitness assessment.

**S3.E4.5** Identifies the need for warm-up & cool-down relative to various physical activities.

**S3.E4.4a** Completes fitness assessments (pre- & post-).

**S3.E4.4b** Identifies areas of needed remediation from personal test and, with teacher assistance, identifies strategies for progress in those areas.

**S3.E5.5a** Analyzes results of fitness assessment (pre- & post-), comparing results with fitness components for good health.

**S3.E5.5b** Designs a fitness plan to address ways to use physical activity to enhance fitness.

**S3.E6.4** Discusses the importance of hydration choices relative to physical activities.

**S3.E6.5** Analyzes the impact of food choices relative to physical activity, youth sports & personal health.

## **Standard 4: Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others**

**S4.E1.4** Exhibits responsible behavior in independent group situations.

**S4.E1.5** Engages in physical activity with responsible interpersonal behavior (e.g., peer to peer, student to teacher, student to referee).

**S4.E2.4** Reflects on personal and social behavior in physical activity.

**S4.E2.5a** Participates with responsible personal behavior in a variety of physical activity contexts, environments, and facilities.

**S4.E2.5b** Exhibits respect for self with appropriate behavior while engaging in physical activity.

**S4.E3.4** Listens respectfully to corrective feedback from others (e.g., peers, adults).

**S4.E3.5** Gives corrective feedback respectfully to peers.

**S4.E4.4a** Praises the movement performance of others both more- and less-skilled.

**S4.E4.4b** Accepts players of all skill levels into the physical activity.

**S4.E4.5** Accepts, recognizes, and actively involves others with both higher and lower skill abilities into physical activities and group projects.

**S4.E5.4** Exhibits etiquette and adherence to rules in a variety of physical activities.

**S4.E5.5** Critiques the etiquette involved in rules of various activities.

**S4.E6.4** Works safely with peers and equipment in physical activity settings.

**S4.E6.5** Applies safety principles with age-appropriate physical activities.



## **Standard 5: Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction**

**S5.E1.4** Examines the health benefits of participating in physical activity.

**S5.E1.5** Compares the health benefits of participating in selected physical activities.

**S5.E2.4** Rates the enjoyment of participating in challenging and mastered physical activities.

**S5.E2.5** Expresses (via written essay, visual art, creative dance) the enjoyment and/or challenge of participating in a favorite physical activity.

**S5.E3.4** Ranks the enjoyment of participating in different physical activities.

**S5.E3.5** Analyzes different physical activities for enjoyment and challenge, identifying reasons for a positive or negative response.

**S5.E4.4** Describes & compares the positive social interactions when engaged in partner, small-group and large-group physical activities.

**S5.E4.5** Describes the social benefits gained from participating in physical activity (e.g., recess, youth sport).

**S3.E5.5a** Analyzes results of fitness assessment (pre- & post-), comparing results with fitness components for good health.

**S3.E5.5b** Designs a fitness plan to address ways to use physical activity to enhance fitness.

**S3.E6.4** Discusses the importance of hydration choices relative to physical activities.

**S3.E6.5** Analyzes the impact of food choices relative to physical activity, youth sports & personal health.

## Grades 6-8

### **Standard 1: Demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns**

**S1.M12.6** Performs a legal underhand serve with control for net/wall games such as badminton, volleyball, or pickleball.

**S1.M12.7** Executes consistently (at least 70% of the time) a legal underhand serve to a predetermined target for net/wall games such as badminton, volleyball, or pickleball.

**S1.M12.8** Executes consistently (at least 70% of the time) a legal underhand serve for distance and accuracy for net/wall games such as badminton, volleyball, or pickleball.

**S1.M14.6** Demonstrates the mature form of the forehand and backhand strokes with a short-handled implement in net games such as paddle ball, pickleball, or short-handled racket tennis.

**S1.M14.7** Demonstrates the mature form of forehand and backhand strokes with a short- or long-handled implement with power and accuracy in net games such as pickleball, tennis, badminton, or paddle ball.

**S1.M15.6** Transfers weight with correct timing for the striking pattern.

**S1.M15.7** Transfers weight with correct timing using low-to-high striking pattern with a short-handled implement on the forehand side.

**S1.M16.6** Forehand volleys with a mature form and control using a short-handled implement.

**S1.M16.7** Forehand and backhand volleys with a mature form and control using a short-handled implement.

**S1.M16.8** Forehand and backhand volleys with a mature form and control using a short-handled implement during modified game play.





## **Standard 2:** Applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance

**S2.M8.6** Reduces offensive options for opponents by returning to mid-court position.

**S2.M8.7** Selects offensive shot based on opponent's location (hit where opponent is not).

**S2.M8.8** Varies placement, force, and timing of return to prevent anticipation by opponent.

## **Standard 3:** Demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness

**S3.M7.6** Identifies the components of skill-related fitness.

**S3.M7.7** Distinguishes between health- and skill-related fitness.

**S3.M7.8** Compares and contrasts health-related fitness components.

## **Standard 4: Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others**

**S4.M1.6** Exhibits personal responsibility by using appropriate etiquette, demonstrating respect for facilities, and exhibiting safe behaviors.

**S4.M1.7** Exhibits responsible social behaviors by cooperating with classmates, demonstrating inclusive behaviors, and supporting classmates.

**S4.M1.8** Accepts responsibility for improving one's own levels of physical activity and fitness.

**S4.M3.6** Demonstrates self-responsibility by implementing specific corrective feedback to improve performance.

**S4.M3.7** Provides corrective feedback to a peer, using teacher-generated guidelines, and incorporating appropriate tone, and other communication skills.

**S4.M3.8** Provides encouragement and feedback to peers without prompting from the teacher.

**S4.M4.6** Accepts differences among classmates in physical development, maturation, and varying skill levels by providing encouragement and positive feedback.

**S4.M4.7** Demonstrates cooperation skills by establishing rules and guidelines for resolving conflicts.

**S4.M4.8** Responds appropriately to participants' ethical and unethical behavior during physical activity by using rules and guidelines for resolving conflicts.

## **Standard 5: Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction**

**S5.M6.6** Demonstrates respect for self and others in activities and games by following the rules, encouraging others, and playing within the spirit of the game or activity.

**S5.M6.7** Demonstrates the importance of social interaction by helping and encouraging others, avoiding trash talk, and providing support to classmates.

**S5.M6.8** Demonstrates respect for self by asking for help and helping others in various physical activities.



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# HOW TO USE THE LESSON PLANS

The lesson plans in this curriculum are for students in grades 4 through 8 (ages 8 through 14 years) and focus on teaching pickleball safely and effectively. These lessons follow the whole-part-whole method of teaching. In lesson 1 you'll demonstrate how the game is played. Then, in lessons 1 through 9, you will introduce the parts of the game, those essential skills needed to play pickleball. The lessons start with the skills needed at the net: In lesson 3, students will learn dinking. Instruction then progresses to the drop shot or long dink in lesson 4. Next, we introduce the serve in lesson 5. Building on that motor skill, in lesson 6 you'll teach students the mechanics of forehand and backhand ground strokes. Using their newly acquired ground stroke skills, we move on to lesson 7, the return of serve; this is then followed by lesson 8, on the volley and block. Lesson 9 focuses on the basic tactics of the game, and lesson 10 concludes by bringing all the parts together to play the game as a whole. This sequence of lessons progresses from basic to advanced, with each lesson building on the skills learned previously to optimize skill acquisition. Beyond being theoretically sound, this progression is one we've tested and refined over many years.

The lessons are approximately 43 to 57 minutes long and are divided into the following sections:

Warm-Up: 5 to 7 minutes

Lesson Plans: 15 to 20 minutes

Practice Games: 20 to 25 minutes

It's a Wrap: 3 to 5 minutes

You are encouraged to adapt these time frames according to the specific needs of your students. The lessons are presented in sequential order and can be slowed down or sped up in accordance with the skill development of your students. If a lesson is completed and class time allows for more instruction, you can start the next lesson. On the other hand, you may not complete a lesson in one class session. For example, you'll introduce the dink, an essential skill of pickleball, in lesson 3, but it may take more than one class session before you are satisfied that students are ready to move on.

Here is what you'll find in each lesson.

- **Introduction.** A brief statement explaining the objective of the lesson.
- **Learning Outcomes.** These outcomes are aligned with the national physical education standards. They are the skills a student should be developing during the lesson.
- **Equipment.** A list of what is needed for each lesson.
- **Warm-Up.** These activities are used to get students moving quickly upon entering the learning environment. For each warm-up activity, we describe the activity and the rules for engaging in the activity. In addition to the warm-up activity listed for the lesson, you may choose to use one of the activities from the previous lesson as a warm-up.
- **Lesson Plan.** Here we provide a developmentally appropriate sequencing of pickleball skills, or what we call "steps." This sequence is designed to help each student progress at his or her own rate. For each step of most skills, we present photos as well as (1) guidance on instruction and demonstration, (2) key teaching points, and (3) practice activities. In lessons where sequencing and timing of a skill are important, you'll be directed to a video link to view.

Important note: Those students who exhibit consistency in skills such as the dink, serve, and return of serve are ready to advance past the *skill-*

*building stage* of competency and proceed to the *playing* of the game. It's during the playing stage that you will teach the scoring of the game, partner positioning, tactics, and ball placement.

- **It's A Wrap.** We conclude with questions at the end of the lesson to help you assess student understanding and achievement of the learning objectives.

After reviewing a lesson, watch the video segments that may be available for that lesson. Repeat until you are comfortable in your ability to teach that activity.

In appendix B we have provided you with a one-page summary of each lesson, which may be helpful to you when teaching that lesson.



# USING MASTERY BOARDS

Mastery boards are teacher-designed self-assessments for your students. After being taught the skills in a lesson, students are invited to demonstrate their mastery of the skill at their own pace in front of another student. While students work to complete the tasks posted on the mastery boards, you have time to work with students who need more instruction.

These skill assessments are presented in three different levels. Level 1 is the easiest, level 2 is more challenging, and level 3 shows mastery of the skills being assessed. Here is an example of a basic mastery board for level 1.

- Walk with the ball on your paddle for the length of a pickleball court
- Forehand tap 10 times in a row
- Backhand tap 10 times in a row
- Pancake flip 5 times in a row
- Tap ball up 10 times in a row and catch it

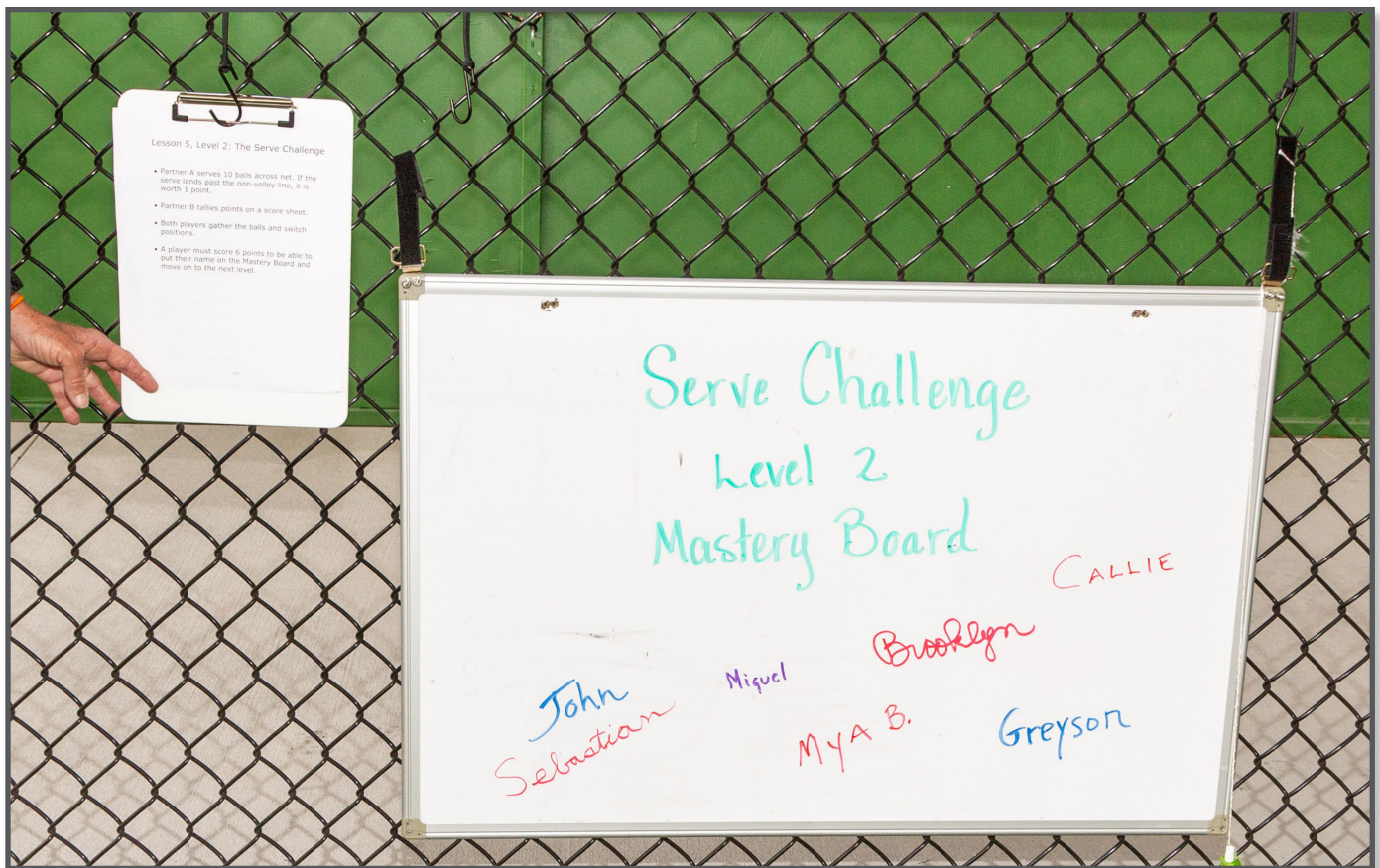
You are encouraged to create your own mastery board levels designed to fit the specific skill development of the students in your program.

In a lesson in which student skill levels can vary substantially from beginners to advanced, a mastery board activity allows all students to progress at their own pace. Instead of the class being instructor driven, it is student centered. (Mastery boards

are not needed in lessons that are instructor directed and have assessment tools already in place through the game activities provided in each lesson.) Three lessons include mastery boards:

- **Lesson 2:** Challenge Yourself (practicing individual paddle skills)
- **Lesson 5:** The Serve Challenge (practicing the serve with a partner)
- **Lesson 8:** Partner Challenge (practicing ball control with a partner)

Through the use of the mastery boards you are able to identify those students needing more assistance while allowing the more skilled students a chance to advance and assess themselves during the lesson. These boards are also useful to assess student achievement.



The clipboard lists the challenges. When students complete the challenge, they write their names on the whiteboard.



Our mastery boards are tied to the national standards that relate to the responsible behaviors of honor and appropriate sporting behavior. Students must hold each other accountable by following the rules and adhering to the concept of fair play. Students may advance to the next level only when they have fairly and honestly accomplished success in each skill.

The rules for completing each self-assessment are presented next. A large-type copy of these rules and of each mastery board are located in appendix A for easy copying.

### **Mastery Board Rules**

- In order to place your name on our mastery boards, you must have a classmate be a witness to each task.
- You may not put your name on a board until you perform the task and you and your witness tell an instructor.
- The instructor may ask to see you perform the task before giving you permission to place your name on the master board and allowing you to move on to the next level.

# EQUIPMENT

Paddle for each student

Pickleballs

Small beach balls or foam balls

Poly spots or rubber spots (class size)



Nets (These do not necessarily have to be real nets. Lines, chalk, ropes, caution tape, chairs, poles, or cones can be used to mark the area.)



Buckets or a ball hopper

Containers: garbage cans, laundry baskets, or storage bins

Hula-Hoops

Whiteboards and markers (You can also use poster boards, sheets of paper, and pens or pencils.)

Beanbags

Boom box with remote or a whistle

### Low-bounce balls



Foam noodles or any item that can be used to designate a tagger

Tape or chalk for wall drills

Large and small cones



Wall (If no hitting wall is available, skip the wall drills.)



Flags or juggling scarves





A member of our club made and donated this cart for the equipment we use in our First Steps program.

# SAFETY FIRST

Pickleball, a non-contact sport, is relatively safe and can be made safer by following these guidelines.

1. Students may only use the paddle with a striking motion when they are instructed to do so and only in the space you prescribe.
2. Students may not use (or pretend to use) the paddle as anything other than a paddle, such as a sword or gun. If students violate this rule, place them in a timeout or suspend them for a day.
3. Appropriate athletic court shoes must be worn.
4. Safety glasses are highly recommended due to the fast nature of the game and the short distance between players across the net. They are not mandatory.



It's important to have start and stop cues when working with a large group of kids who have paddles. You don't want some kids continuing to swing paddles while others have stopped. And you want to have a quick way to get the students' attention. Here are three methods to use.

- *Music cue:* When the music stops, the students hold their ball, hug their paddle, and turn and face the instructor. When the music starts, the students practice their next task.
- *Whistle cue:* On one whistle, the students stop, hold the ball, hug their paddle, and turn and face the instructor. On two whistles, the students return to practicing.
- *Word cue or voice command:* A word is called out by the instructor, loud enough that all students can hear. For example, when the instructor yells “sumo,” all students hold their ball, hug their paddle, turn and face the instructor, and say “huh!”—like a sumo wrestler—once and in unison. (Elementary students think this is great!)





# PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Whether you are a highly experienced teacher or a novice to instruction, here are some principles of instruction to keep in mind when teaching pickleball to young people.

- Make learning fun. Keep it interesting.
- Accommodate individual differences in the ability to learn pickleball skills.
- Never diminish the self-worth of a student for failure to perform a skill.
- Focus on the positive, not the negative.
- Help students set realistic goals for learning pickleball.
- Remember that mistakes are building blocks to success.
- Repetition is a key to learning, but aimless practice is of little use.
- Make practice meaningful to learn the correct skill.
- Practice as closely to game-like conditions as possible. (This principle is called *specificity of training*.)
- Help students with decision-making when they practice (e.g., when to hit the ball in the air or let it bounce).
- Help students understand the speed-versus-accuracy trade-off. The harder they hit the ball, the less accurate they are likely to be.



[www.pickleballchannel.com/2015/01/placement-over-power](http://www.pickleballchannel.com/2015/01/placement-over-power)

- Teach students what to focus on when learning a skill.
- Keep feedback simple. Correct one mistake at a time, addressing the most serious error first.
- Rather than just telling students they made an error (descriptive feedback), tell them how to correct the error (prescriptive feedback).
- Have fun teaching.



# PART II



# Lesson Plans

**Lesson 1: How the Game Is Played**

**Lesson 2: Paddle and Ball Handling**

**Lesson 3: The Dink**

**Lesson 4: The Drop Shot**

**Lesson 5: The Serve**

**Lesson 6: Ground Strokes**

**Lesson 7: Return of Serve**

**Lesson 8: The Volley and Block**

**Lesson 9: Game Tactics**

**Lesson 10: Game Progressions**

# LESSON 1

# HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

## National Standards 1, 5



In this first lesson, we want to demonstrate how pickleball is played to get students excited about this sport and to give them a concept of what is to be learned. This demonstration is the first “whole” in the whole-part-whole learning approach that these lessons follow. After the demonstration, in lesson 1 through lesson 9, we teach the “part” element of the whole-part-whole approach. Then in lesson 10 we combine the parts back into the “whole.”

## Learning Outcomes

- Understand the safety procedures and classroom rules
- Learn how the game is played from a demonstration
- Use the proper method of holding the paddle
- Learn the ready position
- Differentiate between the forehand side and backhand side of the paddle
- Maintain control of the ball on the paddle when moving
- Be cooperative.
- Have fun learning

## Equipment

- One poly spot per student scattered in teaching area, facing instructor
- One paddle and one ball per student
- Four cones

## Warm-Up

### ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS TAG

- Mark the four corners of a play area. Shown here are the corners of a half of a pickleball court. No court? You can mark the four corners with cones.
- Students are divided into four groups.
- At the beginning of the game, group 1 is placed at corner 1, group 2 at corner 2, and so on.
- At each corner students compete against another student in rock-paper-scissors.
- The winner runs to the next corner (e.g., from corner 1 to corner 2, from corner 2 to corner 3, and so on) to compete against another student.

- The loser stays at the cone they are at and competes against the next student in line.
- The game objective is to see how many corners a student can reach.
- Play for three to five minutes.



[www.wikihow.com/Play-Rock,-Paper,-Scissors](http://www.wikihow.com/Play-Rock,-Paper,-Scissors)



## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Game Demonstration

- Set up a demonstration to show the class how the game of pickleball is played. Arrange to have skilled players available to demonstrate.
- It's best if a live demonstration can be done, but if that is not possible, use a video from YouTube to show the game in action. The demonstration should include a regulation court with a net and all the lines, as shown here.

Youth game demonstration:



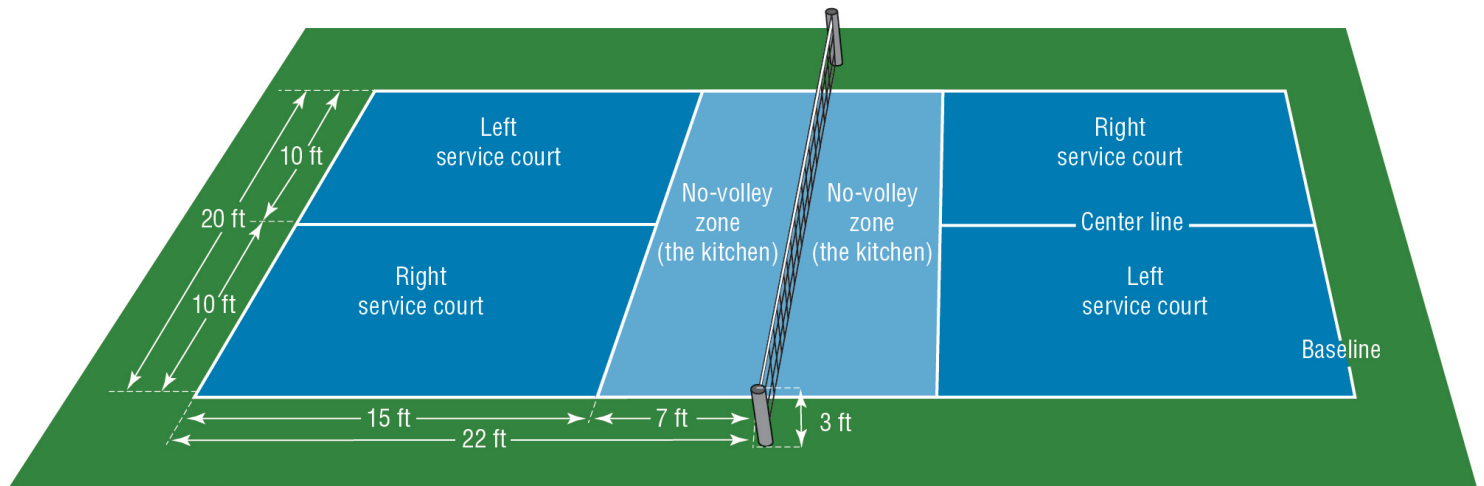
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AceZgFiWuU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AceZgFiWuU)

Advanced adult play demonstration:



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLphJpbwA2A&t=4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLphJpbwA2A&t=4s)

- The demonstration should include a regulation court with net and all the lines, as shown in the diagram.



- Briefly explain the following basics:
  - The serve is underhanded
  - Only the serving team can score points
  - The double-bounce rule
  - The non-volley zone



- Pair up students to discuss what they will observe in the demonstration.
- Begin the demonstration.
- While the students are watching, comment on the features of the game (e.g., the types of shots being made and the positions of the players when serving and receiving).
- At the end of the demonstration, have a question-and-answer session with the students about what they and their partner observed.
  - "What is the object of the game?"
  - "What were some of the different types of shots you observed being performed?"
  - "How does a team score a point?"
- Conclude the demonstration by informing students about the skill development they will be working on in the coming days and weeks, culminating in game play.

## Step 2: Class Safety and Rules

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain your safety rules.
  - Yell out "ball" if one is rolling away.
  - Do not chase a ball that is rolling away.
  - Pick up any loose ball and hand it to its owner (courtesy).
  - Do not back up to hit a ball, open and slide step. (Do not use a crossover step.)
- Explain the start and stop cues.
  - When the whistle is blown or the music starts, students practice the activity.
  - When the whistle is blown again or the music stops, students hold their ball, hug their paddle, and turn to face instructor (courtesy: be ready to listen).
- Demonstrate how to turn sideways rather than running backward.
- Demonstrate starting and stopping an activity.



### Step 3: Paddle and Grip

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Teach the parts of the paddle: handle, face, and edge.
- Explain the forehand and the backhand.
- Demonstrate the grip.

#### Key Teaching Points

- Hold the paddle as if shaking hands or holding a hammer.
- The thumb and forefinger should form a V on top of the grip.



#### Practice Activities

##### Paddle Grip

- Place the students on poly spots, giving each their own personal space.
- Each student should grip the paddle properly.
- Inspect each person's grip, making corrections as needed.
- During later lessons, watch that the proper grip is maintained when doing practice activities.

## Step 4: Ready Position

### Instruction and Demonstration

- The paddle should be out in front of the chest, tilted to a 10 o'clock position if right-handed or to a 2 o'clock position if left-handed; this position allows for a quick transition for a backhand block or volley.
- Have students keep a firm but not tight grip on the paddle.
- The feet should be shoulder-width apart and the knees should be flexed.
- The weight should be balanced on the balls of the feet, ready to move in any direction.
- Show students how to retreat safely: “Never back up on the heels; instead, open the hips and slide or shuffle step back to get a ball.”



## Practice Activities

### Shuffle and Slide

- The students begin in ready position, facing the instructor.
- The instructor gives one of four commands:
  - For “left,” the students slide to the left.
  - For “right,” the students slide to the right.
  - For “forward,” the students step forward.
  - For “backward,” the students open their hips and slide or shuffle step sideways.



### Retreating

Students need to know how to retreat when a ball is hit behind them.

- Tell the class, “Do not move straight backward. The risk of falling is too high.”
- Have students begin in the ready position.
- Have the class practice opening the hips to pivot right or left in order to begin running sideways to go back to reach the ball.
- Students should run only five steps sideways and then return to their original position.

## Step 5: Paddle and Ball Control

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain that the activities will help the students become comfortable with their paddle in order to control the ball.
- Briefly demonstrate the practice activities.

### Key Teaching Points

- Maintain the correct grip on the paddle.
- Keep a firm but not tight grip on the paddle.
- Watch the ball contact the paddle.
- Develop a sense of touch when bouncing the ball with the paddle.
- Move smoothly to reduce jarring the ball off the paddle.

### Practice Activities

#### Forehand and Backhand Roll

- Students place a ball on the forehand side of the paddle and attempt to roll it around the edge of the paddle without allowing it to fall off.
- Students flip the paddle over to the backhand side and roll the ball.



### Balancing a Ball on the Move

While balancing a ball on their paddle, students do the following:

- Touch the floor with one hand
- Move to their knees and back to their feet
- Sit down and get back on their feet
- Skip, gallop, or do any other locomotor movements (run, walk, slide)

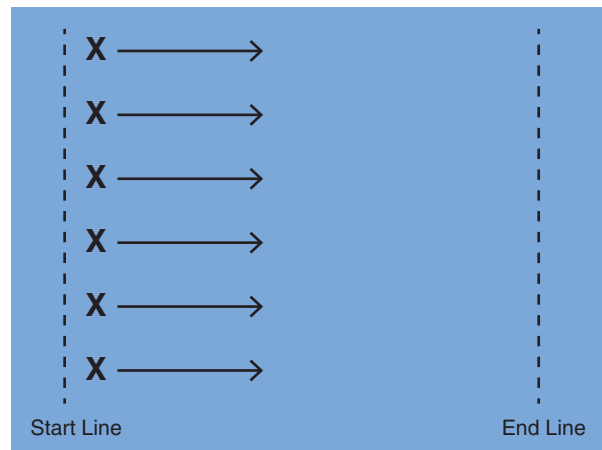
Challenge the students: “How high can you balance the ball? How low can you balance the ball?”



### Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light

- Students begin at a start line.
- On “red light,” the students balance the ball on their paddle.
- On “yellow light,” the students balance the ball while they move in a circle in place.
- On “green light,” the students move as quickly as possible to the end line.
- Students stop when “red light” is called.

- If the ball falls to the ground, the student picks it up and continues.
- The first student to the end line wins that round.
- *Variation 1:* Students tap the ball on their paddle instead of just balancing it.
- *Variation 2:* Students must start over if their ball drops to the ground.



### Pickleball Tag

- Students balance a ball on their paddle inside a designated boundary area.
- Students try to tag other players (touching the other student's back with their non-paddle hand), but they must be in control of the ball on their paddle to be allowed to tag another student.

- If the ball falls off the paddle, the student picks it up, balances it back on their paddle, and continues tagging.
- The object is to tag as many players as possible within one minute.
- After playing for one minute, repeat to see if students can tag more people than on the first attempt.



### It's a Wrap

- “What did you learn about how the game is played?”
- “What pickleball skill did you learn today?”
- “In what ways were you cooperative today?”



## LESSON 2

# PADDLE AND BALL HANDLING

National Standards 1, 4



You may not have been able to complete all the activities in lesson 1. Lesson 2 gives you another opportunity to have your students get comfortable with their paddle and ball. Consider your students' skill level to determine whether you should practice more with the activities in lesson 1 or use the practice activities from this lesson.

## Learning Outcomes

- Develop forehand and backhand control of the paddle in hitting the ball
- Understand how speed and direction of the ball is determined when hitting the ball
- Provide encouragement to fellow students
- Have fun learning

## Equipment

- One paddle and pickleball per student
- One poly spot per student (scattered in the teaching area to provide enough personal space for each student)
- Three small beach balls
- Mastery boards, whiteboards, and markers (placed throughout the playing area)

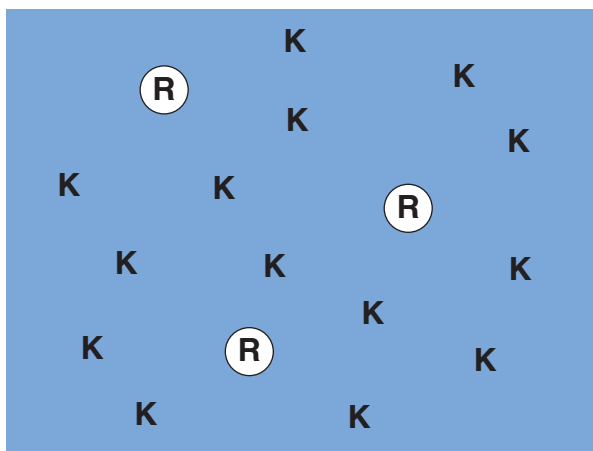
## Warm-Up

### RULERS VERSUS KNIGHTS

In the magical kingdom of Pickleball Land, the Rulers are not very good at pickleball, but they want to be. The Knights of the kingdom are excellent pickleball players,

but they only play among themselves. The Rulers want to convince the Knights to play with them to help them improve. To do so, the Rulers bring out their magical Convincing Balls (beach balls).

The game begins by picking three Rulers, each of whom has a Convincing Ball. They spread out from one another in the playing



area. (Use half of a basketball court for 1 to 20 students and full court for 21 to 50 students).

The three Rulers spread out from one another and must remain stationary.

The remaining students, the Knights, scatter throughout the playing area.

The Rulers try to hit the Knights by tossing their Convincing Ball at them. The Knights try to dodge the ball.

When a ball hits a Knight, they must immediately go down on one knee, where they remain throughout the game. They are now on the Rulers' team and are allowed to toss the ball (from their kneeling position) at the remaining Knights.

After they have thrown their Convincing Ball, a Ruler may retrieve the ball but must return to their original position before they throw again.

Play the game until only one or two Knights are left. Repeat if time allows.

Remind the students: "No screaming."



## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Forehand Control

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain that the object is to tap the ball upward with the paddle.
- Explain how the paddle position controls the direction of the ball.
- Demonstrate the various actions in controlling the ball with the forehand.

#### Key Teaching Points

- Keep proper grip tension on the paddle.
- Keep the wrist and forehand firm and elbow relaxed.
- Use a slight upward pendulum motion initiated from the shoulder.
- Keep the paddle level and parallel to the ground.
- Watch the ball.
- The position of the paddle face determines the direction the ball travels.

#### Practice Activities

##### Ball Taps

- Holding the paddle at waist level, students tap the ball up and off the paddle once; they catch the ball with the opposite hand.
- Have students tap the ball up and off the paddle three times and catch it with the opposite hand.
- Have students tap the ball up continuously, with the ball going “eye high.”
- Next, have students try to slowly travel while tapping the ball up and off the paddle.
- Challenge the students to vary the height of the ball between taps.



### One-Minute Ball Tap

- Students challenge themselves to see how many times they can tap the ball in the air with their forehand in a minute.
- If the ball drops to the ground, they pick it up and keep counting from where they left off.
- Repeat to let the students see whether they improve in a second round.

### **Ball Tap Variation**

- Students try to see how many times they can tap the ball in the air in one minute.
- If the ball drops to the ground, their count starts over at one.
- Next, repeat the activity, but with the students keeping their feet still.

## **Step 2: Backhand Control**

### **Instruction and Demonstration**

- Demonstrate the backhand position.
- Explain the same mechanics of controlling the ball as given for the forehand.

### **Key Teaching Points**

- Teaching points are the same as with the forehand.

### **Practice Activities**

- Do the same activities as done with the forehand.

## **Step 3: Advanced Forehand and Backhand Control**

### **Instruction and Demonstration**

- Challenge students to develop better forehand and backhand control through the Practice Activities.

### **Key Teaching Points**

- Flip the paddle quickly from the forehand to the backhand, keeping the paddle face flat and parallel to the ground.

### **Practice Activities**

#### **Pancake Flip**

- Have students tap the ball with a forehand, then flip the paddle, and tap with the backhand (the “pancake flip”) and continue alternating.

#### **Paddle and Ground Taps**

- Students tap the ball up, allow it to bounce, place the entire paddle under the ball, and tap straight up. They then repeat.

### Crazy Edge

- Students attempt to tap the ball off the edge of the paddle three times in a row.
- Students tap ball off the edge as many times in a row as they are able.



## Mastery Board Challenges

Explain the mastery board levels and rules. Allow students to choose a partner and then begin.

See appendix A for mastery boards that are easy to copy.

### Lesson 2, Level 1: Challenge Yourself

- Walk with the ball on your paddle for the length of a pickleball court
- Forehand tap 10 times in a row
- Backhand tap 10 times in a row
- Pancake flip 5 times in a row
- Tap the ball up 10 times in a row and catch it

## Lesson 2, Level 2: Challenge Yourself

- Forehand taps: 25 in a row without moving your feet
- Backhand taps: 25 in a row without moving your feet
- Pancake flip: 20 times in a row without moving your feet
- Jog: go around a pickleball court while forehand tapping the ball in the air
- Crazy edge: tap the ball on paddle edge 5 times in a row and catch it

## Lesson 2, Level 3: Challenge Yourself

- Backhand tap: 75 times in a row without moving your feet
- Pancake flip: 50 times in a row without moving your feet
- Crazy edge: 25 taps off the edge of the paddle
- Non-dominant hand: tap 25 times in a row—if right-handed, use your left hand; if left-handed, use your right hand
- Blind catch: pass a ball “eye high” from one hand to the other 4 times in a row with your eyes closed

## It's a Wrap

- “What was your favorite pickleball skill today?”
- “Were you an ‘encourager’ today? How did you encourage others?”



# LESSON 3

## THE DINK

National Standards 1, 2, 4



Your students are enjoying the discovery of a new sport, and now they are ready for more action. Without instruction, most people begin playing by banging the ball over the net with hard drives. A better way to learn the game is to begin with the short game of dinking over the net from the non-volley zone line. That's the purpose of lesson 3.

## Learning Outcomes

- Understand the concept of the non-volley zone
- Perform the forehand and backhand dink using proper form and technique
- Understand how to control the speed and direction of the ball when dinking
- Be respectful
- Have fun learning

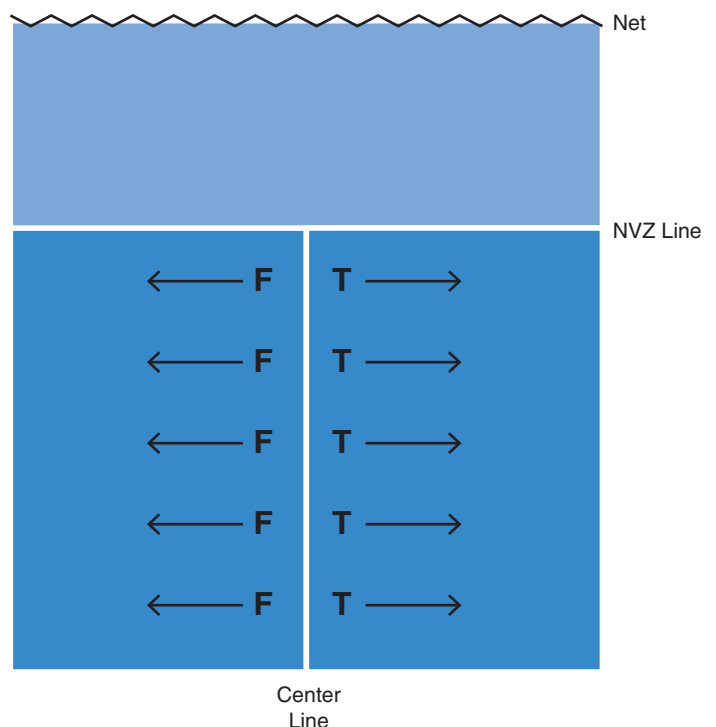
## Equipment

- Paddle for each student
- One pickleball per partner pair
- Four small cones per partner pair
- Net, line, or rope for partners to hit over
- Mastery board, whiteboards, and markers

## Warm-Up

### TRUE-OR-FALSE TAG

- Students line up toe-to-toe on the center line that divides the right and left service courts. The True team is in the right service court, and the False team is in the left service court.
- State a fact or rule relating to pickleball (e.g., “Pickleballs are made of hard rubber” or “A serve must be underhanded”).



- If the statement is true, the True team chases and tries to tag the False team.
- Meanwhile, the False team runs away from the center line; they are safe if they reach their sideline without getting tagged.
- If a False team player is tagged, that player becomes a member of the True team and switches courts.
- If the statement you made is false, the False team chases the True team.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Dink Mechanics

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the purpose of the dink.
- Review the purpose and rules about the non-volley zone (NVZ).
- The dink is a low, soft, short shot performed with the forehand or backhand side of the paddle, with the objective of hitting the ball into or near the NVZ.
- The dink is created by a soft, smooth pendulum swing initiated from the shoulder. The wrist and forearm remain firm.
- Help students understand the concept of force: The speed with which the paddle is swung to hit the ball determines the force or speed the ball travels.
- Demonstrate the head-to-head forehand and backhand dink.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXW0PK8VgJg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXW0PK8VgJg)

#### Key Teaching Points

- Hit the ball to slightly clear the net so the opponent is forced to let it bounce.
- Keep the paddle up and out in front of chest.
- Reach for the ball out in front of the body with an open paddle face.

- Contact the ball low to the ground with a pendulum lifting action.
- Do a soft, controlled hit that is initiated from the shoulder without wrist action. (“Think of the paddle as an extension of your arm.”)
- Watch the ball strike the paddle.
- Know when to step into the NVZ to hit a dink and then to quickly step out of the NVZ.



### Practice Activity

#### Toss and Catch

- This activity teaches students the force necessary to toss a ball underhanded to a partner, who tosses it back.
- Partners stand approximately 10 to 15 feet apart, in ready position, on opposite sides of a line, rope, or net. They do not need a paddle.

- The partners practice the underhand toss over the net (or net substitute) and catching the ball.
- The ball should bounce once before the student catches it. The partners should move side to side.
- Encourage students to cooperate in this activity by doing their personal best to help their partner succeed.



### Partner Toss and Dink

- Partners stand as they did in the Toss and Catch drill.
- Partner A has a ball, and the other partner has a paddle.
- Partner A tosses the ball softly so that it bounces to the *forehand side* and in front of partner B in the ready position.
- Using the proper dink mechanics, partner B dinks the ball back to partner A so that partner A can catch the ball.
- Repeat five times and switch.
- Repeat the drill, but this time toss the ball to the *backhand side* of the partner.

- *Challenge:* Set a two-minute timer. Have the partner pairs see how many catches they are able to complete in two minutes. Switch.

## Step 2: Dinking Practice Without a Net

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Repeat the explanation and demonstration done in step 1.
- Reinforce the major teaching points.

### Key Teaching Points

- The teaching points are the same as in step 1.

### Practice Activities

#### Wall Drill

- Find a wall and draw a line 34 inches above the ground.
- Students aim to hit the ball above the line, let it bounce once, and hit it again at the wall.
- Have the students count how many times they can rally the ball against the wall.
- *Variation:* Have the students move closer to the wall and volley against wall, not letting the ball bounce on the floor.

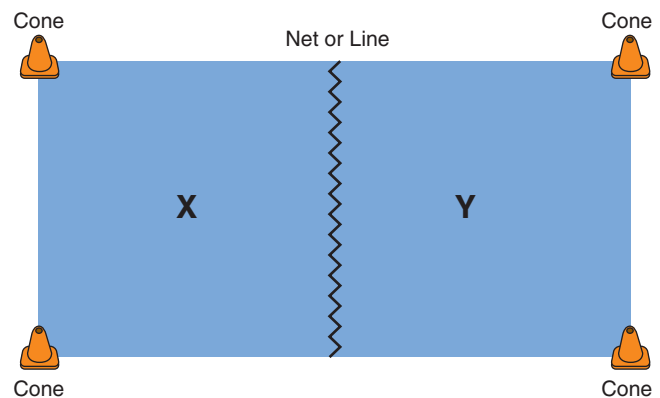


### Partner Dink Rally With a Bounce

- Both partners stand as in the Toss and Catch drill.
- Both partners have a paddle.
- Partners dink the ball over a line using proper fore-hand and backhand dink mechanics.
- The ball should bounce once in front of the feet of the partner. (Students having difficulty can take more than one bounce.)
- Have a competition between partner teams.

### Cooperative Two-Square Rally

- Partners use cones to create a two-square box.
- For the net, use a line or rope in center of the box.
- Partners rally back and forth, hitting the ball after one bounce and keeping the ball within the boundaries of the two-square area.
- Have a competition to see which partner pair has the longest rallies.



## Step 3: Dinking Head-to-Head Across the Net

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Up until this point, your students have been dinking without the net. Now you introduce the net and remind them of the NVZ rules.
- Demonstrate head-to-head dinking over the net.
- Explain that the purpose of the dink is to cause the opponent to go down low to return the shot. This often results in a high return, creating an easy slam.

### Key Teaching Points

Select those teaching points that are pertinent from step 1.

## Practice Activities

### Partner Dink Rally With a Bounce Over a Net

- Partners stand facing each other at the NVZ.
- Partners dink the ball over the net, landing the ball in the NVZ (in front of the feet of their partner).
- Have a rally competition between partner teams.

## Step 4: Introduce the Volley Block

### Instruction and Demonstration

- When students are first attempting the dink, it is common for the ball to be accidentally volleyed in the air back and forth. This presents you with a teachable moment.
- Explain to the students that hitting the ball in the air is called a *volley* and that hitting a ball back to the other side softly or with little force is done with a *volley block*.
- Demonstrate this skill by putting the face of the paddle in the way of a volleyed ball and, without swinging, block or stop the ball from flying away.
- The volley and volley block are taught and practiced in lesson 8.





## Step 5: Dinking Cross-Court

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Up until this point, your students have been dinking head-to-head. Now you introduce dinking cross-court.
- Explain the purpose of cross-court dinking.
- Demonstrate cross-court dinking with forehand and backhand.



### Key Teaching Points

- The teaching points are the same as in step 1.

### Practice Activities

#### Cross-Court Drill

- Players stand on either side of the net, each positioned on the right side.

- They practice hitting the ball cross-court to their partner.
- After a few minutes, they switch so they are standing on the left side of the court.
- After a few minutes of practice, ask the students to return to the right side and attempt to hit 10 shots in a row.
- Repeat on the left side.

### **Cross-Court Challenge**

- Partners stand across the net from one another, each positioned on the right side of their half of the court.
- Partners try to get as many one-bounce dinks as possible in a two-minute period.
- If the ball is hit in the air or blocked, the partners start the rally count over.
- Compare the scores of each pair of students.

### **Dink Competition**

- Set a time frame of two minutes.
- Count a six-dink rally as one point.
- Have the teams compete against another to see who can get the most points by the end of the time.

## **It's a Wrap**

- “Name the pickleball skill you learned today.”
- “Why is dinking important?”
- “In what way were you respectful today?”

## LESSON 4

# THE DROP SHOT

National Standards 1, 2, 5



The drop shot, or what is sometimes called a *long dink*, is made further away from the net. It is a soft shot that is returned over the net and into the NVZ, or close to it, making it difficult for the opponent to return the ball by any method other than with a dink. It's an essential tactical shot that gives the player the opportunity to move toward the NVZ. It's a challenging, advanced skill to learn.

## Learning Outcomes

- Know the mechanics of the drop shot
- Understand the main purpose of the drop shot (to allow the serving team to approach the NVZ)
- Understand that the drop shot can be used as a defense against hard shots
- Be motivated to become a better player
- Have fun learning

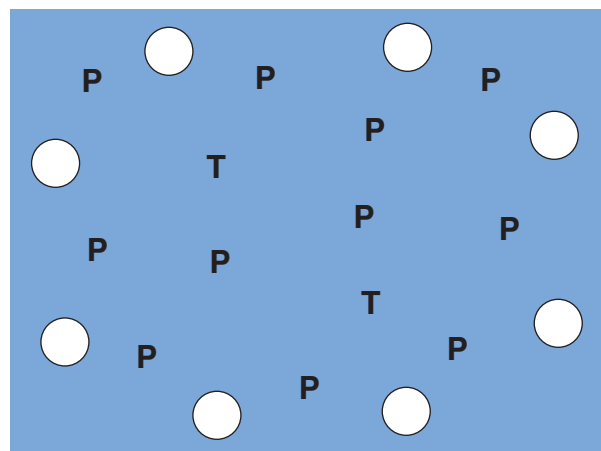
## Equipment

- Hula hoops (one for every three students)
- Bean bags (one for every three students)
- Nets set up for partner pairs
- Paddle and ball for each partner pair

## Warm-Up

### FROZEN STATUE TAG

- Six to eight Hula-Hoops are scattered along the boundaries of the designated area.
- In this game there are two to four Taggers, each with a small noodle.
- All other players hold a paddle; they dodge and flee the Taggers while staying within a designated boundary.
- Any Player tagged must go into the Hula-Hoop and create a pickleball-related statue pose.



- There are five main poses:
  1. Serving position
  2. Dinking position
  3. Ready position
  4. Overhead smash
  5. Volley at net position
- Players must hold their statue pose until another student stands in front of them and copies their pose for three seconds.
- The Players helping the statues cannot be tagged.
- After the three seconds have passed, the now-unfrozen student resumes dodging and fleeing.
- Switch Taggers every few minutes.



## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Review the Dink

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the purpose of the drop shot, especially the third shot drop.
- Review the mechanics of the dink (as taught in lesson 3).

#### Key Teaching Points

- Be in ready position.
- Aim to hit the shot to the opponent's backhand or in between the two opponents.

#### Practice Activities

##### Dinking Rally—Directly Across

- Partners stand behind their respective non-volley lines.
- Partner A begins a rally by tapping the ball like a serve, allowing it to bounce into the opponent's non-volley zone.



- The partner returns the ball on a bounce into the opponent's non-volley zone.
- Partners should encourage each other with kind words and helpful tips.
- Practice both the forehand and backhand.
- *Challenge:* Have the partner pairs count how many times in a row they can properly execute the bounce dink.

## Step 2: Drop Shot—Anywhere

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the use of the drop shot to reset play when the opponents are on the offense.
- The drop shot allows players to move toward the NVZ.
- The drop shot is a long dink executed in the deeper parts of the court.
- Demonstrate the drop shot from the NVZ, mid-court, and the baseline.
- Demonstrate the drop shot using the forehand and the backhand.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-VOy2lhtB8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-VOy2lhtB8)

### Key Teaching Points

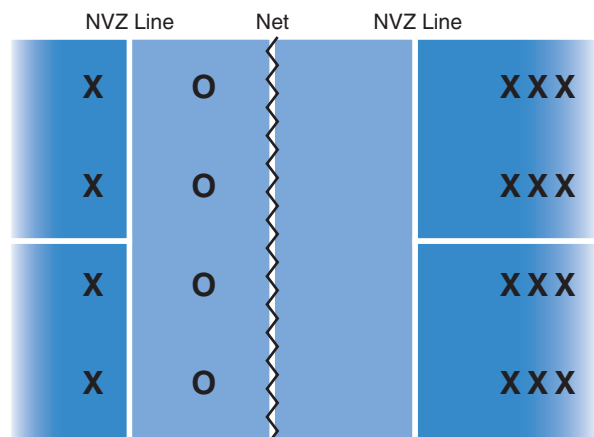
- The longer the shot, the more force (push and lift) needed to propel the ball to the target.
- The farther the shot, the more arch that needs to be put on the ball in order to land in the NVZ.
- This arch is created by opening the face of the paddle.
- Hit the ball out in front of your body and contact the ball as it is dropping.
- The ball should travel in an arch pattern that peaks over the NVZ on the hitter's side and then descends into the NVZ of your opponent.

## Practice Activities



### Mid-Court Drop

- Relay lines are set up at mid-court, with a bucket of balls at each line.
- Four Hula-Hoops are placed on the other side of the net, in the NVZ.
- The first player in line is the retriever, who moves behind the non-volley zone on the opposite side of the net.
- The next player in line bounces the ball and hits it with an open paddle; the player attempts to loft the ball and have it bounce inside of a Hula-Hoop.
- Landing in a Hula-Hoop is worth 10 points.





- The retriever picks up the ball, returns the ball to the bucket at the hitting line, and joins the end of the line.
- The hitter becomes the retriever and moves to opposite side of the court, behind the NVZ.
- Drill first using the forehand and then repeat using the backhand.
- Teammates emphasize kind words and thoughtful actions.

### Baseline Drop

- Move the relay lines to behind the baseline of the court and repeat the process from the previous drill.
- The farther the shot, the more arch that needs to be put on the ball in order to land in the non-volley zone.
- Drill first using the forehand and then repeat using the backhand.



### Third Shot Drill

- Using the full court, player A serves to player B.
- Player B returns the serve to deep in the opposite court.

- Player A does a third shot drop to player B's backhand.
- Drill first using the forehand and then repeat using the backhand.

## It's a Wrap

- “Were you able to do a drop shot from mid-court? The baseline?”
- “What is harder to do: a forehand drop or a backhand drop?”
- “When would you want to use the drop shot?”
- “Did you try to be a better player today?”

# LESSON 5

## THE SERVE

National Standards 1, 2, 5



Students are able to dink in the NVZ and are learning to hit drop shots from anywhere on the court. Now they'll be eager to learn to serve since it is a requisite to starting play. We will only teach the standard underhand method of serving. (With the 2021 rule changes, a second method of serving was introduced. This method of serving, which involves dropping the ball and hitting it on the bounce, is a test for the 2021 year.)

## Learning Outcomes

- Know what constitutes a legal serve
- Know the proper mechanics of a serve
- Be able to serve the ball in the desired direction
- Demonstrate sporting behavior; follow the rules within the spirit of the game
- Have fun learning

## Equipment

- Flags or juggling scarves
- Mastery board, whiteboards, and markers
- Paddle for each student
- One beanbag for each student
- Two buckets for each court
- Balls

## Warm-Up

### COURTESY TAG

- Students put their flag in their waistband or pocket, making it clearly visible.
- Students move around inside a designated boundary area, trying to steal other students' flags.
- Players whose flags have been stolen kneel down on one knee and raise their hand.
- Players with a stolen extra flag may keep the extra one or give it to a kneeling player to get them back in the game.
- The kneeling player must say "Thank you" to the student giving them a flag.
- Once the flag has been put in a waistband or pocket, that student may now stand up and resume playing.



- Players are allowed to keep two flags for themselves.
- If the flag in their pocket is stolen, they may put their extra flag in their pocket and continue playing.
- If a player has stolen more than one flag, and there is one in their pocket and one in each hand, they *must* give the third flag to a kneeling player.
- A kneeling player is not allowed to steal a flag.
- No player can steal a flag from the hand of another player. They may only steal a flag from a pocket or waistband.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Components of a Legal Underhand Serve

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the key points of a legal serve.
- Demonstrate legal and illegal serves.

### Key Teaching Points

- The serve must be underhanded.
- The ball must be struck below the waist.
- The entire paddle must be positioned below the wrist at contact.
- The ball is tossed or dropped prior to contact.
- The ball must go over the net, and over the non-volley zone line, into the intended service court (like tennis, diagonally across from the server).
- The ball may tip the net; as long as it lands in the correct service court, it is legal.

### Step 2: Serve Mechanics

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the sequence of movements in serving.
- Demonstrate the serve repeatedly and repeat the explanation of how to serve.



## Key Teaching Points

- Stand behind the baseline of the service court, facing forward.
- Aim to hit the serve deep in the receiving court.
- Watch the ball strike the paddle; do not look up as you are swinging.
- Follow through with the paddle face toward the intended target.
- Return to ready position after the serve.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrxgEO-5xVE&t=107s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrxgEO-5xVE&t=107s)

## Practice Activities

### No-Net-Serve Drill

- Partners stand approximately 15 feet apart.
- Partner A (with a paddle) serves the ball underhanded so that it will bounce before it reaches partner B.
- Partner B (without a paddle) moves and tries to catch the ball after the bounce. Partner B returns the ball to partner A.
- Switch after five tries.
- *Variation 1:* Move the players farther apart.
- *Variation 2:* Have the partner pairs compete against other pairs. The first team to catch 10 serves after the bounce wins. Emphasize improvement over competition; have the students congratulate their opponents.

### With-Net-Serve Drill

- Partners stand on opposite sides of a net at the non-volley zone line.
- Partner A serves the ball toward partner B. Partner B retrieves the ball and gives it back to partner A.
- Switch after five tries.
- If successful in getting the ball over net—in the proper court and past the non-volley zone line—partners may gradually back up.

### Ready, Aim, Serve

This activity provides a safe environment for a large group of students and allows you time to assess skills. You may shorten the serve length to mid-court or the non-volley line, depending on the skill levels of the students.

- Give each pair of partners matching color bean bags.
- Send partner A to the service side of the court.
- Send partner B to the receiving side of the court, directly opposite partner A.
- Have each one place their bean bag just behind the baseline.
- Scatter buckets filled with balls behind the baseline on the service side of the court. Scatter empty buckets behind the baseline on the receiving side of the court.
- Partner A retrieves a ball from bucket and stands near the bean bag.
- The coach gives verbal commands to the serving side, pausing between each command to allow time for the student to perform the required task and for the teacher to assess their technique.

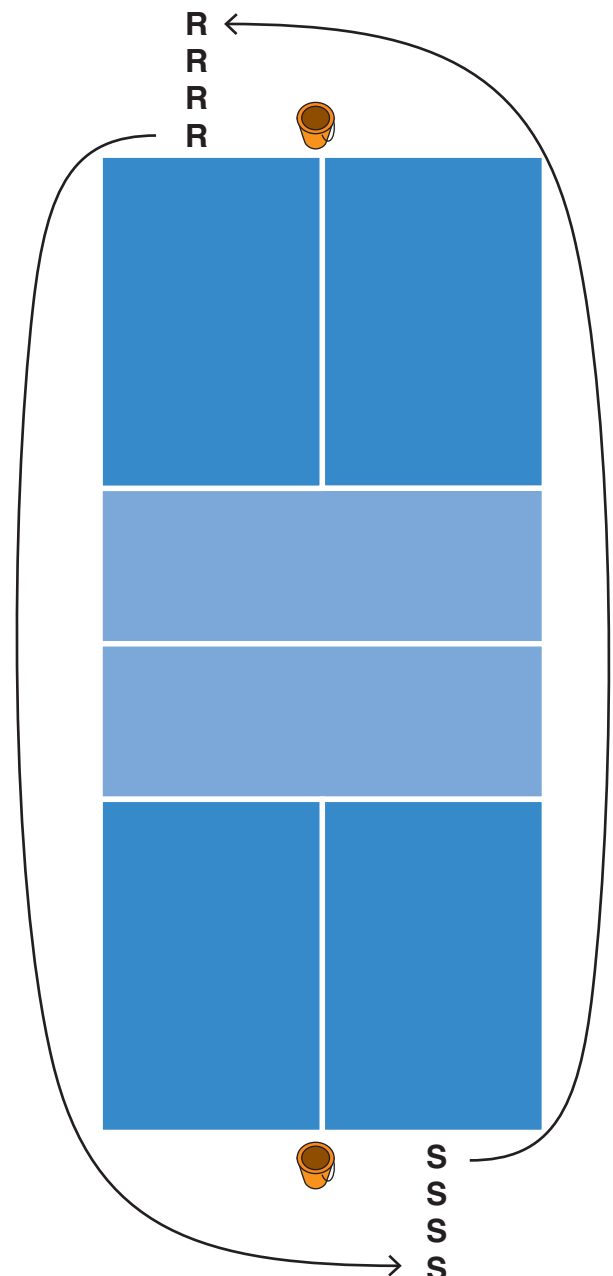




- “Ready”: Bend over with ball in non-paddle hand about knee height.
- “Aim”: Look toward the partner and begin the back-swing.
- “Serve”: Step forward with the foot on the non-paddle side; strike the ball.
- All partner A’s simultaneously hit the ball on the “serve” command.
- Partner B’s retrieve the ball and place it in buckets behind their baseline and return to their bean bag.
- Partner A’s retrieve another ball from bucket and return to their bean bag to await the instructor’s command instructions.
- Switch after three serves.

### One-Bounce Serve Relay

- On the serving side, you will need one paddle, one bucket full of balls, and one empty bucket.
- Place two teams (four to six players per team) in relay lines on opposite sides of the net. One side of the net is the serving side. The other is the receiving side.
- The first person on the serving team gets a ball and serves to the receiving team.
- After the serve, the server hands the paddle to the next player and runs to the right side of their court, to the end of the receiving line.
- The first player in the receiving line attempts to catch the ball after one bounce. They retrieve the ball, run around the right side of their court, place the ball in the bucket, and go to the end of the serving line.



- Every serve that gets over the net is 1 point. Every serve caught on one bounce is 1 point.
- Teams try to get as many points as they can in five minutes.
- *Variation:* Two teams can be on one court; servers and receivers each run around the net on the sideline closest to them. Two points are scored for a serve over the net and beyond the non-volley line. Serve cross-court.

## Mastery Board Challenges

- Remind students of the mastery board rules.
- Have students pick a partner and then begin.

### Lesson 5, Level 1: The Serve Challenge

- Partner A serves 10 balls.
- If the ball goes over the net, it is worth 1 point. Partner B tallies points on the score sheet. Switch positions.
- Players must score at least 5 points or more to put their name on the Level 1 Mastery Board and move on to Level 2.
- Players may have as many attempts as time allows.

### Lesson 5, Level 2: The Serve Challenge

- Partner A serves 10 balls across net. If the serve lands past the non-volley line, it is worth 1 point.
- Partner B tallies points on a score sheet.
- Both players gather the balls and switch positions.
- A player must score 6 points to be able to put their name on the Mastery Board and move on to the next level.

## Lesson 5, Level 3: The Serve Challenge

- Partner A serves 10 balls cross-court (diagonally) from the right-hand service court.
- The ball must land over the net, past the non-volley line, and past a mid-court line designated by a cone or poly spot.
- One point is scored for a successful serve. Partner B tallies points on a score sheet.
- Both players gather the balls and switch positions.
- A player must score 8 points to put their name on the Level 3 Mastery Board.

### It's a Wrap

- "What makes a serve *legal*?"
- "What is an example of playing fairly or being honest in sport?"

# LESSON 6

## GROUND STROKES

National Standards 1, 2, 5



As we progress back from the NVZ line, we now introduce students to forehand and backhand ground strokes. Your goal will be to help students execute these skills with good mechanics and understand a fundamental law of motor performance: the speed–accuracy trade-off. The harder students hit the ball, the less accurate they are likely to be. A more constructive way to state this law is this: *the more controlled their swing, the more accurate their shot will be.*

## Learning Outcomes

- Know the proper mechanics of the forehand and backhand ground strokes
- Use opposition when stepping and swinging (step left, swing right)
- Understand the speed–accuracy trade-off
- Return to a ready position after each hit
- Be responsible
- Have fun learning

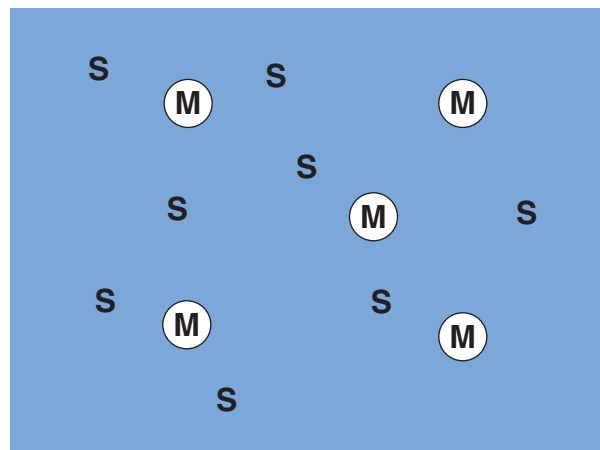
## Equipment

- Nets
- Pickleballs
- Cones
- Small buckets or baskets

## Warm-Up

### MONSTER TAG

- A Hula-Hoop represents the Pickleball Monster's house.
- The hoops are scattered throughout a designated boundary area.
- In each hoop is a beanbag.
- Pick a Monster for each hoop.
- The Pickleball Monster tries to protect his or her bean bag.
- The Snatchers try to snatch the beanbag. If they do, they become the new Monster of that house.



### Monster Rules

- Must stay inside the hoop with both feet at all times
- Must remain standing
- May not touch or hide the beanbag
- Tag Snatchers lightly with two fingers

### Snatcher Rules

- Must remain on their feet to steal the beanbag
- If the Snatchers get tagged while trying to steal, they must leave that Monster's house and go find another house to try to steal from
- If they are successful, they become the Monster of that house; that Monster becomes a Snatcher



## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Forehand Ground Stroke

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the correct position in preparation to hit a forehand ground stroke.
- Explain the sequence of movements to hit a forehand ground stroke.

- Explain the speed–accuracy trade-off and what it means for hitting ground strokes.
- Demonstrate the correct position and movements for a forehand ground stroke.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2LcNYu27Sc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2LcNYu27Sc)

### Key Teaching Points

- Move quickly into position to hit the ball but be set (stopped) when executing the shot.
- Turn the hips and shoulders sideways to the target and shift your weight to the back foot.
- Swing from low to high.
- Avoid a big backswing.
- Hit the ball to maximize accuracy over speed (keep the ball in play).
- Step toward the ball with the forward foot.
- Keep your eye on the ball (don't look to where you want to hit the ball).
- Follow through toward the target and quickly return to the ready position for the next shot.

### Practice Activities

- See the backhand activities that follow.

## Step 2: Backhand Ground Stroke

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the correct position in preparation to hit a forehand ground stroke.
- Explain the sequence of movements to hit a forehand ground stroke.
- Demonstrate the correct position and movements for a forehand ground stroke.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCHXClnyVH8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCHXClnyVH8)

### Key Teaching Points

- The teaching points are the same as those stated for the forehand.

## Practice Activities

### Follow the Leader

- Have the students face the instructor, who has a pickleball in their hand.
- The instructor extends the ball out to the side, shoulder high. If the pickleball is in the instructor's left hand when extended, students jump into the forehand stance, then return to ready position.
- If the ball is extended out in the instructor's right hand, students jump into the backhand stance, then return to ready position.
- *Variation:* Add the step and swing on both forward and backward sides, returning to ready position after swing.





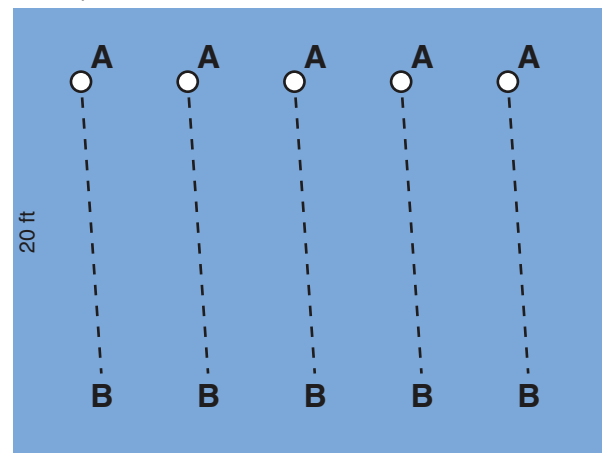
### Wall Drills (Forehand and Backhand)

- Each student has a ball and paddle. Students stand 8 to 10 feet from a wall.
- Each student practices a forehand stroke, hitting the ball against the wall and allowing the ball to bounce between hits.
- Repeat the drill but with the backhand stroke.

### Partner Toss (Forehand and Backhand)

- Students work in pairs. (Emphasize that students should do their personal best to help their partner succeed.)
- Partner A (with a paddle) stands 15 to 20 feet away from partner B (with a ball).
- Place a poly spot to the right of the player with the paddle.
- Partner B tosses the ball so that it bounces on the court near the poly spot.
- Partner A moves to the ball and return the ball to Partner B with a controlled forehand stroke. (“Turn, swing, step, hit.”)
- Partner A returns to a ready position after striking.
- Partner B catches the ball.
- Repeat 10 times and then switch. Move the poly spot to the left side of partner A so the target is now on the backhand side.
- Repeat using the backhand stroke.
- *Variation:* Have the partners stand on either side of a net so that they have the added challenge of getting the ball over the net.

A with paddle



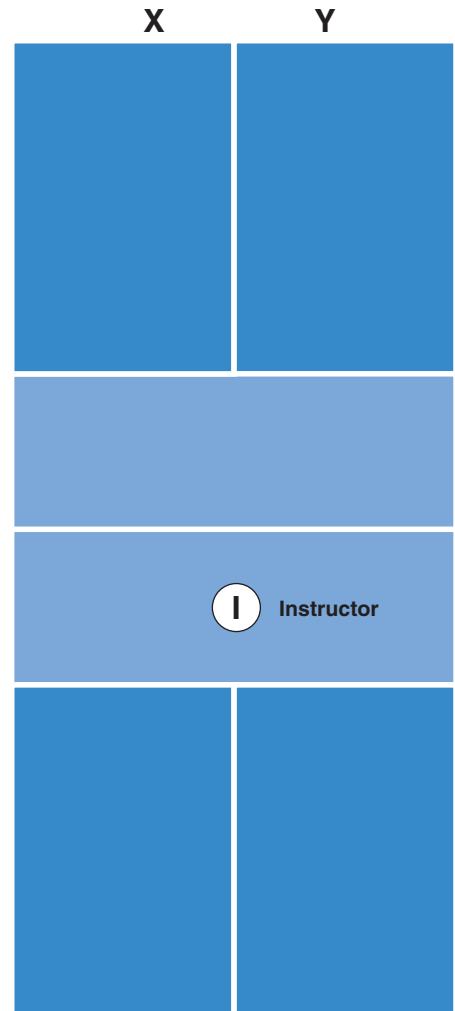
B with ball

### Ground Stroke Feeder

- Each student has a paddle. The instructor has a large container of balls.
- Students are placed in two relay lines behind the baseline of the court. One line is set up to the side of the right-hand serve court, and one line is set up to the side of the left-hand service court.
- The instructor stands across the net, in the middle of the court.
- The first student in each line steps up into their respective courts, behind the baseline.
- The instructor feeds (by hitting or throwing) three balls—one at a time—to the student in the right-hand service court. Using a forehand ground stroke, the student attempts to return each ball over the head of the instructor, into the back portion of the court.
- When the student has attempted three returns, they join the end of the opposite line.

X X  
X X

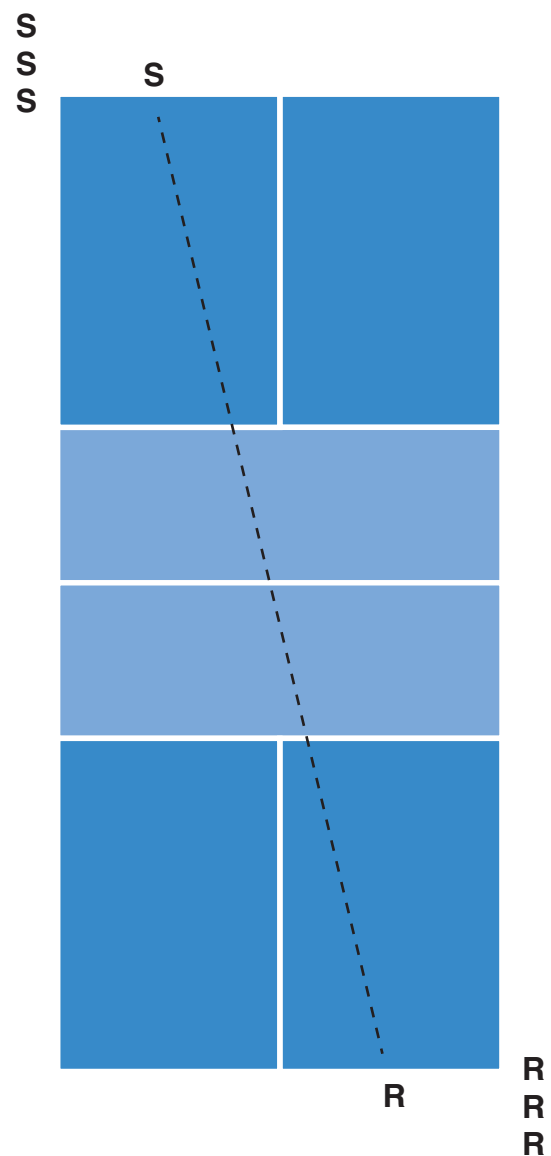
Y Y  
Y Y



- The student in the left-hand service court will use a backhand ground stroke to return the ball over the head of the instructor, into the back portion of the court. After three attempts, the student joins the end of the opposite line.
- The next student in each line steps up to the baseline on their side of the court.
- Repeat until all players have had a chance to hit both the forehand and backhand ground strokes.

### Ground Stroke Rally Tally (Forehand and Backhand)

- Students are placed in relay lines off the court and to the side of the right-hand service court, behind the baselines on each side of the court.
- One side is designated as the serving side. The other is the receiving side.
- The first player from each line steps up to the baseline.
- The serving player serves the ball to the receiving player.
- Both players attempt to rally the ball as many times as they can over the net using the ground stroke from the back portion of the court.
- When the rally ends, the two students return to the end of the opposite side's relay line. (The receiver will head to the serving side, and the server will head to the receiving side, by running around the right-hand side of the net.)



## It's a Wrap

- “What are the four teaching tips for a proper forehand and backhand?”
- “What are some examples of responsible behavior that you saw or did today?”

# LESSON 7

# RETURN OF SERVE

National Standards 1, 2, 5



Your students are mastering ground strokes. In lesson 7 you will apply those forehand and backhand ground strokes to use in learning to return the serve. The key to successful return of the serve is returning the ball deep in the opponent's court, usually to their backhand.

## Learning Outcomes

- Know to wait behind the baseline for the serve to bounce
- Understand that a return of serve may land anywhere in an opponent's court
- Know the two goals of a return of serve
  1. Get the ball over the net
  2. Return the serve deep, anywhere in the opponent's court
- Know the receiving team positions on the court
- Be able to hit the return and follow the ball in toward the non-volley line
- Be a good sport; follow the rules of the game, whether winning or losing
- Have fun learning

## Equipment

- Nets
- Pickleballs
- Cones
- One paddle for each student
- A bucket for each relay line

## Warm Up

Repeat the Rock-Paper-Scissors Tag activity presented in lesson 1.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Position of Receiver

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the proper position for receiving the serve.
- Demonstrate the ready position for receiving the serve.

### Key Teaching Points

- Stay back behind the baseline in ready position and wait for the ball to bounce.
- Quickly decide between a forehand or backhand return.
- Contact the ball out in front of the body.

## Step 2: Move Into Position to Return the Serve

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the decision to return with the forehand or backhand.
- Emphasize the ability to read the flight of the ball.
- Demonstrate moving to the correct position to return a forehand or backhand return.

### Key Teaching Points

- Read the direction and speed of the serve.
- Move quickly to set up for a forehand or backhand return.

### Practice Activities

- Practice positioning when practicing step 3.

## Step 3: Execute a Forehand or Backhand Stroke

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Review the mechanics of the forehand and backhand ground strokes.
- Demonstrate the forehand and backhand return of serve.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=oneADzKM01s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oneADzKM01s)

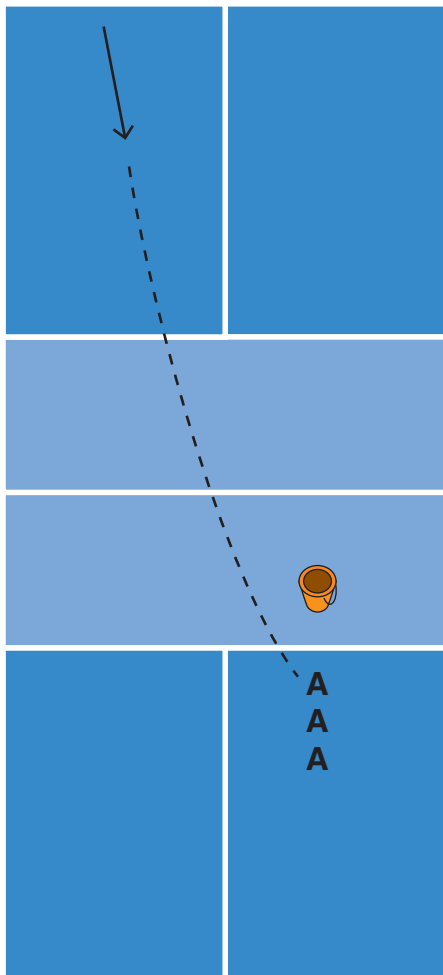
### Key Teaching Points

- Strike the ball when it is slightly in front of you.
- Emphasize getting the ball over the net.
- Return the ball deep but not out of bounds.
- Move toward the NVZ line and in the direction the ball has been hit.

## Practice Activities



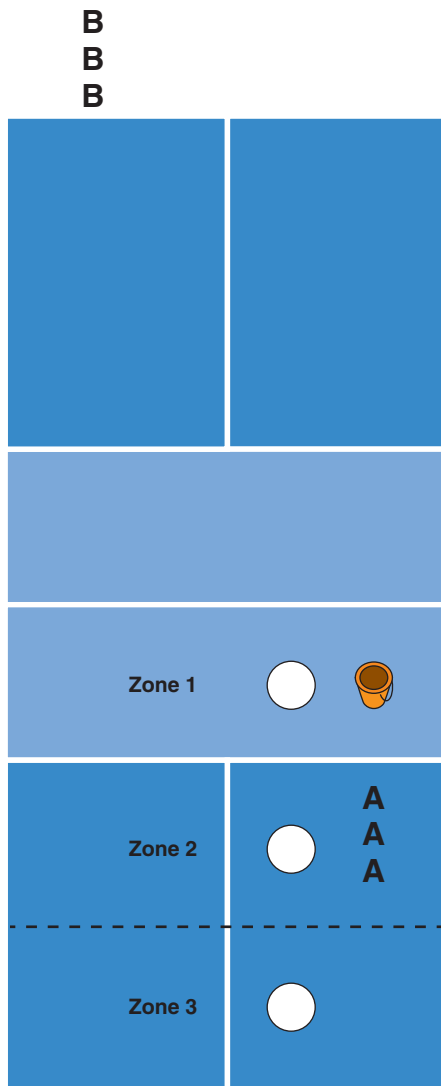
B  
B  
B



### Relay Return

- Relay lines are formed, with players standing behind the baseline.
- A bucket of balls is placed in the NVZ of the opposite court.
- The first player in line A (player A) becomes the feeder and stands behind the bucket. Player A tosses a ball over the net and past the NVZ on a bounce, toward the first player in line B.
- Player B moves to the ball after the bounce and attempts to hit the return over the head of player A and into the back part of the court.
- Player B returns to the baseline, ready for the next toss. Each player in line gets three attempts at the return.
- Player B becomes the next feeder.
- Player A retrieves the balls, puts them in bucket, and runs to the end of the line.





### Return of Serve Tally

- Use the same setup as in Relay Return, except the serving court should have three zones marked by cones, chalk, or poly spots.
- Zone 1 is the area inside the non-volley zone. If a ball is returned and bounces in this zone, it is worth 1 point.
- Zone 2 is the middle of the court. If a ball bounces into this area, it is worth 2 points.
- Zone 3 is the back third of the court. If a ball bounces into this area, it is worth 5 points.
- Teams keep score and compete against the other courts.
- Players encourage one another and congratulate the winners.

### It's a Wrap

- “What is a good strategy for a return of serve?”
- “Were you able to play fair and follow the rules?”

## LESSON 8

# THE VOLLEY AND BLOCK

National Standards 1, 2, 4



Your students are dinking and hitting forehand and backhand ground strokes with some accuracy. Now you are ready to get into the fast action of playing pickleball by volleying and blocking the ball when in the midst of a rally. These are fun skills for young people to learn.

## Learning Outcomes

- Perform a forehand and backhand volley using proper form and technique
- Learn to rally (hitting a ball out of the air back and forth) using forehand and backhand volleys
- Block a ball using a forehand and backhand return
- Know the proper amount of force needed to volley to various locations
- Help fellow students play better
- Have fun learning

## Equipment

- One paddle and ball per partner pair
- Net set up for partner pairs
- Ball hopper or bucket (for the large-group activity)
- Four foam noodle parts

## Warm-Up

Select your students' favorite warm-up activity from the previous lessons.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Forehand and Backhand Volley

#### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain what a volley is and how it is done.
- Demonstrate both the forehand and backhand volley.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=NskPYdDLfKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NskPYdDLfKI)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr1f63FNRI0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr1f63FNRI0)

#### Key Teaching Tips

- Be in ready position.
- Strike the ball out in front of the body.

- Use a short and compact jab-like motion to strike the ball, with a short and compact follow-through.
- Return quickly to the ready position.

## Practice Activities

### Partner Volley Rally

- Both partners with paddles face each other, standing approximately 15 feet apart over a line.
- Partners volley the ball under control back and forth.

### Volley, Volley, Rally

- Partners volley directly across the net, behind the non-volley zone, sending the ball back and forth.
- Rally as many as possible in a row without the ball hitting the ground.

## Step 2: Backhand Block Volley

### Instruction and Demonstration

- Explain the purpose of this shot.
- Tell them that it is normally performed at the NVZ line.
- Explain the proper position.
- Demonstrate the backhand block volley.



### Key Teaching Tips

- Be in ready position.
- Keep the paddle in front, ready to turn to backhand position to block.
- Contact the ball out in front of the body.
- Use a short jab-like motion.
- Quickly return to ready position.

## Practice Activities

### Toss, Volley, Catch (Backhand)

- Partners face each other across the net.
- Partner A tosses the ball into the air, to the backhand of partner B. Partner B blocks the ball back to partner A.
- Partner A catches the ball.
- Switch after five tries. Repeat.
- Next, toss to the forehand side.





A wall, or a backboard like the one shown here, is an excellent way for students to practice on their own.

## Mastery Board Challenges

These may be used to motivate quick learners or as a warm-up activity used prior to the next lesson.

For the partner two-square tally, set up a square box with a line in the middle to make two smaller squares. Corner cones designate the baseline and sideline. Poly spots can be used for corner boundaries.

See appendix A for a version of these mastery boards that can be photocopied.

### Lesson 8, Level 1: Partner Challenge

Each partner must complete each task. Partners stand approximately 10 feet apart with a line or rope between.

- Tap, cone, catch: Tap the ball underhanded to your partner, who is holding a cone, 5 times. The partner must catch 3 out of 5. Switch.
- Toss, volley, catch: Toss the ball underhanded to your partner 5 times. Your partner, who has the paddle, volleys the ball back to you to catch with your hands. You must catch 3 out of 5. Switch.
- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth 10 times in a row, with one bounce between hits.
- Partners volley tally: Hit the ball back and forth in the air 5 times in a row.
- Partner wall tally: Alternate hits 10 times in a row.

### Lesson 8, Level 2: Partner Challenge

- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth 20 times in a row, allowing one bounce between hits.
- Partner volley tally: Volley the ball back and forth 10 times in a row.
- Partner game tally: Hit the ball back and forth 30 times in a row off a bounce or volley.
- Partner wall tally: Alternate hits against a wall 20 times in a row.

## Lesson 8, Level 3: Partner Challenge

- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth, with one bounce between hits, 40 times.
- Partner volley tally: Volley 20 times in a row.
- Partner two-square tally: Hit the ball back and forth, with a bounce or a volley in the two-square box, 30 times in a row. The ball must remain in bounds and not touch the center line.
- Partner wall drill: Alternate hits against the wall, off a bounce or volley, 40 times.

### It's a Wrap

- “What are two components of performing a volley correctly?”
- “Did you or a fellow student do something to help another student learn to play today?”



## LESSON 9

# GAME TACTICS

National Standards 1, 2, 5



We've focused almost exclusively on the technical part of playing pickleball, mastering the basic skills that are essential to play and enjoy the sport. However, tactics are a significant part of playing pickleball. Tactics are knowing where to hit the ball during play to increase the likelihood of winning the point! In this lesson you'll help your students play better by playing smarter.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Teaching Tactics

Rather than a formal lesson on tactics, once your students are able to rally five or six times as they progress through the games in lesson 10, we recommend you begin to introduce tactics. Actually, it's likely and desirable that you have introduced some basic tactics in teaching the technical skills. In this lesson we provide you with beginning and advanced tactical concepts to present to your students. Here's how we recommend you do so.

1. Prior to the beginning of the various games in lesson 10, explain and demonstrate one of the tactics of pickleball. Begin with the basic tactics and gradually move to the more advanced ones as the players advance in their technical skills.
2. When students are playing, you will look for those teachable moments when a good tactical play is made (or missed) to stop play and reinforce the tactical opportunity.
3. Keep these guidelines in mind:
  - Stop play when the point ends.
  - Provide a clear explanation and demonstration (if needed) of the tactical principle.
  - Keep it very brief (30 to 60 seconds).
  - Return to play promptly.
  - Don't stop play too frequently.

### Step 2: Tactical Concepts

#### Tactic 1: Keep the Ball in Play

Nothing is more basic in pickleball than getting the ball over the net and between the lines. Yes, ideally players want to hit unreturnable shots, even if the return shot is a setup for the opponents, they may make a mistake.

#### Tactic 2: Control the NVZ

You've likely explained the value of moving toward the NVZ in previous lessons. If not, emphasize it here. The

players who control the NVZ are more likely to win the point. Thus, the tactic is for the players to move to the NVZ and to keep their opponents back to prevent them from reaching their NVZ. Move toward the NVZ whenever the ball is traveling to the other side and stop moving; be in the ready position when the opponent is about to return the ball to you.

### **Tactic 3: Serve the Ball Deep**

You want to keep the opponents back in the battle so you control the NVZ. Also, deep serves are usually more difficult to return. And remember tactic 1: Don't hit the ball out of bounds.

### **Tactic 4: Return the Ball Deep**

You want to keep the opponents back to prevent them from reaching their NVZ. Also, deep returns are usually more difficult to return.

### **Tactic 5: Hit to the Middle of the Court**

The net is two inches lower in the middle. This area is safer because there is less chance of you going out of bounds, which is adhering to tactic 1. Hitting in the middle, between the two opponents, forces them to make a decision about who will hit the ball, which may create confusion at times. Because of success in hitting to the middle, players often say, "The middle solves the riddle."

### **Tactic 6: Hit to the Opponents' Feet**

Players will soon discover that one of the more difficult shots to return is one hit at the feet, especially the foot of the non-dominant hand.

### **Tactic 7: Hit to the Open Space**

As students demonstrate some mastery of the first six tactics, introduce a more advanced concept: hitting the ball to an open space on the opponents' side. This often is between the two opponents (tactic 5) but may be down the line if a player has moved too much to the middle or is attempting to poach (cut in front of the player's partner to surprise the opponent by hitting the ball). Tell students to look for open spaces during a rally but then focus on the

ball, not the open space, when hitting the ball. A corollary to the open space tactic is to make your opponents move to create open spaces. A bonus in making your opponents move is that it increases the likelihood they'll make an error in returning the ball.

### **Tactic 8: Hit to the Opponents' Weakness**

Another advanced concept is to teach your students to identify their opponents' weaknesses. This often is hitting to the backhand of the opponents. Students can identify weaknesses during the warm-up and early rallies. Remind students not to look to where they are hitting; they should focus on what they are hitting: the ball.

### **Tactic 9: Play the Percentage Shot**

Explain the concept of percentage play as an umbrella for all the tactics given above. Reduce the risk in the shots you make and increase the chance of the opponents making a mistake. A corollary to this principle is to avoid trying to be perfect and instead play within the student's skill level. Don't try to make the sensational shot.

### **Tactic 10: Communicate With Your Partner**

Explain the value of communicating with your partner by calling out who is to hit the ball whenever there is any uncertainty (when the ball is headed to a spot between partners) and time permits. Both partners should communicate by saying "mine," "yours," "switch," or "out."

## LESSON 10

# GAME PROGRESSIONS



Your students are ready to play. Lesson 10 is less of a lesson and more a series of lead-up games that progress from easy to difficult. These progressive games extend over a few days or weeks, culminating in students playing the complete game by the rules. We recommend that less-skilled students begin with game 1 and more skilled students with games 2 or 3. Games 1 and 2 focus on individual play, and games 3 through 7 are played with partners and are suitable once a student is able to consistently serve, return a serve, and maintain a short rally.

## Learning Outcomes

- Understand scoring, announcing proper score, and partner positioning in a simplified sequence
- Learn the etiquette of pickleball
- Be able to play the game of pickleball following all the rules of the game
- Play cooperatively with your partner and competitively with your opponents.
- Have fun *playing*

## Equipment

- Nets and court
- Poly spots
- Chalk (one to four pieces)
- One paddle per player

## Warm-Up

For this series of progressive games, the warm-up is a typical pregame practice routine, as described here.



- Walk or jog for a few minutes to warm up the muscles.
- Stretch the major muscles of the body.
- With a partner, begin dinking straight across and cross-court for a few minutes.
- Practice drop shots or longer dinks from mid-court and the baseline. One partner remains at the non-volley line and feeds the partner a ball on a bounce; the partner will attempt to drop it into the NVZ. Repeat from mid-court and baseline. Switch roles.
- Practice a few serves from each service court.
- Practice a few forehand and backhand ground strokes.

## Lesson Plan

### Step 1: Etiquette

#### Instruction and Demonstration

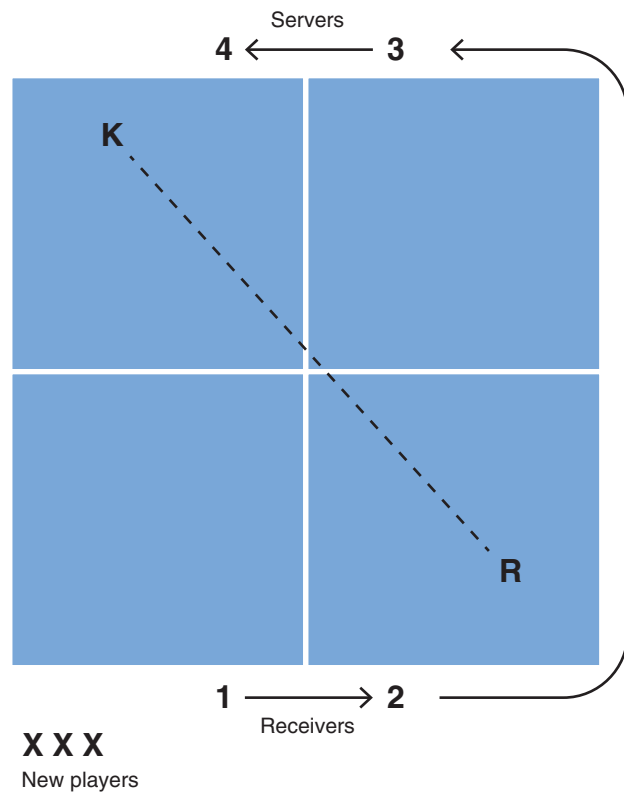
- When returning a ball to the other side, wait until the player is facing you and then hit, throw, or roll the ball to the player who will be serving.
- If a ball enters your court from another court, yell “ball on court” and stop play immediately.
- When serving, always wait for the other side to be ready to play; then call the score aloud so the other side can hear, and then serve.
- Acknowledge your opponents’ good play.
- Follow these guidelines for making out-of-bounds calls:
  - The player on the side where the ball goes out makes the call “in” or “out.”
  - During a rally, if you call a ball out, the ball is dead.
  - If you make a mistake in the call, the other side wins the point.
  - When you are in doubt about a call on your side, the ball is in.
  - Being in doubt about a call on your side does not result in a do-over.

- Only comment on a call by your opponent when asked to do so. Do not question your opponent's calls.

## Step 2: Games

### Game 1: Individual King of the Court

- The object of the game is to knock out the King of the Court and become the King. Once a player becomes King, they want to stay King for as long as possible.
- The court is divided into four squares, from mid-court to the net. Squares 3 and 4 are on the serving side, and 1 and 2 are on the receiving side.
- All players begin the game lined up outside the court, near square 1. The first four players in line enter the court. The first player is in square 1, the second player is in square 2, and so on.
- The King of the Court stands in the right-hand service box: square 4.



### Rules of the Game

- The server (King of the Court) is always in square 4.
- The ball may bounce twice.
- The ball must be served underhand.
- A fault is any error that ends a rally—when the ball is hit into the net, hit out of bounds, or missed.



### Playing the Game

- The server (King of the Court, in square 4) serves the ball cross-court to square 2. A rally ensues. It is a fault if the server hits the ball into the wrong square.
- The player who faults (ending the rally) leaves the game and joins the end of the line.
- The remaining players on the court move up one square number. For example, if the player in square 3 faults, they leave the game and the player in square 2 moves up to square 3, and the player in square 1 moves up to square 2.
- A new player always enters into square 1.
- Continue rotating in a new player each time a fault occurs.
- *Variation:* The King can serve into any of the four squares. The game can be played without a net.

### Teaching Cues

- Progressions are a sequence of steps to achieve an end result. (“Our goal is to be able to play a game of pickleball in which we understand and follow the rules.”)
- “Me-You”: Announce your score first and then your opponent’s.
- Non-volley zone: You may not hit the ball in the air if any part of your body is inside this zone.
- “Me-You-Who?": Announce your score, your opponent’s score, and your service position (1 or 2).

### Game 2: Knockout

- This game can be played with four to eight players.
- Four players take up the doubles positions on the court.
- The other players stand in a line, awaiting their turn to play.
- The serving team serves.
- The player who misses or faults leaves the court and goes to the end of the line.
- The next player in line takes that player’s place.

## Procedures for Games 3 to 7: Partner King of the Court Progressions

- These games can be played with 4 to 12 players per court.
- Divide the class evenly, with students behind the baselines of each side of the court.
- Two lines are formed behind each baseline: one in the right-hand service court and one in the left-hand service court.
- One side is designated as the serving side for the start of the game.
- The player in the right-hand service box always serves first.
- The team that wins the rally (King of the Court) always serves to the new team that enters the court.
- The losing team rotates out and goes to the end of their line. The next two players enter the court in the receiving position.
- Serves must be legal.
- If the King of the Court keeps winning, they must rotate out after three turns. The next two players in line take their place.

### Game 3: Step 1 to Success

- Players are positioned in proper serving and receiving positions.
- No scoring takes place.
- No volleys are allowed.
- The serve can land anywhere on the court, and either player may hit the return off the bounce.
- Rally the ball off one bounce. (With young players, more bounces can be allowed to help the flow of play.)
- Once the players are proficient at a one-bounce rally, they may move on to the next progression.

### Game 4: Step 2 to Success

- Players are positioned in proper serving and receiving positions.
- Serves must be made cross-court but do not have to be over the non-volley line.
- Only the receiving player in the cross-court box may hit the serve.
- Alternate serves after each point, but do not switch sides.
- The receiving team members position themselves according to server position. Rotate positions as points are scored or a new server serves.
- Volleys are allowed. Explain the non-volley zone.
- Once players can rally consistently, they may move onto the next progression.

### Game 5: Step 3 to Success

- The serve must be legal as defined by the rules.
- The serve must land in the proper service court and land past the non-volley line.
- Remind players of the NVZ rules.
- Explain the two-bounce rule.
- The first team to score three points becomes King of the Court. Switch out teams.
- The first team to serve gets only one server.
- From this point on, when a side-out occurs, each team member is allowed to serve.
- There is no switching of sides when a point is scored.
- Players must announce their score and their opponent's score (e.g., "0-0") before each serve. (This is "Me-You" scoring.)
- When players become comfortable with scoring, announcing, and service rotation, they may move on to the next progression.

### Game 6: Step 4 to Success

- Explain the concept of first server and second server (the “Who?” in “Me-You-Who?” scoring).
- Players must announce the score and server position.
- Switch sides when a point is scored; the receiving team adjusts accordingly.
- Play until players are comfortable with scoring, announcing, and server and receiver rotation. Move on to the next progression.

### Game 7: Step 5 to Success

- The team that serves first is only allowed one server, called “start” or “2.”
- Explain that games are played to 11 and the game must be won by 2. In order for large groups to rotate in and out, the winning score can be 3, 5, or any score designated by instructor.

## It's a Wrap

- “Did you learn how to announce and keep score?”
- “Were you able to cooperate with your partner?”
- “Who loves pickleball?!”



# Appendix A

## Mastery Boards

### **Mastery Board Rules**

**Lesson 2, Level 1: Challenge Yourself**

**Lesson 2, Level 2: Challenge Yourself**

**Lesson 2, Level 3: Challenge Yourself**

**Lesson 5, Level 1: The Serve Challenge**

**Lesson 5, Level 2: The Serve Challenge**

**Lesson 5, Level 3: The Serve Challenge**

**Lesson 8, Level 1: Partner Challenge**

**Lesson 8, Level 2: Partner Challenge**

**Lesson 8, Level 3: Partner Challenge**

# Mastery Board Rules

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- In order to place your name on our mastery boards, you must have a classmate be a witness to each task.
- You may not put your name on a board until you perform the task and you and your witness tell an instructor.
- The instructor may ask to see you perform the task before giving you permission to place your name on the master board and allowing you to move on to the next level.

# Lesson 2, Level 1: Challenge Yourself

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- Walk with the ball on your paddle for the length of a pickleball court
- Forehand tap 10 times in a row
- Backhand tap 10 times in a row
- Pancake flip 5 times in a row
- Tap the ball up 10 times in a row and catch it

# Lesson 2, Level 2:

## Challenge Yourself

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- Forehand taps: 25 in a row without moving your feet
- Backhand taps: 25 in a row without moving your feet
- Pancake flip: 20 times in a row without moving your feet
- Jog: go around a pickleball court while forehand tapping ball in the air
- Crazy edge: tap the ball on paddle edge 5 times in a row and catch it
- Jog: go around a pickleball court while backhand tapping ball in the air
- Using your other hand (if right-handed use your left), hit 15 forehand taps in a row



# Lesson 2, Level 3: Challenge Yourself

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- Backhand tap: 75 times in a row without moving your feet
- Pancake flip: 50 times in a row without moving your feet
- Crazy edge: 25 taps off the edge of the paddle
- Non-dominant hand: tap 25 times in a row—if right-handed, use your left hand; if left-handed, use your right hand
- Blind catch: pass a ball “eye high” from one hand to the other 4 times in a row with your eyes closed

# Lesson 5, Level 1: The Serve Challenge

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- Partner A serves 10 balls.
- If the ball goes over the net, it is worth 1 point. Partner B tallies points on the score sheet. Switch positions.
- Players must score at least 5 points or more to put their name on the Level 1 Mastery Board and move on to Level 2.
- Players may have as many attempts as time allows.

# Lesson 5, Level 2: The Serve Challenge

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- Partner A serves 10 balls across the net. If the serve lands past the non-volley line, it is worth 1 point.
- Partner B tallies points on a score sheet.
- Both players gather the balls and switch positions.
- A player must score 6 points to be able to put their name on the Mastery Board and move on to the next level.

# Lesson 5, Level 3: The Serve Challenge

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- Partner A serves 10 balls cross-court (diagonally) from the right-hand service court.
- The ball must land over the net, past the non-volley line, and past a mid-court line designated by a cone or poly spot.
- One point is scored for a successful serve. Partner B tallies points on a score sheet.
- Both players gather the balls and switch positions.
- A player must score 8 points to put their name on the Level 3 Mastery Board.

# Lesson 8, Level 1: Partner Challenge

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Each partner must complete each task. Partners stand approximately 10 feet apart with a net, line, or rope between.

- Tap, cone, catch: Tap the ball underhanded to your partner, who is holding a cone, 5 times. The partner must catch 3 out of 5. Switch.
- Toss, volley, catch: Toss the ball underhanded to your partner 5 times. Your partner, who has the paddle, volleys the ball back to you to catch with your hands. You must catch 3 out of 5. Switch.
- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth 10 times in a row, with one bounce between hits.
- Partners volley tally: Hit the ball back and forth in the air 5 times in a row.
- Partner wall tally: Alternate hits 10 times in a row.

# Lesson 8, Level 2: Partner Challenge

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- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth 20 times in a row, allowing one bounce between hits.
- Partner volley tally: Volley the ball back and forth 10 times in a row.
- Partner game tally: Hit the ball back and forth 30 times in a row off a bounce or volley.
- Partner wall tally: Alternate hits against a wall 20 times in a row.

# Lesson 8, Level 3:

## Partner Challenge

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- Partner rally tally: Hit the ball back and forth, with one bounce between hits, 40 times.
- Partner volley tally: Volley 20 times in a row.
- Partner two-square tally: Hit the ball back and forth, with a bounce or a volley in the two-square box, 30 times in a row. The ball must remain in bounds and not touch the center line.
- Partner wall drill: Alternate hits against the wall, off a bounce or volley, 40 times in a row.

# Appendix B

## Lessons in Brief

Each page contains the major parts of each of the 10 lessons so you can copy them and add notes to take to the gym or courts.



# Lesson 1: How the Game Is Played

**Step 1: Game Demonstration**

**Step 2: Class Safety and Rules**

**Step 3: Paddle and Grip**

**Step 4: Ready Position**

**Practice: Shuffle and Slide**

**Practice: Retreating**

**Step 5: Paddle and Ball Control**

**Practice: Forehand and Backhand Roll**

**Practice: Balancing a Ball on the Move**

**Practice: Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light**

**Practice: Pickleball Tag**

# Lesson 2: Paddle and Ball Handling

## Step 1: Forehand Control

**Practice: Ball Taps**

**Practice: One-Minute Ball Tap**

**Practice: Ball Tap Variation**

## Step 2: Backhand Control

**Practice: *Same as for forehand***

## Step 3: Advanced Forehand and Backhand Control

**Practice: Pancake Flip**

**Practice: Paddle and Ground Taps**

**Practice: Crazy Edge**

## Mastery Board Challenges

# Lesson 3: The Dink

## Step 1: Dink Mechanics

**Practice:** Toss and Catch

**Practice:** Partner Toss and Dink

## Step 2: Dinking Practice Without the Net

**Practice:** Wall Drill

**Practice:** Partner Dink Rally With a Bounce

**Practice:** Cooperative Two-Square Rally

## Step 3: Dinking Head-to-Head Across the Net

**Practice:** Partner Dink Rally With a Bounce Over a Net

## Step 4. Introduce the Volley Block

## Step 5: Dinking Cross-Court

**Practice:** Cross-Court Drill

**Practice:** Cross-Court Challenge

**Practice:** Dink Competition

# Lesson 4: The Drop Shot

## Step 1: Review the Dink

**Practice: Dinking Rally—Directly Across**

## Step 2: Drop Shot—Anywhere

**Practice: Mid-Court Drop**

**Practice: Baseline Drop**

**Practice: Third Shot Drill**

# Lesson 5: The Serve

**Step 1: Components of a Legal Underhand Serve**

**Step 2: Serve Mechanics**

**Practice: No-Net Serve Drill**

**Practice: With-Net Serve Drill**

**Practice: Ready, Aim, Serve**

**Practice: One-Bounce Serve Relay**

**Mastery Board Challenges**

# Lesson 6: Ground Strokes

## Step 1: Forehand Ground Stroke

**Practice:** *See the backhand activities*

## Step 2: Backhand Ground Stroke

**Practice:** Follow the Leader

**Practice:** Wall Drills (Forehand and Backhand)

**Practice:** Partner Toss (Forehand and Backhand)

**Practice:** Ground Stroke Feeder

**Practice:** Ground Stroke Rally Tally (Forehand and Backhand)

# Lesson 7: Return of Serve

**Step 1: Position of Receiver**

**Step 2: Move Into Position to Return the Serve**

**Practice:** *Practice positioning when practicing step 3*

**Step 3: Execute a Forehand or Backhand Stroke**

**Practice:** Relay Return

**Practice:** Return of Serve Tally

# Lesson 8: The Volley and Block

## Step 1: Forehand and Backhand Volley

**Practice: Partner Volley Rally**

**Practice: Volley, Volley, Rally**

## Step 2: Backhand Block Volley

**Practice: Toss, Volley, Catch (Backhand)**

## Mastery Board Challenges



# Lesson 9: Game Tactics

## Step 1: Teaching Tactics

## Step 2: Tactical Concepts

**Tactic 1: Keep the Ball in Play**

**Tactic 2: Control the NVZ**

**Tactic 3: Serve the Ball Deep**

**Tactic 4: Return the Ball Deep**

**Tactic 5: Hit to the Middle of the Court**

**Tactic 6: Hit to the Opponents' Feet**

**Tactic 7: Hit to the Open Space**

**Tactic 8: Hit to Opponent's Weakness**

**Tactic 9: Play the Percentage Shot**

**Tactic 10: Communicate With Your Partner**

# Lesson 10: Game Progressions

**Step 1: Etiquette**

**Step 2: Games**

**Game 1: Individual King of the Court**

**Game 2: Knockout**

**Game 3: Step 1 to Success**

**Game 4: Step 2 to Success**

**Game 5: Step 3 to Success**

**Game 6: Step 4 to Success**

**Game 7: Step 5 to Success**