



## Pickleball Skill Level Guidelines

*The following skill level descriptions are a guide to self-rate your pickleball skill level. This guidance was developed utilizing existing guidelines from USA Pickleball and refinements from other online skill level guides.*

### 3.0 Skill Level

- Knows the fundamental rules and can keep score
- Learning the importance of hitting unattackable balls
- Understands the need to dink but doesn't dink much
- Works at keeping the serve deep and return of serve deep
- Uses both forehand and backhand groundstrokes on return of serves
- Able to keep the ball in play and increasing ability to sustain rallies
- Learning to move quickly to the non-volley zone when opportunity is there
- Aware of partner's position on the court and moving as a team
- Displays good footwork and good hand/eye coordination
- Game play is inconsistent with too many unforced errors during rallies

### 3.5 Skill Level

- Has a deep understanding of the rules
- Gets a majority of serves in deep and return of serves deep
- Demonstrates smart playing strategies during games
- Actively works with partners in communicating, covering the court, and moving to the non-volley zone together
- Executes with varying consistency: forehand/backhand ground strokes, punch volleys, and block volleys
- Becoming comfortable dinking and hitting unattackable balls
- Developing consistency in hitting 3rd shot drops
- Specifically places shots rather than just hitting shots anywhere
- Selectively mixes up soft shots with power shots to create an advantage
- Maintains a moderate number of unforced errors per game
- Demonstrates ability to intentionally play in offensive mode
- Game play is gaining consistency with fewer unforced errors during rallies



## 4.0 Skill Level

- Puts advanced playing strategies into the game, particularly when dinking
- Consistently varies shots for competitive advantage, uses power shots selectively and smartly
- Strategically places serves and return of serves to a competitive advantage
- Communicates and moves very well with their partner covering the court and getting to the non-volley zone together
- Learning to master the 3rd shot drop
- Very comfortable playing at the non-volley zone
- Works with their partner to control the non-volley zone line, keep opponents back at the baseline and drive opponents off the non-volley zone line
- Able to consistently use the punch volley and block volley to gain an advantage
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward with ease
- Hits punch volleys consistently, often as kill shots
- Consistently hits overheads as kill shots
- Uses topspin and underspin (slice) to stress opponents
- Ability to change a hard drive into a soft shot through a block volley
- Consistently executes effective drop shots that are not easily returned
- Can effectively poach
- Makes a low number of unforced errors per game
- Regularly demonstrates "anticipation of play"
- Demonstrates self-correcting during games
- Consistently is a multi-dimensional player

## 4.5+ Skill Level

The 4.5+ player is distinguishable from the 4.0 player by:

- Increased athleticism
- Higher level of strategic playing
- Stronger dink game
- Smarter use of power
- Superior placement of shots
- Faster hands
- Consistently hits fewer unforced errors