

PICKLEBALL ETIQUETTE

Pickleball is a **game**. It is not a metaphor for life. It is not a profession. Nobody makes money playing recreational pickleball. Your social status will not change depending on your recreational pickleball results. Much of what follows is based on this concept.

- 1. Begin each game by acknowledging all other players.** Introduce yourself if you do not know any of them. If you do know them, acknowledge them. Tip a paddle towards them, salute them, or just say “hi” to let them know that you know they are there. After all, they are doing you a favor by even playing this wonderful game with you.
- 2. Good sportsmanship is the rule, not the exception.** During open play you will play with and against players of all skill levels. Do not complain about this. This is the essence and beauty of open play. If you are not comfortable with this, by all means, organize your own private games. If you are a significantly stronger player, if you have limited time available to you, and if there is an “advanced court” option, please queue there and wait for a more competitive game. In any event, learn how to gracefully play both up and down the skill spectrum.
- 3. At the end of each game, find something positive to say to the other team at the net.** “Good game” is not always appropriate if in spite of your efforts at sportsmanship you won 11-0, but an encouraging “you made some great shots!”, or “that was much closer than the score”, or “wow, we were lucky today!” are positive examples. Even a simple “thanks for playing” is nice. But **never** leave a game without acknowledging the time and effort spent by the other team.
- 4. Line calls on your side of the net are entirely your team's responsibility.** If you **clearly** see the ball out, call it out. Otherwise you **must** give the benefit of the doubt to your opponent. There are times, like when the game is close, where you will find this particularly difficult to do. Set a good example and do it anyway. If your opponent does not do it, learn to suck it up and do the right thing anyway when it's your turn to make the call. Never make line calls out of anger or retaliation for perceived bad calls or other slights. That's very bad etiquette and you may be subject to disciplinary action for doing it.
- 5. If you see yourself or your partner step into the kitchen on a volley, call it as a fault against your team.** Again, even if your opponent is failing to do this, be a good example and do it anyway. Similarly, be **very** honest about your ability to call kitchen or serving faults against your opponents. It is perfectly acceptable to kindly point out to your opponent that you think they may be committing a fault, but without taking the point penalty. After all, many players are at an age where it is highly doubtful they can **clearly** see a serving violation (illegal serve or foot-fault on the baseline) from either 23 or 44 feet away.
- 6. Never ask for, or accept, line calls from spectators.** Spectators will often offer their opinions. This is perfectly normal. But line calls are to be made **exclusively** by the players on the court. At most, use spectator calls to make you feel better about a close call you already made. But **never** change a call you already made based on a spectator's input.
- 7. Never verbally or physically abuse your partner or an opponent in anger.** This includes, but is not limited to, yelling, swearing, intimidating, retaliating, bullying, and acting or speaking in a hostile or sarcastic manner. No player in the history of pickleball has ever deserved any such wrath for losing a point, game, or match. You may be subject to disciplinary action for repeated offenses.
- 8. Play your absolute best against more or equally skilled players, but slow things down and take the opportunity to work on your own weaknesses in games with less skilled players.** Destroying a weaker team 11-0 in 5 minutes is simply disrespectful.
- 9. Do your best not to take advantage of a player's physical limitations when playing them socially.** If you know someone is physically unable to retreat for a lob, why lob over them? It's a cheap shot and you will not gain any respect for doing it. Much better to keep the game competitive by playing to their strengths and working on making good shots out of their returns instead.
- 10. Give advice only when asked and if you honestly think the player is sincere about wanting it.** But keep it very brief so as not to interrupt the flow of the game. Longer discussions can be had after the game.
- 11. Stack paddles and/or shorten the number of points to win a game when there are as many players waiting for a game as playing.**