

## Agenda: New CTPA PB-1/Fast Track Clinic & Early Learners Program

To get the most out of the clinic we want you to review BEFORE the course:

1. the three 2-minute videos on the basic rules and scoring on [www.CTPApickleball.com](http://www.CTPApickleball.com) from the main page "pickleball tab" - the videos are mid-way down the page – AND
2. the "Overview: Basic Rules of Pickleball" (same page)

Doing this ahead of time will make your class more meaningful and allow us more time during class to focus on training and practice.

- **Safety rules:** Stretching ahead of time. Good indoor court shoes that do not slip (ideal is indoor shoes with good traction and putting them on indoor to avoid having mud or stones in the treads). You should not play outdoor on a wet court, eye protection is recommended.
  - Another court ball enters a court, play stops immediately. Yelling "ball on court" if your ball is going to go on another court. Stepping on or tripping over a ball can make you fall and get injured.
  - Play stops if a person falls. The point is replayed.
  - NEVER run backwards. Go at a speed that is suitable for your own stability.
- **The Paddle:** You are provided with a free basic paddle that is yours to take home to practice and to use as you learn the game. Most people play with a composite paddle but we suggest you wait a few weeks or months to do your research for what paddle is best for you. The basic grip with the "V" (thumb & pointer finger) on top of the paddle. Avoid chocking up.
- **The Ball:** With pickleball, there are many version of balls with different bounce and flex characteristics. There is an indoor ball (larger holes since weather is not a factor) and an outdoor ball (smaller & more holes about 40 total holes) in a variety of colors.
- **Lines:** All lines are "in" and are part of the court with the exception of the NVZ line DURING the serve – it is considered "out" if you hit the NVZ line during a serve. You do NOT get a second serve in this case.
- **Scoring:** First number is your team score. Second number is the other teams' score. The third number identifies if you are the first or second server for your team. The team who starts the game gets only one serve. The reason for this because it becomes very unfair to the receiving team IF the starting team gets 2 serves...they can rack up points quickly and actually win the game without the 2<sup>nd</sup> team even having gotten to serve/score points.
- **Ready Stance:** Feet shoulder hip width apart. Knees slightly bent, leaning forward with weight on the balls of your feet. Most important is paddle is **ALWAYS** up! **\*\*Advanced technique:** Use your paddle as a site (crosshairs) to follow the ball.
- **NVZ RULES:** Many people call the NVZ "the Kitchen", but the official term is "non-volley zone. No volleying (hitting the ball on the fly) while inside or on the line of NVZ. "Volley" means hitting the ball in the air without a bounce on your side first. The NVZ line is part of the NVZ. Your momentum, after a shot, cannot take you into the NVZ after you hit the return shot. EVEN your hat, sunglasses/glasses or paddle cannot fall into the NVZ after your "volley" shot. If you "fall" into the NVZ after your shot...you lose the play. Your partner CAN pull you back before you fall into the NVZ if they see you teetering after your shot and you CAN jump to the sides out of the court to avoid falling into the NVZ after your shot.
- **Prime Position at NVZ:** Emphasize briefly the prime position for good players is toes 2 inches from NVZ line and playing a "dink" shot over the net trying to force your opponent to hit an "underhand" shot, but all that will be discussed and practiced in the CTPA PB-2 course.
- **Serving** *The person on the right ALWAYS serves first. It's the server's responsibility to make sure your partner is also behind the service line! When the ball is returned you have to allow it to bounce once before you can return it. If you win the point you will then serve from the left hand side. When you lose the point, it will be your partner's turn to serve. You can only get points when you are serving.*
  1. Stand behind the service line and use a bowling motion. (The paddle must be below your wrist and below your waist line to be a legal serve. No slide arm serves. Think bowling)
  2. Point your paddle toward the ground with bent knees.

3. Toss the ball in front of your body in the direction of target. Your target should be the very center of the serving box. This will give you a lot of leeway for error.
  4. Step toward the target with your front shoulder pointing at your target.
  5. Swing in an upward motion with the paddle below the wrist and watch the ball contact your paddle below the waist. Keep your eye on the ball until you hear it make contact.
  6. Follow through in the direction of your target.
  7. The goal is to first get the serve in and ideally hit the ball as far back & deep to the service line as possible.
- **THE FIRST SHOT: Serving** \*\*Do not serve if your partner is at the NVZ line (No side arm serves - think bowling)
    1. Stand behind the service line and stay behind the line after the serve. Do not move forward.
    2. Rule 1 on the serve.....get the ball in. You really need 99% of your serves in. But you need to practice to get the 90% of your serves into a 4 ft x 4 ft box within the service court.
    3. Rule 2. Ideal is a deep serve because it keeps the person back for the return of serve. Keep in mind, if this person is a good player, after he/she hits the return, they are coming up to the NVZ line. A long/deep serve keeps them away from the NVZ line longer.
    4. Rule 3: If you are a good server, try to get it deep and to their backhand. If they are protecting their backhand and you are a good server, go for the other end of the service box to make them run or hit the ball at them deep.
    5. Rule 4: Don't try to win the point with hard/fast/spinning serves unless you are a good server and getting 99% of serves in. It's good to mix up serves with a semi lob to fast serve. The smart play #1 is not losing a serve turn due to hitting a serve into the net or out of bounds.
  - **Return Serve** The person on the right will get the serve first. Hold your paddle up to wait until your partner is up at the NVZ line. You will never rotate with your partner while the opponent is serving. You only rotate partners when you win a point.
    1. You are now using your ground strokes techniques to return the ball after it bounces in the service box.
    2. Ideally hit the ball up the middle and as far back as possible without going out.
    3. This is not like tennis. You do not need a hard return of the serve and actually a slow long semi-lob service return can be the best.
  - **THE SECOND SHOT: Return Serve**
    4. This is not like tennis. You do not need a hard return of the serve and actually a slow long semi-lob serve return is the best. Smart Play #2: Do not hit the ball into the net – get the return IN!!
    5. Rule 1: Hit the ball up the middle and as far back as possible with an arc without going out. Ideally to the person's backhand IN THE MIDDLE (not the sides). It's that simple. The reasons why you want a long lob return? A short serve will give your opponent a chance to get to the NVZ line in ready position very fast and more options to hit easier shots back at you. (Will discuss in the Third Shot). But the main reason is to give YOU and your partner extra time to get to the NVZ line BEFORE your opponent hits the ball. But your partner and you should not rush to the NVZ if you did not hit a good return service shot.
  - **THE THIRD SHOT also called a "drop shot":** \*\*This is what separates good players from intermediate and beginners. We will break it down to taking a serve that is short versus long and where your opponents are at the time you are about to make a third shot.
    1. Short Service return/One or both players are back: Hit the ball back to the opponent further back and ideally at their feet and you and your partner get to the NVZ line.
    2. Short Service return/One or both Players are still coming to the NVZ: Do a power hit at the feet of the person running towards you or to the opponents back hand in the middle. Even a soft shot at their feet will work. Then you and your partner get to the NVZ line in ready position.
    3. Long service return/Opponents stay back at the service line: Then hit a ground stroke back to the middle as far back as possible and you and your partner get to the NVZ line in ready position. Long Service return/Opponents are at the NVZ line: Three choices;

- a. **Very Bad:** Hit a ground stroke volley to the person at the net: This is what most beginners and intermediate will try to do as it is the easiest shot to hit, but it is a low percentage shot in winning the point. Any better opponent will win the point if you hit this shot.
- b. **Not good:** Lob it to the back line to draw your opponent away from the NVZ: This is what intermediate players will do as it is a harder shot to do it correctly. But again on good opponents it is a low percentage shot. Too short, the opponent will smash it. Too long and it goes out of bounds. Older people like this shot because their opponent may also be old and slow to get to a lob. Or the opponent is a newer player and cannot hit a good lob shot back as a smash.
- c. **Ideal:** Is to hit a “drop” shot so it arcs and drops into the NVZ, ideally to the opponents back hand to give you & your partner enough time to get closer to the NVZ. This is the hardest return shot in pickleball and it requires control and touch.....and PRACTICE!!

Other shots used for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> shots.

- **Dink:** The soft game. The whole strategy of moving your opponents around is to create an opportunity for you to score a point; most often through their unforced error but about a third of the time through your being “handed” an opportunity to put the ball away and score. As an advanced beginner or intermediate player the only dinking you may do is in warm up, but it is the way advanced players play.
- **Making & Playing the Lob:** The ideal lob shot is when all four players are at the NVZ line and you lob it (ideally) over the opponents back hand side where it drops to the edge of the court. Again, a hard shot to make especially with fast players. If the ball is lobbed over your head at the net, your partner should yell "I got it" and run behind you. At the same time, you should switch sides of the court. If you feel you can make an excellent overhead return, call off your partner early.
- **Review Positioning:** The goal is to be at the NVZ line. You should not play at the back of the court and AVOID mid court (no-man’s land). Be focused to STAY right at the NVZ line. If your teammate is returning the ball on return of service, just take one or two steps forward and watch his/her shot. If it is a good third shot, advance to the NVZ line. If it was a bad shot, stay in ready position where you are & get ready to move.
- **Anticipate Out Balls:** Try to anticipate when your opponents are about to hit an out of bounds ball. Know when to expect an out of bounds ball before your opponent even touches the ball. Things to take into consideration when anticipating an “out” ball from your opponent.
  1. Is the wind at your opponent’s back?
  2. Is your opponent swinging real fast at the ball and is his contact point below the net?
  3. Is your opponent making a difficult shot on the full gallop?
  4. Is he a very inconsistent player?
  5. Is it a very hard and low percentage shot for you to try and return? If so - let it go. It may go out.
  6. Keep an ear open for yell of "no" or “let it bounce” from your partner when he thinks the ball is out.

Hitting your opponents out balls builds confidence in your opponents and a good player will make an adjustment after realizing he has just hit an out ball. You will probably lose future points without him being penalized for hitting an out ball. If you should play someone who always tries to hit everything, even your out balls, then hit at that person much faster than you normally would. You have nothing to lose. Be aware of where you are on the court at all times. This will help you to decide whether to hit or not to hit a ball. Be a smart player....

**Smart Play by understanding the strategies of PB. Becoming a better PB player is much more that stroke development and touch. It’s not about making the great winning shot, but understanding what are high percentage and low percentage shots and when to attempt them.**

- **THE ZERO PERCENTAGE SHOT!** Hitting the ball in the net. Doing it on the serve &/or return of serve is inexcusable. On your third shot you have several options, but the one that ends the point is hitting it in the net. Anything, even a bad shot over the net extends the play so there is a chance for the opponent to make a mistake.
- **Serve & Return:** An ideal serve is near the back of the service line. The ideal return is a long arching ball up the middle ideally to the person's back hand. The other ZERO percentage shot is hitting the ball out of bounds. Unless you are a great player, try to keep the ball within 2-3 feet of the out of bound lines. A court 14-16 feet wide and 19 to 20 feet long.
- **Service Return person: must go to the net - No Exceptions!** : If you have poor mobility then lob the serve back to give you more time to get the net. EVERYONE is more effective at the net than back at the service line.
- **Third Shot return:** If you are not making the third shot do not run rapidly to the net until your opponent hits and you can see what kind of shot is it. If it's a good third shot then go to the net. If it's a bad shot, then stay about 2 feet in front of the service line in ready position as the ball most likely is coming at you.
- **Partners Play together:** It is not "this is your side of the court and this is mine". You and your partner are protecting 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the court "together". You want minimal gaps between players. Together you are moving to where the ball is going side by side. See example.
- **Communications:** If you're new with playing with the person, take a moment (besides introducing yourself) to clarify issues like "forehand will take 60 or 70% of the shots", or ask if you or your partner can call "shots", "You", "me"....etc. If you don't have good mobility - let your partner know so he/she can cover for certain shots.
- **Know your position on the court:** First, stop moving and get in the ready position when your opponent is ready to hit the ball. Know your distance to the out of bounds line. If you are 5 feet from the out of bounds line and the ball is at your chest, let the ball fly out. If your opponent is hitting a power shot that's above shoulder high and you are at the NVZ, let it fly. Watch other players to get a sense of shots that were out of bounds relative to the position they were in. Everyone will react and hit an out a bound shot sometimes. Ask your partner or opponent if the shot would've been "out" and learn from these mistakes.
- **Fourth Shot:** The correct 3<sup>rd</sup> shot is a dink but if one of the opponent is not up at the NVZ line, then keep that person back wherever they are, ideally hitting to their feet and if possible their backhand.
- **Patience:** Beginners want to be able to hit the ball back over the net. Intermediate player wants every shot to be the winning shot, but the ideal method is patience for the high percentage shot. Playing the soft shot/dinking game until a mistake is made is how better players win.
- **Avoid the low percentage shots:** See examples
- **Gather together to summarize:**

## Practice Handout and other Reference Source

- **Practice at home drills:** (Paddle & one ball is to be taken home)
  1. Bounce the ball on the paddle 20-30 times. First Forehand, then backhand. Then try alternating forehand/backhand between hits.
  2. Locate a wall and stand 4 to 10 feet away where you can hit the ball to a spot about 3 to 6 feet high. Hit the spot and let the ball bounce once and hit it back to the same spot. Practice with forehand and back hand. Increase distance from the wall.
  3. Stand about 3 to 4 feet from wall and hit the ball underhand against the wall toward a spot marked on the wall. Hit the ball back before it bounces and continue. Practice forehand and back hand.
  4. Find a friend and hit back & forth in the driveway or street.
- **Additional resources:** [USAPA.ORG](http://USAPA.ORG) contains useful information:

1. Rules
2. Learning to Play
3. Places to Play

- **YouTube videos:** There are a wide variety of videos available on YouTube for different aspect of pickleball and they can be a very valuable resource for you. We encourage you to watch some championship doubles national tournaments and get a sense of how the professionals play the game.
- **Go to the courts and watch higher rated players play:** Since CTPA courts are assigned by ratings, you can watch 2.5 or 3.0 or 3.5, etc and get a sense of what the different level of play looks like.

## Places to Buy Pickleball paddles & gear

*These potential suppliers all offer benefit to CTPA or are CTPA members*

### Retailers:

**Dicks Sporting Goods & Walmart has some equipment.**

**Pickleball Central:** Claim to be the largest supplier of pickleball equipment and all their staff plays the game. <http://www.pickleballcentral.com/> They do have over 100 different types of paddles for sale and **they offer a 5% discount to you** by using the code **CRCranTWP** and will give CTPA 5% credit to use for supplies.

### Local Representative:

**Bill Billeter:** Is a CTPA member and lives in Cranberry and can offer a discount of 20% of Gamma paddles and equipment ordered off Gamma web site using a special code. Bill can meet with you give you hands on demonstration of all of Gamma paddles before you order. Contact Bill [wwbill4@yahoo.com](mailto:wwbill4@yahoo.com) .

### Early Learners Program:

You will be invited to attend up to three Early Learners sessions at no additional costs to you. This program is lead by Bill Billeter [wwbill4@yahoo.com](mailto:wwbill4@yahoo.com) . Bill will be in direct contact with you by email to see if you are interested in attending one of his outdoor Early Learners session. In the wintertime, we may not have the option to have an Early Learners session and we will then invite you to attend when outdoor weather permits. There is no problem if you cannot attend a certain weekend and we will be very flexible with you to selected dates that you can make up to 6 months after your clinic. The maximum you can attend is three times without having a membership.