

PICKLEBALL TIPS

TIP # 1

A GOOD SERVE

Much too often, people attempt ace serves. The best pickleball players generally serve to the center of the opponent's court and then work to set up a winning shot. Experience shows that ace serve attempts against an equal player fail much more often than they make a point.

TIP # 2

RETURN OF SERVE

When receiving the serve remember that your opponents must let the ball bounce after you hit it back to them. You should take advantage of this rule to set your team up at the net. Do this by hitting the ball fairly softly and deep into your opponent's court. This will give you time to approach the net, the strongest doubles position, and it keeps your opponents at the back of their court.

TIP # 3

GETTING TO THE NET

If you are the team at the back of your court and the other team is at the net, you are at a disadvantage. You want to get to the net. To do so you should master the toughest shot in Pickleball. From the back court hit the ball soft and just over the net so it will bounce in your opponent's non-volley zone. This will give you time to rush the net and therefore have the same court position advantage as your opponents. This shot must be perfected because if you hit it too high they will smash it. If you hit too hard you will not have time to make it to the net.

TIP # 4

VARIETY ADDS SPICE

Variety players have the advantage. Hitting the ball hard is aggressive and may seem to be the best way to make points. However, slowing a shot down, placing it where the opponent is not expecting it, or lobbing the ball high and to the back of the court will often improve your chances for making a point. Try these options and keep track of the points you make. You will be convinced when you master variety in your shot selection.

TIP # 5

ALWAYS ANTICIPATE A RETURN

Some pickleball players count their chicks before they are hatched. They will hit what they think is an ace and then they drop their guard. Too many pickleball players are quick and will return even the best of your shots. Always concentrate and be ready for a return and only when the ball is “dead” pat yourself on the back for a shot well executed.

TIP # 6

HAVE FAITH IN YOUR PARTNER

Have faith in your partner. Even if you are the stronger player you must trust your partner to return the shots on his/her side of the court. Encourage them and don't criticize during the game. This does not mean that you should not occasionally “poach” a shot. If you can surprise the other team with a quick “poach” do so, but be ready to get back to your side to cover. After the game is over partners can talk about what improvements might be made to improve their game.

TIP #7

TAKE TIME TO FOCUS WHEN SERVING

Do not call out the score as you are serving. Too often this habit will have you serving out of bounds, into the net, or simply too high or slow. What you should do is call out the score, take a deep breath, then serve the ball when that is all you are doing. Don't give away those easy shots.

TIP #8

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PARTNER

Talk with your partner and make agreements about shots before the game starts. Agreements can include such things as yielding to the partner with a forehand shot when either partner can return a hit. Another agreement may be that one of the partners (the stronger lob re-turner) takes all lob shots and switches to the opposite court are made when necessary. During the game, talk to each other to avoid having both players go for the same shot.

TIP #9

POSITIVE ATTITUDE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Pickleball is a sport that is best played by happy people. Yes, intensity is good, but if you are feeling bad about your partner's play or even about your own mistakes, you are bound to keep making errors. Take time to loosen up, to think positive, to be innovative. Go get a drink of water and take a deep breath. Put on a smile and then come back and play some more.

TIP #10

GETTING BACK INTO POSITION

When your partner is pulled out of position by a well placed shot on the edge of the court, your responsibility is to move to the middle of the court and try to cover it all until she/he can get back. And when that partner gets back quickly move back to your side of the court. Also, try to slow the game down by hitting the ball soft and low giving your out of position partner time to get back. When you master this, you and your partner will feel good about each other and that helps win games.

TIP #11

THE FAKE SHOT

This is tough to do but if you master it you can make a lot of points. It takes a flick of the wrist to successfully achieve it. You line up to hit the ball one way, you look that way and then as you hit the ball you change the angle of the paddle at the wrist, and the ball goes to another part of the court. It takes practice and concentration. Your opponent will be hard pressed to get the shot back and even if she/he does, you will probably have an opportunity for an aggressive return. Try it. Good luck.

TIP #12

ALIGNING YOUR BODY

When playing doubles align your body to face the opponent hitting the ball. This will put you in the best position to respond to any ball hit your way. If the opponent hitting the ball is directly across from you your position should be parallel to the net. But if the opponent hitting the ball is across from your partner you should be directly facing that hitter.

TIP #13

DON'T POP THE BALL UP!

Whatever you do don't "pop" the ball up. Many players, both novice and experienced, will hit the ball into their opponents "wheelhouse." You may be quick and athletic in returning a ball that is driven down at you but most often you will lose the point. To avoid "popping" it up, slow the ball down and drop in over the net (dink) or hit it straight across the net even if you sometimes don't get it over the net. At least you will have a chance at the point.

TIP # 14

USING SPIN

Many Pickleball players play with an over the ball spin that drives the ball down as it crosses the net. If you get your opponent used to this spin then the opposite spin, under the ball spin, will catch him/her off guard and their return will often go right into the net. You must be careful when hitting the ball with under the ball spin to not get it too high allowing our opponent to smash it down into your court. This change of spin must be practiced and is most effective when not overused.