

## Basic Etiquette and Safety on the Courts

### **Etiquette**

Pickleball is only a game.

Begin each game by acknowledging the other players, introducing yourself if you don't know them.

During open play (mixed skill-levels), players play with all skill levels. No complaints. Good sportsmanship is the rule.

If you are playing against a team where there is a significantly stronger player, play against the STRONGER player. You will forget about who wins a given game tomorrow, but if you play against a stronger player, you may learn something.

If YOU are the strongest player of the four, play to the weakest players in a way they can handle and learn from. Sometimes you can even ask people what they are working on (e.g. drop shots, lobbs, returning balls hit to their backhands, whatever) and if they tell you hit them shots they can use to work on those shots.

At the end of each game, find something positive to say to the other team at the net. "Nice game" "you made some great shots!", or "much closer than the score". Or "Wow, we were lucky today!" would be just fine. At least, "Thanks for playing with us!" is nice. NEVER leave a game without acknowledging the other team.

The ball is out, and it on your side, call it out. If it's close, give the benefit to your opponent. This is hard to do when the game is close but do it anyway. If your opponent does not do it, ignore it and you do the right thing anyway when it's your turn.

If you step into the kitchen on a volley, or if your partner does, call it on yourself. Be very cautious about calling kitchen or serving faults on others.

Never ask for, or accept, line calls from spectators.

If spectators continuously comment on the play itself, while this is normal and fun, ask them not to if their comments are loud, disruptive, argumentative, hostile or combative.

NEVER yell at, swear at, or say a hostile or sarcastic word to your partner or your opponent in anger.

Teasing your opponents in a fun and lighthearted way, is part of pickleball. But be careful – don't tease someone who is sensitive, who you don't know, who is a weaker player or can't for any reason tease back. Just be careful.

Always compliment people on outstanding "hero" shots or on a really great game.

Play your strongest game against better players but work on stuff you need to practice on with the weaker players. We will often individually tell our partners “I am working on placement today” and they know that will mean that we are not necessarily going to put every shot away. Saying this beforehand gives you a chance to gauge what your partner wants out of the game.

Do not take advantage of a person’s physical limitations when you play them socially. If someone cannot go back for a lob when they’re at the line because of physical limitations, for instance, why lob over their heads? It’s a cheap shot, you won’t learn anything by doing it, and you certainly will not be respected for it. Anyway, perhaps they have great hands at the line and you could learn something by hitting shots to their strength and trying to make good shots out of their returns.

At the end of the game, if you believe another player would benefit from an observation about their play, DON’T OFFER IT. Who made YOU court-captain today? Most people don’t want observations about their play and will not take it well. Even if they ask, be very cautious. See the next point.

Eventually even YOU will get to the point when you are a senior player. At that point you inherit the obligation to, in fact, give advice WHEN ASKED, if you believe that the party is really sincere about wanting it. Everybody handles this differently but we believe we should, at that point, give no more than ONE piece of advice at a time. Let them work on that. Then, some other day, go on to the next thing.

Pickleball is just a game.

## **Safety**

Stretch before and AFTER playing.

Do not overplay your current physical condition. (“JUST ONE MORE GAME” has caused too many accidents!)

Hydrate. This means “drink water”. Drink BEFORE you are thirsty. Otherwise it’s too late.

If a ball comes onto your court, do NOT chase it onto the other court. Stop, yell “Ball on the court”, and let the other people stop play and retrieve the ball.

If you are crossing an active court to get onto a vacant court or to leave a court, wait until their current point is over. Ask them for permission to cross their court.

If a ball breaks, safely remove it from the court.

If ANYTHING falls on the court, quickly remove it.

If you see someone who displays signs of dizziness, weakness, or lack of concentration, keep an eye on them. Recommend a time-out if you think it necessary for their sake.