

# **Pickleball Skill Level Definitions**

*Note: Above the 2.0 level, all levels should be able to demonstrate most of the skills for their level plus most of the skills from preceding levels. Thus a 2.5 level player, for example, demonstrates most skills in the 2.5 level list as well as most skills in the 2.0 level list, and so on.*

## **2.0 Skill Level**

- Moves around court in balanced, safe manner
- Gets some serves “in”, perhaps not regularly
- Realizes aspects of score-keeping, rules and where to stand on court during serve, receipt of serve, and general play
- Has some basic stroke skills

## **2.5 Skill Level**

- Able to serve “in” more regularly
- Knows two-bounce rule and demonstrates it most times
- Knows where to stand on the court during serve, receipt of serve and general play
- Is mastering keeping score.
- Attempts to dink but not always effective at it
- Working on their form for ground strokes, accuracy is variable
- Can keep the ball in play longer
- Sometimes lobs with forehand with varying degrees of success.

## **3.0 Skill level**

- Knows the fundamental rules and can keep score
- Regularly gets serves “in” to mid-court or deeper
- Dinks mostly in opp. kitchen and is dinking lower over the net
- Able to sustain dinking in the game
- Using both forehand and backhand on returns and forehands on overhead returns
- Working at keeping the serve deep and return of serve deep
- Moves quickly towards the non-volley zone when opportunity is there
- Trying to make flatter returns (where appropriate)
- Aware of partner’s position on the court & moving as a team
- Developing more power and/or softness in their shots
- Somewhat a uni-dimensional player working at broadening their playing repertoire.

### 3.5 Skill level

- Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the rules of the game
- Gets a high majority of serves in deep & returns serve deep
- Often hits to the weak side of opponent
- Demonstrates strategies of playing during games
- Actively works with partners in communicating, covering court, moving to net
- With varying consistency executes: lobs, forehand/backhand ground strokes, overheads, net volleys, and sustained dinking
- Some use of drop shots to get to the net
- Specifically places shots rather than just hitting shots anywhere
- Selective mixing up soft shots with power shots to create an advantage
- Hits fewer balls out of bounds or in the net
- Has a moderate # of unforced errors per game
- Demonstrates ability to intentionally play in offensive mode
- Self-correcting after play is over
- Demonstrates extended periods of multi-dimensional play

### 4.0 Skill Level

- Primarily plays in an offensive mode rather than reactively
- Controls and places serves and return of serves to best advantage
- Puts advanced playing strategy into the game, particularly in dinking
- Consistently varies shots for competitive advantage, uses power shots selectively
- Communicates and moves well with partner — easily “switches” court positions
- Very comfortable playing at the non-volley zone. Works with partner to control the line, keeping opponents back and driving them off the line.
- Can block hard volleys directed at them
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward with ease.
- Hits overhead shots consistently, often as put-a-ways
- Ability to change a hard shot to a soft shot
- Consistently executes effective drop shots that are not easily returned for advantage
- Can effectively poach
- Hits a low # of unforced errors per game
- Regularly demonstrates “anticipation of play”
- Self-correcting during play
- Consistently is a multi-dimensional player and/or is exceptionally dominate in a limited playing repertoire.

### 4.5 – 5.0 Skill Level

- Can regularly convert a hard shot to a soft shot
- Exhibits patience in play at a superior level
- Shows noticeably increased skills, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands and movement, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots, superb anticipation of play, sustained volleying skills, superior put-aways —all with consistency

- Makes very few unforced errors

*Differences between 4.5 and 5.0 are subjective – but, generally, each of the four points above is even more pronounced at the 5.0 level.*

**Court 1 – intended for players who are 3.5 and higher**

**Court 2 and 3 – intended for players who are 2 – 3.5**

**\*\*\*Note: if Court 1 is not being used, it is open to all players. \*\*\***