



*There's nothing competitive about this game.
Remember to have fun!*



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Pickleball by the Book

Pocket Guide to Starting and Improving Pickleball

POP
PAVILION OF
PICKLEBALL

By:

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2022 National Sr. Olympics 65+/4.0 Men’s Doubles Champion

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APPENDIX 2 – Favorite Trash Talk Phrases

Is that all you've got? – Exclaimed when your opponent hits his hardest volley and you block it back for a winner (get in their head!).

Barn door is open – Stated when you score your first point – meaning we are on our way now!

Nothing to this game! – When you hit a beautiful winner, perhaps a low percentage shot, that finishes a rally. Basically, you are saying I can do that shot in my sleep (get in their head!).

What's for dinner? – A reference to the “Kitchen” and uncalled foot faults. In rec play there are few foot faults called as they are the responsibility of the person hitting the ball and faulting. A nice way for an opponent to encourage proper Kitchen footwork is to say, “What's for dinner?”, inferring that you may have been in the Kitchen on a volley (ie preparing dinner)!

Are the lines good today? – Well of course they are, but sometimes we have close calls. This phrase is just part of the banter, particularly if there are multiple close calls!

Sorry! – In an intense rally, you dribble a let cord in for a winner. Say you are sorry with all the sincerity you can muster (get in their heads!).

Just one more game? – Seems like there's never enough pickleball!

No blood – Desire or observation that you hold your opponents to two side outs without them scoring a point on the current serving round.

Blood in your eyes – Referring to a massive overhit that loses the rally because you're out of control!

Living right! – An off-hand compliment after you win a rally with a let cord or some other amazing get.

Nice shot – Encouragement to your opponent after they hit a winner off of a low percentage drive. You are trying to get them to hit another low percentage drive (Get in their head!).

I thought this was a recreational game – Comment to opponent in a seniors match after they have won the last 5 rallies with lobs!

I was aiming for your feet – Sometimes you nail an opponent unexpectedly and apologetically. A weak out is to say sorry, I was aiming for your feet.

Scorpion – A volley made with the paddle vertical hitting the ball straight in front of your body. Allows a wrist whip that puts extra pace on the ball. Usually requires a squatting knee position.

Server – The player that puts the ball in play for the rally to begin by hitting a legal serve (and calling the proper score before serving!)

Shake and Bake – A rally strategy where the serving player hits a 3rd shot drive hard while their partner crashes the net to clean up a hoped for pop up.

Side out – When the receiving team wins a rally, it is called a side out. Win two side outs to obtain the serve again.

Singles – There is a singles game in pickleball. Plays more like tennis with passing shots and speed and less dinking and finesse. Scoring is simpler because there is no third number for which server is up.

Third Shot Drive – A serving team shot hit as a ground stroke from the back part of the court with pace to pass or attack the opponents.

Third Shot Drop – A long distance “Dink” intended to land in the Kitchen while giving the serving team an opportunity to approach the net to level out the court positioning in hopes of winning the rally.

Two Bounce Rule – The serve must bounce before the returning team can hit it and the return of serve must bounce before the serving team can hit it. Makes pickleball a “return and volley” game, not a “serve and volley game” like tennis. Makes the points longer and very strategic.

Underhand Serve – 3 rules make a serve qualify as underhand: 1) the ball is struck below the bellybutton, 2) when the ball is struck, the highest point on the paddle is below the wrist hinge, 3) the ball is struck with an upward motion. The serve is not a weapon (not many aces, unlike tennis), but it is a good practice to mix up the pace, location and spin to keep your opponent off balance.

Volley – Hitting the ball out of the air before it hits the ground. Important to watch your foot placement around the Kitchen so that foot faults do not occur during or immediately after hitting a volley.

INTRODUCTION:

This booklet is intended for those new to the game of pickleball that want a quick and easy reference as to how to play the game. It is also intended for the recreational player (2.5-3.5) that has played the game for a few months, but would like to know a few of the strategies specific to pickleball that will improve their play. For those that have played the game a while, my intention is to open your eyes to new ways of thinking that will lead to better/faster decision making that results in successful high percentage outcomes. This booklet is intentionally short and organized so you can go directly to the section of interest based around different shot types.

Having taught over 500 people the basics of the game, I use three distinct paths to teach the game: 1) Rules, 2) Shot Mechanics, and 3) Strategies. Each shot section is divided this way. Advanced players can skip the RULES, but review the SHOT MECHANICS if you are having an issue executing a particular shot and read the STRATEGIES to learn ways of winning rallies. Pickleball is “chess on a court”! The shot skills to a degree are not as important as the “head” game to victory (so I added a trash talk appendix!) – but all three (rules, mechanics, strategies) create a game that is easy to play and constantly presents opportunities for improvement.

Let’s begin with RULE #1: Have Fun!

Having played tennis for 59 years, racquetball for 12 years and ping pong for 63 years, etc. I can passionately say there is no game like pickleball with its quick learning curve and infinite strategies for improvement. Welcome to the *Greatest Game on Earth! But beware – it is addicting!*

SHOT 1: SERVE

RULES: *Two Serving Options: Drop or Volley Serve* – Pickleball rules are few and simple, but lets start from the beginning playing the game by the rules! There are two different serves to choose from. The DROP SERVE has the server drop the ball (not forcibly) and hit it into the portion of the court diagonal from the server clearing the net and the non-volley (kitchen) zone. The server must strike the ball with both feet behind the baseline. That's it - it's that simple! The VOLLEY SERVE is an underhand serve defined by 1) striking the ball below your belly button, 2) striking the ball with the highest part of the paddle below the wrist hinge, and 3) hitting the ball with an upward motion

MECHANICS: Basically, the motion is that of a slow-pitch softball toss, only holding a paddle. Your paddle arm moves back while your opposite foot steps forward to get your body weight into the shot. My mechanics “secret” for new players is supination of the wrist (pointing it down as far as possible to lock the rotation of the lower arm and the paddle face – see lines in image). Also, for the volley serve, hold the ball on with your fingers on the top so you don't hit them instead of the ball! Here is a nice YouTube on the basics for your reference on serving, by “Pickle Pong Deb” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKhFjT-NdzM>.



STRATEGIES: The initial serve that you learn is a lob serve. Learn to get it in and then learn to get it deep. Then try moving it left to right. With that confidence, try a drive serve – same motion, but you strike the ball with the paddle less elevated and harder – as a result it goes lower and faster. You want to have 2-3 different serve types so that your opponent can't anticipate what is coming. Vary placement, pace and spin to keep your opponent guessing and off balance. Depth keeps your opponent further from the Kitchen making it a longer distance for them to get positioned strategically at the Kitchen to control the rally.

another court comes into your court while playing – a let is a call to replay the point due to the distraction.

Lob – A shot that is intended to go over the vertical reach of your opponent and still land in the court. A good way to back them off the Kitchen.

Match – Typically the best 2 out of three games. Sometimes in a large tournament, a match is settled by just one game to 15.

Mixed Doubles – Doubles game with a male and female player on each team.

Nasty Nelson – When your opponent's non-receiving partner is not paying attention, hitting the serve at them so that it hits them before it hits the ground results in a point. Hard to pull off, but as the name would imply, nasty!

NVZ: Non-Volley Zone – See “Kitchen”.

Overhead – A stroke that involves striking the ball above the head. Due to the dynamics of the ball flight, placement is more effective than power in pickleball!

Over Playing – Commonly in mixed doubles, the guy will try to take over the court to protect the weaker sex! When overdone, opponents can win by going behind them in the empty court space left behind. This issue sometimes results in a need for marital counselling.

Pickled – When the game score is 11-0. Try to avoid! A Golden Pickle is when the 11 points come without the opponent getting to serve!

Point – A point is scored only by the serving team winning a rally, otherwise it's a side-out if the receiving team wins the rally.

Rally – A serve begins the action and continues until the ball is knocked out of the court, into the net or bounces twice before the player can return it. A rally is the basic activity of pickleball, but it is only a “point” if it is won by the serving team – it is a side out if won by the returning team.

Rally Scoring - An approach to keeping score where the winner of every rally scores a point (ie you don't have to serve and win the rally to score a point). A game in rally scoring is typically to 21 points, win by two.

Receiver – The player that awaits and returns the serve (2nd shot).

APPENDIX 1 – Terms of the Game

ATP: Around the Post – This is a shot that does not go over the net, but because of a wide setup, allows the ball to travel to the opposition’s court outside and below the net! A real fun shot, but your opponent has to give you a wide ball and you have to wait longer than usual to strike the ball so that it opens up the angle!

Bounce/Drop Serve – The serving rules changed to add the Bounce/Drop serve as an option in 2023. The rule allows the server to drop the ball (no downward force) and hit it with any striking motion or grip geometry (see underhand serve for the nuances of the traditional serve). The serve must clear the net and Kitchen, landing in the opposite diagonal and must be struck while the feet are behind the baseline.

Chicken Wing – Hitting your opponent in the shoulder of their paddle hand! Funny way to end a point, but all within the rules and proper!

Dink – Fun expression for hitting a ball that is “unattackable” by your opponent. The goal is to make the ball bounce in the kitchen so that your opponent has to hit up on the ball and, if hit hard, risk hitting it long.

Drop Shot – A soft block with backspin that thwarts a baseline third shot drive!

Erne – A volley hit while jumping across the corner of the kitchen allowing the ball to be struck higher in its flight and closer to the net, but hitter must land both feet outside the kitchen so there is no foot fault.

Flapjack – When the serving team returns the return of serve before the ball hits the ground (volley) it breaks the Two Bounce Rule and the rally is lost.

Foot Fault – When a player hits a volley and his feet (hat, paddle, ...) touch within the “Kitchen” either while hitting the shot or because of momentum.

Game – The standard game in pickleball is to 11 points, win by two. A match is typically best of three games. Remember you only score a point if you win a rally that you serve. Some tournaments play to 15 if they are making a match only one game. Also see ‘Rally Scoring’ for an approach that scores a point for each rally.

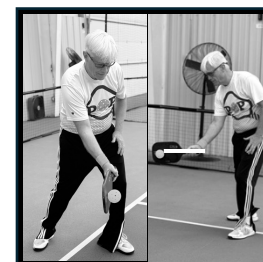
Kitchen – A fun name for the NVZ (Non-Volley Zone). The court space 7-feet from the net that allows for the dink strategy to come into play.

Let – A let serve (one that clips the top of the net but goes in) is played, unlike the rules of tennis. A second use of the term “let” is when a ball from

SHOT 2: RETURN OF SERVE

RULES: *Two Bounce Rule* – This brilliant rule combined with the Kitchen (NVZ) creates a strategic game within a game unique to pickleball. It makes pickleball much more than tennis on a little court! The rule is simple to state – the serve has to bounce before the returning team can strike it (Bounce 1) and the return of serve has to bounce before the serving team can hit it (Bounce 2). Simple?! Yes, but it sets up a rally where the receiving team has a distinct advantage *if they know how to use it!* Those new to the game, particularly from tennis, may rush the net off the serve hitting their next shot before it bounces – a breach of the rules causing a fault that is affectionately called a “flapjack”! (Pickles, kitchens, ... flapjacks).

MECHANICS: This shot is mechanically very close to a tennis forehand or backhand. The footwork is parallel with the line of the ball. The paddled remains close to parallel with the ground. The swing initiates from the paddle being close to the back hip. The swing motion is like a gate from the rotation of the torso. The swinging arm joints are motionless (torso and shoulder rotational motion) while the follow through accelerates through the point of contact with the ball. Don’t scoop and don’t flip the wrist. Minimizing extra joint motion results in more consistent shots.



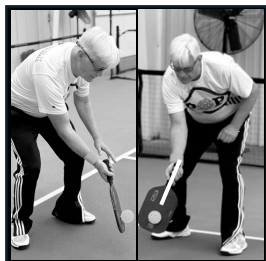
STRATEGIES: Here is a very valuable, very counterintuitive strategy for the second shot (the returning team): hit the ball “loopy deep”. Rather than smacking it hard 6 inches over the net trying to execute a winner, hit it with a loop/arc/rainbow about 8 feet over the net. This results in depth and an increased time of flight (they can’t hit the ball until it bounces due to the Two Bounce Rule). You get to move to the Kitchen and prepare for their shot while your return of serve is still floating in the air. You take positional control of the point and against bangers, you have them deep and you have a stable position established before they strike the ball, not to mention you are now forward, commanding position while and they are still back!

SHOT 3/5: APPROACHING THE KITCHEN

RULES: Touch and footwork start to play a role in the approach shots. Remember the odd numbered shots are made by the serving team. Due to the Two Bounce Rule, the serving (shot 1) team may be at a positional disadvantage when hitting the 3rd and 5th shots as they work their way to the Kitchen. The key rule to remember is the Kitchen is your friend – if you can land the ball in the Kitchen, because your opponent can't enter to volley, your opponent now has a much lower possibility of attacking you with speed. Also, the low rebound height of the ball (low coefficient of restitution) acts in your favor – rules that encourage a game of strategy, not just power!

MECHANICS: The third or fifth shot “drop” is the key to moving from an intermediate player to an advanced player. This shot takes touch and balance to execute. It is basically a long-distance dink – a shot intended to easily clear the net, but land in the Kitchen. Refer to the mechanics section on the Dink Shot to understand the ideal mechanics for this shot. The ball flight is a deep parabola where the peak (apex) is halfway between you and the target landing spot – if struck at the baseline, the apex is your Kitchen line; if you are mid-court, the apex is about one full step *on your side* of the court. This assures that the ball is dropping into the opponents Kitchen, forcing them to hit it off the bounce while giving you time to move in to the Kitchen position.

STRATEGIES: Target the 3rd/5th shot drops cross court because you have a longer distance in the Kitchen to land the ball (that's from geometry! – 12 feet rather than 7 feet). Also, aim at your opponent's backhand – if you leave it a bit high, most rec players can't crush a backhand volley. Mix it up with a 3rd shot drive so you are not always predictable, particularly if their 2nd shot lands short.



learn to soften up! Rally scoring and just for fun. This game is great for practicing touch, control and patience.

- **SLINKY DRILL** – This one is more advanced. It's a way to practice the long-distance dink (3rd shot drop) into the kitchen. Your drillmaster remains at the kitchen line feeding balls to you. You hit two dinks and then progressively move back hitting dinks of different depths until you are at the baseline. Pause there and hit about 4-6 drops and then move (Slinky) back into the kitchen again. This drill makes you develop touch from any depth on the court and is a key to improving your game from a simple banger to a clever player.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Pickleball is an amazing game. Its initial learning curve is really fast (2 hours from novice to playing the entire game, all but learning the scoring scheme!), but its deceptive strategy techniques are still evolving with the game (there's a lot of depth to the mental side of this game!) I find extreme joy in introducing this game to totally new acquaintances (I've taught over 500 and counting how to play). If you are looking for exercise of the body and mind, fellowship with energetic friends, and a way to stay active for a lifetime - this is the game for you! I have personally seen folks from the age of 8 to 86 enjoying pickleball at the Knoxville Pavilion of Pickleball. It's even a game that different generations can enjoy together - even spouses, too (but don't get too competitive!) Be smart. Protect your eyes. Warm up the big muscles before playing with a few jogs and stretches. Remember your limitations, you are here for fun (most of us won't make a living at this, but you can make a *better life* with a little common sense and fun community!)

One final word of caution – pickleball is addicting, really! It's the best addiction I have. The endorphins released when you react and block a fast shot at the kitchen subconsciously make you always want more. **Eat, Sleep, Play Pickleball REPEAT!**
Just one more game?

KEEPING SCORE

I'm not going to waste the paper to write it out! Get on YouTube and watch a 10-minute pickleball scoring video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnKo8xXkHXM>) and you will be totally confused! Best thing to do is get with a friend that knows the game and play 3-4 games with a correction on the scoring and positioning before each rally. I do offer two quick memory aides:

- **ME-YOU-WHO** – It's the three numbers – serving team (me) score, receiving team (you) score and who is serving (1 or 2). The server should always call out the score before starting each rally.
- **MAGNET SERVING BALL** – The ball in the hand of the server is a “magnet” pulling his partner back for starting position (reminding of the two bounce rule – serving team must let the return bounce) and pulling the non-receiving opponent to the kitchen for initial positioning (reminding that opponent that by the time they have a chance to hit the ball, they can take it out of the air!)

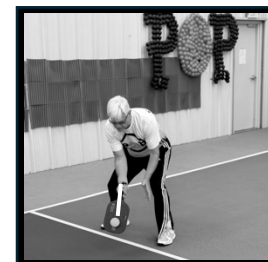
FAVORITE DRILLS & LEARNING GAMES

- **WALL DINK** - Get two strips of painters tape in a room with a smooth wall (wallboard) and a hard floor (wood, linoleum, concrete). Tape one strip horizontally at 34” on the wall and 7’ parallel with the wall on the floor. You have your private dinking arena! Work on control, footwork in and out of the “Kitchen” and footwork for touch. 5 minutes a day for a week and you will massively improve.
- **DINK GAME** – A fun, made-up game that can get competitive. It's simply 2v2 in the Kitchen! Balls that land outside the Kitchen are out and lose the point. Soft underhand serve puts the ball in play. Players quickly

SHOT 4+: OWNING THE KITCHEN-DINK

RULES: If you hit a deep 2nd shot and follow it to the net using the *Two Bounce Rule* to your advantage (loopy deep), you are set to own the point beginning with the 4th shot. The main rule you need to remember now is the Non-Volley Zone (NVZ = Kitchen). It's all about footwork – getting as close to the 7-foot Kitchen line without going into it as you hit a volley or as you follow through after a volley (that includes dropping your paddle into the Kitchen, or your cap, or accidentally touching the paddle in the Kitchen to maintain your balance).

MECHANICS: There are two key shots you will be hitting from the Kitchen line – Dinks and Volleys. A “Dink” (short for hit a ball that bounces in the opponents Kitchen and is therefore unattackable meaning that they have to hit up on it to clear the net and if they hit it too hard or high, it flies long). Mechanically, use the shoulder, not the wrist, to hit this shot. Strike it out in front of a line that is between your legs, not out to the side. Doing this assures the greatest consistency because you are minimizing the number of joint movements involved in the swing by locking the wrist and lower arm joint.



STRATEGIES: Dink cross court and move your target spot from foot to foot (don't be predictable!). The shoulder is the “accelerator”, but the wrist is the “steering wheel”. Disguise the direction you seek to put your opponent off balance. If your opponent's 3rd shot is high, take it as a volley (next section) and seek to drive the ball deep to keep them back, away from the Kitchen. Your decision-making capabilities & speed will increase with practice. Don't seek to win a point on one great shot, but with smart shot sequences that open the court to your advantage. Pickleball is a game of minimizing unforced errors. Don't seek to overpower your opponent because most rallies are not won by great shots – they are lost by unforced errors (from bad shot decisions!) Be strategic, patient and unpredictable!

SHOT 4+: OWNING THE KITCHEN-VOLLEY

RULES: If you hit a deep 2nd shot and followed it to the net using the *Two Bounce Rule* to your advantage, you are set to own the point starting with the 4th shot. If your opponent leaves their 3rd shot high (waist high or above), you are set to volley the ball – but watch your footwork as you cannot volley from within the Kitchen or even follow through landing a foot or equipment in the Kitchen after a volley. Another rule – if you nail your opponents body (Chicken Wing!) you win the rally! The risk is that they are fast handed enough to get it back to you before you are prepared! Unlike tennis, hitting your opponent with the ball is a common strategy, not an egregious, ungracious shot and it makes for some great banter on the court!

MECHANICS: The Pickleball Volley is mechanically very similar to a tennis volley with a little less motion of the paddle (for control). Ideally, strike the ball within a 90 degree “V” in front of your body so that the ball is always within your vision field. Minimizing excess motion allows you to be better prepared for you opponents return. There are two popular ready positions: 1) 11 o’clock “tennis volley” preparation position and 2) 3 o’clock backhand blocking position. With either, minimize your forward swing – the volley is a punch/block, not a swing.



STRATEGIES: Up to down pathway is the goal! A “Reset” volley is a strategy to take a lot of pace off the volley (soft hands) to make it bounce in the Kitchen to “Reset” the point. This is useful when you are at a disadvantage, like out of position or fielding a fast paced shot! Finally, a key tip: watch your opponent’s paddle at the instant of their strike – it totally tells your mind instantly where the ball is going (ie., don’t watch the ball, watch their paddle!) This will give you an extra fraction of a second to prepare making a big difference in the speed of your hands! With time, you will improve your ability to predict your opponent’s next shot.

drive that barely clears the net. You can get a very high percentage of these to land in the kitchen out of the reach of your opponent without clipping the net.

- Remember the **net is your greatest enemy**. 100% of the shots that do not clear the net cause you to lose the point. Even a high shot that requires your opponent to hit a return, sometimes results in their error. **Clear the net!**
- On dinks, **go cross court** most of the time as there is more room to land the ball in the kitchen and touch is not as critical.
- **Aim for the middle of the court on fast shots**, not the sidelines, because you can miss align two ways and still get the ball in – so own the middle! If you watch at higher levels, most of their misses are long, not wide or in the net. There is a reason!
- Remember pickleball is **chess on a court** (Scott Moore quotation!) It’s about patience, multiple (3+) shot sequences and deception, much more than it is about overpowering your opponent at all but the highest levels.
- Rather than winning points, **patiently allow your opponents to lose points via unforced errors** (keep the ball on the ground, don’t give them easy kills, if they give you an opportunity-make the most of it). Patience is a great strategy if both partners buy into it!
- **Wear eye protection** as you reach a fast level of the game. You can remove the lenses out of some frames so there is no fogging. I have not had an issue, but I also only have one set of eyes – cherish them.
- As you start to play this new game, **take it easy the first few times** as you are using muscles that have laid dormant for some time. There’s nothing sadder than getting enthusiastic about a new avocation only to have it cut short in the early stage because you didn’t work up to it with a few sessions. Pickleball is athletic with a lot of side motions – walk before your run!
- Each time before you play, **warm up** your leg muscles. Your knees and hammies will appreciate it.

HIGH PERCENTAGE PICKLEBALL (PICKLEBALL BY THE BOOK!)

Until you get to the very highest levels of pickleball play (and even then), pickleball is a **game of unforced errors!** Read that sentence again until you ingrain it in your pickleball mind! What do I mean? The swing skill mechanics for pickleball are not too hard – underhand serve, second shot smooth-loopy groundstrokes, dinks, volleys . Sure, the third shot drop takes a while to get the touch and there are some beasts out there that can clobber a third-shot drive threading the line or the middle, but all-in-all, the shots are not that hard. Its why the game can be played by all ages, genders and athletic levels quickly. That's why so many folks are picking up the game and having fun! So if the skills of the game are not really all that difficult, what makes for the competitive levels and differing abilities? Eliminating unforced errors! How do you do that?

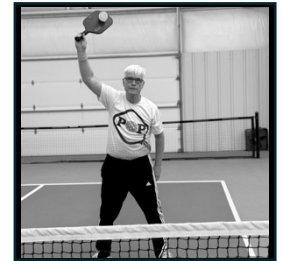
PICK THE RIGHT SHOT! Most unforced errors are made because of the choice of a low percentage shot. What makes the difference between a low percentage and a high percentage shot – leaving yourself margin. Here are a few simple thoughts on shot picking to reduce your errors:

- If the **height at which you strike the ball** is below your waist, seldom try to speed it up – be patient for another chance by resetting the ball to bounce in the kitchen. Some use the RED (below knees), YELLOW (knees to waist – maybe speed up), GREEN (crush it and make them pay!) filter on shot selection. I have condensed it to RED/GREEN with the waist as my divider – easier for me to think fast that way (Note: for the vast majority of shots that hit the ground, none of them bounce higher than the net, therefore all balls that hit the ground require the opponent to hit up on the ball – reducing the pace they can hit and keep the ball in.)
- When **dinking**, give yourself about 6 inches of **margin** over the net by hitting a soft, looping dink. Not a line-

SHOT 4+: LOB & OVERHEAD

RULES: Occasionally, your opponent will lob you (a rainbow shot seeking to get over your head where you cannot easily reach it). If you move back quickly to hit an overhead, make sure you don't push off from within the Kitchen. You must reset both feet in the court before hitting the ball otherwise it is a foot fault.

MECHANICS: The Pickleball Overhead is mechanically similar to a tennis overhead with a lot less motion of the paddle adding a wrist snap for velocity. For older players: be careful of backpedaling for a lob – turn and run, then pick up the ball off the bounce to hit a 3rd shot drop. As far as hitting the lob,



it takes touch, balance and disguise. Aim over the backhand shoulder of your cross-court opponent into the corner for the best results and longest ball flight. Set up to hit a lob just like a dink or low volley only lift the ball at the last instant over the head of your opponent. It works best when they are crowding the kitchen line and leaning in with their weight on their toes making it harder to move back quickly.

STRATEGIES: Deceive, deceive, deceive!!! Don't lob too often or smart players will start playing a couple of feet off the kitchen line to anticipate your shot. Also, don't back off if you hit a short lob, just hunker down and see the ball off their paddle to block a return (no swing, just block). If you retreat, you're dead meat! On when to lob: when playing a new opponent, I like to test them early – how well do they move and how good of an overhead do they hit? Can they place their overhead or just hit it hard (its so much fun to block about three overheads back in a row to have them try to overhit and dump in the net – it gets in their head!)

SHOT 4+: PASSING DINK

RULES: No special rules here other than watch your kitchen footwork to make sure you don't foot-fault if you hit this shot out of the air. The deception called for herein refers to an assumed dink so footwork would not matter.

MECHANICS: The "Passing Dink" is a shot that works totally on deception. You set up like you are going to do a dink, but at the last instance, you change the pace and direction to "pass" your opponent, typically through the middle. The mechanics are exactly like a dink with the exception that you may shift the directional face of the paddle with your wrist (steering wheel). Push through with your shoulder with a greater velocity to add pace to the ball. The more your setup looks just like a dink, the greater the possibility that you can lull your opponent into a surprise. Remember pickleball is chess on a court! This shot is not hard to hit, but requires deception to pull it off well (otherwise, the ready opponent will smash a waist high volley back.) Always prepare your hands at the Kitchen for a fast shot, if a dink comes you have time to adjust.



STRATEGIES: Deceive! Pickleball is about multiple shot sequences. This shot is useful when you have dinked 2-4 shots, moving your opponents to open up a small breach in the middle or down the line. Then push the ball through the gap! It works best with a bit of topspin (a roll) and it works best if not overused. Mistakes are usually made by hitting this shot too high and hard (resulting in it flying long) or in overuse and the opponents bait you into it but are ready to pick it off. It is a much higher percentage shot to go cross court down the middle, rather than down the line due to the geometry and the net height (believe it or not 34" at the middle rather than 36" at the sidelines makes a notable difference in clearing the net). The middle solves the riddle – own it!

SHOT 4+: THE FRISBEE VOLLEY

RULES: No special rules here other than watch your kitchen footwork to make sure you don't foot fault as you reach out to take the ball in the air.

MECHANICS: The "Frisbee Volley" refers to the mechanics needed to hit a topspin backhand volley. Remember your days of throwing a Frisbee in the backyard? You curl your wrist and fling the disc with a fast release of the wrist. Replace the disc with your paddle and time the "fling" with the striking of the ball. Start the volley with the paddle in the "6 o'clock" position and as you reach to strike the volley, quickly rotate the paddle to the 12 o'clock position. This rotation puts a lot of topspin and some pace on the ball. The topspin allows faster balls to drop into the court because of the flight dynamics.



This is a shot that will take some practice. On your first attempts, you will miss wildly sometimes hitting the ball on the edge of the paddle, but persist because it can be a real weapon once mastered! The motion puts a significant amount of topspin on this backhand volley and allows both the lifting and the control of a fast shot allowing it to clear the net and not fly long. It's worth a try. If you like to drill with a friend, feed then balls at the baseline so they can work on their third shot drives while you work on frisbee volley returns.

STRATEGIES: This shot is best used when you have a volley between knee and waist high. It's not for every volley and if used for every backhand volley, it becomes predictable and not as valuable as a weapon. It is most effective when it is positioned not directly at your opponent because they may block it back at you before you can get ready for the next volley.