

PICKLEBALL RULES

Your court-side cheat sheet | USA Pickleball 2026

Standard standing play. Last updated September 23, 2026.

1. Serve diagonally

Start behind the baseline with at least one foot grounded. Do not touch the baseline or court at contact. Keep grounded feet inside the correct serving area. Aim past the kitchen and its line into the opposite service box. One serve attempt. No service lets: net contact plus a legal landing stays in play. (Rules 7.A, 7.E)

2. Choose your serve

Volley serve: upward paddle arc; paddle top no higher than wrist top; contact no higher than waist. Drop serve: release from an unaided height without propelling the ball, let it bounce, then strike. Volley-serve contact limits do not apply to a legal drop serve. (Rules 7.B–7.D)

3. Wait for the first two bounces

Receiver lets the serve bounce. Serving team lets the return bounce. After that, volley or play after one bounce. Standard play does not allow two bounces on your side. (Rules 10.A–10.B)

4. Respect the kitchen

You may enter before a bounce and play bounced balls there. No kitchen contact while volleying, including momentum afterward. After entering, ground both feet fully outside before volleying. The kitchen lines count as part of the zone. (Rule 11.A)

5. Call the score

Traditional doubles: your score, their score, server number. Start 0-0-2. Only the serving team scores. The opening team has one server; later turns normally have two. Losing the second server's rally causes a side-out. Usually play to 11, win by 2. (Sections 4–6, 15.C)

6. Know the 2026 rally option

Rally scoring awards every rally winner a point, including game point while receiving. Doubles uses two score numbers and one server per team's turn. Agree on the scoring format first. (Rule 14.A)

7. Make fair line calls

Lines are in, except the kitchen line on a serve. Call out promptly only when you clearly see a gap. Uncertainty and partner disagreement favor the opponent. (Section 8)