

Pickleball Skills Clinic Outline

OPC Rochester, MI – Spring 2009

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A. Do-alone practice drills you can do to improve skills

1. Bounce the ball on both sides of the paddle and on the edge of the paddle.
2. Hitting against a wall at 5 feet, 9 feet, and 15 feet.

These drills help the player be ready sooner and be actively involved in the movement of the ball, to watch the ball right to the paddle, to improve eye-hand skills, and with touch and control.

B. Drills with a Partner

1. **Ready Position:** Knees flexed, paddle in front, tip high, just below or at eye level, relaxed forearms with elbows bent, eyes **ALWAYS** on the ball.
2. **Dinking** - getting into the “ready” position. Placement.
3. **Volleys and half-volleys** – ready position with quick shoulder rotation. Hitting out, not down into the net.
4. **Forehands** – getting into position and low to high stroke within the power zone. Avoid swinging around the ball.
5. **Backhands** – positioning and stroke.
6. **Serves** – underhand: what’s legal, what’s not?
7. **Overheads** – techniques and picking your spot.

In ALL cases – being alert, relaxed with flexed knees (never stiff) paddle at the “ready position” helps the player to move to the ball and effectively return it.

C. Practice – Your General Mindset:

1. Each time you go out, pick one thing which you would like to improve.
2. Concentrate on the skill you wish to work on; technique, intensity, placement.

*One doesn’t always have to play with players of equal skill to derive something positive from the time spent on the court.

D. Common Mistakes/ Simple Corrections:

1. Player not in ready position
 - a. at net
 - b. at baseline
2. Standing – not moving your feet.(Stay in motion)
3. Remember to rotate or turn body and/or shoulders to hit the ball.
4. Find your power zone - elbow flexed, comfortable extension of the arm, no reaching and lunging except in desperation. Again – avoid that gathering motion.
5. Hanging back at the baseline keeps the player out of the action. Get into the net ASAP.
6. After you hit, don't stand and watch the action – stay mentally in the point. Your job is not over until the point is won.
7. Check your serve. Hit from below the waist. Remember – the paddle head must be below the wrist at impact. No wrist cock at the point of contact.

E. Strategies: Hitting up the middle – makes the other team decide who will take the shot.

1. Serving – study your opponent's likes and dislikes and be able to mix it up. If the opponent doesn't know what to expect, he cannot always hit his best return. Make him MOVE.
2. Make your opponent play you with his weakest shots. (Most players favor the forehand...so hit to their backhand)
3. Play the weakest player.
4. The return of serve – should be deep and soft – giving you more time to join your partner at the net.
5. The player on the receiving team who is NOT returning the serve should be standing at or near the Kitchen Line.
6. The third shot – after the return of serve – should be LOW. Hard or soft – keep it low over the net. If the other team can hit down on the ball, your team is at a great disadvantage.

7. Communicate with your partner during points. It isn't always obvious who should be taking the shot.
8. Closing out a match – don't rush and don't change your game. Keep doing those things that got you to match point.

F. Good Sportsmanship on the Court:

1. Line calls: When calling a shot in or out, if it is not clearly out, it must be called in.
2. If you step on or over the Kitchen Line you must call it on yourself even if the opponent does not see it. Likewise for touching the net with your paddle or your body.
3. In social situations – adjust your game to the relative level of the other players. Refer back to “Practice in General”. There is always some skill you can work on regardless of the competitiveness of the game in which you are playing.
4. When a game is in progress, wait until the ball is no longer in play to pass behind the court.
5. When a ball from a near-by court enters your playing area or in the playing area of your opponents, a LET or BALL ON COURT should immediately be called and play stopped. This is both for courtesy and safety reasons. Replay the point.
6. When returning the ball which has entered your court, STOP, look up. Try to determine where it came from and return it to the person who appears to be asking for the ball. Do not simply push the ball off your court and continue playing.
7. If it is YOUR ball which has entered a near-by court, raise your hand and clearly acknowledge ownership of the ball by saying – for example: “Court 2, thank you”.

POINT: be courteous to your neighbor.

8. Be COMPLIMENTARY!!! Acknowledge a good shot by your opponent. It shows good sportsmanship and also allows you time to get in control of those negative emotions which we all occasionally have when we get aced on a serve, burned down the line, or just plain outplayed.