

Skills N' Drills – Beginners Week 4 – Volleys

What is a volley?: A volley simply refers to anytime a player hits the ball out of the air without it bouncing.

What Is the Importance of a Volley in Pickleball?

- When you take the ball as a volley, you take valuable time away from your opponent
- You can get a higher contact point with a volley which allows you to hit down into your opponent's court.

How to hit the Volley

- A basic volley is hit with either a backhand or a forehand
- The backhand volley is more common since a ball coming at some part of your body is most easily hit with a backhand
- The volley is typically executed when a player is playing at or near the non-volley zone line though it certainly can be executed from further back in the court if the incoming ball is high enough.
- The goal of the volley is to hit either down at the opponent's feet to force them into a low contact point or away from your opponent if you see a gap somewhere on the court.

Volleys and the Non-Volley Zone (or Kitchen)

- The kitchen is the area that extends seven feet from each side of the net. On each side of the court there is a line that extends from sideline to sideline called the non-volley zone line or the NVZ.
- The kitchen rule was created to prevent players from standing right up against the net and hitting volleys and smashes which would quickly end the rally.

Non-Volley Zone Rules

- You cannot step into the non-volley zone or on the non-volley zone line with your foot if you make contact with the ball out of the air (as a volley).
- You may extend your arm forward in the air and contact the ball in the kitchen, just as long as your feet or anything else are not physically touching any part of the kitchen. If you do, this is a fault.
- Your momentum from hitting the volley cannot carry you into the kitchen even after you have made contact – there is no time limit on momentum.

Pickleball Volley Shots

- Forehand Volley

The paddle stroke is on the same side as your dominant hand. For example, a right-handed player will present their paddle face to the ball by laying their wrist back on the right with their palm facing forward and meet the ball in front of their body with as little backswing as possible and only as much follow through as is needed. The traditional volley is a compact stroke so be careful not to overdo it by swinging too much

- Backhand Volley

A shot where you hit the ball on the opposite side of your dominant forehand and any shot that is coming towards your body that you will need to hit as a volley. On the backhand, you lead with the knuckles rather than the palm of your hand.

Hitting Tips

- You should just about always hit a volley if you have the opportunity to do so. This gives your opponent less time to react for their next shot.
1. Always make sure you are in a ready position as your opponent is contacting their shot.
 2. In the ready position you should be holding your paddle with a continental grip, which is the best paddle grip for volleys because you can hit a forehand volley or backhand volley out of that grip.
 3. The ready stance for pickleball volleys will be standing with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart or be squared up (facing) the net, near the non-volley zone line.
 4. An important volley technique is to hold your paddle in front of you approximately waist high. Most contact at the net will be waist high or lower so it's best not to hold it too high up. Anything shoulder height and hit hard is likely going out of bounds past the baseline. A common mistake is to hold the paddle too high.
 5. Volley soft when your contact point is low (below the height of the net) and volley harder when your contact point is high.

Volley Drills to Improve Your Game

- Volley back and forth with a partner or against a backboard. Start at a speed that is comfortable so that you can keep the ball going.
- It's not about winning, it's about keeping the ball going. You can increase the speed as you go. Hit to each other and not around each other.
- Try for control and see how many volleys you can hit.
- This will eventually increase your hand speed. You can do simple drills with a partner by just volleying back and forth with each other. Start at a speed that is comfortable for both of you so that you can keep it going. Increase the speed as you go.

Final Thoughts

A couple reminders about volleys:

1. Have a continental grip on your volleys so that you can hit a forehand and a backhand.
2. Use the ready stance as your opponent is making contact with the ball each time so that you can effectively react to the oncoming ball that you will take as a volley.
3. Plan to practice your volley skills with a partner or against the wall so that you can improve your pickleball volley techniques.
4. Practice and have fun!