

The Third Shot Drop

Every pickleball match begins with a serve and a (hopefully) deep return to the baseline. Each team is trying to take control of the net, so what comes after the return of serve is critical. A common shot, executed by the serving team, is known as the **THIRD SHOT DROP SHOT**.

Last session we practiced dinking; the third shot drop is basically just a longer dink from back deep in the court.

The drop shot can be one of the most challenging shots to hit consistently since the return of serve usually comes in quickly and is generally placed deep in the court. Keep in mind when you're practicing this shot that even the most experience pickleball players find it to be challenging.

Here are some simple steps to help you execute a perfect third shot drop:

1. Stay low, bend your knees and get under the ball.
2. Keep your swing path moving low to high.
3. Shorten your backswing – a big backswing will mess with your timing.
4. Give yourself a good margin of error by aiming 4-6 inches over the top of the net.
5. Step into the ball, let your body weight and momentum carry you through the shot.

Watch the ball's trajectory to tell if you have hit a good Third Shot Drop. It'll move in an arching shape, and the peak of the arch will be on your side of the net and beginning to drop as it crosses over the net into your opponent's kitchen.

- If you have hit a good Third Shot Drop, you should advance quickly to the Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) line.
- If your Third Shot Drop isn't so good, you can begin to advance forward but you likely will not be able to get to the NVZ line and you may have to hit a 5th or 7th Shot Drop to advance further.

What does a poorly executed Third Shot Drop look like?

- It's too high – allowing your opponents to swing freely at the ball and likely will hit the ball with pace at your feet.
- It bounces too high after landing in the kitchen. When that happens, it's best to split step, set your feet and prepare for a return shot with some pace.

You have more options than just the third shot drop. Don't think you're limited to it. So, here are a few situations in which **NOT** to use the third shot drop:

- When the return of serve lands short, counter with an offensive shot down the middle.
- When your opponent stays back. Giving them a short ball will invite them to the net, and you want to keep them at baseline. It's much easier to win points when your opponents are kept back.
- When your ability to hit a drop shot is compromised. If the return of serve throws you off balance, this is not the time to go for a drop shot. Hit a counter-attacking shot right back at the returner who will be transitioning to the net (hitting to their feet would be ideal).