

SCA PICKLEBALL DRILLS

Ready Position:

We need to understand how important it is to be set and established, either after we hit the ball or as soon as we get to where we need to be before our opponent is hitting the ball, e.g., returning the serve and getting to the Kitchen Line (No Volley Zone Line). We need to be set and in our ready position before our opponent is hitting the ball.

Ready position:

- Wide Base, feet should be further apart than shoulders, if possible.
- Paddle should be in front with the top of the paddle “head” about chest high.
- Paddle head at about 11:00, lefty’s 1:00.
- Grip pressure depends on what kind of shot you’re trying to hit. As a gauge, you can use 1 to 10 grip pressure. The tighter the grip, the ball deflects off the paddle faster and harder and with less feel. With a 1, the paddle would be almost falling out of your hand and a 10, would be a death grip. So for example, I would use about a 3 when I’m dinking.
- Try to be relaxed and not anxious. Yes, easier said than done.

Don’t Try to do Too Many Drills In One Session:

- When you come out to the courts for your drill session, I recommend that you **don’t** try to do too many drills at one session. Come out to do 2 different drills at most and spend a good amount of time practicing these 2 drills. It’s much better for you to spend 20 or 30 minutes (10 or 15 minutes each player) on one type of drill, than to spend a few minutes on 5 different drills.

Invest in a bucket of balls:

- You can never have too many balls. Especially when you’re drilling by yourself. But also, when you have a drilling partner. You don’t want to keep running after balls, just because you only have 4 balls.

Serves:

- This is one of the drills you can do by yourself. Practice your technique. If you’re having difficulty serving straight or not getting enough depth on your serves, you may have to change your technique and work on developing different and proper mechanics. It also helps to have a pre-serve routine that helps you focus to perform your serve.

Overheads:

- The person performing the overhead shot, also known as a smash, stands a couple of feet from the kitchen line. The feeder stands around mid-court. Feeder will hit some lofty shots high enough for the player to hit and practice their overheads. Don’t worry too much about killing the ball with your smash, better to hit with some good pace, control and placement.

2 Touch Dink Drill 4 Part Progression:

- Players face each other, both at the kitchen line. This is a **4 part progression dink** drill, learning to get a better feel for the ball (soft hands) and learning better control.
- **1st progression:** 1 player will feed the ball as a simple dink bouncing ball about 1 foot in front of the kitchen line. Player will let the dink bounce then touch the ball (1st touch) with paddle, let it bounce again, then dink the ball back (2nd touch) 1 foot in front of the kitchen. The opponent will do the same. Goal is to try and maintain a long rally, trying to get into a rhythm.
- **2nd progression:** Player starts with feeding the ball just like the 1st progression. Player receiving the dink will let the ball bounce, then touch the ball (1st touch) however, this time, will not let the ball bounce, but dink the ball out of the air (2nd touch). Opponent will do the same and continue the rally.
- **3rd progression:** Unlike the first 2 progressions, the feed of the ball in progression 3 & 4 will be hit to the player's waist so the player can volley the ball. Player will not hit the volley back, but will work on absorbing the ball (1st touch) letting the ball bounce right in front of them and then hitting the ball (2nd touch) back to the opponent right to their waist, so they can hit the ball as a volley. Keep the rally going.
- **4th progression:** In this progression, the ball does not touch the ground. Just like in progression 3, the ball is fed to the player at their waist, the player will absorb the ball (1st touch) then the player, without letting the ball bounce, hits the ball out of the air (2nd touch) to the opponent at their waist. Keep the rally going.
- Remember, each progression gets a bit more difficult. Be cooperative. You can speed up your shots, based on the ability of each player. Work on your feel of the ball. Soft hands!

Dink Drills:

- Down the line, both from the right side and left side. Loose grip about a 3. Make sure you don't go around your backhand. You need to develop your backhand. It helps you not move too much.
- Cross court, from right side and left side. Be loose and fluid. Move laterally according to where you hit the ball. Bend those knees. Same things apply, as in down the line dink drills.

Drop Shots from different distances:

- Both players start at the kitchen line down the line face to face. Start with dinks and get consistent and relaxed. One player will then take one long step back and start dinking from that spot. The feeder needs to feed the ball to the player performing the drop shots about a foot in front of their feet. You can also mix it up by hitting some shots to their knees, belly and chest, so they can practice dropping volleys into the kitchen, as well. Then change rolls.
- Do not just do a few drop shots from each distance. You need to spend a good amount of time from each distance, doing your best to get more and more consistent, before taking another long step back.
- After you've both completed one step back, now practice from another long step back.

- As you become consistent from these distances, keep moving back, until you get to the baseline.
- **A good way to describe a Drop Shot, would be a “Longer Dink.”**

Drop Shots from Transition Zone:

- One player at the kitchen line, the other is in the Transition Zone, about 3 or 4 feet inside the baseline. The feeder will stand at the kitchen line hitting balls to the player standing in the transition zone, in various spots in that area, e.g., at their feet, right and left side of their feet, at their knees, etc. The player in the transition zone will not come to the kitchen line, but stay in the transition zone, trying to hit as many balls as they can, into the opponent’s kitchen. Be cooperative, make sure the player in the transition zone is having some success. The player at the kitchen can be more aggressive, based on the ability of the player in the transition zone.
- **Remember:** The player at the kitchen (feeder) is working on things too. Their ready position, staying at the kitchen line and not retreating, and taking balls out of the air (volley) as best they can. As long as it’s a comfortable volley (do not over reach just to volley) you should try not to let these balls bounce. Remember, you’re playing the role of the attacker. The one who has the advantage.

Drop Shots: Transitioning In:

- Same as Drop Shots from Transition Zone Drill above, however, this time the player who is working on their drop shots, will be standing at the baseline.
- The feeder at the kitchen line will be working on keeping the opponent back and not letting them come up to the kitchen.
- The player performing the drop shots, will transition forward. Their goal is to get to the kitchen and force the player at the kitchen to a dink rally. You must play the point out. Being patient and working your dinks, until someone hits it too high, you then have permission to attack, putting the ball away with control.
- The player at the kitchen can be aggressive, however, to the point of the other player’s ability.
- The player who is moving through the transition zone, needs to be patient and work on moving in by hitting good drop shots, forcing the player at the kitchen line to hit balls in an upward motion.
- There are no lobs or drives in this drill. You can be aggressive once you’re at the kitchen line. But remember, once you are both at the kitchen line, you must be patient and work on good dinks, moving your opponent around. Try to hit deeper dinks at your opponent’s feet.

Volley Drill Inside the Kitchen:

- Both players are face to face, with both players standing “**inside**” the kitchen. Your heels should be about 1 or 2 inches inside the kitchen line.
- One player feeds the ball at the other player’s waist to start the volley drill. Remember, a volley is a shot you hit out of the air without letting it bounce. Each player’s target is to hit balls to each other between the thighs and chest, cooperatively. As you get better, you can start to speed it up a little.

Volley Drill at Kitchen Line:

- This is the same drill as the Volley Drill Inside the Kitchen Line, however, you will be standing “**outside**” the kitchen, behind the kitchen line.
- When you come out to do these volley drills, I would start with the first drill inside the kitchen line. You will notice that when you do the 2nd volley drill outside the kitchen, you will feel like you have much more time. And again, you can speed it up, depending on your ability. These drills will help you with your reaction time and developing quicker hands, to be more effective in those kitchen speed ups.

Skinny Singles Drill:

- I always finish my drill sessions with Skinny Singles, leaving enough time after my drills, to play out at least 2 games to 11, win by 2. This is very important! Nothing like getting 100% of the shots in a game. This is where you do your best to practice proper shot selection, foot work, positioning and strategy in a competitive game setting. Yes, be competitive and of course do your best, however, don’t worry so much about winning, this is a drill. Be conscious of what you’re doing. Take some risk, practice what you’ve been drilling. Yes, you’re going to make plenty of mistakes, but don’t give up. Keep doing the correct shot, like your drop shots and patient dinking, for example. Over time, little by little, you’ll be better for it, than reverting back to what you’ve been comfortable doing, just to try and win.

HAVE FUN! These drills and others, will help you become a more consistent and better player. We all learn at different speeds, so be patient.