

**A guide to assessing one's pickleball knowledge, skills, and shot making capabilities and matching them to one of four different skills levels:
Novice, C, B, or A level**

Introduction

This document contains a description of the specific knowledge and shot making skills that pickleball players should be confident they possess before making an assessment or “self-rating” themselves into one of the four ability levels: Novice, C, B or A. Each skills description is designed to capture the abilities and talents that would be needed to compete with others at this skill level. In case it's not obvious, Novice skill levels describe the lowest level of pickleball skill sets, C represents the mastery of more skills, B represents a very high level of skills but not yet the best, while A describes the skills level of an advanced player who can comfortably play and win points with the most talented pickleball players in our club.

We suggest you begin by reviewing each skills level: starting with Novice and gradually moving from level C to level B to level A to assess whether you have all or at least most of the skills listed in that category. If you do agree you have or demonstrate that level of skills consistently, move on to the next level, if you can't perform the skill or don't understand the concept, you have probably found your level. If there are words or concepts that you don't understand, please ask us to explain or provide more explanation before we turn this draft into a final document.

Novice Level:

Includes all "NEW" players on the way to demonstrating the following skills:

- Knows the basic rules; including two bounce rule, scoring, and player position relative to scoring
- Demonstrates basic pendulum swing on the forehand & backhand side
- Attempts to start dinking down the line forehand & backhand.
- Attempts to start dinking cross court both from left and right side
- Demonstrates proper ready position (body posture and racket position)
- Demonstrates a punch volley
- Demonstrates an overhead shot (smash)
- Knows where to stand as a serving team and as a receiving team
- Demonstrates proper lateral (side to side) movement while being balanced
- Has good mobility and can move forward in a safe and balanced manner
- Is developing eye-hand coordination
- Demonstrates a forehand ground stroke swing low to high and striking the ball off the front foot with very limited control of depth and placement
- Demonstrates a backhand ground stroke swing low to high and striking the ball off the front foot with very limited control of depth and placement
- Demonstrates a serve with limited ability to control depth
- Demonstrates a return of serve with limited ability to control depth

C Level:

Should possess all “Novice Level” skills and the following additional skills:

- Working on consistency while dinking down the line, forehand and backhand
- Working on consistency while dinking cross court from both left and right side of court, utilizing both forehand and backhand
- Demonstrates proper sidestep movement while staying balanced at the kitchen line
- Is starting to attempt drop shots from transition zone (mid-court) with limited ability
- Starts to attempt punch volley with control and intentional direction
- Starts to attempt overhead shot (smash) with control and intentional direction
- Is starting to attempt to move forward to get to the kitchen line to attempt dinks and volleys
- Has good eye-hand coordination
- Beginning to demonstrate more consistency and control with forehand ground stroke drives (direction, depth, height)
- Is attempting more backhand ground stroke drives with limited control, direction, depth and height
- Is starting to become more consistent with serve showing more control and depth
- Is starting to become more consistent with the return of serve showing more control and depth
- Keeps ball in play during short rallies

B Level:

Should possess all “C Level” skills AND the following additional skills:

- Becoming more consistent in dinking with purpose and “attempting” to be more strategic in placing the ball and moving opponents around to create offensive opportunities for their team
- May end a dink rally too soon due to lack of patience
- Is beginning to understand the difference between an attackable ball and one that isn't
- Sustains a short volley exchange near the kitchen line
- Ability to punch volleys to the back half of opponent's court
- Can perform drop shots from transition zone (mid court) with moderate ability.
- Starting to perform drop shots during match play with moderate ability.
- Does not back up unnecessarily from kitchen line.
- Is aware of partner's position on the court and moves accordingly as a team
- Is getting more comfortable moving forward as a team to get to the kitchen line to become a more offensive team
- Attempts offensive and strategic lobs with limited control
- Is using much less desperation and reactionary lobs
- Acknowledges difference between hard game and soft game and starts to experiment when each should be used along with proper shot selection
- Is learning proper court positioning and utilizing it during rec play
- Becoming more consistent and intentional in performing forehand ground strokes with depth and good placement
- Places a high majority of serves and return of serves with varying depth and speed
- Starting to understand the block/reset volley
- Has a moderate amount of unforced errors per game
- Demonstrates better placement and depth on serves and return of serves

A Level:

Note: When using the word “Consistently” in the skills descriptions below, we are talking approximately an 80% consistency rate for that skill.

Should possess all “B Level” skills, and the following additional skills:

- Has a high level of consistency, having minimal unforced errors
- Can initiate and maintain an extended dink exchange and is not impatient when dinking, but uses the dink rally to his/her advantage to create offensive opportunities by hitting more aggressive dinks
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward well, using weight transfer for more efficient footwork and to be able to change direction more easily
- Has learned proper court positioning, including when to move forward, when to move back and when to stay put
- Uses split step properly
- Knows how to stack both as servers and receivers.
- Sustains a controlled volley exchange at the kitchen line with directional control
- Able to consistently hit winning volleys when an opponent hits a dink too high
- Can consistently perform a block volley
- Can consistently perform a swing volley
- Keeps ball in play during rallies and is aware of minimizing errors
- Utilizes poaching properly
- Can consistently hit drop shots from various distances on the court both down the line and cross court
- Can consistently get to the kitchen line (neutral position) when serving
- Can hit offensive lobs consistently with both forehand and backhand
- Can use spin effectively in a variety of shots
- Demonstrates placement, spin and depth on return of serves
- Demonstrates control on forehand and backhand ground strokes (direction, depth, height, top spin and underspin/slice)
- Understands when to be aggressive and hit hard, and when to play soft

