

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America. Many seniors have taken up the sport in their retirement years but it is played by children and adults of all ages. It is an easy sport to learn and most everyone can play the game after just a short time of hitting the ball back and forth across the net. However, it is also a sport where you can keep learning new strokes and strategies and continue to improve your game.

Pickleball is a court sport best described as halfway between tennis and ping-pong. The court is 44' x 20' and divided in half by a 34" high net. It is played as a singles or a doubles game. Each player has a paddle and the object of the game is to score points by successfully hitting a 3" diameter plastic ball, similar to a whiffle ball, across the net without it being successfully returned by the opponent(s).

BASIC RULES OF THE GAME

-To serve, you must drop the ball onto the paddle and hit it below your waistline. You must stand behind the service line to serve.

-The serve is diagonal from one side of the court to the other where it must bounce before it is returned.

-The return must bounce again, but this time anywhere, on the serving team's court before it is returned over the net. This is referred to as the "Two Bounce Rule".

-After the first two bounces, each side can choose to hit the ball in the air (volley) or let it bounce once.

-On each side of the net there is a 7' non-volley zone (called the "kitchen") and players cannot enter this zone to hit the ball unless the ball first bounces in the non-volley zone. (The serve must bounce beyond the non-volley zone, but the return can bounce in the non-volley zone.)

-In doubles, one team member will serve and continue to serve until the team loses the rally. Then the other team member serves until both players lose their serves. From this point on each player from both teams will serve before losing the serve to the other side.

-Each time the serving team wins a rally they score a point. The game is usually played to 11 points and the winning team must win by 2 points. You only score points when you are serving. In doubles, when you are serving and your team wins a rally, you get a point. You then switch sides on your court for the next serve, but your server number doesn't change. If you were the first server you are still the first server. When the other team wins a rally, they do not get a point, but you lose your chance to serve again. Now, your partner gets to serve, and that person is Server #2. Server #2 now serves until the other team wins a rally. Then the other team gets to serve. The player in the right-hand court is Server #1.

-The scoring is the most confusing thing about pickleball; but the more you play, the easier it gets!

For a more detailed description of pickleball and the official rules, please visit www.usapa.org. There are also many helpful links on the Saddlebrooke Ranch Pickleball Association website.