

Oak Ridge Pickleball Rules and Expectations

We are so happy that Oak Ridge Pickleball continues to grow and bring lots of new faces to our senior program. Our indoor program began approximately 10 years ago and, over the course of time, we have learned many lessons with regard to running the program smoothly and efficiently, especially as numbers continue to grow. As with court play, a successful outcome requires a team effort. For this reason, we would like to offer all of our players a reminder of our rules, expectations and necessary updates that are intended to be consistent through all levels of play. We are offering this program overview in the hope that each player will take the time to become familiar with our guidelines so that we can continue to move forward smoothly.

General Information

Senior Pickleball, for players aged 50 years and older, is scheduled to play on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Open play is also available on Wednesdays with no "senior" age restrictions. On Wednesdays, advanced play will be on the north side of the curtain and intermediate will play will be on the south side.

Time Slots are as follows:

8:30 am - 11:00 am Advanced Group - Players with ratings of 3.5 and above

11:00 am - 1:00 pm Intermediate Group - Players with ratings 2.5 - 3.5

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm Beginner Group - 2.5 and Below

Open play is on Wednesdays from 8:30 - 11:00.

See Skill Level Rating Definitions to determine your skill level.

Please note that there will be conflicts with other City activities from time to time so please pay attention to Senior Center emails so that you are aware of those days when pickleball may be cancelled.

Getting Started

Upon arrival all players must sign in **before** play. If you are not a registered player, please stop by the Senior Center to fill out the appropriate paperwork.

All players are expected to help with the setup and/or take down of equipment as needed each day.

Rotation Rules

All paddles must be labeled with your name on the face of the paddle, preferably just above the handle.

Paddles will be stacked on a first come, first served basis on the table on the northwest corner of the gym.

When numbers are low, paddles will be stacked in groups of two with the "on deck" group being those paddles on the front left corner of the table. At the conclusion of each game, the winners will split and prepare to play the next game against two new opponents. Those who lost will stack their paddles to the right at the end of the row of stacked paddles and continue to make groups of two.

If there is an odd number of paddles on the table, one player's paddle will go on top of the lone paddle and the other player's paddle will begin a new stack.

When "on deck" players take the court, they will split up and play the winners of the just completed game. The next two stacked paddles will become the "on deck" players.

When there are 12 paddles stacked and waiting to play, we will automatically move to a four-person rotation. Both winners and losers will leave the court, but stack in separate piles of 4 with winners in one pile and losers in a separate pile. The goal with both forms of rotation is to constantly divide players so that you see new opponents as often as possible. Both winners and losers will split once again when they play their next game.

Manipulation of paddles to alter the fair rotation of players in any way is not allowed! If you see this happening, please speak up!

If you need to leave the gym for any reason, please pull your paddle from the rotation or move it to the end of the line. Players who are missing when it is their turn to play, will be skipped and their paddle will be moved to the end of the line.

Keep an eye on your stacked paddle so that you can be prepared to take the court when it is your turn. Hunting for “on deck” players is a waste of everyone’s time.

Never walk through a court of play when the ball is in play! This is not only a common courtesy, but also a safety issue.

Game Play Format

Each new game will begin on the west court (#1) on each side of the curtain. When a new set of 4 players is ready to play, game play will slide one court to the east.

This slide rule will continue during play. When a game is completed on court 3 for example, players will leave the court. Losers will stack their paddles to the right of those currently on the table. The winners will move back to court 1, split up and prepare to play the “on deck” players who will also split up. During this move, players currently on court 1 will slide to court 2 and players on court 2 will slide to court 3. By sliding in this way games are less disrupted by players who would potentially be running back and forth across two courts of play.

The first serve of any game will always be from the wall side of any court.

Game play will always stop when a loose ball enters another court of play. It is the responsibility of the offending team to alert other players immediately so that no one is hurt. Never return a loose ball to a neighboring court unless you have made eye contact with a player on that court. If no one has asked that the ball be returned, keep it!

We also have occasions where players may run or fall onto another court. Accidents are unavoidable, but careless play is dangerous. No point should be worth the risk of someone being hurt so stay within the boundaries of your own court! Play should stop immediately in this scenario too.

Curtain - While our curtain creates a much-needed boundary, it should not be treated as a wall.

There are players immediately on the other side who could be hurt by any action into the curtain. Overly zealous players may run into the curtain. Even a large backswing on a serve has been known to tap a player on the other side. Please always keep this in mind and stay away from the curtain as much as possible.

Safety glasses or sports goggles are recommended for all levels of play.

Pickleball Program Considerations

As mentioned before, only the Advanced group will have use of the courts from 8:30 - 11:00.

The Intermediate group will have the courts from 11:00 - 1:00, but may stay longer. Because our program offers no organized instruction, intermediate players may continue to use the courts during the Beginners’ time slot from 1:00 - 2:30 with the understanding that all beginners will be included in any play. Any coaching or instruction offered to beginners during this time would be greatly appreciated.

Advanced and Intermediate players may only play with one group. There will be no carry over from the Advanced session to the Intermediate session. If, based on your skills, you are on the bubble between 2 groups, you must choose only one session. It can vary from one day to the next, but you may not play in both groups on the same day.

Keep in mind, successful advanced players should not be playing down in the intermediate program! The game is more fun for everyone when we play with people of equal abilities.

So that the Senior Center can continue to provide on-site support for our pickleball program, we have recruited volunteer coordinators to help our program run smoothly.

Vicki White (865-399-0554) will represent the Intermediate group and Paula Zarestky (865-719-3151) will represent the Advanced group.

The 2025 Pickleball Rule Book can be found online at this site:

<https://usapickleball.org/docs/2025-USA-Pickleball-Rulebook.pdf>

Please note that the Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Department reserves the right to amend these Rules and Expectations as is deemed necessary. Questions or comments can be made to Senior Center Manager, Linda McGhee at 865-425-3999.