

Pickleball Skill Level Rating Definitions

Below is an example of rating definitions used for the 2-digit rating system used by tournament directors to rate players who have never played in a tournament before. We can also use these ratings for our Oak Ridge Pickleball program so that players can decide which group may be the best fit for them based on their current abilities.

Oak Ridge offers three levels of play:

Advanced Group - Players with ratings of 3.5 and above

Intermediate Group - Players with ratings 2.5 - 3.4

Beginner Group – 2.4 and Below

For our **recreational** play, the goal should be for everyone to improve and be competitive but most importantly to have fun. This happens as a result of playing with players of equal abilities. A game of mismatched players is rarely fun for anyone. All players can play most safely and with the best opportunity to develop their skills in a balanced competitive situation. Only when you find you are consistently outplaying most players in your current group is it time to consider moving up. If you are unsure, give the next level a try. If you find that you are not a good fit yet, please slide back down and work on those skills that you still need to improve. In this way, our games remain fun for everyone.

What is your pickleball rating?

(Keep in mind, these are just guidelines pulled from different sources. Tournament expectations will probably continue to change over time, but for our purpose you can get a reasonable idea of where you may fit in the best.)

Level 1.0

- New - has minimal knowledge of the game

Level 1.5

- Learning to serve
- Working on coordination needed to return balls successfully
- Learning to play the game, scoring and basic rules

Level 2.0

- Sustains short rallies
- Makes basic strokes such as forehand, backhand, volley, and can usually serve the ball “in”
- Moves around the court in a balanced and safe manner
- Learning fundamental rules and can keep score

Level 2.5

- Able to serve “in” consistently
- Knows where to stand during serves and general play
- Knows the two bounce rule and demonstrates it
- Beginning to approach the non-volley zone (kitchen) to hit volleys
- Aware of the soft game and occasionally tries to dink
- Can sustain longer rallies
- Makes most easy shots including backhands
- Court coverage is improving

3.0

- Has consistent serve and returns medium paced ball reliably
- Able to make all basic strokes, but may lack control when trying to place the ball
- Attempts lobs and dinks with some success
- Moves quickly towards the non-volley zone when the opportunity is there
- Aware of partner's position on the court and moving more as a team
- Developing more power in shots
- Trying to make flatter returns when appropriate

3.5

- Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the game
- Serves are consistently "in"
- Able to serve deep and return serve deep
- Hits to weak side of opponent often
- Demonstrates more game strategies during play
- Works better with partners in communicating, covering the court and moving to the net
- With varying consistency executes lobs, forehand and backhand ground strokes, overheads, net volleys and sustained dinking
- Working on mixing up soft shots with power shots to create advantage
- Able to sustain dinking in the game
- Has a moderate number of unforced errors

4.0

- Plays more consistently in all phases of the game
- Anticipates opponent's shots resulting in good court position
- Primarily plays offensively
- Controls serves and return of serves to best advantage
- Puts strategy into game play, including partner play
- Consistently varies shots to create competitive advantage
- Very comfortable at the non-volley zone
- Has good footwork and moves laterally, backward and forward with ease
- Demonstrates 3rd shot strategies: drop shot, lobs and fast paced ground strokes
- Has a low number of unforced errors

4.5

- Able to regularly convert a hard shot to a soft shot
- Exhibits patience at a superior level
- Exhibits a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands and movement, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots, anticipation of play, sustained volleying skills, superior put-aways
- Adjusts game style to account for opponent's strengths/weaknesses and court position
- Growing mastery of dink and drop shots

5.0

- Has mastered all skills and strategies
- Dependable in stressful situations
- Athletic ability, quickness, and agility generally separates these players from others