

Pickleball Skill Level Guidelines

The following skill sets are a **guide** for evaluating your own skill level. They were developed to provide greater detail than guidelines listed by the USAPA on their website (www.usapa.org) and are used by the Voyager Pickleball Club's Ratings Committee in their ratings assessments.

*** If a person cannot move quickly enough due to physical restrictions, then a rating will be reduced according to the physical limitations as related to playing the game.

2.5 Skill Level

- Knows some of the basic rules including the "two bounce rule", scoring
- Attempting to control forehand groundstroke (direction, depth, height over net)
- Attempting backhand groundstroke
- Getting 60% of serves in the service court and returning 60% of serves
- Knows where to stand as the server, server's partner, and receiver
- Approaches the non-volley line for volleys inconsistently
- Can keep the ball in play for short rallies
- Sometimes lobs with forehand
- Attempting to "dink" the ball at the net
- Attempting to hit some soft shots
- Moves in a safe and balanced manner
- Developing good hand-eye coordination

3.0 Skill Level – will ALSO possess most/all of the 2.5 skills

- Knows basic rules including how to keep score
- Developing control on forehand groundstroke (placement, direction, depth)
- Developing control on backhand groundstroke (placement, direction, depth)
- Getting 70% of serves and return of serves "in"
- Striving to place serves deep into the court
- Beginning to develop placement of serves
- Uses deeper and higher returns of serve to allow time to approach the net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly rather than staying back
- Sustains a short volley session at the net
- Exhibits correct court positioning for doubles and how to "move as a team"
- Beginning to use the forehand lob with some success
- Developing a sustained "dink" exchange at the net
- Attempting to hit a soft "drop shot" to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Attempting to adjust to differing ball speeds (hitting & returning)
- Has good mobility
- Developing good hand-eye coordination

3.5 Skill Level – will ALSO possess most/all of the 3.0 skills

- Knows all the main rules including how to refigure the score and correct server
- Demonstrates control on forehand groundstroke (direction, depth and pace)
- Demonstrates control on backhand groundstroke (direction, depth and pace)
- Getting 80% of serves and return of serves "in"
- Regularly placing serves deep into the court
- Regularly uses deeper & higher returns of serve to allow time to approach net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly rather than staying back
- Able to play with partners effectively. Beginning to use court strategies such as partner communication and team coverage of court

- Avoids hitting “out” balls
- Hitting the ball lower over the net consistently
- Developing a wide variety of shots with some consistency
- Learning when to use soft shots vs. power shots to their advantage
- Developing consistency on shot placement, including ability to create and hit “gaps”
- Sustains a short volley session at the net with some control and placement
- Initiates and maintains a sustained “dink” exchange at the net
- Utilizing a soft “drop shot” to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Able to adjust to differing ball speeds consistently
- Developing ability to hit overheads with control
- Using a forehand and backhand lob when appropriate
- Developing ability to maintain patience in rallies
- Has good mobility
- Has good quickness
- Has good hand-eye coordination

4.0 Skill Level – will ALSO possess all of the 3.5 skills

- Controls and places 90% of both serves and returns of serves
- Consistent and dependable forehand and backhand groundstrokes, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Consistent and dependable volleys, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Consistent and dependable overheads, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Has good accuracy in placing lobs
- Consistently makes successful “drop shots” from the back court to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Regularly initiating and sustaining a “dink” exchange at the net until a “put away” shot is received
- Able to change from a soft shot strategy to a hard shot strategy, and vice versa
- Can block and return hard volleys
- Developing the ability to return overheads hit at their feet
- Can handle speed on shots without over-hitting or hitting out of bounds
- Moves effectively with partner, easily switching courts and communicating when required
- Can control play at the non-volley zone line, keeping their opponents back, driving them off the line and controlling the speed or placement of the ball
- Consistently uses shots to create and hit “gaps”
- Recognizes and exploits the weaknesses in their opponent’s game
- Can poach effectively
- Maintains patience in rallies
- Has good mobility *
- Has good quickness *
- Has good hand-eye coordination *

4.5 and 5.0 Skill Level

The 4.5 player is distinguish from the 4.0 player by increased skills, a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots and consistently fewer unforced errors. The 5.0 player is even more consistent in all skills than the 4.5 player with very few, if any, unforced errors.