

Pickleball!



Your Complete Beginner's Guide



Fancy a dink? 🏓



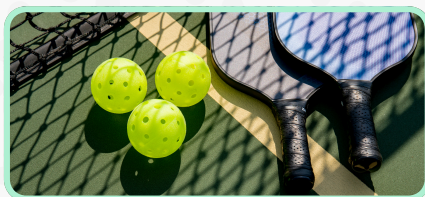
Everything you need to step on the court for the first time with confidence

Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in the UK — and it's easy to see why. Participation in the UK has grown by over 200% since 2021.

And with more than **40,000 active players** (and counting), this fast-paced paddle sport is exploding in popularity, from leisure centres and school gyms to dedicated pickleball clubs popping up across the country.

Already a phenomenon in the US, where over **10 million people** play regularly, pickleball is now making serious waves on this side of the pond — and it's not just for one age group. Kids love it. Retirees thrive at it. And everyone in between is picking up a paddle and getting hooked.

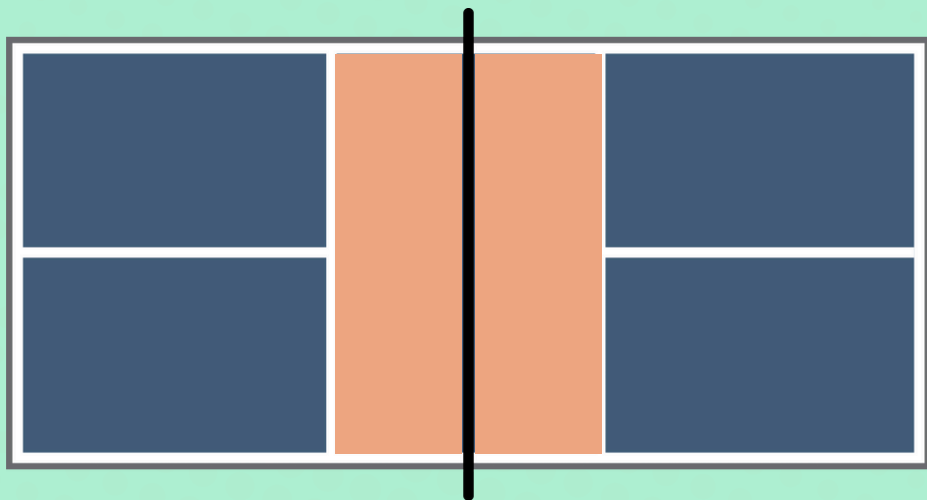
It's easy to learn, doesn't require expensive gear, and works just as well for casual rallies as it does for competitive matches. Whether you're looking for a new way to stay active, meet people, or just try something different, pickleball's got you covered.



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The Basics (you'll get these down fast)



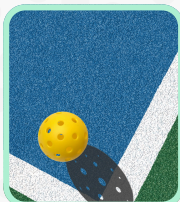
- **Court Size:** 20 x 44 feet (same for singles and doubles – think badminton)
- **Net Height:** 36" at the sidelines, 34" in the middle
- **Serve:** Underhand, cross-court
- **Scoring:** Only the serving side scores
- **Winning the Game:** First to 11, win by 2
- **The Kitchen (Non-Volley Zone):** Coloured pink in the image, don't volley if you're standing in it or on the line.



What you'll need to play

- **Paddle:** Lightweight, slightly bigger than a ping-pong paddle
- **Ball:** Plastic with holes — like a Wiffle ball
- **Shoes:** Tennis or court shoes are advisable, but sensible trainers will more than do
- **Court & Net:** Most games are played at local clubs or leisure centres, where the court and net are already set up — no need to bring your own

That's it — no fancy equipment, no expensive gear, no barrier to entry.

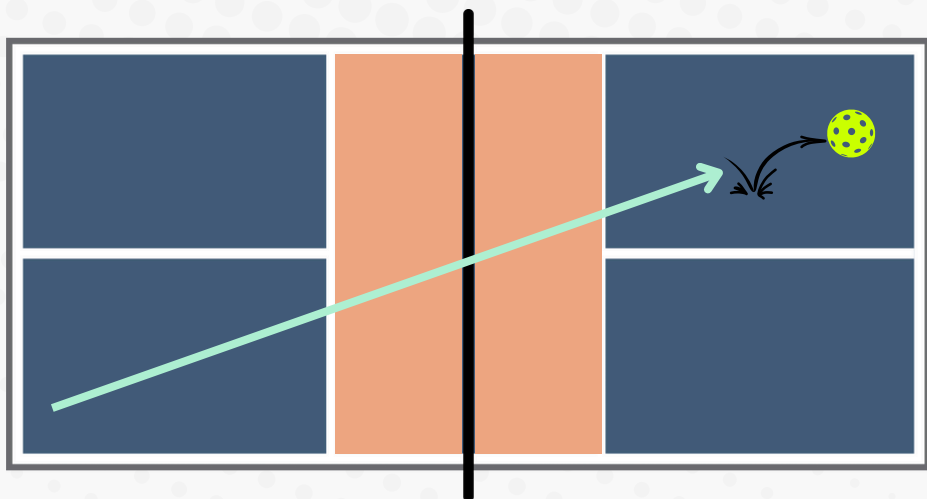


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Serving rules (and how to start a rally)

- You serve underhand with the paddle below your waist
- Keep both feet behind the baseline until you strike the ball
- The serve must land in the opponent's diagonal service box
- Only one serve attempt is allowed — no second serves





The double bounce rule

After the serve, the ball must bounce once on each side before any volleying can begin. It looks like this:

- **Serve** → Must bounce on receiver's side
- **Return** → Must bounce on server's side
- **Then** → Rally begins — volleys and groundstrokes are fair game

This prevents the server from charging the net and dominating early.

Understanding the Kitchen

The Kitchen — also known as the non-volley zone — is a 7-foot area on either side of the net. You can enter the Kitchen, but:

- You can't volley (hit out of the air) from inside it
- If your momentum carries you into the Kitchen after a volley — fault
- Groundstrokes and soft shots (called “dinks”) are allowed from within it

This is what makes pickleball strategic — not just fast.



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How scoring works in doubles

Here's the part that trips up most new players. But don't worry — you'll get it after one or two games.

- Only the serving team scores
- Each team gets two serves (one per player) except at the start
- Score is called in three parts:
- [Serving Team Score] – [Receiving Team Score] – [Server Number]
- Example: “5 – 3 – 2” means second server is serving with their team on 5

First team to 11 (by 2) wins.

What about singles?

Scoring is more straightforward in singles:

- Still: Only the server scores
- Only two numbers in the score callout (your score – opponent's)



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Types of shots in pickleball

There are a handful of core shots in pickleball — and mastering them will quickly level up your game.

- **Serve:** Starts the rally. Must be underhand and land diagonally in the service box.
- **Return:** Usually hit deep to push the server back.
- **Groundstroke:** A shot hit after the ball bounces once.
- **Volley:** A shot hit before the ball bounces (not allowed from inside the Kitchen).
- **Dink*:** A soft shot that drops into your opponent's Kitchen. Used during net play to create mistakes or set up a winning shot.
- **Drop Shot:** Hit from further back, this soft shot lands just over the net to neutralize aggressive play.
- **Lob:** A high, looping shot over your opponent's head. Risky, but effective if well placed.
- **Smash:** A powerful overhead hit — think of it as your pickleball spike.

**The dink is one of the most important shots in the game. It's not flashy, but it wins matches — especially when both teams are at the net, trading soft shots to outlast or outmaneuver each other.*



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Beginner strategy: Win without smashing

You don't need to be powerful to win at pickleball. The best players keep it simple:

- Return deep
- Dink when you're at the net
- Reset under pressure
- Stay patient — let your opponent make the mistake

First-time tips (we've all been there)

- **Play doubles to start** — it's easier and more social
- **Stay ready** — always on your toes
- **Communicate** — don't be afraid to call "Mine!" or "Yours!"
- **Be kind to yourself** — everyone flubs their first serve



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Ready to give it a go?

Pickleball's not just a sport — it's a movement. Whether you're in it for the sweat, the smiles, or the social side, your first step is the same: grab a paddle and get on court.

There's a reason tens of thousands of players across the UK are picking it up. And once you've had your first rally... you'll get it!

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*Thanks for
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