

INVERMERE PICKLEBALL CLUB PLAY, ETIQUETTE, & SAFETY GUIDELINES

These guidelines set out the basic organization of play, court etiquette, and safety that are adopted by the Invermere Pickleball Club. They are intended to ensure all activities that are conducted through the Club run smoothly and safely, and in keeping with good sportsmanship.

Foremost - pickleball should be fun for participants at all skill levels, and they must have a safe physical and psychological environment. Participants must be treated fairly and with respect - no abuse or disrespect is tolerated.

Event Supervision

The Club is represented by a "Host" at all events. The Host's tasks include basic administrative duties such as taking attendance, providing and collecting membership and waiver documents when applicable, collecting fees when applicable, organising and running the event, and ensuring that the Club equipment and supplies are set up/distributed and collected/put away for their event. Club members share the responsibility of volunteering as Hosts for Club events.

Play

Even though Club members are generally respectful and considerate of other players, potential for discord can arise, usually from two underlying issues:

- Too many players wanting play on too few courts, and
- Players are of very mixed skill-levels.

Various player rotation systems (formal and impromptu) are generally used to mix players, so everyone eventually plays with and/or against all other players, and everyone shares about equal time on-court. Depending on the attendance, the Host may employ a "round-robin" system, where players are assigned new partners and opponents from among the players in attendance, or they may set up the "rack" or "racket stacking", where players are split up and reassigned partners and opponents according to winners and losers. When the number of players is fewer than is required to fill two full courts, players generally just organise themselves by mixing partners and opponents.

Whenever the players attending cannot fill the courts, those who are sitting out a game (on a "bye") can rotate into the subsequent game when the current game is completed, and someone else takes a bye. When a large number of players must sit out games due to high attendance, games may be restricted to a specified time, or the winning score may be reduced.

During round robin play, partners are assigned randomly for each game, so excess players sit out on a bye while awaiting their turn in the rotation. If the rack or the racket stacking is used to establish players, an orderly and fair system is employed to select the first four players, and the excess players sit out on a bye. Then, once the first game is completed, the two winners stay on for a second game, but they split up, with each partnering with one of the two players who are at the front of the queue. The two losers of that first game join the back of the queue. The intent is that no winner plays more than two games in a row if there are players sitting out, so once the second game is finished, the two losers plus the winner of the second (and first) game join the back of the queue, and the other winner (who has now played only one game) and three new players from the front of the queue start a new game, one partnering with the winner, while the other two partner up. Once the third game is completed, the two losers and the winner of the second and third game join the back of the queue, and three others join the winner of the third game, and so forth. This process can be used whenever there are more players than one court can accommodate.

The Club currently offers "Open" play, wherein players of all skill levels play together, and "Challenge" play, encompassing: "Beginner/Novice", "Intermediate", and "Advanced". Though few players in the Club are officially "rated" according to their capability, players can "self-rate" based on the rating system that has been adopted by Pickleball BC.

"Beginner" players can be loosely described as new players who are recently introduced to the rules of pickleball and/or those who have weak racket skills. Even the more athletic beginners who bring good racket skills, including good mobility, good reactions, and good hand/eye coordination generally need considerable guidance and coaching, as errors and violations of the rules tend to be frequent among newly initiated players. Although the more athletic beginners tend to advance quickly to the more competitive Intermediate level, they should continue to practice at the Beginner/Novice session until the rules are more engrained. Similarly, beginners who have learned the rules, but have weaker racket skills should spend more time practicing and playing at the Beginner/Novice level, until they have develop better racket skills.

"Intermediate" players have reasonably well developed racket skills, and they know all of the basic rules and can abide by them without repeated violations. There is generally a wide range of strengths and weaknesses amongst players at this level. Stronger players at this level should offer a fairly significant challenge to weaker players, but they should temper their efforts to win the game at all costs. Intermediate play is a good opportunity to hone their weaker skills.

"Advanced" players are the most skilled and experienced in the Club. They generally seek strong competition, but should be welcoming of players who also seek competition at the higher level.

"Open Play" affords players of all abilities to play with and against one another. A group of players may set up a challenge game amongst themselves, but they should only do so if it does not disrupt the player rotation system. All participants should enjoy about equal time on the courts. Open play is an opportunity for players to hone their skills against players of various abilities, and it can benefit players of all levels.

During Challenge or Open play, the stronger players should temper their efforts to win against significantly weaker players. They should consider such games as an opportunity to practice their weaker skills by, for instance, supporting long rallies even if it means intentionally setting the weaker players up for shots that that stronger player will then need to defend against.

On the other hand, weaker players who engage strong players during challenge play should expect some strong, aggressive competition. If the outcome finds them somewhat humiliated, they should look back on it as an opportunity to identify the skills they will want to improve.

Court Safety

1. Warm up your joints and muscles with a light exercise and stretching (before you warm up your racket).
2. Hydrate frequently, especially before you get thirsty.
3. Remove any dirt, lint, or garbage you find on or near the court.
4. Wear appropriate (and clean) court shoes and sport attire. Eye protection is recommended.
5. Never run backward on a court; turn around and/or move sideways.
6. Never dive for a ball.
7. Never enter other active courts when either playing a ball or chasing a loose ball – wait for neighbouring players to return your ball, or wait for permission to retrieve it.
8. Shout "BALL" as your ball enters another active court or their immediate out of bounds, or if a loose ball enters your court or out of bounds.
9. When you shout or hear "BALL" or see another court's ball on or near your court, stop play immediately. Return stray balls to the court that lost it.
10. Stay clear of active courts when walking to or leaving a court.
11. Never intentionally smash a ball directly at your opponent.
12. Stop play and attend to anyone who falls or is injured. Be attentive to players who exhibit dizziness, weakness, lack of concentration etc. If you doubt their ability to continue, suspend play.

13. Forgo attendance at pickleball activities if you are sick with a communicable illness (or even if you suspect you may be getting sick or you have been exposed to carriers) until you have completely recovered. Most Club members are in the medium to high risk demographic for a serious impact to health from communicable diseases; act prudently by staying away.

Etiquette

1. Abide by the "Rules of Pickleball".
2. Always be courteous.
3. Greet, and introduce yourself if warranted, at the start of a game. Acknowledge the other players at the end of each game (often with the traditional tap of racket handles) and offer a compliment.
4. Accept your wins humbly - don't rub it in. Accept defeat gracefully - congratulate your opponents. Compliment your partner and your opponents for a great shot or for their overall game.
5. If your partner wants to play a competitive game, delay practicing your weaker shots for another time (or at least until you have secured a strong lead).
6. Do not use profanities or rude gestures. Do not wear clothing that displays profane language or graphics.
7. Light-hearted trash-talk and banter is acceptable if made in good taste, but don't overdo it, it can be annoying and disruptive. Be sure you know the other players well enough to gauge their sensitivity to trash-talk. Never make racial slurs, joke about someone's physical or mental limitations, or make politically incorrect statements. Expect to get back as much teasing as you give.
8. Spare other players your complaints and excuses; suck it up.
9. "Open Play" is intended to attract a mix of players of various skill levels to play with and against one another. Rotate through the group of players in attendance, and rather than stacking the deck by repeatedly partnering with a strong player against weaker opponents, switch a strong player from one side of the court for a weaker player on the other side - level out the opponents' strengths. Direct your hits at both of your opponents.
10. If you prefer to play with and/or against players with similar skills as your own, schedule your Club play for the appropriate level: "Beginner/Novice", "Intermediate", or "Advanced" accordingly.
11. If you want to play only with specific players, organise your games outside of the Club-scheduled play, otherwise queue up and wait for an open court in turn.
12. Don't exploit an opponent's physical limitations - it's a cheap way to win.
13. Either get rated or do an honest self-rating to identify the niche that you can be competitive in, and until you improve, spend most of your time in the appropriate group. Don't over-rate yourself, and don't expect "strong" players to play down to you if you challenge them - expect to be humbled.
14. When playing against significantly weaker players, especially during "Open Play", afford them a challenge while tempering your efforts to win - and even though you should send shots that they are likely able return and learn from, don't patronise them; it's demeaning.
15. When playing against a stronger player, hit toward them often to test and improve your own skills, while keeping the game interesting for all players.
16. Do not repeatedly poach from your partner. Conversely, if you are being poached, ask yourself if you should be playing more aggressively, so your partner isn't compelled to poach.
17. Do not smash the ball near (or at) weaker or timid opponents - some players are reluctant to approach the kitchen line for fear of being hit.
18. Only offer coaching if it is requested, some players take offence to having their shortcomings brought to their attention. If you do offer advice, be certain you are correct, and be brief and mindful of the game-flow.
19. Call out the correct score before serving. (This is also a "rule".)
20. Only serve the ball when the receiver is ready. (This is also a "rule".)

21. When a ball lands out of bounds on your own side of the court, IMMEDIATELY shout "OUT" and/or raise your arm.
22. If you and your partner are uncertain about whether a ball landed "in" or "out" of bounds on your side, consider it "in". (This is also a "rule".)
23. Disregard spectator-referees. Ask them to stop or leave the court if they disrupt the game.
24. Call a fault if either you or your partner steps into or contacts the kitchen (no-volley-zone) with any part of your body or racket during a volley.
25. Be cautious about calling kitchen, line, or serving violations that occur on your opponents' side of the court – let them call their own.
26. Your call on your own side of the court is gospel, but if you ask for your opponents' opinion, you forfeit your right to make that call - so their call becomes final. (This is also a "rule".)
27. Do not make false calls. Fair and honest play is a cornerstone of the game.
28. Do not argue about calls.
29. Abide by the process being used for the play rotation. If you take a break from playing, or you will be indisposed for a few minutes, temporarily remove yourself from the rotation so someone who is ready to play can take your place.
30. Call out "COURT" so the next group waiting knows it is their turn to play.
31. When you are on deck, be sure your foursome is ready to start your game as soon as a court becomes available.
32. If there are more players than the venue can accommodate, yet a court remains vacant, politely remind the next group that is waiting in the rotation that it is available, and that if they (or one of them) are not ready, they should offer it to the next player(s) in the queue.
33. If no one is sitting out, and other courts are occupied by games that are still calling low scores, and there is no particular reason to switch out players in your current group; feel free to continue to play or practice until at least until one of the other games concludes - keep the courts occupied.
34. If you intend to attend a particular Club activity, make a habit of indicating so on the *SignUpGenius* app. If you change your mind about attending, always delete your name from the list - do not stand up the Host.
35. Host an event once in a while - share the load - it's not an onerous task.
36. Lend the Host a helping hand once in a while with setup or tear down - if you see a task that needs attention, do it.