

First off - The Golden Rules of Pickleball

1. **Be ready.** Use Good footwork. Use Proper Form. Be in a Good set position. Be ready for any serve, return or shot than comes your way. Be ready to cover for your partner when they get out of position. Most important - Watch the ball.
2. **Consistency** - Hit the shot where you want. Take 20 % off to hit it in a better location and to keep it from going out or into the net. Hit a slam shot with a 3/4 sidearm shot. Not OVERHEAD. This will help to keep your shots from going into the NET. (ouch)
3. **Have a plan** - Before you start the game, think about where you are hitting the ball in certain situations. Adjust your plan if something is not working. Hit shots they don't like, so they will give you a shot that you like.
4. **Be positive** - with yourself and your partner. Say things that will encourage them. If they hit a bad shot. "It's ok we'll get the next one." When they hit a winner, "Great shot, keep it up, we've got this". Other like phrases to keep you and your partner focused and ready for the next point. If you somehow end up losing. "No worries we'll get it next time."
5. **Be ready** - for the hard/fast shot. If a dink or other slower shot comes, then you're ready for it. Stay in the middle area don't give them too much room to hit it hard past you. Cut off the alley when the ball is on your side of the court, cut off the middle when it is on the other side of the court.

Top 10 Mistakes Advanced Intermediate players make and how to correct them.

1. Third Shot Drops Too Low of a Trajectory.

Problem: Third shot drops not hit high and slow enough to go into the kitchen. Allowing the opponent to attack the shot.

Correction: Hit the ball with more arc, about 2-3 paddle lengths above the net so the ball drops into the kitchen area. And with a little back spin if possible. This will allow you time to get up to the kitchen.

2. Dinks Bounce Too High.

Problem: Dinks are hit too high. Also do not dink directly at the person, make them move left or right.

Correction: A softer shot is needed. Should be about 1 paddle length above the net and soft enough to drop into the kitchen. Do not dink directly at the person, make them move left or right. Make your dinks unattackable. If they choose to drive the ball it will go into the net or out. Grip the paddle with less tightness, a slightly loose grip is needed about 40-60 % grip.

3. Lack of Spin.

Problem: Not using spin ever.

Correction: Use spin sometimes. Not necessarily on every shot. You can use top spin, backspin, or left or right spin. It takes practice to perfect the technique. Using different spins will keep your opponents off balance and makes it more difficult for them to return the ball.

4. Lack of Pattern Recognition.

Problem: Not recognizing patterns in play or players weaknesses.

Correction: If a player has trouble with a shot, keep hitting it there until they prove they can return it. If they are hitting the ball to the same place "A LOT" then be ready to be there and return it to a difficult to return area, not just right to them.

5. Lack of Service Change

Problem: Hitting the same serve from the same spot or to the same spot. If you don't change your serve occasionally you are training them how to return your serve.

Correction: Serve from different locations on the baseline. Serve to different areas on the court and a variety of pace, spin, even try a lob serve from time to time.

6. Lack of Shot Arsenal

Problem: Hitting the same type of shots almost every time.

Correction: Occasionally hit the shot to different spots. To their backhand, at their feet. A legal body shot at the right or left shoulder, knees. Even a lob, once in awhile. If you lob a lot you are going to get burned when they figure it out.

7. Bad Foot Work

Problem: Don't do a crossover step if you don't need to. Especially when dinking ground strokes.

Correction: Lunge for a dink keeping the off foot in place if possible, or shuffle step to get there. Always use good form on your drive shots, long drops.

8. Playing Too Tight.

Problem: Hitting your shots too “carefully”. Remember, when your paddle stops the ball stops. When you hit with a short stroke quickly and then stop your stroke the ball pops up.

Correction: Play with authority. Know where you want to hit your shots. Follow through with your strokes.

9. Body Dinking or Dead Dinking

Problem: Dinking the ball directly to your opponent.

Correction: Dink away from them. Use top spin when possible or a little slice. Vary your dink so they have to make the adjustment, there is a good chance they will make a mishit and/or pop it up so you can put it away.

10. Not Ready for Pace

Problem: Not respecting the pace of their shot.

Correction: If you see them put extra pace on the ball you must defend that pace with a reset or if it is hit high enough send it back with pace. Don't just hit it back high so they can re-attack you. It will happen sometimes so be ready. Again, BE READY, don't assume that your shot is a winner. You must BE READY to return every shot. Dink, Lob, Attack, Soft pace drive, Hard pace drive. BE READY.

11. BONUS: Play WITH your partner, not against.

Problem: Not talking to each other, not staying together.

Correction: Communicate. Yours, mine, bounce it. Let it go. This will avoid confusion as to who gets the ball. And avoid hitting balls that might go out. . . Also, when your partner moves left or right to get the ball you must move a step or two to cover the area vacated. When one of you moves to the net BOTH of you must get to the net. Don't leave your partner alone at the net because now you become vulnerable to being attacked. You are an easy target because you are so far back and there is also a lot of space between both of you. Communicate, stay, and play together.