



Stay healthy

with **Pickleball Tips**



THERAPY SPECIALISTS

Care That Delivers.™

Pickleball is a paddleball sport that combines elements of badminton, table tennis, and tennis. Two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, much like a wiffle ball, with 26-40 round holes, over a net.

Safety is our number #1 priority, and we want to keep every player on their feet. As with any sport having the right equipment, keeping our bodies in proper condition and knowing our limits all play a role in allowing us to enjoy playing pickleball.



Hydration – Pickleball is a sport and activity. As such we need to make sure we are hydrating before, during, and after play.

Protect your skin – Remember to wear sunscreen and when waiting on the sidelines, consider a wide brim hat that will shade your eyes, ears and neck.

Protect your eyes – Sunglasses help cut the glare and light reflected off the surface. Sports sunglasses or eyeglasses are HIGHLY recommended because not only do they provide full UV protection, their lenses are non-breakable and will prevent any eye injuries.

Shoes – Court shoes are HIGHLY recommended as they are designed to increase lateral (side to side) movement, which makes it easier to move on the court. Here is a helpful [video](#) on selecting shoes for pickleball.

Balance - Can you stand on one leg without using your arms? Can you stand and look all the way up? Can you turn your head and shoulders right to left without pain or restriction? Can you shift your weight from foot to foot with varying speed? Good balance is critical to prevent injury while playing pickleball.

Know your limits - Yes, I know this is the hardest one of all. We can all get a little competitive, some of us more than others. But is it worth an injury? That injury may not just sideline you for a few weeks, it maybe a game changer.

- Pickleball, unlike tennis, requires us to squat lower stressing the knees/hips and ankles. We tend to make contact with the ball between the levels of our knees and hips vs. tennis where we hit the ball between our hip and shoulders causing us to squat lower and faster.

- Pickleball has a shorter racket than tennis. As a result, we often misjudge our reach causing us to overextend or overstep to hit the ball. This could lead to us losing our balance or risk a shoulder injury.
- Be mindful of how you move your neck and head as it is easy to get dizzy. When we look up and see the ball go over our heads, we tend to step backwards and can easily lose our balance. Walking or stepping backwards is a skill and it takes practice. We do not recommend this and instead, call "Good Shot" and let the ball go.
- The same is true for reaching or diving for a low ball. Lunging deep and to the side with a quick low reach is a common way to fall. Instead, when the ball is that difficult to get, consider letting it go and telling your opponent, "Good shot!"

Something to consider: Depending on your group consider a double bounce rule. Maybe you score it at a ½ point. Play can continue and the reduction in injuries and falls is significant.

What condition am I in? Have you been exercising regularly or are you just getting back into things? Remember conditioning takes time and consistency. You would not just go out and run 10 miles when you have not been running in a while. You start slow increasing slowly and steadily. The same is true for pickleball. Start with daily walks, exercise classes, and/or utilize the cardio equipment. Build that endurance. See additional Pickleball Handouts for Healthy Practices and Injury Prevention that cover conditioning, stretches, and exercise specific to Pickleball Players.

Online Resource for all things Pickleball

<https://www.pickleballcentral.com>





Healthy Pickleball Practices

Pickleball places a premium on rotational strength, lateral quickness, and shoulder stability. Plus, stronger, more flexible muscles mean a greater resistance to injury!

So, before you hit the court—or start feeling the effects of tennis elbow, a product of tight shoulders—it is important to open up your shoulders, your hips, and improve your side-to-side movements. All these are so crucial for chasing down volleys, firing off accurate backhands, and staying on your feet.

Stretching and warmups

To decrease the risk of injury while you are participating in any physical activity, be sure to stretch and warm up your body before and after. Stretching reduces muscle tension, increases your range of motion, prevents muscle and joint sprains, increases circulation, and can help you reduce muscle soreness post-workout.

You want to warm up for 5-10 minutes; longer in cooler weather. Take a brisk walk, march, or jog in place. Think anything that will get you moving at a light and then moderate pace for a steady 5 minutes or more.

Stretch before and after playing! This is injury prevention 101.

Try these movements to improve your game, and you will be winning more sets and matches, too!

Arm circles

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and extend your arms parallel to the floor.
- Circle your arms forward using small, controlled motions, gradually making the circles bigger until you feel a stretch in your triceps.
- Reverse the direction of the circles after about 10 seconds.

Marching in place (stretches upper and lower legs, ankles, and feet)

- Stand with your feet flat on the floor.
- Lift your right leg to a comfortable height and lower.
- Repeat the same on the left leg.
- March in place for 30 seconds, break for 15 seconds and repeat for 30 seconds.

Look both ways (stretches your neck)

- Stand with your feet flat on the floor.
- Keep your head squarely over your shoulders and your back straight.
- Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a stretch in the side of your neck and shoulder.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds, and then slowly turn your head forward again.
- Repeat on your left side.

Standing quad stretch

- Stand with support if needed and flex the hip so you can grasp your ankle (you risk a cramp by simply bending the knee).
- Pull the foot to your bottom or as close as possible ensuring there is a straight line from the knee through the hip to the shoulder.
- Tighten your abs to flatten the low back (if allowed to arch forward you lose much of the effectiveness).
- Also be sure to keep the knees together rather than allowing the leg to move outward (caused by a tight **Iliotibial Band**)

Ankle circles

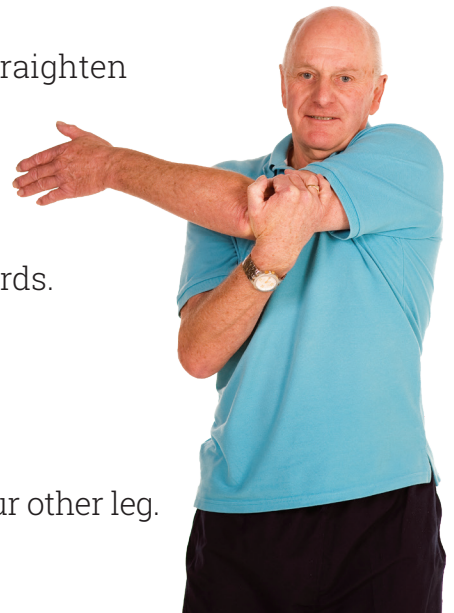
- While sitting perform a circular motion with your ankle in a clockwise direction
- Then go counterclockwise. Repeat on other foot.

Cross body standing hip

- Lay on left side, bend the hip and knee of the top leg and straighten the knee of the bottom leg.
- You can hold the knee down on the top leg and then rotate towards the right side with a straight right arm.
- Also turn your neck towards the side you are rotating towards.

Calf stretch

- Stand facing a wall, with one foot in front of the other, front knee slightly bent
- Place both hands on the wall with the targeted leg behind your other leg.



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- Keeping your back leg straight, your heel on the ground, and lean toward the wall to feel a stretch on your back calf.

Achilles stretch

- Put your foot on or against an object that is slightly raised from the ground.
- Lean forward slightly at the ankle (do not bend at spine or hips) until you feel a light stretch in your calf.
- Keep your knee straight. Do not stretch into pain.

Hamstring stretch

- Start by placing a chair in a doorway, use the sides of the door jam for support.
- Place one hand on each side.
- Next place your heel on the seat, slowly lean forward until a stretch is felt behind your knee/thigh.

Cross body arm stretch

- Bring one arm across the chest.
- Push down gently above or below the elbow for a deeper stretch.

Postero-lateral shoulder stretch

- Bring your elbow across your body and place your hand on your upper back.
- Keep your chin tucked in and hold the stretch with your opposite hand placed at the elbow. You should feel a comfortable stretch in your upper arm.

Doorway pec stretch

- Place arm on the wall, maintain a 90-degree angle.
- Focus on keeping your chest up and taking a small step forward with the same leg and bending the knee forward feeling a stretch in the front of your chest.
- Gently turn your shoulders away from the wall to increase the stretch but keeping your HEAD STRAIGHT.

Standing T

- Stand hinged at the waist, making sure to keep your back flat and your chest up.
- Pull your shoulder blades back and down, and raise your arms alongside your body

and over your head to form a T.

- Return to the starting position, and continue for a total of 10 reps.
- The movement should be initiated with the shoulder blades, not the arms.
- This improves rotational movement and counteracts the negative impact of sitting.

Drop lunge

- Stand tall in an athletic position.
- Take a big step back with your left foot.
- Then, maintaining your weight on the heel of your front leg, gradually lower yourself into a squat.
- Do not let your front knee slide over your toes.
- Stand and return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- Alternate for a total of 10 reps on each side.

Lateral lunge

- Step to your left side and lower your hips by squatting back and down with your left leg, making sure to keep your right leg straight.
- Return to the starting position by pushing up with your left leg.
- Switch directions, repeating movements 10 reps on each side.
- You will feel it working your glutes, hamstrings, quads, feeling a stretch of the inner thigh of the straight leg.

Knee hug

- From a standing position, lift your right knee to your chest and grab below the knee with both hands.
- Pull right knee to chest while contracting left glute.
- Step forward and repeat to other side.
- Alternate for a total of 10 reps on each side.





Practicing Hand-Eye Coordination

Pickleball requires a lot of hand-eye coordination which is important for the sport, but it also translates into daily activities as well. While hand-eye coordination keeps thinking skills sharp, its biggest advantage is to make sure that the eyes track the movement of the hands naturally. These skills play a role in good balance, handwriting, reading, directing objects and of course, playing sports with proficiency.

- **Paddle balance** - In your home, balance your pickleball on your paddle. Bounce the ball on the paddle in front of you 20 times, take a break and continue for another set of 20.
- **Hitting consistency** - Find an area with a solid wall and open space that's out of the way and not disturbing others. Use this as your makeshift practice partner, where you'll be able to hit your ball repetitively against the wall.

Cool down

Just like your warmup you want to cool down for 5 minutes with a slow and steady walk bringing your heart rate and core body temperature down. Follow with your same warm up stretches for injury prevention.

Recovery

Foam rolling

- Foam rolling uses deep compression to roll out muscle spasms and imbalances that develop over time. The compression causes the nerves to relax and loosens muscles, gets the blood flowing, and helps the body recover from workouts and day-to-day living. Like a professional massage, there will be some uncomfortable moments with foam rolling so use it anywhere you feel tight. The foam roll not only addresses muscle imbalances, it's a great barometer of the quality of your muscle and connective tissue.
- Recovery is a key part of tennis, the foam roller will help get you back on the court quicker.

Trigger point

- Trigger point therapy will help relieve chronic foot pain and fascial tightness, which is a result of everyday life but especially from playing on hard tennis surfaces.
- While standing or sitting, slip off your shoe, and roll back and forth over the tennis ball, applying pressure to the arch of your foot.



Pickleball Exercises

Clam Shell

- Lie on your side, with legs stacked and knees bent at a 45-degree angle.
- Rest your head on your lower arm and use your top arm to steady your frame. Be sure that your hipbones are stacked on top of one another, as there is a tendency for the top hip to rock backward.
- Engage your abdominals by pulling your belly button in, as this will help to stabilize your spine and pelvis.
- Keeping your feet touching, raise your upper knee as high as you can without shifting your hips or pelvis. Don't move your lower leg off the floor.
- Pause, and then return your upper leg to the starting position on the ground. Do 20 reps on each side.

Bridge

- Lie on your back with your hands at your sides, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor under your knees.
- Tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles by pushing your low back into the ground before you push up.
- Raise your hips to create a straight line from your knees to shoulders.
- Squeeze your core and pull your belly button back toward your spine.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, and then return to your starting position.
- Complete at least 10 reps.

Forearm Plank

- Begin lying on the floor with your forearms flat on the floor, making sure that your elbows are aligned directly under your shoulders.
- Engage your core and raise your body up off the floor, keeping your forearms on the floor and your body in a straight line from head to feet.
- Keep your abdominals engaged and try not to let your hips rise or drop.



Squat

- Stand tall with your feet forward and hip distance apart.
- Bend your knees and extend your buttocks backward as if you are going to sit back into a chair. Make sure that you keep your knees behind your toes and your weight in your heels.
- Rise back up and repeat.

Monster Walk

- Place the **resistance** band around your ankles.
- Get into the athletic position with bent knees, neutral lower back and looking forward.
- Start walking sideways maintaining a posture with bent knees.
- Open your stance wide and keep good tension on the band.
- Step out to the side with one foot and then step in with the other foot, without dragging it on the ground.
- Make sure that your knees are always aligned in one line from the hips over the feet and the feet are pointing forward. If your glutes are very weak, the knees tend to buckle in to compensate. Don't let them!
- Walk 20 steps one way, and then return to the starting position working the opposite hip.

Shoulder external rotation with resistance band

- Attach the resistance bands to an anchor point as close to the height of your elbow as you can.
- To execute: pull the band across your torso until you feel a comfortable stretch in your shoulder.
- Return your arm back to the starting position.
- Repeat for your desired number of reps and then switch arms.



Video Resources

Pickleball warm up exercises

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CUYNbcFe-w

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUVqvCKqKqo>

Pickleball stretching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwmAklnBG9g>

Pickleball balance

[Injury Free Pickleball-Improve Your Balance - YouTube](#)

Participation in Pickleball and all exercises in this document is at your own risk. Writer, owner and management make no representations, expressed or implied , as to the suitability of any particular exercise for any individual.