Pickleball Rules Cheat Sheet

One page, every rule you need on court: serve, scoring, the two-bounce rule, the kitchen, and what counts as a fault.

The Court

Court: 20 ft wide × 44 ft long (same for singles and doubles).

Net: 36 in (91 cm) at the ends, 34 in (86 cm) in the middle.

Non-volley zone (“the kitchen”): 7 ft deep on each side of the net.

Service boxes: the centreline splits each side into two equal boxes; serve diagonally.

The Serve

A serve must go diagonally to the opposite service box, clearing the kitchen.

- **Volley serve:** Underhand, paddle below the wrist, ball below the waist, contact with a clear upward arc (Rules 7.C.1–7.C.3).
- **Drop serve:** Drop the ball — do not toss, spin, or throw it; hit it after the bounce (Rule 7.D). You use one type per serve, not both.

Serve within 10 seconds of the score being called (Rule 6.D); the server’s feet must be behind the baseline and inside the sideline extensions at contact.

One serve attempt per player. There is no let serve: a serve that touches the net and lands in the service box is LIVE (Rules 7.E and 13.A). A serve that hits the net and lands out of the service box is a fault.

Scoring

Standard scoring is **side-out**: only the serving side can score (Rule 4.A).

- Games usually to 11, win by 2. Tournament matches: games to 15 or 21, win by 2.
- Doubles: call three numbers — your score, then your opponent’s, then 1 or 2 for which server. Example: 4–2–1.
- Singles: call two numbers — your score, then your opponent’s.
- First server at the start of a game: only server 2 serves after the first fault (the ‘1’ in 0-0-2 is the exception everyone forgets).
- When the serving side wins a rally, the server switches sides; when the side serves from the left or right, the server’s score is odd or even (serve from the right on an even score, from the left on an odd score).
- When the receiving side wins a rally, the serve passes to your partner (doubles) or to the other side (singles).

Rally scoring (Rule 14.A): a point on every rally (serving or receiving), called as two numbers, and since 2026 there is no game-point freeze. **This is optional — side-out scoring is the default.**

The Two-Bounce Rule

Each side must let the ball bounce once before hitting it after the serve — the serving side lets the return bounce, and the

receiving side lets the serve bounce (Rule 10.A).

- After the two bounces, you can volley (hit it before it bounces) or play it off the bounce.
- A ball on the line is in, except a serve touching the kitchen line, which is “out”.

The Kitchen (Non-Volley Zone)

You can stand in the kitchen anytime, but you cannot volley there — and your momentum from a volley must not carry you in (Rule 11.A).

- A ball that bounces in the kitchen may be hit from inside it. A ball that bounces in the kitchen is dead once it bounces twice, or is hit.
- Both feet must be outside the kitchen before you volley again (Rule 11.A.3).
- If your momentum from a volley carries you into the kitchen, it is a fault — even if the ball is already dead (Rule 11.A.2).
- If you drop your paddle into the kitchen while volleying, it is a fault (Rules 11.A.1 and 10.J).

Faults

When a fault happens, the rally stops immediately — and if you committed it, you lose the point (or the serve).

- Serving into the net, out of bounds, or into the kitchen.
- Failing to clear the net, hitting the ball into the net, or out of bounds.
- A ball that bounces twice on your side before you return it (Rule 10.B.1).
- Volleying from the kitchen, walking into the kitchen after a volley, or not clearing your feet from the kitchen before volleying again — carrying the ball on the paddle (not a clean hit) counts too (Rule 12.C) — or a double hit (only one continuous motion counts as one hit).

Line Calls

If it is not clearly out, it is IN. Call “out” promptly, before the opponent hits the ball or it becomes dead (Rules 8.D–8.F.3).

- Partners must agree on an out call — if they disagree, the ball is “in”.
- Do not call a ball “out” unless you clearly see space between the ball and the line.

Sources: 2026 USA Pickleball Official Rulebook (free PDF, USA Pickleball); Rule numbers as shown. The kitchen rules are in Section 11 in 2026, not Section 9 as in earlier books. Full guide: pickleball rules — report a mistake via the homepage contact form. Last updated 9 Nov 2026.

Questions about the 2026 changes? See 2026 pickleball rule changes.