

Skill Level Guidelines

Are you sure you're playing on the correct court?



For fair, fun, and safe competition, these are the minimum skills required for each court level. Based on these guidelines, overall wait times, and/or the scores of your games, you may be asked by a Tustin Pickleball Director (or fellow member) to move down or up a level.

1	2	3
6	5	4
7	8	
9	10	

Tustin Pickleball
Courts

Novice (Court 1)

- ☐ Understands basic rules and scoring, how to serve, where to stand, double bounce rule, kitchen rules
- ☐ Has reliable serves and returns, but lacks depth and consistency
- ☐ Has basic control of forehands and backhands
- ☐ Hits medium paced volleys but lacks consistency
- ☐ Moves forward after serve/return but may hesitate or get caught in the transition zone
- ☐ Occasionally attempts a 3rd shot drop, but is more comfortable with a 3rd shot drive
- ☐ Can occasionally block or reset a hard shot from the transition zone
- ☐ Dinks occasionally but lacks consistency

Intermediate (Courts 2, 3, 4, 5)

- ☐ Serves with depth and consistency
- ☐ Returns deep to push opponents back to maintain control of the kitchen line
- ☐ Executes 3rd shot drops with moderate consistency to move to the kitchen line successfully
- ☐ Hits forehands and backhands both cross court and down the line with topspin or slice
- ☐ Displays quick reactions, paddle positioning, and footwork to hit punch and block volleys
- ☐ Able to hit a reset shot from the transition zone to turn a fast or difficult shot into a soft neutralizing shot
- ☐ Engages opponents in short dink rallies (3+ shots) but lacks consistency on height and depth of shots
- ☐ Starting to develop a soft game to create advantage

Adv Intermediate/Advanced (Courts 6, 7, 8)

- ☐ Serves and returns with accuracy, depth, and spin
- ☐ Hits to specific targets- feet, sidelines, gaps to force poor positioning or to set up attack opportunities
- ☐ Moves from the baseline to the kitchen line smoothly using a 3rd shot drop, or drive and 5th shot drop approach
- ☐ Engages opponents in extended dink rallies (5+ shots) with varying spin, height, and depth of shots
- ☐ Chooses the right shot based on opponent score, momentum, and court position (e.g., when to attack, speed up)
- ☐ Neutralizes aggressive attacks by resetting pace and hitting drop shots into the kitchen under pressure
- ☐ Displays fast hands and reflex control to win hands battles at the kitchen line
- ☐ Makes few unforced errors

Advanced/Expert (Challenge Courts 9, 10)

- ☐ Serves with variety of depth, spin, pace, and placement
- ☐ Hits shots with pinpoint control and accuracy- 3rd shot drops, dinks to the sideline, deep corner drives, etc.
- ☐ Uses advanced spin manipulation- topspin, backspin, and sidespin to add deception and force errors
- ☐ Engages opponents in extended dink rallies with accuracy, depth, and spin with offensive intent
- ☐ Can adjust pace/tempo, and exploit opponent tendencies
- ☐ Hits controlled reset shots under pressure from multiple court locations to regain position
- ☐ Executes attacks and counter attacks at the kitchen line out of the air or off the bounce, often with topspin rolls or flicks to force errors or create offensive opportunities
- ☐ Displays explosive hand speed and anticipation to dominate fast exchanges at the net
- ☐ Rarely makes unforced errors