Tustin Pickleball Policy of Play

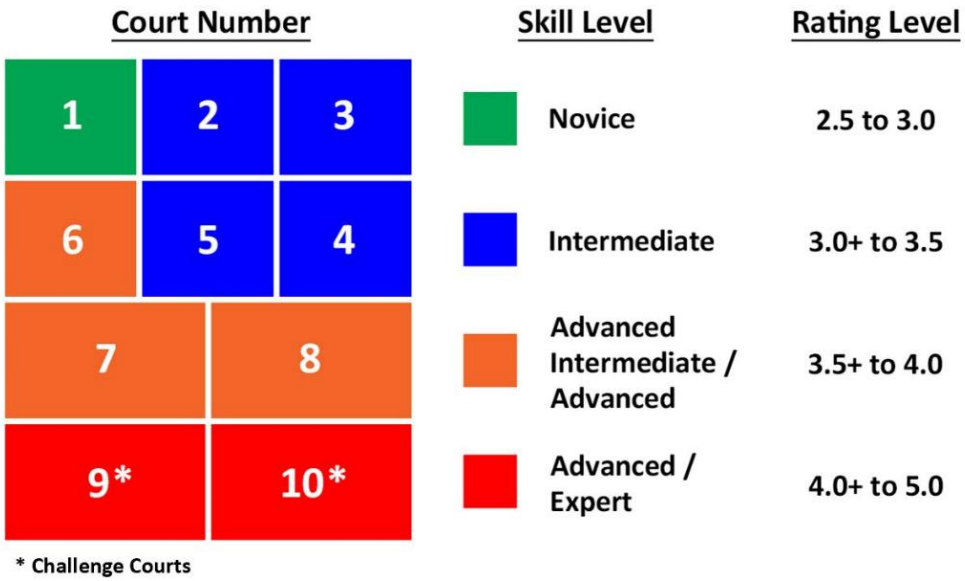
Tustin Pickleball offers organized, skill level open play using a drop-in format during the hours of **7:00am to 11:00am Monday through Saturday**

This **Policy of Play** is intended to promote player safety, fair and efficient court utilization, good sportsmanship, and an enjoyable recreational and competitive environment for all Tustin Pickleball members and guests.

Participation by junior players is governed by the **Junior Players Policy** contained in **Appendix 1** of this **Policy of Play**. In addition to complying with all main provisions of this **Policy of Play**, all junior players and their parents or guardians are required to comply with the provisions of **Appendix 1.**

1. Court Skill Levels and Usage

Players should play/challenge on to courts designated for their skill level.



- If there is an open court, players of any skill level may temporarily use that court, provided fewer than four players assigned to that court's designated skill level are waiting to play.
- To evenly distribute wait times across all courts, the directors of Tustin Pickleball present that day can make an assessment to determine whether to temporarily reassign a court's skill level designation and move players around.
- At all times, players are expected to play on the right level courts and follow the **Skill Level Guidelines** contained in **Appendix 2** of this **Policy of Play**. Based on observed skill level, repeated game results, and/or safety considerations, directors or designated Court Monitors may redirect a player to a different skill-level court.

2. Player Rotation Rules

- Games will be played to 11 points, win by 1.
- To challenge on, players shall place their paddles in the paddle rack located on the court.

Courts 1 through 8:

- If 1, 2 or 3 paddles are waiting when a game ends, rotation is 2 on, 2 off. If 4 or more paddles are waiting when a game ends, rotation is 4 on, 4 off. Winners can stay for 2 wins in a row when rotation is 2 on, 2 off.
- If rotation is 2 on, 2 off, and a team wins 2 games in a row, all 4 players exit and the losing team gets priority in the queue. When rotation is 4 on, 4 off, all 4 players exit and winners get priority.
- The limit of 2 consecutive wins applies to individual players rather than teams. A substitution does not reset a player's consecutive-win count.
- If a player is not present on the court and ready to start when their turn is up, they immediately lose their place in line and must wait for the next game.

Challenge Courts 9 and 10:

- Rotation is always 2 on, 2 off, regardless of the number of paddles waiting. Winners can stay for up to 3 wins in a row.
- If a team wins 3 games in a row, all 4 players exit and the winners get priority in the queue.
- The limit of 3 consecutive wins applies to individual players rather than teams. A substitution does not reset a player's consecutive-win count.
- If a player is not present on the court and ready to start when their turn is up, they immediately lose their place in line and must move to the back of the queue.

Based on wait times, the directors of Tustin Pickleball present that day can make an assessment to determine whether to temporarily change the above rotation rules (e.g. change rotation on a Challenge Court to 4 on, 4 off) and/or set a time limit on games on any court.

Other Rules (all courts)

- Warm-up time is limited to 2 minutes whenever players are waiting.
- A player who loses two games by seven or more points must move down a level or may be subject to review by a director or Court Monitor and may be directed to move to a lower-level court.
- On courts 2 and 5, if a ball in play lands on the expansion joint (located on the centerline of the court), the point shall be stopped immediately and replayed.
- Only one paddle per player can be used to either play in a game or wait in a queue. Multiple paddles are not allowed.
- Players wanting to play together as a team (e.g. for tournament practice) or as a group, can place their paddles together moving *back* in the queue.
- Playing music on the courts is prohibited.

Use of Game Timers

Use of timers shall be an option to limit the length of games when 8 or more players are waiting on a court. Use of timers can be initiated by a director or volunteer staff member present that day. When timers are used, the timer shall be set to 15 minutes and countdown begins when all 4 players are on the court. The 15 minute time limit includes up to 2 minutes for warm up. If a game is tied at the end of 15 minutes, the next point wins the game, regardless of serve.

3. Active Court Safety Rules

- Do not cross a court during play. Wait until a rally has ended before crossing.
- If your ball enters into another active court, shout "ball on" to alert the court's players, and let the court's players return the ball.
- If a loose ball enters your court, shout "ball on" and stop play immediately. Return the ball to the other court and replay the point.

In addition to player safety, the goal of Tustin Pickleball is to provide its members a fun, recreational and competitive social activity. It is the responsibility of each member to know the rules and abide by them. Failure to comply with the **Policy of Play** may result in corrective action, including verbal warnings, suspension of playing privileges, or termination of membership, as determined by the Board of Directors.

4. Non-Organized Play Guidelines

Outside of its organized, drop-in play schedule, Tustin Pickleball, in partnership with the Tustin Unified School District (TUSD), promotes the following guidelines for court use:

- Court use, in order of priority: 1) TUSD for school or district use; 2) Holders of a TUSD Facilities Use Permit; 3) Walk-on players and/or groups.
- For walk-on players and/or groups, courts are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- A walk-on player or group may remain on a court for one hour beyond the time at which other individuals or groups arrive to play, provided all other courts are occupied.
- Drop-in players are not automatically guaranteed opportunities to play into a group on non-organized play days. However, in keeping with the spirit of Tustin Pickleball and the international pickleball community, groups are encouraged to include drop-in players whenever possible—provided they are of the same skill level.

Please note that Tustin Pickleball is not responsible for the unlocking/opening of the courts outside of its organized, drop-in play schedule, and members should not contact TUSD directly regarding availability of the courts for Tustin Pickleball.

Appendix 1 – Junior Players Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for junior participation at Tustin Pickleball while ensuring a safe and enjoyable environment for all members and guests. A junior player is defined as any participant who is 15 to 17 years of age.

Eligibility and Participation

- Juniors are permitted to play at Tustin Pickleball as drop-in players.
- Juniors are subject to the applicable daily drop-in fee and must comply with all Tustin Pickleball rules, policies, and court etiquette.

Waiver Requirement - Prior to participating, the Tustin Pickleball waiver form must be signed at the check-in desk by the junior player's parent or legal guardian.

Parent or Guardian Supervision - A parent or legal guardian must be present at all times while the junior is participating at Tustin Pickleball. The parent or guardian must remain on the court where the junior is playing, either as a player participating in the game or as a spectator observing the activity. Juniors may not participate without the required parent or guardian supervision.

Exceptions

Exceptions to any provision of this **Junior Players Policy** may be granted at the discretion of a Tustin Pickleball director who is present on the day of play. In considering whether to grant an exception, the director may evaluate factors including, but not limited to:

- The junior player's age, physical maturity, and ability to safely participate with adult players.
- The junior player's demonstrated skill level, court awareness, and understanding of pickleball etiquette and safety.
- A current and verifiable DUPR rating.
- Tournament, league, or other organized competitive playing experience.
- Prior participation at Tustin Pickleball and demonstrated sportsmanship and conduct.

A director may waive the parent or guardian supervision requirement for a junior player who, in the director's judgment, demonstrates sufficient maturity, skill, and ability to safely participate with adult players. Any waiver or exception may be limited to a specific date, event, or period of time and may be revoked at any time.

Tustin Pickleball reserves the right to deny or terminate a junior's participation if the requirements of this policy are not met or if a director determines that participation is not in the best interests of Tustin Pickleball or its members.

Appendix 2 – Skill Level Guidelines

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.

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

Tustin Pickleball