



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**

The following guidelines and rules apply during the hours of operation:

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

<u>Court Number</u>			<u>Skill Level</u>	<u>Rating Level</u>
1	2	3	Novice	2.5 to 3.0
6	5	4	Intermediate	3.0+ to 3.5
7	8		Advanced Intermediate / Advanced	3.5+ to 4.0
9*	10*		Advanced / Expert	4.0+ to 5.0

* Challenge Courts

- To challenge on, players shall place their paddles in the paddle rack located on the court.
- If there is an open court, players of any skill level may temporarily play on that court, provided there are fewer than four players of that court's designated skill level waiting on other courts. Once four or more players of the court's designated skill level are waiting to play on other courts, the temporary players must vacate the court.
- Based on wait times, 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.

Player Rotation Rules –

- Games will be played to 11 points, win by 2.
- Winners stay on and losers exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Next 2 players in the queue play the winners.
- Rotation continues with 2 players off, 2 players on. If only 1 player is waiting, that player will team with 1 of the losing players.
- Winners can stay on and win 2 games in a row. After the second win, all 4 players exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Losing players get priority in the queue ahead of the winners.
- Rotation changes to 3 or 4 on, 3 or 4 off, when 3 or more players are waiting on each of the courts of the same skill level. For example, once 3 or more players are waiting on courts 2, 3, 4, and 5, rotation becomes 3 or 4 on/off for all Intermediate (blue) courts. Similarly, once 3 or more players are waiting on courts 6, 7, and 8, rotation becomes 3 or 4 on/off for all Advanced Intermediate/Intermediate (orange) courts. For Novice (green) court 1, rotation changes to 3 or 4 on/off once 3 or more players are waiting. If

only 3 players are waiting, 1 winner will stay on for the next game. Winning players get priority at the end of the queue ahead of the losing players.

- Courts 9 and 10 are “Challenge Courts” for advanced/expert players in which the above rotation rules do not apply. Regardless of the number of players waiting, winners can stay on and win up to 3 games in a row. After the third win, all 4 players exit and place their paddles at the end of the queue. Winning players get priority in the queue ahead of the losing players.

Other Rules –

- 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) can place their paddles together moving back in the queue. For example, if your paddle is second in the queue and your partner’s paddle is fourth in the queue, you would move your paddle right behind your partner’s paddle so that the player who was third is now second and you and your partner are third and fourth up.
- 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.
- Warm-up time is limited to 2 minutes whenever players are waiting.
- If a player loses 2 games by 7 or more points, they must move down a level.
- Based on wait times (in addition to temporarily changing a court’s skill level designation), the directors of Tustin Pickleball present that day can make an assessment to determine whether to temporarily change 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.
- All players are expected to follow the “Skill Level Guidelines” (see Appendix 1) to determine which court to play on. Based on the guidelines, overall wait times, and/or the final scores of games, the directors of Tustin Pickleball or board designated “Court Monitors” may redirect players to a different level court.
- Playing music on the courts is prohibited.

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 rally.

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 abide by the rules in the Policy of Play can result in the loss of a player’s membership in Tustin Pickleball.

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.

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

Tustin Pickleball