

Safety and Rules – The Foundation of Every Great Player

Before learning advanced shots or strategy, every new pickleball player should develop a solid understanding of safety and the basic rules of the game. These fundamentals not only make learning easier—they also help prevent injuries and build confidence on the court.

In the complete **Pickleball for Beginners** manual, you'll learn the essential safety principles every player should know, including proper ready position, partner communication, eye protection, safe court movement, and Coach Tom's "Safety First" philosophy. You'll also find easy-to-follow explanations of the official rules, scoring, serving, the double-bounce rule, the Non-Volley Zone (Kitchen), line calls, court etiquette, and good sportsmanship.

As a sample of what's included in the manual, we've provided two of the most important beginner lessons:

- **2.4 – Keep Your Paddle Up** – Learn why proper paddle position helps you react faster, protect yourself from fast shots, and become a more confident player.
- **4.3 – The Drop Serve** – Understand the fundamentals of a legal serve and how to start every point with confidence.

These two lessons are just a small introduction to the complete **Pickleball for Beginners** manual, which contains full-color illustrations, step-by-step instruction, coaching tips, practice ideas, and safety-first guidance designed to help you build a strong foundation and enjoy the game for years to come.

Remember: Play safely today so you can play again tomorrow.

2.4 Keep Your Paddle Up

One of the simplest habits that improves both safety and performance is keeping your paddle up whenever you're near the kitchen line.

A paddle held in front of your body:

- Helps you react faster.
- Makes blocking easier.
- Helps you stay prepared; protective eyewear is still important.
- Keeps you ready for the next shot.



An Excerpt from My Beginner's Manual

4.3 The Drop Serve

To Perform a Drop Serve

- Release the ball from a natural, unaided height.
- Release the ball naturally—do **not** throw or propel it upward, downward, or in any direction. Applying force to the ball as you release it results in a fault.
- Strike the ball **after it has bounced**.
- The serve must still meet all other serving requirements, including landing in the correct diagonal service court.

Coach Tom's Tip:

The Drop Serve is often easier for beginners because you don't have to coordinate dropping and striking the ball at the same time. It allows you to focus on developing a smooth, consistent serve with greater confidence.

The Drop Serve can make serving easier for many beginners.

Drop serve reminders

Let the ball fall naturally and bounce before you strike it. Do not toss it up, push it down, or add spin with your hand.

The volley-serve restrictions on contact height, paddle position, and upward swing do not apply to a drop serve.

At contact, keep at least one foot grounded behind the baseline. Neither foot may touch the baseline or court, or the ground outside the imaginary extensions of the sideline and centerline.

Aim diagonally into the opposite service court, beyond the kitchen line. A serve that touches the kitchen line is a fault.

Practice goal: Make five relaxed drop serves to the correct diagonal court. Focus on a natural release and balanced finish.

Rules reference: USA Pickleball Rules Summary
usapickleball.org/rules/summary/

Coach Tom's Beginner Checklist

Before every game, ask yourself...

- ☐ I have my **protective eyewear** on.
- ☐ I'm wearing **proper court shoes**.

And during the game...

- ☐ My paddle is **up and in front** when I'm near the kitchen line.
- ☐ I'm staying in an **athletic ready position** with my weight slightly forward.
- ☐ I communicate with my partner using "**Mine**" and "**Yours**."
- ☐ I avoid backpedaling; I turn and move only when I can do so safely.
- ☐ I call the **score clearly** before serving.
- ☐ I make **honest line calls**—if I'm not sure, the ball is **IN**.
- ☐ I wait until the **court is clear** before entering or crossing another court.
- ☐ I remember to **have fun, encourage others, and play safely today so I can play again tomorrow**.

Coach Tom's Golden Rule

Avoid backpedaling. Turn and move safely when possible. If you cannot reach a ball safely, let it go.