



THE PICKLEBALL GURU'S LIST OF...

The 5 Biggest Pickleball Mistakes You Could Be Making Every Time You Play

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MISTAKE #1: NOT GETTING UP TO + STAYING AT THE NO-VOLLEY LINE

You've Gotta GET Up to The Line

Many people think that they are “at the line” if they are within about two feet of it. When *I* say “at the line” I mean you better have your feet about two *inches* from the line.

LOTS OF PEOPLE ASK, “BUT WON'T I MAKE LOTS OF FOOT FAULTS IF I'M THAT CLOSE TO THE LINE?”

Well, that's the trick. You need to always know where you are in relationship to the line, and plant your feet *right behind it*, so that you *know* that the only time you're going to step forward is to take a ball off the bounce, which is, of course, when it's perfectly legal to step over the line.

It's something you need to drill on so that you don't get called on foot faults, or worse, NOT get called on them, marvel at the excellent shots you're hitting, and then find out after the fact that they weren't actually as legal as you thought.

You've Gotta STAY Up at The Line

Getting up to the line is not the same as staying at the line. Often times a player will do a great job of coming right up to the back of the line. But two shots later, you've backed up a good two or three feet from the kitchen.

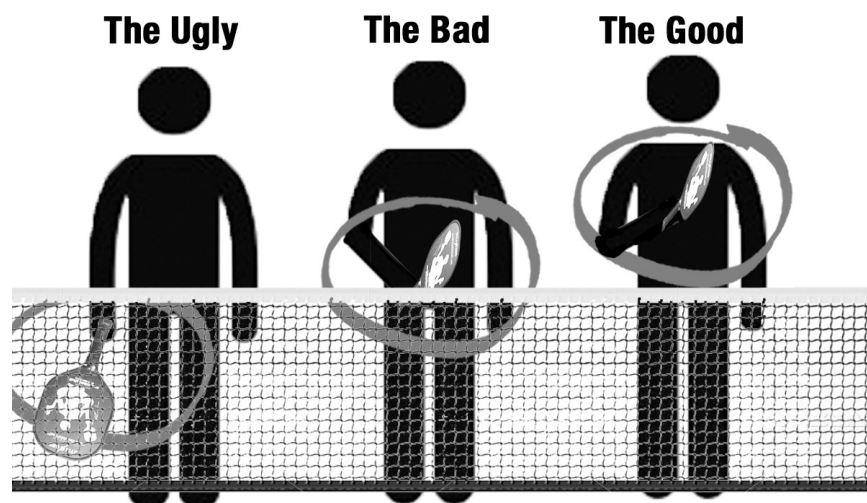
I always tell my students, never, ever, ever back up from the line to take a ball. Once you back up, it's hard to come back, and it's more likely your opponent will just keep hitting the ball at your feet to push you farther and farther back from the line, shot by shot.

Here's What to Do Instead

Look down at your feet at the end of every point and notice how far you are from the kitchen line. If you're not within 2"-3" of the line, chances are, that's why you lost the point.

MISTAKE #2: NOT KEEPING YOUR PADDLE UP

When I ask players to show me their ready position, they each bring their paddle up to varying degrees, but most of them are all in the range between bad and ugly, as shown on the diagram below.



You see, when you're standing at the kitchen line, the net is about 32"-34" tall depending on where you're positioned. When I ask players to show me on your body how high the net goes. They usually indicate somewhere between their belly button and their crotch.

I explain that the net is protecting you from there down. So you need to focus on protecting yourself from that line *up*. Then I ask them to show me their ready position again.

When someone hits a hard ball toward your torso and your paddle is down in front of your belly, one of two things is going to happen. Either you'll direct the ball from your paddle downward, in which case it's going to land into the net, or you're going to hit it upward, in which case you'll pop it up to give your opponent an even better opportunity at the next shot.

Here's What to Do Instead

Keep your paddle up high, in front of you, and BRING IT BACK UP AFTER EVERY SHOT.

MISTAKE #3: DEPENDING ON MENTAL TELEPATHY

Ha! You probably didn't think of yourself as someone who relies on mental telepathy but if you aren't communicating with your partner about each and every shot, then you might as well be.

Partner communication can make you play better no matter who your partner is, and ESPECIALLY if it's your hubby or your wife...

Now, when your team hits a shot down the middle, it often leaves your opponents both thinking the other person was going to get the ball, and therefore neither of them gets it. Score one for your team!

Of course, it's fantastic when it's your opponents who are confused. But it's frustrating and sometimes embarrassing when you and your partner are the ones who are confused.

Equally as frustrating is the situation in which you are all set up to make an excellent shot and your partner goes in to make a less-than-stellar smash into the net. (Not to mention—AHEM!!—the case in which you are the one to take a great shot from your partner...)

YOU MIGHT ASK, "BUT, IT'S HARD ENOUGH FOR ME TO CONCENTRATE ON HITTING A GOOD SHOT, AND NOW YOU WANT ME TO TALK DURING MY SHOT?"

Here's the good news.

First of all, you shouldn't have to talk WHILE you're hitting the ball.

Second, have you managed to master being able to talk while walking? (If not, maybe you should go work on that first.) This isn't very different, it's just a matter of practice.

Forgive me for being Captain Obvious here, but if you're calling the ball WHILE you are hitting it, it is already way too late. When you call the ball, it should be just a millisecond after your OPPONENT hits the ball, and BEFORE either you or your partner is going to hit it.

Here's What to Do Instead

Practice calling EVERY SINGLE SHOT so you'll be in the habit and will call it on the ones that really count.

MISTAKE #4: NOT ORIENTING YOURSELF TO THE BALL + YOUR OPPONENTS (A.K.A. SUFFERING FROM LEADEN FEET)

In case you haven't noticed, pickleball is a fast-moving game. You can be in a great position for one shot, and in the blink of an eye, the ball is somewhere else and you're suddenly out of position.

To stay in position, you should move left and right to follow the ball. If the person in front of your partner has the ball, move in that direction. If the person opposite you has the ball, cover your line (what would be "the alley" in tennis).

Even if you're just not a runner...

Or you're old...

Or you're tired...

Or both...

Here's What to Do Instead

Shuffle your feet or take a step left or right to follow the ball throughout the course of the point and you'll go a long way toward covering more of the balls that come your way.

5. AFFLICTED BY BAD KARMA FROM BEING A PICKLEBALL SNOB

Without a doubt, the best way for you to keep improving is to play with better players. It forces you to play at the top of your ability, makes you pay for your mistakes, and puts you on the fast-track to a higher skill level.

But if you attempt to only ever play with players who are better than you, then you are, what I call, a pickleball snob, and I believe it will cost you.

Remember, someone took you under their wing when you first started playing, so pay it forward and make a point to regularly play with players who are weaker than you. Perhaps you regularly play a warmup game with them, or once a week you decide to dedicate the last half of your play to playing with them. Not only does it build community, it also helps raise the general level of play.

If players ask to play with you, and you opt to play a higher-level game, let them know when you WOULD be willing to play, perhaps later in the day, or later in the week.

Don't be patronizing—or overly aggressive. Instead of focusing on who wins or loses, find a way to make it challenging for yourself. Pick a shot you want to improve upon and focus on hitting that shot. Or, try to reduce your number of unforced errors. Focus on keeping the ball in play rather than slamming every put-away shot.

Consider how YOU'D like to be approached when lower level players ask to play with you and approach the better players that

way. (This is The Golden Rule, folks, nothin' new, just plain old common sense.)

Here's What to Do Instead

Play regularly with lower-level players and be considerate when you try to play with better players.

Didja Find This List Helpful?

Want to Find Out What Mistake YOU Are Making Every Time You Play?

(After working with 1000s of students, I can promise you there's always a biggie that you're overlooking...)



If you want to get EXACT feedback on what you're doing right and wrong when you play, a Customized Video Analysis Report might be for you.

Just [click here for more information](#) and to order yours.

Otherwise, I wish you all the best and I look forward to seeing you out there on the courts soon.



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Warmest Regards,

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