

# Beginner Pickleball Lesson Plan

## Notes to Instructor:

- Have plenty of practice balls available
- Make sure all participants have appropriate athletic shoes
- Pass out practice paddles from BPRD supply (or your club's extras)

## Introduction to Class:

**5 minutes**

- Instructor introduces self (name only; no chatting about yourself)
- Objectives of class: introduction to the basic skills, rules and etiquette that will enable you to play the game by the end of today's session
- Flow of class: instructor will explain and demo; students will follow and practice
- Encourage them to ask questions at any time (Questions often lead to an opportunity to explain procedures and rules without a lecture on rules)

## First Demo and Exercise – Dinking from the Kitchen Line

**10-15 minutes**

- Objective: get a feel for the paddle, how hard to hit the ball, understand how the ball bounces, establish ball control
- Demonstrate proper grip on paddle (form 'V' between thumb and index finger). Grip towards bottom of paddle handle, so butt of paddle rests on heel of the hand. Have all students imitate.
- Demonstrate stroke: lift from underneath the ball with firm wrist, top of paddle tilted down to ground at about 45 degrees, paddle face flat. Hit a few shots with one of the players. Have students imitate without the ball.
- Have students practice with each other. Option: for more control and better practice, have instructor(s) stay on one side of the net and dink balls to students, being sure to hit the ball TO the student to give them the best opportunity to return the ball. Emphasize 'eye on ball'. Make sure ball lands within the kitchen. Observe form and offer help as needed. Stay positive. Congratulate good shots.
- Explain "volley" – hitting ball in the air with no bounce. Step into NVZ (non-volley zone) /Kitchen to hit ball only if ball bounces in the Kitchen. Kitchen line is part of the kitchen; must not touch line when hitting volley.

## **Second Demo and Exercise – Forehand and Backhand from Midcourt 20 minutes**

- Instructor faces net. Students stand to instructor's right (if right-handed instructor) to watch demo
- Demonstrate forehand (without ball)
  - Start in 'ready position' – knees bent, paddle up in front and middle of body
  - Keeping eye on ball, step forward with off-leg (opposite of paddle arm)
  - shifting weight as you step,
  - shoulders turn so off-shoulder (opposite of paddle arm) points across net to target,
  - Keep looking at the ball (not the target) and swing side-arm. keeping paddle face straight and perpendicular to ground
  - Swing through 4 lined up imaginary balls to follow through, finishing with paddle pointing at target
  - Have students imitate forehand without ball
- Arrange students across the net from each other (no more than 2 students per side at one time) at mid-court for forehand practice. For first round, have students on one side toss the ball to the opposing player's forehand side; then reverse tossers and hitters. (If students have difficulty tossing balls with some accuracy, line students up on one side of the net, one behind the other. Have instructor(s) on the other side of the net tossing balls to students one at a time. Give each student about 3 balls before sending that person to back of line and tossing to the next student. Have waiting students act as ball shaggers. ) Once some ability is demonstrated, have each side hit the ball back and forth.
- If the group is small (<6 students), better option is to have the instructor feed the ball to the students who have lined up one behind the other at mid court. If there is no assistant to the instructor, have a couple of students take turns and rotate from the practice group to act as ball shaggers then back to the practice group. Have each individual hit 3-5 balls per turn. Observe form and offer help as needed. Stay positive. Congratulate good shots.
- During practice draw attention to safety issue – never back up to hit ball above head = high percentage of accidents. Instead turn sideways and take small steps while keeping an eye on ball or turn around and run to back of court and wait for ball to come down.
- If balls roll into other courts, stop play and explain "ball in court" call for safety and how to return ball to appropriate player. Court etiquette: return the ball gently to an individual on the team that lost it once that person is expecting it. Don't just whack the ball back.
- Demonstrate backhand using similar process to forehand. It's especially important to turn shoulder for backhand shot. Difference with backhand vs forehand: step into the ball with

the **same** leg as backhand arm. Have students imitate without ball. Observe and correct as appropriate.

- Arrange students as before for backhand drill. Observe and coach for improvement.

### **Third Demo and Exercise – Serving**

**20 minutes**

- Describe basic rules: server stands behind baseline and between sideline and center line; must use underhand motion, paddle below wrist and ball contact below waist. Ball must land in opposite diagonal space beyond kitchen line. Describe “let” vs service fault.
- Describe and demonstrate technique (like bowling), first without a ball, then with a ball:
  - Align body to target
  - Keep wrist locked and paddle face flat
  - Bend knees, keep head down, take step forward with off-leg as paddle arm goes back, drop ball low and in front of off-foot as paddle arm swings forward to target
- Have students imitate the motion in place without ball
- Depending on the number of students, have one student act as receiver/shagger, collecting balls in bucket. Rest line up at opposite base line with each student taking 3-4 serves each. As each student finishes serving, goes to receiving side and acts as receiver/shagger. Former receiver goes to end of line of servers. Observe and coach for improvement. As always, be positive.
- Explain scoring: (Starting score 0-0-2) Each side gets 2 serves, except at the start of the game. Because the first team to serve has the advantage of having the first opportunity to score, they only get one serve. Give them a couple of score examples for clarification. Tell them they’ll be playing a game next and each server must call the score each time before he or she serves.

### **Student Game**

**30 minutes**

Now that students have practiced all basic skills, they’re ready to play a game.

- Assign 4 students to a court (If more students than available courts, have non-players observe.) Explain starting positions on the court, score only when serving. Explain 2-bounce rule. As a reminder for proper player positioning on court, tell them to “stay with the ball”. That means that when one person is serving, the partner should stay back at the baseline where the ball is. (purpose – allow second bounce before 3<sup>rd</sup> shot). When the

other team is serving, the player opposite the server should stay up at the kitchen line --- as close to being with the ball as they can get --- while the receiver on that team stays back.

- Have initial player call the score (with help from the group if necessary) and serve (give them at least 2 attempts to get the serve in). Let them play as long as they can keep a rally going. Explain rules as you go along only when needed. Eg., if team scores a point, have server rotate to other court; if ball goes out of bounds, call “Out” and explain impact on points, server. Instructor should call out “point”, “second server”, “side out” as appropriate so players can get the sense of the game.
- Encourage players to move up to the net as quickly as possible after the second bounce – that’s where the game is controlled.
- After a few rallies, take a minute to explain scoring, if you have not already done so. Now have each server call the score before they serve, encouraging the group to help them if they get stuck.
- Let them have fun. Help them along. Be encouraging, not critical.
- Normal game goes to 11, but for this practice limit games to 4 or 5 points in order to give everyone a chance to participate.
- At the end of each game, show students how to come to the net and touch paddles and thank each other for the game – part of the social etiquette. Add that when they play people they don’t know, introduce themselves across the net before the start of the game.

### **Wrap-Up**

**5 minutes**

- Ask for any final questions.
- Tell them about the Bend Pickleball Club ([bendpickleballclub.com](http://bendpickleballclub.com)) and hand out the BPC info sheet
- Inform them that they can join in on organized play and to check the club website for the most current schedule.
- Thank them for coming to learn the great sport of pickleball!
- Collect paddles and ask for help picking up balls