

2021 USA Pickleball Rules - Key Changes

You might want to read up on the new 2021 USA Pickleball rules. However, the document is 81 pages long and 90% of the rules pertain to tournament players. Many of the rules remain the same, but changes were made for clarifications for refs and players. We condensed and highlighted some of the new rules and added our own simplified wording. Enjoy!

New rule re service lets: The definition Service Lets has been removed from the rules. Starting in 2021, there will be no rule governing service lets. Even if the serve touches the net, as long as the serve lands past the NVZ line and in the appropriate receiving court, the ball is live and no replay shall be called. Out of habit, players may sometimes habitually call a service let. If any player stops play because of a service let being called, that player/team will have committed a fault. This is going to be hard to get used to, but this change is part of the goal to prevent receivers from calling phantom lets on 'ace' serves.

Paddles: Hand-drawn or handwritten markings are allowed on the paddle's playing surface as long as they do not impact the surface roughness and are in good taste. No aftermarket graphics are allowed on a commercially made paddle other than "hand-drawn" or "handwritten" pen markings.

New Provisional Rule Drop Serve: In addition to the standard serve, players may opt to use an alternate "drop serve" method. Servers must release the ball from one of the server's hands from a natural height and hit the ball after the ball bounces on the playing surface. The server's release of the ball must be visible to the receiver. Servers may use the normal serve or provisional drop serve at any time during the match. No notification is needed. **Reasons for this rule change:** 1. Provides a better serve method for the physically impaired. 2. Easier serve to teach beginners. 3. Provides an alternate serve method for those who have the "yips".

Ball hitting your hand: It is a fault if the ball contacts a player or anything the player is wearing or carrying. Except, if the ball hits the player's hand below the wrist provided hand is on the paddle. If the player is in the process of changing hands with both hands on the paddle or is attempting a two-handed stroke and either hand is hit below the wrist, the ball is still in play.

Double hits. Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during an unintentional, continuous, single-direction stroke, by one player. If the stroke is not continuous or not in a single direction, it is a fault.

Broken or cracked Ball. If any player suspects the ball is or becomes cracked after the serve, play must continue until the end of the rally. If a broken or cracked ball impacted the outcome of a rally, but the players do not agree that the cracked ball impacted the outcome, the rally stands as played.

Calling the score: The server normally calls the score, but the server's partner may call the score if the server is unable to call the score with sufficient volume. In the latter case, the person calling the score shall not change during the game.

Ask your opponent: A player/team may ask the opponent's opinion to make the line call on the player's side of the court. If requested and the opponent makes a clear "in" or "out" call, it must be accepted. If the opponents cannot make a clear "in" or "out" call, then the ball is ruled as being "in" on the receiving team. The moment the receiving player/team asks for the opponent's opinion, they lose their right to make any subsequent "in" or "out" call for that rally

Call faults on yourself: In the spirit of good sportsmanship, players are expected to call faults on themselves as soon as the fault is committed or detected. The fault call must happen before the next server occurs. For non-officiated matches, if a player believes the opponent(s) have committed a fault, they may mention the specific fault to the player(s), but have no authority to enforce them. The final decision on fault resolution belongs to the player that allegedly committed the fault.

Fair play: After the completion of a rally, players may overrule a partner's line call, or an opponent's "in" call to their own disadvantage.

[Preview YouTube Video - 2021 Top 4 Pickleball Rule Changes](#)