

THE PICKLEBALL GURU'S TIPS FOR "PLAYING DOWN"



When you play with or against players who are WEAKER than you:

- Remember Where You Came From.** Who took you under their wing when you first started playing? Chances are you've improved your game since then by getting to play with better players, so pay it forward and make a point to regularly play with players who are weaker than you. You could regularly play a warm-up game with them, or once a week decide to dedicate the last 30-45 minutes of your play to playing with them, it's up to you. Just find a way to pay it forward.
- If Now's Not Good, Say When.** If someone asks to play with you and you opt to play a higher-level game instead, let them know when you **WOULD** be willing to play, perhaps later in the day, or later in the week.
- Give Them a Head's Up On How Long You'll Stay.** When you do play, let them know in advance how long you're planning to play, you might say, *"I'd love to play with you all for a game or two, but then I'd like to get in with those other players."*
- 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 consistency and keeping the ball in play rather than slamming every put-away shot you get.
- Limit Your Feedback.** If you notice something they could be doing better, limit your feedback to one aspect of their game during play. Giving them too many pointers can overwhelm them. Plus, they're probably already a little nervous about being on the court with you, so don't be too critical. Afterwards, if you want to give them more background info on your pointer, or give them one additional pointer, go ahead, but start out by asking permission first, *"Would you like to hear more about what I noticed about your game?"*