

Pickleball Guelph Association

Ratings Guide

Knowledge and Skill Expectation Overview

As players progress through the various rating levels from 2.0 to 4.5 the expectation is that they demonstrate the knowledge and skills at the prior levels consistently and effectively as they are applying the new and/or finely tuned skills at the higher level. In other words, the knowledge and skills described below for each level assume an accumulation of skills.

It should be noted that the descriptions are not necessarily intended to be a “check list”. Rather, they are intended to be a synopsis of knowledge and skills expected at each level.

2.0 Players

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play:

Knowledge

- Understands the basic rules including two bounce rule, scoring and player position relative to scoring
- Demonstrates safety in all play
- Familiar with court positioning in doubles play
- Knows where to stand as the serve team and the return team

Skills

- Demonstrates:
 - A proper ready position
 - The basic shot strokes—forehand, backhand, dink, volley, overhead and serve, but lacks consistency in most strokes
 - Basic pendulum swing on the forehand & backhand side
 - Forehand and backhand groundstrokes swinging from low to high
- Executes:
 - Proper serve and return serve at a 40% success rate
 - Forehand and backhand punch volleys at a 40% success rate
 - Short rallies with other players
 - Forward and backward movement in a safe and balanced manner

2.5 Players - In addition to 2.0 skills

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the basic rules
- Aware of the “soft game”
- Understands strategies for approaching the non-volley zone for dinks & volleys
- Understands proper court coverage

Skills

- Demonstrates:
 - Proper serve and return serve at a 60% success rate
 - Consistent dinking down the line forehand & backhand at a 40% success rate
 - Overheads with the proper sideways turn, arm positioning and backward movement at a 40% success rate
 - Control on forehand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height) at a 50% success rate
 - Control on backhand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height) at a 40% success rate
 - Appropriate backhand shots keeping the ball in play at a 40% success rate
 - Punch volley forehands and backhands at a 50% success rate
- Attempts:
 - Drop shots from the transition zone 25% of the time
 - Drop shots from the baseline sporadically
 - Sustains longer lasting slow-paced rallies

3.0 Players- In addition to 2.5 skills

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play:

Knowledge

- Full and complete understanding of the rules
- Understands fundamentals
- Understands proper court positioning
- Understands the transition zone
- Understands moving as a team and tethering with a partner

Skills

- Demonstrates:
 - Getting to the non-volley zone after receiving serve at a 95% success rate
 - Pace and loft of return of serve to aid in getting to the non-volley zone
 - Medium paced serves and return of serve with depth, direction, and consistency
 - Hitting a medium paced ball with some intentional direction
 - Medium paced volley with appropriate direction and consistency
 - Placement of punch volleys to the back half of the court
 - Sustained dink rallies
 - Proper team movement to the non-volley zone
 - Control to keep ball in play during short rallies
 - Short volley exchanges at the net
 - Control of ground strokes, forehand and backhand
 - Overheads with appropriate control while maintaining proper position
 - Dinks down the line and cross court, forehand and backhand, in rallies of 5 shots or more
 - Drop shots from the transition zone at a 50% success rate
 - Drop shots from the baseline at a 40% success rate
 - Punch volley forehands and backhand, at a 60% success rate

- Serves and returns of serve at a 70% success rate
 - Overheads at a 60% success rate
 - Offensive lobs from the non-volley zone line at a 60% success rate
 - Proper position at non-volley zone (does not back up unnecessarily)
- Attempts:
 - Changing direction of dinks from crosscourt to down the line
 - Offensive lobs from the non-volley zone with understanding of when and where to hit them
 - Adjusting to different ball speeds (serves, groundstrokes, volleys)
 - 3rd shot drop shots with increased regularity

3.5 Players. In addition to 3.0 skills

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play:

Knowledge

- Beginning to understand the importance of strategy and teamwork in doubles
- Beginning to understand stacking and when and how it should be used during play
- Understands the difference between the hard game and the soft game
- Understands the strategy of the drop shot and its importance in getting your team to the non-volley zone

Skills

- Demonstrates:
 - Control of height and depth of dinks with consistent change of direction of from crosscourt to down the line, both forehand and backhand; dinks with purpose
 - Directional control with overheads, successful overheads at a 60% success rate
 - Punch volley, forehand and backhand, to the back half of the court at a 70% success rate
 - Drop shots, forehand and backhand, from the baseline at a 50% success rate
 - Drop shots, forehand and backhand, crosscourt and down the line, from the transition zone with an 80% success rate
 - Loftier and deeper returns to get to the non-volley zone effectively and efficiently
 - Improved control when adjusting to different ball speeds (serves, groundstrokes, volleys)
 - Offensive lobs from the non-volley zone line at a 60% success rate
 - Effective offensive lobs from the NVZ, hit when and where they should be
 - Ability to safely run down a lob and return with some control
 - Ability to sustain controlled volley exchanges at the net
 - Serves and returns of serve at an 85% success rate
 - Dependable strokes with directional control on most medium paced balls and some faster paced balls
 - A variety of shot choices, hit with control in respect to direction, depth and power
 - Ability to vary between hard and soft games during play
 - Aggressive net play when appropriate
 - Control when adjusting to different ball speeds and ability to anticipate opponent's shots

- Moving forward as a team to approach non-volley zone for dinks and volleys, moving quickly towards the non-volley zone when the opportunity is there
- Keeps ball in play during rallies and minimizes unforced errors
- Sustains medium length rallies
- Attempts drops on at least 50% of the opportunities embracing the idea of the drop shot and beginning to develop it to get to the non-volley zone
- Communicates effectively with partner, strong and effective teamwork
- Attempts:
 - The use of different strategies to expose opponent's weaknesses
 - Using stacking as a strategy during play

4.0 Players in addition to 3.5 skills

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play

Knowledge

- Understands the importance of strategy and teamwork in doubles
- Understands stacking and uses it when appropriate during play
- Understands the difference between the hard game and the soft game
- Understands the strategy of the drop shot and its importance in getting your team to the non-volley zone

Skills:

- Demonstrates:
 - Serves and returns of serve at a 95% success rate, showing variation in serves, with varying depth and speed
 - Successful drop shots; forehand, backhand, cross court and down the line, from the transition zone at an 80% success rate
 - Drop shots, forehand and backhand, from the baseline at a 60% success rate
 - Punch volleys, forehand and backhand, to the back half of the court at an 80% success rate
 - Block volleys, forehand and backhand, at a 60% success rate
 - Overheads at an 80% success rate • Offensive lobs from the non-volley zone line at an 80% success rate
 - Sustained patience in dinks and rallies • Increased dinking consistency with moderate ability to control height/depth
 - Purposeful dinking, looking to create a gap or high ball from the opponent
 - Ability to discern between attackable balls and those that are not
 - Ability to slow down or change the pace of a game using the dink shot and drop shot
 - Effective 3rd/5th/7th shot strategies—drop shots, lobs, and fast-paced ground strokes
 - Aggressive net play • Ability to control play at the non-volley zone by keeping opponents back at their baseline
 - Ability to consistently adjust to differing ball speeds
 - Consistent use of backhand and forehand ground strokes with direction, depth, height, and power
 - Ability to return volley a variety of shots at different speeds with consistency and control
 - The block/re-set volley
 - Directional control while sustaining a volley exchange
 - Effective poaching and understands when it's appropriate

- Defensive ability; defending drives and digging hard balls with limited success
- Solid understanding of stacking and when and how it could be used in match play
- Beginning to identify opponents' weaknesses and attempts to formulate game plan to attack weaknesses
- Understanding proper shot selection, minimal unforced errors per game • Attempts: • The use of spin on a variety of shots • Drop shots from the baseline after running down lobs with limited success

4.5 Players In addition to 4.0 skills

Knowledge and Skills Observed During Game play:

Knowledge

- Understands strategy and can adjust style of play and game plan according to the opponent's strengths, weaknesses, and court position
- Understands the concept of "keeping the ball in play" and the effect of making errors
- Understands completely the rules and can council others on specific topics, incidents, and interpretations

Skills:

- Demonstrates:
 - Good choices in shot selection, consistent use of power and spin, successful execution of all shots, control over depth of shots
 - Ability to handle pace, defensive ability to block and dig hard paced attacks
 - Ability to initiate and maintain an extended dink exchange
 - Ability to allow points to develop, showing patience
 - Ability to anticipate the opponent's shots resulting in good court positioning
 - Stacking with ease
 - Good footwork and moves laterally, backward, forward well using weight transfer for more efficient footwork
 - A high level of consistency with forehand and backhand shots using pace and depth to elicit opponent's error or set up the next shot
 - Serves and return of serves with power, accuracy, and depth and can vary the speed and spin of the serve
 - Ability to place dinks with success at changing shot types and offensive intent
 - Ability to attack and defend in dinking rallies
 - Consistent execution of effective 3rd, 5th, or 7th shot drop from the transition zone that are not easily returned for advantage
 - Intentional and consistent placement of the ball
 - Driving the ball for power as an option
 - Blocking hard volleys directed at them and consistently dropping them into the non-volley zone
 - Consistently hitting winning volleys when a ball is popped up
 - Sustained controlled volley exchanges at the non-volley zone with directional control creating unforced errors
 - Hitting overhead shots consistently, often as winners
 - Poaching effectively and understanding when it is appropriate
 - Changing a fast-paced strategy to a slow one and vice-versa
 - Swing volley both forehand and backhand, to the back half of the court at an 80% success rate

- Ability to block volley both forehand and backhand, at an 80% success rate
- Running down lobs and dropping them into the non-volley zone
- Drop shots, forehand, backhand, cross court and down the line, from the transition zone at an 80% success rate
- Drop shots, forehand, backhand, cross court and down the line, from the baseline at an 80% success rate
- Attempts:
 - Ernes and ATPs when possibilities arise
 - Proper defense for Ernes and ATPs