

Hello BVPA Pickleballers,

Welcome to the second edition in a series of monthly emails intended to provide informative, interesting and useful information about some of the technical aspects of pickleball around rules, skills and strategies.

I hope you found the first edition useful, interesting and fun. This edition focuses on some useful 'dinking' practice drills as well as a game strategy discussion for return of serve.

Rule of the Month: When can I be in the "kitchen" (also known as the Non Volley Zone)?

The answer I like is 'whenever I'm hungry'! However, in terms of pickleball, the answer to that question is sometimes more confusing and misunderstood by players of all levels.

The quick answer is that you can be in the pickleball kitchen anytime you want however you can never play a volley shot (i.e. a shot where the ball is hit without letting it bounce) while you are in or touching any part of the kitchen.

Quick FAQs that may help to clarify the understanding of this rule:

1. Can you ever step in the kitchen? YES, as long as you are not volleying while standing in the kitchen.
2. Can you go into the kitchen before the ball bounces? YES, as long as you don't hit the ball until after it bounces you are perfectly fine to enter the kitchen before it bounces. In some cases, anticipating this situation and getting into the kitchen before the ball bounces will help put you in a better position to play your shot.
3. Can I touch the kitchen line or enter the kitchen after I play a volley shot? NO, not if your momentum from your volley shot carries you into the kitchen. No part of your body or equipment can touch the kitchen after a volley shot until you regain full control of your body. This includes a paddle, body part or any other equipment (e.g. sunglasses) touching the kitchen zone. If that happens your team loses the rally.

So what does all that mean? Here's a short video that explains in more detail.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGfLXDTzJck>

For those that are into the detailed rulebook description, here is a link to download the official Canadian rulebook. Section 9 in the .pdf relates to Non Volley Zone rules.

<https://pickleballcanada.org/play-and-learn/official-pickleball-rules/>

Skill of the Month: Dinking Practice Drills

"Dink" shots are a key focus area in order to improve any player's overall game. There are generally four key components to focus on that in combination will help improve the quality of a person's dink shots.

1. Focus on having a low to high motion with your arms and legs.
2. Have a short swing path (almost like pushing the ball rather than hitting the ball). There is no need for a backswing or long follow through. This will help you control the ball.
3. Use your legs more than your arms - stay in a ready position with bent knees and use your legs to 'lift' the ball rather than hitting it with your arms. This will help you control the pace of the ball.
4. Work on controlling the depth of your shots - try to keep the ball in the front ½ of the other team's kitchen zone. This will ensure more of your shots are unattackable.

Here is a short video that explains each of the concepts in more detail.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo_iZnYxNI8

In order to practice these concepts, there are a couple fun dinking games that you can play when you first show up at your next pickleball session and you are going through your warm-up. The video in the link below explains both practice games. Try them out with your warm-up partners as a good way to work on the techniques noted above in a friendly, competitive situation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vakiJCINV6w>

Strategy of the Month: Return of serve: Drop it, drive it or survive it?

The return of serve is coming towards you. What shot do you choose to play next? Do you try a drop shot? Do you drive it back at the other team? Do you just try to survive it?

It's a great question that depends on a few factors: How high is the bounce? Do you have reach or go low to get a paddle on it? Does the return have a crazy amount of spin on it? Is it on your forehand or backhand? Thinking about these factors in advance and how you prefer to play the shot in each situation will help you and your team gain control of the rally and score more points. Here's a great video that explains and demonstrates the shot choices in each situation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7Xfb3YDzlo>

Pickleball Fun Facts

1. Pickleball was invented in 1965.
2. Pickleball was first invented by three dads up in Washington state. They created the game as a solution to their children's boredom during the summertime.
3. Pickleball was named after one of the inventor's, US Congressman Joel Pritchard's dog, whose name was Pickles.