



Sussex Pickleball Club: Official Court Etiquette

The goal of the **Sussex Pickleball Club** is to foster a community that is inclusive, safe, and respectful. Whether you are a seasoned pro or picking up a paddle for the first time, please adhere to these guidelines to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone.

I. The Culture of Respect

- **Introductions:** Start every match by introducing yourself to players you don't know.
- **The Paddle Tap:** Finish every game at the net with a paddle tap and a "Good game."
- **Fair Officiating:** Call lines fairly and give the benefit of the doubt to your opponents. If you didn't see it clearly, the ball was **IN**.

II. Coaching & Advice (The "Quiet Play" Policy)

To maintain a pressure-free environment, we enforce a strict **no unsolicited advice** policy.

- **No On-Court Coaching:** Refrain from telling teammates or opponents what they "should have done" during or after a rally.
- **Ask First:** Only offer technical or tactical feedback if a player explicitly asks for it.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Focus your energy on encouragement ("Great shot!", "Nice get!") rather than instruction.

III. Skill-Level Integrity & Safety

Matching power and skill appropriately is essential for injury prevention and player retention.

- **Mind the Gap:** Advanced players should avoid playing at maximum intensity (aggressive "body shots" or excessive slams) when playing with beginners.
- **Focus on Finesse:** In mixed-level games, higher-skill players are encouraged to practice their "soft game" (dinks and drops) rather than relying on power.
- **Safety Over Points:** Never compromise a player's safety for a point. If an opponent is out of position or vulnerable, play the ball to a safe area.

IV. Inclusive Open Play

Open Play sessions are designed for social rotation and community building.

- **The Rotation System:** Follow the designated paddle rack system or pre-arranged organized play of the session. Do not "stack" groups to bypass the rotation.
- **Welcome Newcomers:** Ensure no player is left sitting out for multiple rotations. If a foursome is needed, welcome the next person in line regardless of their rank.
- **Court Exit:** When your match is over, exit the court promptly so the next group can begin.

V. Court Safety & Logistics

- **"Ball On!":** If a ball enters your court from another game, stop play immediately. Call "Ball on!" and replay the point once the area is clear.
 - **Crossing Courts:** Never walk behind a court while a rally is in progress. Wait for the point to end and make eye contact with the players before crossing.
 - **Equipment:** Keep bags, water bottles, and extra paddles outside the fence or in designated gear areas to avoid tripping hazards.
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