



# Session Captain Guide

Bow Valley Pickleball Association

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# Introduction

Firstly, thank you for volunteering to be a BVPA Session Captain! This guide equips BVPA Session Captains with everything needed to run safe, fair, and fun games at all BVPA Scheduled Play sessions. It draws on best practices from various resources and established club operations across Canada and the United States. Keep a printed or digital copy of this guide on hand for every session! The checklists, templates, and decision charts are designed to be used live, not just read once.

This is your personal digital guide to keep, use and augment as you get more experience being a Captain! There will also be a Session Captain physical binder located at any location where BVPA books playing time. That binder will contain:

- Emergency Action Plan Procedures for that site;
- Emergency Action Plan Addresses and Contacts;
- Session Captain - Site Specific Instructions (e.g. set up and closing procedures, etc.);
- A copy of the Session Captain Guide (this document!);
- Copy of BVPA Court Acceptable Use Policy (when approved by the Board);
- Incident Report Forms;
- Non-Member Waiver Forms;
- Any other forms or documents needed for that specific location; and
- Plastic envelope with pens and for cash collected from Guest play.

## Section 1: The Session Captain Role

### What Is a Session Captain?

A Session Captain is the designated volunteer lead for a scheduled BVPA Scheduled Play session. The role is not about refereeing, it's about player coordination, fair rotation, welcoming atmosphere, and smooth logistics. The Session Captain is a key interface between the BVPA and its members.

### Why It Matters

- Provides a reliable point of contact for all players at the session.
- Reduces friction, confusion, and disputes.
- Protects BVPA's reputation as a well-run organization.

### Selection & Tenure

- Captains are recruited by the Play Committee and are assigned on a volunteer basis.
- Commitment: Varies depending on the individual, but we look for Captains that can participate throughout the season.
- A backup/co-captain may be designated for a large session or special event.
- Being a volunteer role, we recognize the Session Captain may be away for periods of time (vacations, etc.).

### Skills Needed

- Good knowledge of pickleball rules and BVPA Policies.
- Friendly, calm, and approachable manner.
- Basic organizational and communication skills.
- Able to de-escalate disputes calmly.

#### What You Get

- Non-official title of “Keeper of Good Vibes”.
- Input on session scheduling and format decisions.
- Direct connection to the Play Committee.

## Section 2: Pre-Session Preparation

Here are a series of quick checklists to follow the day before and day of a Scheduled Play session.

### 24 hours before Scheduled Play

- Confirm court booking on Trackie (venue and time block).
- Review the session type (e.g. Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Open).
- Review the Scheduled Play Format (e.g. round-robin, MLP, Box, SPD).
- Check expected player count via Trackie and follow-up as necessary.
  - For example, if two courts are booked for an Intermediate Scheduled Play session and seven people have signed up, see if you can find one (or two) more players so both courts are fully utilized and attendees can maximize play.
- Check the weather forecast (if playing on outdoor courts) and know the cancellation procedure.
- Optional: Send a pre-session welcome message to confirmed players (see Communication Tools, Section 9).

### Day of Session

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before session start time.
- Locate Session Captain Binder on site.
- Review and complete any site-specific beginning of session procedures found in the Session Captain Binder.
- Locate Play Format (e.g. Round-Robin) Binder on site
- Recruit help to ensure equipment is ready.
- Refresh your knowledge as needed on the Emergency Action Plan located in the Session Captain Binder.
- For outdoor courts: If environmental conditions create a safety concern (rain, smoke, etc.), you have the authority to cancel a Session:
  - Send a cancellation message to confirmed players (see Communication Tools, Section 9)
  - Inform the Play Committee ([play@bowvalleypickleball.org](mailto:play@bowvalleypickleball.org)) that a session has been cancelled as we typically receive a refund for lost time due to environmental factors.

## Section 3: BVPA Scheduled Play Formats

BVPA typically uses the following Scheduled Play formats:

### Round-Robin

<b>Format</b>	Round robin means each player plays several short games against different opponents. Everyone gets similar court time and variety of partners and opponents, which makes it a good time for all!
<b>Scoring</b>	Games are to 11, win by 2 (or your posted target); only the serving team scores, using standard doubles side-out scoring.
<b>Serve &amp; Sides</b>	Serve / side: First serve of each game starts on the right (even) side; serving team switches sides when they win a point, receivers stay put.
<b>Rotation Sheet</b>	After each game, players move exactly as shown on the posted round-robin sheet (no custom swaps) so the schedule stays fair and easy to follow.
<b>Time Limit</b>	When time is called, finish the rally in progress. If the game does not reach 11, the current score stands, and the higher score wins (tie stays a tie). If a game is finished before the 11 minute time limit, the players can play another game on the same court using Rally scoring.

### King of the Court

In this type of play, courts are ranked from lowest to highest. For example Court 1 = Lowest rank and Court 4 = “King’s” court. Your goal is to try and be King (or Queen) and rule over King’s Court! If you can achieve this, your secondary goal is to stay in power for as long as you can once you are there!

<b>Beginning a Session</b>	<p>In a four-court scenario, players draw cards from a shuffled, 16 card deck to be randomly paired with a partner and court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The number (Ace, 2, 3, 4, etc.) tells you which court you go to (for example: Ace = Court 1, 2 = Court 2, 3 = Court 3, and so on)</li> <li>● The colour/suit tells you your partner:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Red suits (hearts, diamonds) play together.</li> <li>○ Black suits (clubs, spades) play together.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The number of cards in the deck would be adjusted based on the number of courts being used. This format works best when there is an exact multiple of eight players participating.</p>
<b>Scoring</b>	Games are to 11, win by 2 (or your posted target); only the serving team scores, using standard doubles side-out scoring.

<b>Format</b>	<p>At the end of a game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Winners on any court except the top court move up one court.</li> <li>● Winners on the top court stay where they are.</li> <li>● Losers on any court except the bottom court move down one court.</li> <li>● Losers on the bottom court go to the end of the waiting line, and the next pair in line comes on.</li> </ul>
<b>Switching it up</b>	<p>Players are expected to split and mix partners when they arrive at a new court, unless your session specifically uses fixed partners. In most cases, BVPA uses the split and mix method for King of the Court.</p>

### MLP

This format may be introduced in 2026 and requires an exact number of players (eight per court). Each four person team (2 men, 2 women) stays together during an MLP match.

<b>Format</b>	<p>Teams of 4 (2 men, 2 women) play four games per match: women's doubles, men's doubles, and two mixed doubles games.</p>
<b>Rally Scoring</b>	<p>Every rally is a point for someone, whether you are serving or receiving, and games are played to 21, win by 2. MLP does not use designated rally scoring - players switch sides when they score a point on serve.</p>
<b>Freeze at Game Point</b>	<p>When a team reaches 20 (game point), that team is "frozen." From 20 onward they can only score the winning point when they are serving. If they win a rally as the receiving team, they win the rally but only gain the serve, not the game.</p> <p>The trailing team is not frozen and keeps using rally scoring (they can score on serve or return) until they also reach game point; once both teams are past game point and tied again, rally scoring continues normally and either team can score on any rally.</p>
<b>Serve &amp; Sides</b>	<p>Serve still starts on the right (even) side and switches sides when your team scores, but both teams' scores go up on every rally until one team reaches game point.</p>
<b>Optional Tiebreaker (Dreambreaker)</b>	<p>If the teams are tied two games to two after their initial four games, Session Captains can run a short "DreamBreaker-style" singles tiebreaker to 11 or 21 with rally scoring, rotating players after a set number of points (for example, every 4 points) so all 4 teammates play.</p>

## Section 4: Beginning the Scheduled Play Session

### Sign-In

- All players must be registered for the Scheduled Play Session via the Registration System (Trackie) and must sign in before play. Have each player use the BVPA sign-up sheet and dry-erase markers.
- For any non-members who have not registered for the Scheduled Play Session and have just shown up and would like to play, follow Non-Member Play rules: Welcome them, have them sign a Waiver, collect a fee as appropriate, and explain rotation rules (See Non-Member Play Policy for more detailed procedures).

### Opening the Session (First 5 Minutes)

- Welcome players and introduce yourself as the Session Captain.
- If there are any new members present, introduce them to the group.
- Briefly announce the session format and rotation system.
- Remind players about our key safety rule: Pause play immediately if a ball rolls onto a court from another court. Call "Ball on Court!" and stop. Players on the court that the ball rolls on to will replay the current point.
- Remind people not to run backwards or "backpedal" to retrieve a ball lobbed over their head.
- Remind people that there are houses and families close to outdoor courts so try to refrain from loud outbursts of profanity! 😊
- Confirm any session-specific rules or site-specific characteristics or safety concerns (e.g. "Be careful as there is less room at the back of the courts here at Veterans").
- Begin the first game and direct someone to start the timer.

## Section 5: During the Session - Captain Responsibilities

You are not just a Session Captain, you are a player too so have fun out there! During Play, there are some ongoing Session Captain duties:

- Monitor the rotation queue and ensure it is moving smoothly.
- Ensure games are running on time (11 minute rule).
- Watch for any players who have been off court unusually long (check in with them).
- Keep an eye on player energy, heat, and hydration (especially outdoor, summer sessions).
- Pause play immediately if a ball rolls onto a court from another court: Call "Ball on Court!"
- Intervene if a dispute arises (see Section 7, Conflict Resolution and Conduct Issues).
- Enforce session end time (begin wind-down 10 minutes before).

## Section 6: Ending the Scheduled Play Session

To end a Scheduled Play session, proceed through the following steps:

- “10-minute” or “last-game” warning given .
- All players leave courts on time
- Nets down (if required).
- Balls and equipment stored.
- Sign-in sheet collected.
- Any incidents documented.

## Section 7: Conflict Resolution and Conduct Issues

### General Principle

Session Captains are not referees. Your role is to de-escalate, re-focus attention on enjoyment, and escalate only if necessary. Most disputes resolve on their own with calm acknowledgment.

### Step-by-Step Dispute Handling

Here are a good set of guidelines to help manage any conflicts that occur on the court.

Step	Description
<b>Step 1: Observe</b>	Let players attempt to resolve it themselves. Most pickleball disputes (line calls, kitchen violations) are self-managed.
<b>Step 2: Acknowledge</b>	If a dispute persists, approach calmly. Say: "I can see there's a disagreement. Let's sort it out quickly." Avoid taking sides.
<b>Step 3: Apply the Rule</b>	If you know the applicable rule, state it neutrally. Reference Pickleball rules if needed. "If your momentum carries you into the kitchen after a volley, it is a fault. It is the responsibility of the offender to call their own fault."
<b>Step 4: Offer a Replay</b>	If the dispute cannot be resolved factually, offer a rally replay. This almost always satisfies both parties.
<b>Step 5: Redirect</b>	If a player remains confrontational, calmly say: "I need you to play on for now. If you'd like to discuss it after the session, I'm happy to chat." Do not argue.
<b>Step 6: Remove from Play (rare)</b>	If a player's conduct is disrespectful to others (verbal aggression, intimidation), you have the authority to ask them to sit out for the

	remainder of the session. Document the incident and report to the Play Committee Chair.
<b>Step 7: Escalate</b>	Serious misconduct (harassment, physical aggression) triggers BVPA's Court Acceptable Use Policy enforcement ladder. Complete an Incident Report form and Notify the Play Committee Chair immediately.

Common Rules Captains Should Know!

For those interested, the full and official set of Pickleball rules can be found on Pickleball Canada's web site: <https://pickleballcanada.org/play-and-learn/official-pickleball-rules/>

For the purposes of recreational play at BVPA, some of the common rules that will typically apply are simplified below.

<b>For all types of serves</b>	<p>Stand behind the baseline, between the sideline and centreline.</p> <p>Both feet must be behind the baseline and between the sideline and centreline at the moment you contact the ball, but you can step into the court as soon as contact is made.</p> <p>Serve diagonally cross-court into the correct service box. The ball must completely clear the non-volley zone (kitchen) and cannot land on the NVZ line. A ball that touches the NVZ line on the serve is a fault.</p> <p>A ball that lands on or touches the baseline, sideline, or center line in the correct service box is a good serve and is "in."</p> <p>You can serve either with your forehand or backhand stroke.</p> <p>Serves that hit the net and continue over the net and land in the correct service box are good and "in play."</p>
<b>Volley serve (Drop ball and hit it out of the air before bounce)</b>	<p>There are three things that must exist when you hit a volley serve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You must make contact with the ball <u>clearly</u> below your waist;</li> <li>● The paddle height must be lower than your wrist at the point of contact; and</li> <li>● You must swing the paddle in an upward arc.</li> </ul>
<b>Drop serve (Drop ball, let it bounce and then hit it)</b>	<p>In order to perform a drop serve, let the ball fall from your hand, allow it to bounce, and then hit it.</p> <p>On a drop serve, the "below waist, paddle below wrist and upward swing" restrictions do not apply, but the ball must be dropped, not</p>

	<p>tossed or pushed down.</p> <p>You cannot add any force to the ball when you drop it: you cannot throw it down or toss it up in the air and you cannot add any spin. Simply drop it from any height.</p>
<b>Ball hits side post or bottom bar on net</b>	<p>During play, when a ball hits the side post or bottom bar on the net, the ball is dead immediately.</p>
<b>Kitchen Basics</b>	<p>The Non-Volley Zone (NVZ) or “kitchen” is the 7-foot zone on both sides of the net, including the line.</p> <p>You <u>may not</u> volley (hit the ball out of the air) while any part of you, your clothing, your paddle, or anything you’re wearing or carrying is touching the kitchen or the kitchen line.</p> <p>You <u>may</u> step into the kitchen any time to play a ball that has bounced (dinks, drop shots, etc.)</p>
<b>Common Kitchen Faults</b>	<p>Volleys with a foot on or in the kitchen: Even having a toe on the line while volleying is a fault.</p> <p>Momentum carrying you in: If you volley legally from outside the kitchen but your momentum causes you (or anything you’re wearing, like a hat or paddle) to touch the kitchen afterward, it’s still a fault. Even if the point has ended and your momentum carries you into the kitchen, this is still a fault.</p> <p>Not re-establishing: After stepping into the kitchen, you must get both feet fully back outside the kitchen before you are allowed to volley again. This is a lesser known part of the rule and likely won’t be watched for or enforced in beginner or intermediate play.</p>
<b>Common Kitchen Question</b>	<p>You are allowed to stand in the kitchen whenever you want! You just cannot play a volley while you are there.</p>
<b>Two Bounce Rule</b>	<p>On every point, the serve must bounce once on the receiver’s side, and the return must bounce once on the serving side before anyone can volley. After those two bounces (one on each side), players may volley or play off the bounce as they wish.</p>
<b>Lines are “in” or “out”?</b>	<p>Any ball that lands on a line is “in,” except a serve that hits the non-volley zone (kitchen) line, which is a fault. There is no “wrong side” of a line. If a ball touches any part of a side line, centre line, or base line it is “in.” If a ball touches any part of the kitchen line on the serve it is a fault.</p>

## Common On-Court Scenarios and Responses

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Recommended Response</b>
<b>Line call dispute</b>	"The receiving team is ultimately responsible for line calls." Players make the in and out calls on their own side.
<b>Line call confusion</b>	On the receiving team, one player thought a ball was in and one player thought it was out. In this case, give the other team the benefit of the doubt and the ball is "in."
<b>Kitchen fault dispute</b>	"In recreational play, the player that commits the fault (or his partner) is ultimately responsible for calling a kitchen fault. If the opposing team feels a fault has occurred, they can respectfully discuss it or point it out at the end of the rally but they cannot make the call. Only the player that commits the fault (or his partner) can make that call."
<b>Court is wet from rain and people still want to play</b>	"Player safety is critically important. The BVPA Board has approved a Court Use Policy that clearly indicates that play is not allowed when there is any moisture on the court as it makes the surface slippery and dangerous to play on. All moisture must be removed from the courts with squeegees, etc. before play can continue. As Session Captain, I actually have no discretion on this issue. The Board wants me to stop play when the court is wet."
<b>Potential foot fault during serve</b>	Only the player that commits the fault (or his partner) can call the foot fault on serve. Play the rally. If the opposing team feels a fault occurred but was not called, they can respectfully discuss it or point it out at the end of the rally but they cannot make the call.
<b>Illegal serve</b>	Only the player that commits an illegal serve (or his partner) call the fault. Play the rally. If the opposing team feels a player used an illegal technique during the serve, they can respectfully discuss it or make their opinion known at the end of the rally but they cannot make the call. See the Common Rules section above for description of proper serve technique and common rules regarding serves.

## Section 8: Safety Protocols

The well being and safety of our players is critically important. As Session Captain:

Regularly reinforce key safety principles at the beginning and throughout Scheduled Play

- “Do not run backwards to retrieve a ball lobbed over your head.”
- “Do not run onto a live court to retrieve an errant ball. Yell ‘Ball on Court’ and stop playing immediately. If a point is stopped due to an errant ball, replay the point.”
- “Play on a wet court is completely prohibited. All water must be removed from the court surface before we can play.”
- “Monitor your liquid intake and make sure you stay hydrated and don’t overheat!”

#### Know the BVPA Acceptable Court Use Policy

It is important to ensure that all BVPA courts are used for their intended purpose. The BVPA Acceptable Court Use Policy clearly describes how courts should (and should not) be used. Get familiar with this Policy.

#### Know any site-specific safety rules or concerns

Every location BVPA plays at has its own unique set of characteristics. Learn what those are and inform participants of these characteristics at the beginning of a Scheduled Play session.

#### Know the Emergency Action Plan

There is a simplified Emergency Action Plan in the Captain Binder at every BVPA site. Make sure you know where it is located and have read it.

## Section 9: Communication Tools

This section contains communication templates you might need as a Session Captain.

### Template 1 - Session Reminder

**Subject: BVPA [Session Type] Play — [Day, Date] at [Time], [Venue]**

Hi everyone,

Just a reminder that [Session Type] play is scheduled for [Day, Date] at [Time] at [Venue / Court Numbers].

Session details:

- Format: [Round Robin / Skill-Level Divided / etc.]
- Captain: [Your Name] — [contact method if applicable]

Please arrive 5 minutes early to sign in.

Questions? Reply to this message or contact me at [email].

See you on the courts!  
[Your Name], Session Captain  
Bow Valley Pickleball Association

## Template 2 - Session Cancellation Message

**Subject: BVPA Play — [Date] SESSION CANCELLED / POSTPONED**

Hi everyone,

Unfortunately, today's [Session Type] session at [Venue] has been cancelled due to [weather / facility issue / low sign-up].

We'll confirm next session details as soon as possible. Check Trackie for updates.

Thanks for your understanding,

[Your Name], Session Captain  
Bow Valley Pickleball Association

## Template 3 - First Time Player at a Scheduled Play Session

**Subject: New Player Welcome!**

Hi [Name],

It looks like you are a new player. Welcome to BVPA [Session Type] play!

I'm [Your Name], the Session Captain for your games.

Here's what to expect:

1. Arrive a few minutes early to sign in and get oriented.
2. The Session Captain (me!) will explain the rotation system when you arrive.
3. I will introduce you to the group.
4. Play format: Round-Robin.
5. Games are played to 11, and you must win by 2. We keep it fun and social.

6. Games are 11 minutes in length.
7. Any questions, just drop me a note!

Can't wait to have you on the courts!

[Your Name], Session Captain  
Bow Valley Pickleball Association