

Special Olympics Pickleball

Special Olympics Pickleball training and competition opportunities are provided to athletes and Unified Partners. Special Olympics Unified Sports is offered to athletes and Unified Partners (i.e. persons without intellectual disabilities) in the form of Unified Doubles. Players (athletes and Unified Partners where applicable) can compete in Singles, Traditional Doubles and Unified Doubles

Level 1

1. Provides meaningful Pickleball training and competition for novice-level players, such as those with limited mobility, balance, low fitness levels and tracking skills, and limited control paddle control and ball placement.
2. Provides an ability based learning environment.
 - a. Larger ball type with slower movement - Foam or Indoor/Outdoor pickleball
3. Basic Learning concentrations
 - a. 4 Strokes - Forehand, backhand, volleys and serves
 - b. Movement
 - c. Tracking
 - d. Basic Rules and Etiquette
 - e. Matchplay

Level 2

1. Level 2 players can demonstrate proficiency in previous Level skills and are ready for additional skills training and competition opportunities. These players understand the basics of the game, have limited control of the serve and return of serve, predominately use a forehand stroke, lack control on volleys and can sustain a slow paced rally.
2. Provides an ability based learning environment.
 - a. Slower paced ball – Indoor/Outdoor pickleball
3. Basic/Moderate Learning concentrations
 - a. Sending and receiving skills
 - b. Preparation
 - c. Footwork
 - d. Basic/Moderate Rules and Etiquette
 - e. Matchplay

Level 3

1. A Level 3 player can demonstrate proficiency in Level 1 & 2 skills and is ready for additional skills training and competition opportunities. This player has a good understanding sport rules, can demonstrate a controlled serve, return serve, volley, has limited success and consistency when attempting a dink shot, can sustain a medium paced rally, and begins to vary depth of shots. Player skills are sufficient for community play.
2. Provides an ability based learning environment.
 - a. Traditional 2.5 Level Pickleball Competition
3. Learning concentrations
 - a. Faster shot recovery
 - b. Advanced strokes – dink, overhead
 - c. Increased paddle control with movement
 - d. Doubles communication
 - e. Moderate/ Good Etiquette/ Rules
 - d. Shot Placement / Strategy

Level 4

1. A Level 4 player can demonstrate proficiency in Level 1, 2 & 3 skills and is ready to advance their skills training and competition opportunities. This player can serve with pace, vary shot speed and depth, use a dink shot effectively and sustain dink rallies, demonstrates singles and doubles strategy, is able to move opponent around effectively and works and moves well as a doubles partner.
2. Learning concentrations
 - a. Speed, endurance, and core training
 - b. Placement with varying pace
 - c. Develop spins
 - d. Doubles strategy
 - e. Shot selection strategy



Special Olympics Pickleball Competition

- Events:** Singles, Doubles or Unified Doubles
Athletes may play 1) Singles or 2) Doubles or 3) Singles and Doubles or 4) Singles and Unified Doubles.
- Divisioning:** Athletes and Unified Partners will be divisioned by their play level and assessment score. Divisions will be comprised of no less than 3 (ideally) and no greater than 8 per division.
- Match Format:** Pool play followed by final compass draw Competition Round.
- Game Format:** Level 1 - One 11 point game, first team to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points
Level 2 - One 11 point game, first team to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points
Level 3 - Best of 3 - 11 point games, first team to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points
Level 4 - Best of 3 – 11 point games, first team to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points
- Ball Type:** Level 1 - Foam or Indoor/Outdoor Ball
Level 2 - Indoor/Outdoor Ball
Level 3 - Competition Ball (Indoor or Outdoor Competition)
Level 4 - Competition Ball (indoor or Outdoor Competition)
- Scoring:** Points are scored by the Serving Team only.
- Serves:** Serves must be made underhand.
Paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist, paddle below the highest part of the wrist.
Neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.
Only 1 serve attempt is allowed unless it was a let serve (the ball touches the net on the serve and lands in the proper service court). A let serve will be replayed.
- Traditional Doubles:** Teams comprised of athletes from 2 different Levels must compete at the Level designated to the higher-ability athlete.
Athletes must be from same program to compete in Traditional or Unified Doubles.
- Unified Doubles:** Unified Partners (UP) (individuals without intellectual disabilities) train and compete as a teammate alongside Special Olympics athletes on a Unified Sports Team (either on a school based or community based team) Unified Doubles Competition Models.

Unified Player Development Model - Level 1

- Similar age for all teammates
- Sports ability of athlete and unified partner not required to be the same.
- Teammates of higher ability serve as mentors to assist players or lower ability.
- Lower ability teammates may not have the necessary sport skills and understanding of the rules
- Rule modifications are made to define players roles and prevent higher ability player from dominating the game.



Unified Competitive Format – Level 2, 3 & 4

- Similar sports ability
- Unified Teams age 8-13 may only have an age variance between youngest and oldest shall be no more than 3 years.
- Unified Teams age 14-17 may only have an age variance between youngest and oldest shall be no more than 5 years.
- Unified Teams age 18 and over may have an age variance between youngest to oldest should be not more than 20 years.
- Athlete and UP expected to put forth full effort.
- Teammates have necessary sports skills and understanding of rules.
- No modifications are made to sport rules.
- Scheduled training and competition season – 8 weeks to year round
- Special Olympics Certified Adult coach.

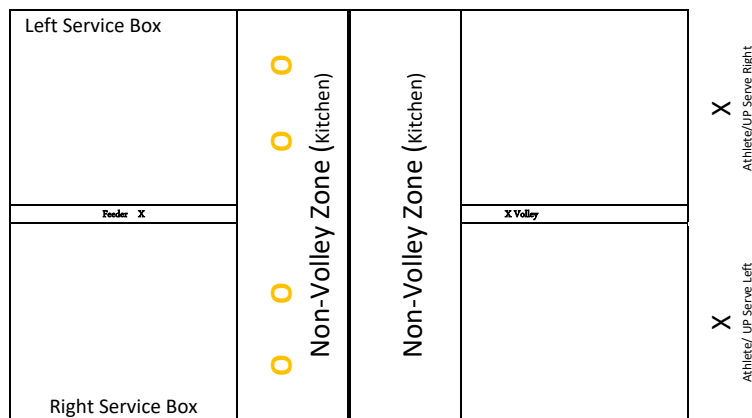
Rules: All USA Pickleball rules will be followed.



Special Olympics Pickleball Assessments

All athletes and Unified partners must submit assessment scores with tournament registration.

The Special Olympics Pickleball Assessment consists of 4 tasks *: Serve, Return of Serve, Volley and Rally. Points from each task will be totaled and assessment information will be used in the divisioning process for fair and equitable competition. *Level 3 and Level 4 have one additional task each, dink and dink rally.



A. Equipment: Pickleball court, 2 paddles, individual assessment sheets, clip board and pencil, 18 Level balls; Level 1 - Foam, Indoor/Outdoor (larger holes/slower) , Level 2- Indoor/Outdoor (larger holes/slower), Level 3/4 – Competition Ball, **Level 3 only - 4 - 12” poly rings** ○

B. Roles: Recorder, Feeder, Athlete/Unified Partner

C. Assessed Tasks

- Serves-** The Athlete/UP stands behind baseline beginning on the rightside. The Athlete/UP receives 12 underhand service attempts, **6 rightside** and **6 leftside**. The serve must be a **diagonal** underhand serve with paddle below the waist and no higher than the highest part of the wrist and be hit prior to bouncing. **Serves are not a bounce serve**. Balls landing in the correct box receive 1 point. If player steps on or over the baseline, it is considered a foot fault and shall receive 0 points. Balls landing in the no-volley zone (kitchen) shall receive 0 points. A missed attempt is 0 points and will not be replayed unless it was a let serve. Served balls landing on a line shall be considered good except Non-Volley Zone line. Coach or volunteer demonstrates the serve for Level 1 & 2.
- Return of Serve -** The Athlete/UP stands in the Right Service Box, the Feeder/Server (*using appropriate Level balls*) shall serve 6 balls to the Right Service box - 3 balls to the Forehand side and 3 balls to the Backhand side with the Athlete/UP to return each serve. The point is not played out. Next same process is repeated to the Left Service Box. The Athlete/UP shall receive 1 point for each return of serve that lands over the net and within the court boundaries . Balls landing on lines are considered good. The server's pace of serve should be appropriate for the players level.

Special Olympics Pickleball Assessments con't.

3. **Volleys** - The Athlete/UP stands 1 meter behind the No-Volley Line on center line. The feeder stands on opposite side of net, 1 meter from the No-Volley Line on center line with a basket of 12 Level appropriate balls. The ball is paddle fed to the Athlete/UP alternating Forehand /Backhand, twelve attempts (6 Forehands and 6 Backhands). Each Volley hit landing inbounds across the net receives 1 pt. Any ball landing on a line is considered good. If the the feeder makes an error in feeding, the feed shall be refed 1 time. If an Athlete/UP misses a Volley, that attempt shall receive 0 points.

4. **Dinks** – *Level 3 only* – The Athlete/UP stands on the base line. The feeder stands on the opposite side of the net, 1 meter from the No-Volley Line on the center line with a basket of 12 regulation competition balls. 4 – 12” poly rings are placed in the Kitchen on the feeder side. (see diagram) The feeder paddle feeds each ball. The Athlete/UP shall receive 6 attempts to dink the ball over the net to the target located in the “Kitchen”. Each ball landing inbounds in “Kitchen” area receives 1 point. Balls landing in any target area shall receive 2 points. Any ball landing on a line is considered good. If the the feeder makes an error in feeding, the feed shall be refed 1 time. If an Athlete/UP misses a dink attempt, that attempt shall receive 0 points.

5. **Rally** - The Athlete/UP shall receive 6 rally attempts. The Athlete/UP will serve (alternating Right then Left sides for each rally) to a like ability Athlete/UP/Feeder. The Two-bounce rule is in effect. (*When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before retuning, thus two bounces*). After the two bounce rule is fulfilled, every hit counts as 1 pt. until an error ending the rally is made. (Ex. Athlete/UP serves, ball bounces and receiver returns the ball then after the ball bounces the server hits ball and rally continues until a mistake was made after the 4th hit. The score for that attempt would be 4 points.) If the two bounce rule was not met, that rally attempt shall receive 0 Pts.

6. **Dink Rally** – *Level 4 only* - The Athlete/UP shall receive 6 dink rally attempts. The Athlete/UP will serve (alternating Right then Left sides for each rally) to a like ability Athlete/UP/Feeder. The Two-bounce rule is in effect. (*When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before retuning, thus two bounces*). After the two bounce rule is fulfilled, each hit must be a dink hit. All dinks must be in consecutive hits to score points for each attempt. If the hit is not a dink, then that attempt ends. For each attempt, 1-2 dinks = 1 point; 3-4 dinks = 2 points; 5 or more dinks = 3 points. (Ex. 2 bounce rule was fulfilled, 2 dinks and then a deep hit occurred. This attempt ended with the deep hit and 1 point shall be scored for this attempt because 2 dinks were hit in succession)
If the two bounce rule is not been met, that rally attempt shall receive 0 Pts



D. Assessment Scoring Scale

Levels	Serves	Return of Serves	Dinks	Volleys	Rally	Dink Rally	Total Score
1 Foam or I/O Ball	0 - 5	0 - 5	x	0 - 5	0 - 5	x	0 - 20
2 I/O Ball	5 - 10	5 - 10	x	5 - 10	5 - 12	x	20 - 42
3 Competition Ball	8 - 12	8 - 12	0 - 6	8 - 12	18 - 30	x	48 - 72
4 Competition Ball	10 - 12	10 - 12	x	10 - 12	24 - 36+	0 - 18	54 - 90+