



# PADDLEWAR RULEBOOK

June 25, 2025

PADDLEWAR, LLC PADDLEWAR.ORG



## 2025 Rule Revisions

**\*\*All revisions are highlighted**

### Roster Requirements:

1. Each team consists of **8 to 16 players** of the same level. Players may choose to play up one half level (e.g., a 3.5 player can play in the 4.0 league). However, players are not permitted to play down a half level.
4. **Once a player has a recorded score on a team, the player may not switch teams.**

### Captains

4. After a match is finished, it is the responsibility of the **Winning Team Captain** to input scores within 48 hours of the match, but the opposing Team captain can input scores as well.

### Time Outs:

4. **Time outs can be called at any point during the game, but a “switch” can not occur during the Freeze point.**

### Match Rosters:

**We have removed the “substitute” rule. Teams can now bring an unlimited number of players to matches, with a minimum requirement of 6 players for regular leagues (4 players for Non-Advancement leagues).**

Teams are allowed to rotate players, swap partners, and change courts between rounds, but not between games.

For example, in Round 1, a team might play 6 players. In Round 2, the team could substitute all 6 players with 6 new ones or keep some or all of the original players. There is no limit to the number of rostered players who can be present at a match, as long as changes are made between rounds.

### Default:

1. If a team fails to bring at least 4 players to a match, they will automatically lose the entire match and may be suspended from the league **unless they give at least one day's notice to both the opponent and the Local League Coordinator.**

### Makeup Matches:

3. **If a makeup match involving all 12 players cannot be arranged, both captains must agree on a single lineup for all three rounds and submit it to the Local League Coordinator. The coordinator will then connect the designated players for their respective lines to coordinate the makeup match.**
  - a. **Example:**
    - i. **Line 1: Team A (Sara/Rachel) vs. Team B (Kara/Natalie). These players will play all three rounds for Line 1.**
    - ii. **Line 2: Team A (Andrea/Jill) vs. Team B (Carmen/Claire). These players will play all three rounds for Line 2, and so on.**
  - b. Scores must be entered immediately.

### Non Advancement League Format:

⇒ **PW NonAdv Format**



## Rules

The following rules apply to all League and Tournament Play for **PaddleWar**. For General rules, including all guidelines regarding paddles, balls, net regulations, etc., all players will refer to the USA Pickleball Official Rulebook.

### Why Rally Scoring?

At PaddleWar, we will be implementing Rally Scoring for all games, including league and postseason play. Although the term may be unfamiliar to some, our trials have shown that players quickly adapt and appreciate this scoring system after just one game. We have chosen Rally Scoring for several key reasons:

1. **Consistency:** Rally Scoring provides a more predictable estimate of game duration, helping us keep league matches on schedule.
2. **Accuracy:** This system offers a more precise assessment of each player's skill, as every point counts.
3. **Excitement:** By preventing one server from dominating the game, Rally Scoring creates a more dynamic and engaging experience.

### What is Rally Scoring?

Rally Scoring is the format used by professional pickleball players and is anticipated to become the standard for the sport. In Rally Scoring, every point is important, regardless of who is serving, except for the "freeze" rule, which will be explained in detail.

### General Terms:

**Line:** In each match, players play doubles matches (called "lines").

**Round:** A round includes 3 lines (courts) of doubles playing simultaneously best 2 out of 3 games to 15 (win by 2) rally score points (3<sup>rd</sup> game if necessary to 10 points (win by 2)).

**Match:** Refers to the weekly competition where you play an opponent best 2 out of 3 games to 15 points (win by 2) (3<sup>rd</sup> game to 10 points (win by 2)) for 3 rounds. With this format, a team will earn 1 point for each line that they win. Since 3 lines are played each round for 3 rounds there is a total of 9 lines in a match, which means 9 points will be awarded between the two teams. A team will win a match with any of the following score possibilities: 9-0, 8-1, 7-2, 6-3, or 5-4.

**Rating Scale:** 2.50 – 2.99

3.00 – 3.49

3.50 – 3.99

4.00 – 4.49

4.50 – 4.99

5.00 – 5.49



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**Eligibility:**

1. Players must be 18 years of age or older.
2. Players must have a current valid PW membership.
3. If an ineligible player is played in the regular or postseason, each line of a round that the ineligible player participated in will be counted as a default win for the opposing team even if the discovery is made after the match (must be before the next round or within 48 hours of the conclusion of postseason playoffs, whichever occurs first). Ex. Deb was not on the roster and he played in Line 1 of each round. The team with Deb will default Line 1 of each round.
4. Players must agree to uphold the Code of Conduct and be fair and show respect and good sportsmanship towards others.

**Roster Requirements:**

1. Each team consists of 8 to 16 players of the same level. Players may choose to play up one half level (e.g., a 3.5 player can play in the 4.0 league). However, players are not permitted to play down a half level.
2. Every player must be 18+ years old and must be registered prior to playing a match on the roster of the team through PaddleWar.org.
3. If a player plays in a match that is not registered, the entire team could be expelled from the league.
4. Players may only play in one league per level. Example: a 3.5 rated man can play in one 3.5 Men's League, one 4.0 Men's League, one 7.0 Mixed League, and one 8.0 Mixed League if desired. Once a player has a recorded score on a team, the player may not switch teams.
5. A player can play in a separate league in a city of the same level but must choose to advance with only one team. Example: A player from Atlanta may have the option to play in a 3.5 Men's League in the Central Atlanta League and in a 3.5 Men's North Atlanta League. They are welcome to play in both but can only advance with one of those teams for postseason play.
6. In another scenario, a 3.5 male player who is part of both a 3.5 male team and a 4.0 male team and both teams advance to postseason play can participate in both teams' matches. However, it is important to note that no special scheduling arrangements will be made to accommodate the player's participation in both teams' matches. The player will need to manage their schedule to participate in both sets of postseason games as per the standard schedule provided.

**Move Up Ratings**

1. A player's rating will be adjusted based solely on their league match results.
2. If a player performs well enough throughout the league, their rating will increase, necessitating registration in a higher-level league for the following year.
  - o Example: If a player with a 3.5 rating performs well and his rating increases to 4.00 by the end of the year, he must register for the 4.0 league for the following year.
3. Ratings will be "frozen" the Monday following Thanksgiving each year.



### **Captains**

1. Each Team must name a Captain. Captains do not have to attend every match but must name an acting captain if they are not at a match.
2. Captains are responsible for collecting team dues to pay their home facility the court fees if any.
  - These fees must be paid at the start of the season and must include any fees for visitors, if any.
  - Visiting Teams should never pay any fees.
  - Each Team is responsible for the court fees for 3-5 Home Matches.
3. Captains must confirm their team's availability for each match and will set lineups.
4. After a match is finished, it is the responsibility of the Winning Team Captain to input scores within 48 hours of the match, but the opposing Team captain can input scores as well.
5. If a captain does not fulfill their responsibilities or adhere to expectations, they may face suspension from PaddleWar.

### **Men's and Women's Leagues**

1. Offering Levels: 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, and 4.5
  - A 4.5 team is allowed to roster two 5.0 players.  
⇒ Only one 5.0 player may play at a time and must be slotted at Line 1.

### **Mixed Leagues**

1. Offering Levels: 5.0, 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, and 9.0
2. Maximum Point Differential: 1 point between players
  - Example: In the 8.0 mixed league, a 4.5 player can team up with a 3.5 player, or a 4.0 player can team up with another 4.0 player.
  - The combined rating must not exceed the league's rating limit (e.g., 8.0 or less for the 8.0 league).

### **Combo Leagues**

1. Offering Levels: 5.5, 6.5, 7.5, and 8.5
2. Maximum Point Differential: 1.5 point between players
  - Example: In the 7.5 league, a 3.5 player can team up with a 4.0 player, or a 3.5 player can team up with another 3.5 player.
  - The combined rating must not exceed the league's rating limit (e.g., 7.5 or less for the 7.5 league).

### **Team Standings**

Standings, in a League, are determined by the following factors in order.

1. Number of Team Matches won
2. Number of Lines won
3. Fewest games lost
4. Head to Head Record
5. Fewest Points Lost

### **Advancement**

1. League Champions advance to Nationals



## Rules Of Play

### Service and End Selection

1. To begin, each team must determine which end of the court they want and who will serve first. This can be decided by flipping a coin, playing rock-paper-scissors, or any other agreed-upon method.
2. The winner of this decision gets the choice to decide on one of three things.
  - The end of the court
  - Whether to serve/receive first
  - To defer
3. The other team will get to decide on the option not chosen.
  - Example 1: A team wins the coin toss, and they decide to serve first. The opposing team made the decision to start play on the end of the court with the fence at their backs.
  - Example 2: A team wins the coin toss and decides to defer. The opposing team chose to serve. The deferring team then chose the end with the fence at their backs.

### Switching Sides

1. Teams will switch sides of the court between Game 1 and Game 2.
2. If a third game is necessary, teams will switch sides between Game 2 to Game 3.
3. Additionally, in Game 3, teams will switch ends again when one team reaches 5 points.

### Serving Order

1. In a best 2 out of 3 games format, teams alternate starting serves.
  - If Team A serves first in Game 1, Team B will serve first in Game 2.
  - If a Game 3 is needed, Team A will serve first.

### Choosing Sides

1. Each partner must decide whether to serve from the right or left side of the court.
2. The right side is the EVEN side, serving when the team's score is even (0, 2, 4, etc.).
3. The left side is the ODD side, serving when the team's score is odd (1, 3, 5, etc.).
4. Partners remain on their chosen side at the start of every point, regardless of which team is serving.

### Switch Option:

1. Each doubles team is allowed one "switch" per game, letting a partner change from the left to the right side or vice versa.
  - The switch is optional but must be used during a time out which must occur before the "freeze" point.
  - Teams can freely switch sides between games.

### Time Outs:

1. Teams are allowed one time out per game which should not exceed 2 minutes.
2. The team that called the time out is allowed to use this time to "switch" sides with their partner as long as the time out is called before the Freeze point.
3. The opposing team cannot "switch" during a time out that they did not call.
4. Time outs can be called at any point during the game, but a "switch" can not occur during the Freeze point.

**Freeze Rule:**

1. During the freeze, the team that reaches 13 points (or 8 points in Game 3) can only score points on their serve.
2. The opposing team can still score points regardless of who is serving, unless they also reach the freeze point.
3. If both teams reach the freeze point, each team can only score points on their serve and must win by two points.

**Game Rules and Scoring**

1. Every point counts, regardless of who serves, until you reach the Freeze point.
2. Each partner chooses a side and serves and returns from that chosen side.
  - o Remember: "the ball moves, not you."
  - o The server is also determined by the score:
    - ⇒ If the serving team's score is even, the player on the right side serves.
    - ⇒ If the serving team's score is odd, the player on the left side serves.
3. Teams serve until they lose a point, at which point the serve goes to the opponents.
4. If a player says the wrong score AND the wrong person serves, players can stop the return and correct it and replay with the correct server. Players may also play out the point and appeal after the point has concluded. If it was indeed the wrong score and wrong server, players will replay the point with the correct server and score and will not incur any penalty.

**Miscellaneous Game Rules/Etiquette:****1. Court Access**

Only players participating in the current round are allowed on the court.

- o Spectators and substitutes must remain off the court during gameplay.

**2. Coaching Restrictions**

Coaching from spectators is prohibited while the game is in progress.

- o Spectators, including teammate/captains, should refrain from making comments or engaging in discussions during play, including matters related to line calls, score corrections, or kitchen violations.

**3. Disqualifications and Infractions**

Any infractions of the game rules may result in disqualification.

- o Players must adhere to all regulations; repeated violations or unsportsmanlike behavior will lead to penalties, including potential removal from the game.

**Game Format:**

1. Matches are played in a best 2 out of 3 games format.
  - o Games 1 and 2 are played to 15 points (win by 2), with a freeze at 13 points.
  - o Game 3, if necessary, is played to 10 points (win by 2), with a freeze at 8 points.
2. Home Team is responsible for bringing the balls to a match.
  - o Only one new ball is needed per court so 3 new balls must be brought.
  - o Balls that are approved by USA Pickleball Regulations can be used.

**Match Structure:**

1. Best 2 out of 3 games to 15 points. If necessary, a 3rd game will be played to 10 points.
2. Most Matches are played within a 2-hour timeframe.
3. Winning Team Captain will input scores on the website or app within 48 hours after the entire match is finished, and Opposing Team Captain will have 48 hours to confirm the score is correct.





4. Incorrect Scores must be reported to the Local League Coordinator.
5. If a match runs over the scheduled time, and is not allowed to finish by the facility's request, players will attempt to get on a different court as soon as possible.
  - If no court is open or available to finish the match, players will have 7 days to complete the match.
  - If no agreed upon day or time is accomplished, the match will be held the following Friday at 6pm on the home courts.
  - If a team does not arrive, it is a default. If both teams do not arrive, it is a double default.

#### **Warmups:**

1. Warmups must be completed before the start time of a league match. If warm up courts are not available prior to the match, warm up should be no more than 5 minutes.

#### **Match Rosters:**

1. Each team must present a lineup with a minimum of 6 players for a league match.
  - Player rotation is permitted between rounds of a match but not between games within a round.
  - A player who has been rotated out during a match may re-enter in subsequent rounds.
2. If a player gets injured or is unable to finish a round, the Line in which the player had to retire would forfeit that line of the round. The score at the time of retirement is recorded to reflect the state of the match when it ended. The team is allowed to use a substitute in the next round of play to relieve the retired player.

#### **Lineup Exchange and Play:**

1. **First Round:**
  - Immediately before the round begins, Captains will exchange lineups, each consisting of 2 players for Line 1, 2 players for Line 2, and 2 players for Line 3.
  - Players will compete against the corresponding line of the opposing team (Line 1 vs. Line 1, Line 2 vs. Line 2, Line 3 vs. Line 3).
  - Once lineups have been exchanged, they cannot be changed.
2. **Second Round:**
  - After the first round of three doubles matches, captains will create new lineups. Other players can be inserted, partners can be changed, lines can be swapped, or the same lineup can be maintained.
  - Immediately before the second round, Captains will present the new lineups and the second round of matches will commence.
  - Once lineups have been exchanged, they cannot be changed.
3. **Third Round:**
  - Following the second round, captains will again create and exchange new lineups for the third round.
  - Once lineups have been exchanged, they cannot be changed.
  - The final round of matches will then be played with the new lineups.
  - The last round of scores will be recorded.
  - Each Line within each round is worth one point. There are 9 total points available for the match. Teams will turn in a final score of 9-0, 8-1, 7-2, 6-3, or 5-4 to win a match.



### Match Timing:

1. **Warm-Up:** Players will warm up before their match begins.
  - If courts are not available until match start time, you will be given a 5 minute warmup prior to the start of round one only.
2. **Lineup Submission:**
  - Captains must exchange lineups at the start of each round and assign players to their designated courts.
  - Lineups for all three rounds should be planned in advance to optimize time, allowing only for necessary adjustments.
3. **First Round:**
  - Matches are expected to last approximately **35 minutes**.
  - Players are allowed up to **2 minutes** between games.
4. **Between Rounds:**
  - Once all three doubles matches in a round are completed, captains have **3 minutes** to revise and exchange lineups for the next round.
  - This applies between the **first and second round** and again between the **second and third round**.
5. **Restroom Breaks:**
  - If a player needs to use the restroom or fill their water, they should do so promptly and be respectful of time to ensure the match stays on schedule.
6. **Late Arrival Penalties (Based on Match Start Time):**
  - **Up to 5 minutes late:** Opponents are awarded **5 points for Game 1**.
  - **5:01 - 10:00 minutes late:** Loss of **Game 1** (Score: **15-0**, Game 2 starts at **0-0**).
  - **10:01 minutes or more:** **Default loss** (Score: **15-0, 15-0**).
  - **Automatic Coin Toss Loss:** Late players forfeit the coin toss, giving their opponents the choice of serve/receive or court side.
7. **Repeated Timing Violations:**
  - Players must report **within a week of the match** to the **Local League Coordinator by email** stating a player has repeatedly violated or abused the timeout breaks, changeover breaks, or has been consistently late to the start of a match. The Local League Coordinator will inform PW Management and will consider penalties for repeated violations.

### Default:

1. If a team arrives with fewer than 6 players (e.g., 4 or 5 players), they will automatically default the third line until 6 players are present. (Default refers to a forfeit.)
2. If a team fails to bring at least 4 players to a match, they will automatically lose the entire match and may be suspended from the league **unless they give at least one day's notice to both the opponent and the Local League Coordinator**.

### Makeup Matches:

1. **Rescheduling Canceled Matches**
  - If a match is canceled due to weather, it must be rescheduled and played within 14 days of original match date.
    - ⇒ Exception: Matches canceled due to weather conditions the last week of the season must be made up within 1 week.



- Captains must work together to agree on a new date, time, and location. Once agreed upon, the details must be emailed to the Local League Coordinator (LLC) by both captains.
- Once confirmed, the new match date and time are final and cannot be changed without LLC approval.
- If captains cannot agree on a date, the match location and time will be determined by the LLC.
- **No-Shows:** If one team fails to arrive, the other team wins by default. If neither team arrives, it is a double default.
- **Scores must be entered immediately.**

## 2. Unfinished Matches Due to Rain

- If a match starts but does not finish due to weather, it must be rescheduled and played within 14 days of original match date.
  - ⇒ Exception: Matches canceled due to weather conditions the last week of the season must be made up within 1 week.
- Captains must agree on a new date and time, which must be emailed to the LLC by both captains.
- Once confirmed, the new match date and time are final and cannot be changed without LLC approval.
- If captains cannot agree on a date, the match location and time will be determined by the LLC.
- **No-Shows:** If one team fails to arrive, the other team wins by default. If neither team arrives, it is a double default.
- **Scores must be entered immediately.**

## 3. Repeated Rainouts

- All matches must be completed by the final scheduled match date per local league rules. Matches rained out on the last week of league play will be scheduled immediately by the LLC.
- **No-Shows:** If one team fails to arrive, the other team wins by default. If neither team arrives, it is a double default.
- **Scores must be entered immediately.**

## 4. Makeup Alternatives

- If a makeup match involving all 12 players cannot be arranged, both captains must agree on a single lineup for all three rounds and submit it to the Local League Coordinator. The coordinator will then connect the designated players for their respective lines to coordinate the makeup match.
- **Example:**
  - ⇒ **Line 1:** Team A (Sara/Rachel) vs. Team B (Kara/Natalie). These players will play all three rounds for Line 1.
  - ⇒ **Line 2:** Team A (Andrea/Jill) vs. Team B (Carmen/Claire). These players will play all three rounds for Line 2, and so on.
- **Scores must be entered immediately.**

**Disqualification:**

1. If a player breaks the code of conduct, the local league coordinator will investigate the situation. The player may be expelled from the league indefinitely.
2. If a player is found to be sandbagging or lying about their rating during sign-up, they will be immediately disqualified from the league.
3. If a team plays with an ineligible player, the team is at risk of expulsion from the league

**Grievances:**

1. Any Grievance alleging a violation of the PaddleWar Official Rules, the Code of Conduct, or eligibility requirements shall be filed in writing as a General Grievance to the PaddleWar League Grievance Committee or Local League Coordinator to be reviewed.
2. Any Grievance contesting that a player is playing at a rating lower than their skill level constitutes a PW Rating Grievance.

**Grievance Procedure:**

1. Filing a Grievance:
  - Any grievance alleging a violation must be submitted in writing to the Local League Coordinator.
  - The grievance must be filed before the next match of the individual, regardless of their participation in the upcoming match.
2. Notification and Sharing:
  - Upon receiving the grievance, the Local League Coordinator will forward it to the PaddleWar League Grievance Committee.
  - The party or parties against whom the grievance was filed will be notified of the grievance.
3. Investigation and Hearing:
  - The PaddleWar League Grievance Committee, in collaboration with the Local League Coordinator, will investigate the grievance.
  - If necessary, a hearing will be arranged to hear both parties involved in the grievance.
4. Decision and Communication:
  - After the investigation, the PaddleWar League Grievance Committee will make a decision to either accept or deny the grievance.
  - A written copy of the decision will be provided to both parties involved.

**Appeals:**

1. If a player believes their rating is too high or too low, they may file a PW Rating Appeal
  - The player must describe in writing why they should be granted an appeal, and the PaddleWar Rating Committee will investigate to determine whether to grant or deny the appeal.
  - Players may only appeal up or down one-half level.
    - ⇒ For example: A 3.5 male could appeal to be a 3.0 or 4.0 if they believe their rating is incorrect.



## Code of Conduct

### 1. Respect and Sportsmanship

**Respect for Opponents:** Players must show respect to their opponents at all times. This includes acknowledging good play and avoiding any derogatory or insulting remarks.

**Respect for Officials:** Players must respect the decisions of referees and other officials. Any form of dissent or argument with officials is prohibited.

**Respect for Teammates and Partners:** Players should support and encourage their teammates and partners, maintaining a positive and cooperative attitude.

**Respect for Spectators:** Players must conduct themselves in a manner that respects spectators and creates a positive experience for all.

### 2. Behavior on Court

**Prohibited Conduct:** Any form of unsportsmanlike conduct, including but not limited to, swearing, yelling, or using abusive language, is strictly prohibited.

**Physical Conduct:** Physical intimidation, aggressive behavior, or any form of violence is prohibited.

**Honest Play:** Players are expected to make honest line calls and play fairly at all times.

### 3. Integrity of the Game

**Rule Adherence:** Players must adhere to all PW rules and regulations during play.

**Drug and Substance Policy:** The use of performance-enhancing drugs or any illegal substances is strictly prohibited.

**Equipment:** Players must use equipment that complies with USA Pickleball regulations and must not use it in a manner that gives them an unfair advantage.

### 4. Dress Code

**Appropriate Attire:** Players must wear appropriate sports attire that is in good condition and adheres to league standards.

**Footwear:** Players must wear proper sports shoes designed for court play.

### 5. Player Responsibilities

**Punctuality:** Players must be punctual for all matches, warm-ups, and official events.

**Readiness:** Players should be prepared and ready to play at their scheduled times.

**Communication:** Players must communicate any scheduling conflicts or issues to league officials promptly.

### 6. Consequences for Violations

**Verbal Warning:** For minor offenses, a verbal warning may be issued by the facility representative or league official.

**Technical Warning:** A formal notice of a behavioral violation without any points deducted.

**Technical Foul:** A referee's assessment of a behavioral violation resulting in one point being removed from the offending team's score.

**Ejection:** For severe behavioral violations, a player may be ejected from the facility or at a tournament by the Tournament Director but allowed to remain at the venue.

**Expulsion:** For extreme cases, a player may be expelled from the league, prohibiting participation in any current or future play, and required to leave the venue immediately.

**Forfeit:** An egregious behavior violation or a combination of technical warnings and/or technical fouls may result in the awarding of a game or match to the opponent.

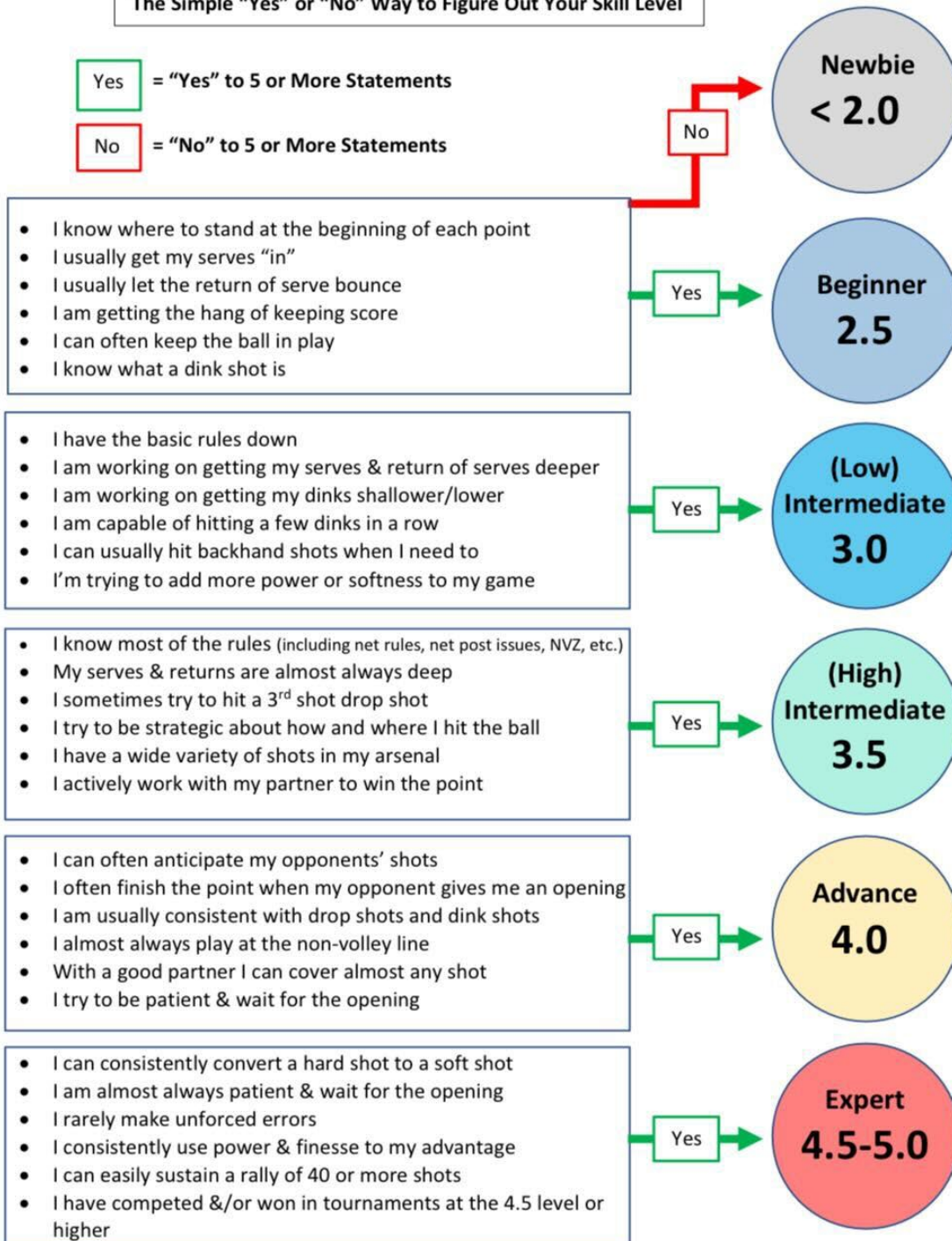
## RATING CHART

### Pickleball Skill Levels

The Simple "Yes" or "No" Way to Figure Out Your Skill Level

**Yes** = "Yes" to 5 or More Statements

**No** = "No" to 5 or More Statements





## SECTIONAL MAP

