

Pickleball Drills for 3.0 Skill Level



OVERVIEW

Drills are an essential part of improving your pickleball game. If you drill the same shot over and over again, it trains your muscle memory. The more you train your muscle memory, the **more confident** you'll be and the **more effective** your shots will be. A good rule of thumb: drill half as much as you play games.

Drill #1: Deep Serves

Objective: To hit deep serves that land in three different zones on the opponent's side—the right side of the court, the middle of the court, and the left side of the court.

Directions: 2 to 4 people per court. Place tape across the court that is 6' from the baseline. Whoever serves tells the receiver where they are going to hit the serve (right, middle, left side of the court), and the receiver indicates if the target was hit.

1. Two people, one on each side of the court, are designated to be the first servers.
2. Each server will hit a deep serve crosscourt that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the right side of the opponent's court.
3. Repeat this routine until each server has hit a total of 3 deep serves onto the right side of the opponent's court.
4. Then the same two servers will hit a deep serve crosscourt that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the middle of the opponent's court.
5. Repeat this routine until each server has hit a total of 3 deep serves onto the middle of the opponent's court.
6. Finally, each server will hit a deep serve crosscourt that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the left side of the opponent's court.
7. Repeat this routine until each server has hit a total of 3 deep serves onto the left side of the opponent's court.
8. Now, the other two people, if applicable, become the servers and repeats steps 2-7.
9. If time permits, people on the same side of the court will switch positions and repeat the above steps.

Drill # 2: Deep Return of Serve

Objective: To hit deep return of serves that land in three different zones on the opponent's side—the right side of the court, the middle of the court, and the left side of the court.

Directions: 2 to 4 people per court. Place tape across the court that is 6' from the baseline. Whoever receives the ball tells the server where they are going to hit the return (right, middle, left side of the court). The server indicates if the target was hit.

1. Two people, one on each side of the court, are designated to be the first server. The other two people will be the receivers.
2. The servers will hit a deep serve to the receivers—a serve that lands between the tape and the baseline.
3. The receivers will hit a deep return of serve that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the right side of the opponent's court.
4. Repeat this routine until the receivers have hit a total of 3 deep return of serves onto the right side of the opponent's court.
5. Then the receivers of the serve will hit a deep return of serve that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the middle of the opponent's court.
6. Repeat this routine until the receivers have hit a total of 3 deep return of serves onto the middle of the opponent's court.
7. Finally, the receivers will hit a deep return of serve that lands between the tape and the baseline onto the left side of the opponent's court.
8. Repeat this routine until the receivers have hit a total of 3 deep return of serves onto the left side of the opponent's court.
9. Now, the servers become the receivers. Repeat steps 2-8.
10. If time permits, people will switch positions staying on the same court and repeat the above steps.

Drill #3: Drop Shots

Objective: To hit effective drop shots, including the third-shot drop.

Directions: 2 people per court. Start over at the kitchen line if steps are not successfully executed.

1. One person is designated to be the one who will hit the first round of drop shots.
2. Both people start at the kitchen line.
3. Play starts with a dink.
4. The person designated to hit drop shots gradually works his/her way back to the baseline, hitting drop shots each time.
5. Once the person has reached the baseline, he/she continues to hit a pre-determined number of effective shot drops (emulates the third shot drop-in real play). Once the person reaches this goal, he/she makes his/her way back up to the kitchen line, still hitting drop shots along the way.
6. Once both players are back at the kitchen line, the other person is driven back to the baseline, hitting drop shots along the way. This person also hits the pre-determined number of effective drop shots from the baseline and then eventually works his/her way back up to the kitchen line.
7. Repeat the above process, as desired.

Drill #4: Forehand Dinks

Objective: To hit consistent and effective forehand dinks.

Directions: 4 people per court.

1. Everyone starts at the kitchen line.
2. One person starts the rally, dinking to the forehand of the person directly across from him/her.
3. The person receiving the ball dinks crosscourt to the forehand of his/her opponent.
4. The person receiving the ball dinks to the forehand of the person directly across from him/her.
5. The person receiving the ball dinks crosscourt to the forehand of the person who started the rally.
6. Repeat this process, striving to hit as many consecutive forehand dinks as you can.
7. Rotate players clockwise and continue play as outlined above.
8. Continue rotating players until everyone has been in every position.

Drill #5: Backhand Dinks

Objective: To hit consistent and effective backhand dinks.

Directions: 4 people per court.

1. Everyone stands at the kitchen line.
2. One person starts the rally, dinking to the backhand of the person directly across from him/her.
3. The person receiving the ball dinks crosscourt to the backhand of his/her opponent.
4. The person receiving the ball dinks to the backhand of the person directly across from him/her.
5. The person receiving the ball dinks crosscourt to the backhand of the person who started the rally.
6. Repeat this process, striving to hit as many consecutive backhand dinks as you can.
7. Rotate players clockwise and continue drilling as outlined above.
8. Continue rotating players until everyone has been in each of the four positions.

Drill #6: The Dink Game

Objective: To hit effective dinks and to make your opponent move.

Directions: 4 people per court. Only dinks are allowed. All shots must land in the kitchen or you lose the rally. If a dink hits the kitchen line, it is considered a good dink. If your opponent hits a ball past the kitchen line, do not play it or you lose the rally.

When dinking, make your opponent move 10-12 inches. In other words, do not dink directly back to them—make them move. Moving can cause them to either hit up on the ball or dink into the net. If they do hit the ball up, dink it into the kitchen (no volleys, lobs, or overheads are allowed). Play a game to 11, win by 2.

1. Everyone starts at the kitchen line.
2. The first server serves crosscourt into the kitchen area.
3. The receiver dinks the serve back into the kitchen to either of his/her opponents. Dinking continues until a rally is lost.
4. Play a game to 11 points from the kitchen line (win by 2). Scoring and server rotation is the same as that in a regular game.

Drill #7: Dink on the Move (Windshield Wiper Dinks)

Objective: To hit effective dinks while on the move across the court.

Directions: 2 to 6 people per court. Two people start at the kitchen line across from one another. They will start at one end of the court by the sideline. Any other people participating will stand off the court waiting their turn and will come onto the court after steps 1-3 are performed. Only dinks are allowed.

1. The 2 starting people dink the ball to one another.
2. As they dink, they move across the court, hitting dinks as they go.
3. When they reach the end of the court, they move back to the side they started from, dinking along the way.
4. Then the next 2 players, if applicable, come onto the court and repeat steps 1–3.
5. Then the next 2 players, if applicable, come onto the court and repeat steps 1-3.
6. Repeat this process, as desired. As you get better at this drill, work on dinking only to one another's forehand; then to one another's backhand.

Drill #8: Deep Serves & Returns, Third Shot Drops, and Dinks

Objective: To hit a deep serve, a deep return, an effective third shot drop, and an effective dink. If a deep serve, a deep return of serve, the third shot drop, and the dink are not successfully executed, play stops and another round begins with the same server. Note: If the foursome cannot execute these first three shots on a somewhat consistent basis, start first with just hitting a deep serve before play resumes. Then incorporate the deep return before play resumes. Then incorporate the third shot drop before play resumes.

Directions: 4 people per court. Each round consists of only 4 shots: a serve, a deep return, a third shot drop, and a dink.

1. The server hits a deep serve.
2. The receiver hits a deep return of serve back to the server's partner and moves to the kitchen line.
3. The server's partner hits a third shot drop to the person who returned the serve. If the third shot drop is effective, both the server and his/her partner move toward the kitchen line.
4. This person dinks the ball to the server, who has moved up the kitchen line.
5. Play stops once a successful round has been completed. If desired, though, you can play the point out.
6. Repeat this process until one person has served 3 times.
7. Then players rotate clockwise until everyone has served 3 times.

Drill #9: Pepper Volleys

Objective: To hit consistent and effective volleys. Hit the ball to the other person such that the return volley can be made. The goal is to have a rally with a large number of continuous hits and not to hit winners. This drill will include slow and high volleys. Note: If you cannot consistently volley starting from the kitchen line, start volleying one foot from the net. Then step back one foot and volley. Repeat this process until you are behind the kitchen line.

Directions: 2 to 4 people per court.

1. Everyone starts at the kitchen line.
2. Volley the ball back and forth to the person directly across from you, hitting to one another's forehand.
3. After a series of forehand volleys are made, hit to each other's backhand.
4. After a series of backhand volleys are made, hit directly at the person's body.

Drill #10: 7-11 Drill

Objective: To work on hitting effective volleys that are non-returnable and to also defend against volleys.

Directions: 4 people per court. Two players are positioned at the kitchen line (Team 1). Two players are positioned behind the baseline (Team 2).

1. Team 2 starts the game by hitting the ball that can be volleyed to one of the Team 1 players.
2. The Team 1 player tries to hit an effective, unreturnable volley.
If the person does not hit an effective volley and Team 2 can return the ball, play continues until a mistake is made. Any shot is acceptable (i.e. lob, dink, drive).
If Team 1 wins the rally, they earn 1 point. If Team 2 wins the rally, they earn the point.
3. Continue steps 1 and 2 noted above until either Team 1 reaches 11 points or Team 2 reaches 7 points. Team 1 has to earn 11 points because they have the advantage since they are at the net.
To start each rally, Team 2 alternates feeding the ball between Player 1 and Player 2 on Team 1 so that each player on Team 1 has an opportunity to hit a put away volley.
4. At the end of the game, players rotate sides. Team 1 becomes Team 2, and Team 2 becomes Team 1.

Drill #11: Black Hole Volley

Objective: To hit volleys in a specific location. Both short volleys and deep volleys can be highly effective at putting your opponents in trouble. This game forces you from hitting “nothing balls” that land in the middle of the court.

Directions: 4 people per court. Two players (Team 1) are positioned at the Non-volley Zone (kitchen line). Two players are positioned behind the baseline (Team 2).

1. Team 2 starts the game. One person from Team 2 hits a ball that can be volleyed to one of the Team 1 players.
2. The Team 1 player who the ball was hit to tries to hit the volley short (into the NVZ) or very deep (past 3/4 court). If the volley lands in one of the target areas, play out the point — anything goes! Whoever wins the rally earns a point.
3. If the volley does not land in either target area, it is in the “black hole” and considered out, and a point is awarded to Team 2.
4. Continue the steps noted above until either team reaches 10 points.
5. Then switch roles.

