



Pickleball Rules



Updated February 18, 2025

1. Pre-Game – Equipment, Game Time, Defaults, Courts

Spirit of the League: The primary focus of FCSSC is FUN! This league is a positive and encouraging environment that is welcoming to players of all backgrounds and playing abilities, with the goal of getting moving, meeting new people, and having fun while doing it! We look forward to an awesome season of welcoming and inclusive play.

Play that is competitive, overly aggressive, rough and/or unsportsmanlike such as pushing, shoving, elbowing, shouldering, tripping, hacking, slashing, sliding, tackling, ball blasting, chirping, name calling, threats and intimidation, is prohibited and will not be tolerated by FCSSC. FCSSC IS FIRST-AND-FOREMOST-FOR-FUN. ANY ROUGH OR PHYSICAL PLAY WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE EXPULSION FROM THE GAME, THE LEAGUE, THE CLUB AND/OR ALL OF THE ABOVE. All players should go out of their way to avoid contact with other players and/or eliminate actions or behaviours that could jeopardize player safety. If accidental contact occurs it is expected that players will apologize for that contact, ensure everyone is all right and stop the game to seek appropriate help as required. This rule supersedes all others!

Equipment/Set-Up: FCSSC Game Hosts will provide pickleballs for each game and will set-up the nets (if not built-in to the venue). Players are responsible for bringing their own paddle. They are also welcome to bring their own balls for warm-up and practice.

Game Time/Default:

- Please arrive 15 minutes early so that you can start your games on time.
- Games are played to 11 points; but teams must win by two points (to a capped limit of 15)
- A full team consists of 2 players. The game is considered a default if only 1 player is present.
- A default will occur if any team cannot field a squad by 10 minutes after the official start time.

Alcohol/Drugs: ALCOHOL AND DRUGS ARE NOT PERMITTED DURING LEAGUE PLAY! ANY OFFENDERS WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE LEAGUE WITHOUT REFUND. No exceptions.

2. In Game – General Rules

General Rules:

1. Games do not use a rally-point scoring system; points can only be scored when having the serve
2. Each team can only strike the ball once before it has to pass over the net – it must be returned before bouncing twice
3. **Double bounce rule:** Each team must play their first shot of the rally off of the bounce or as a ground-stroke (no volleys)
4. **Non-volley zone:** Also known as the “Kitchen” - extends 7 feet from each side of the net; players can only enter the area to make a ground-stroke, or play a ball landing in the non-volley zone
5. Players are to call their own faults. Common faults include:
 - The serve touches the net and lands in the non-volley zone
 - Double-hit: the ball is caught and slung during the execution of a stroke
 - Double bounce rule violation
 - Non-volley zone violation - “Stay out of the kitchen!”

- Crossing the plane of the net with a body part, paddle or clothing (exception is the follow-through of a racquet where contact is made on the returning player's side of the net)
6. A total of 5 combined points must be played in a game for the result to count. If the Game Host is required to call 'time' on a match, finish the current point. The score will stand as-is, unless the combined score in the current game has not reached a total of 5 points, in which case the game will not count.
- Regular Season: ties are allowed.
 - Playoffs: ties are not allowed, one additional point must be played to determine a winner

Serving and Returning Service Rotation:

- Teams can use any suitable means to determine who gets to serve first (coin toss, rock paper scissors, etc.)
- The first turn of the match begins with the team's second server. Once team that server loses the point, the ball goes to the other team's first server and each team receives two serves per possession thereafter.
- The serving team always starts the game with the player in the right-hand-service-court
 - If a point is scored, the server moves to the left side (odd court) and serves to the diagonally opposite court
 - Players on the serving side continue to move from the right to left or left to right each time a point is scored
- For the serving rotations that follow, serves will always start in the right-hand court, but the player serving first will vary
 - Players alternate serves between service-courts after each point
 - Whoever is on the right side (depending on the score) when the team gets the serve back is the first server for that service turn only
 - When the first server of that game is on the right side of the court, that team's score should be even.
 - If this is not the case, either the players are positioned on the wrong side of the court or the called score is inaccurate
- The serving player should announce the score and serve number before each serve
 - Announce the serving team's score first, followed by the opponents score, and then the server number
 - Example: 9-6-2 (indicates that the score is 9-6 for the serving team, and they are on their second serve)
- Players on the serving team alternate between the service-courts after each point
- A maximum of 5 consecutive points are allowed per server. The serve then goes to the next server – if server 1 earns 5 consecutive points, the serve goes to server 2. If server 2 wins the 5 consecutive points, the serve goes to the other team's first server

Receiving the Serve:

- To start the game, the receiving team must decide which court / side each of them will receive serve in
- After the initial service game, players receive serve from the court / side they last served from
- The receiving team does not alternate positions when a point is scored by the serving team

Service:

- Both players on the serving team must be behind the baseline at the time of the serve
- All serves must be contacted below the waist. Servers may let the ball bounce before serving (drop-serve).
New Fall 2024: In addition, the paddle must be moving in an upward motion while serving rather than sideways
- There is a maximum of 5 consecutive points allowed per server. The ball then goes to the next server in line (i.e. if the first server on the team scores 5, the ball then goes to the second server on that team. If the second server on the team has scored 5, the ball goes to the first server on the opposing team).
- The ball must land in the diagonal court, between the non-volley zone and the boundary lines
- **NEW SPRING 2024:**
Please refer to location specific rules regarding a served ball that touches the net and lands in the legal playing area:
 - 1) Rec and Int Leagues (London):** The serve is a let if the served ball touches the net and lands in the correct service-court area. That particular serve does not count.
 - 2) Court House Leagues (St. Thomas):** A served ball that touches the net but lands in the correct service/court area is a live/playable ball.

Discrepancies: All games are self-refereed. Any disputes will be discussed amongst the two team captains. Please play honestly and call your own infractions (in the kitchen, net, etc). If a dispute cannot be settled the point should be re-served

3. Post-Game – Departure & Score Reporting

Departure: Each week after your game, it is important to leave the court in a timely manner. Teams could be playing after you and will need to get their game started on time. It is also possible that the facility could be closing upon the completion of your game and all staff and members will need to depart the building at that time.

Score Reporting: FCSSC Game Hosts will report the score for each game (if applicable). Please be sure to inform your Game Host of the game's score before leaving the facility! Scores and standings can be viewed through your account at www.forestcityssc.ca

Teams will rotate between various opponents throughout, and only a team's wins will be recorded in the standings (for example, a team that wins 3 of 4 games in a night will have a score of 3-0 entered).

4. Playoff Games

No Ringers: To play on playoff nights players must have played a minimum of 2 regular season games for that team. For pickleball leagues, games = nights.

Substitutes: A player is only allowed to play for one team in each playoff round. Players cannot sub in for another team during the same round, most particularly in a championship game. Exception: a player may sub for another team in the same league during the same play-off round IF the game is not a championship game (ie, title on the line) and the team needing a sub would default the game without the substitute player (resulting in both teams being unable to play).

Tiebreaker: If a game ends in a tie during playoffs, one additional point must be played to determine a winner.