

“Gonna Play Together” Student Handout

- 🏓 **Strategy:** when playing doubles pickleball, there’s no one best strategy. Partners need to be flexible and change strategies according to conditions and the strengths / weaknesses of the opposing team.
- 🏓 **Unpredictability:** As much as you’re sizing up the opponent, they’re sizing you up too! Pull out those aces up your sleeve, catch your opponent’s off-guard, keep them guessing and let them make the errors.
- 🏓 **Practise Patience:** be selective with your shots, know when to defend and when to attack, recognize times when you could have been more patient and communicate this with your partner.
- 🏓 **Move as One:** move together forward, backwards, side to side. Practise, communicate, know your partner’s playing style. By moving together, your opponents will have a harder time finding a weak spot.
- 🏓 **Serve Advantages:** 1: serve deep (forces receiver back, makes their return more difficult and could set up an easy 3rd shot drop), 2: serve to backhand or opponent’s weaker side (forces an error), and 3: mix up your serve (drive and lob) keeps it unpredictable (and could force errors).
- 🏓 If you're on **the returning side**, position yourself two to three feet behind the baseline. It’s easier to run forward on a short serve than to scramble backwards on a deep serve.
- 🏓 **Visualize** where you are hitting the ball – have directional control.
- 🏓 **Mirror the ball:** whenever the ball lands on the opposite side of the court, be sure that you and your partner are moving accordingly. Example: If your partner hits crosscourt, you must move laterally to be in front of the ball while your partner covers the middle.
- 🏓 **Movement:** control the momentum of a rally, be in position, and try to keep your opponents moving. Aim your shots toward different sides of your opponent and different areas of the court. Wait for a scoring opportunity to show itself, then strike.
- 🏓 **Dinking:** Move opponents around. Cross-court dinking is an excellent strategy for forcing opponent errors and finding weaknesses in your opponent’s play.
- 🏓 When in trouble **be defensive:** hit directly across to be able to get back in position (dink, drop). Cut off angles to prevent opponents from poaching, hitting an “erne” or catching you off-balance for the next shot.
- 🏓 **Aim for your opponent's feet:** this forces them to employ some quick footwork while trying to return the shot. If they do return the shot, they'll have to hit it with an underhand stroke, possibly popping it up high, which sets you up for an aggressive follow-up on your next shot.
- 🏓 **Aim behind your opponent:** this forces them to move backward to get around the ball, which is difficult to do. Lobs, cross-court dinks, or a low shot to the backhand side are great ways to put the ball behind your opponent.
- 🏓 **Master Drop Shots:** whether it’s the 3rd, 5th, 7th etc. drop shot, learn to make these shots from the baseline all the way to the NVZ. Move forward with your partner. If it’s not a great drop, stop to defend it with another drop.
- 🏓 **Befriend the Non-Volley Line:** get to the line and control the line. If an opponent is back, keep them back, if all four players are at the NVZ wait for your opportunity to strike. Use resets when necessary.
- 🏓 **Communicate:** “Mine” and “Yours”, “Switch”, “Out” and any strategy you plan to employ – take time to analyze your game.

**Pickleball is a game of consistent control – placement over power, accuracy, strategy.
Always come to the courts ready to focus on the game!**