

“Gotta Drop It” Student Handout

FOR STARTERS:

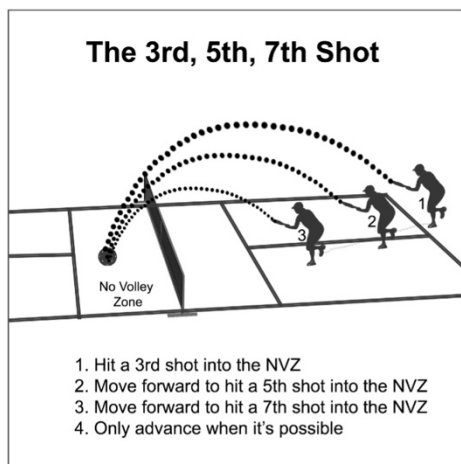
Make sure technique, consistency and mindset are in place before moving on!!!

1: Proper Technique:

- 🏓 Be in a set position when making contact with the ball.
- 🏓 Hit in front from 2 to 10 with a medium grip strength of 4 to 6 (out of 10 - be aware of what works for you).
- 🏓 Contact ball with the proper stroke – do not move to hit a backhand with a forehand.
- 🏓 Keep stroke short and compact – learn to be consistent with this shot before moving on to a longer stroke (if ever!).
- 🏓 Always be set before opponent hits the ball. Then, if the ball is not hit to you, there’s time to move to a new set position and make contact.
- 🏓 Before making contact with the ball, have the purpose of the shot in your mindset – “I want to drop that ball over the net to the middle of the kitchen.”
- 🏓 Learn to hit a consistent lofted drop (nice Arc) first before a tighter line drop. This drop gives can be used from all positions, is easier to master, and gives you more time to reposition yourself.
- 🏓 Any drop the opponent can’t return with power or is forced to hit up on is a good drop.
- 🏓 Give yourself permission to make an imperfect 3rd shot – you can defend it with a 5th, 7th, 9th shot. It’s better to hit a bad drop that goes over the net than one that goes into the net.

2: When and Why To Use A Drop Shot:

- 🏓 3rd, 5th, 7th or any drop shot is used as a positioning shot so the opponent has to hit up on the ball which gives you time to take away court space and lanes the opponent can hit to. Your final goal is to get to the NVZ closing off lanes to hit through.
- 🏓 The drop shot should be used as the first option from: behind the baseline, baseline, 10 feet inside the baseline AND whenever you cannot get in a good set position.
- 🏓 If you are in the first stages of learning drops, have the mindset that every shot (except balls that are shoulder height or higher) should be a drop shot until you get to the NVZ. Keep this mindset until you have control and consistency, then start adding in different options ONE THING AT A TIME.



WHEN YOU HAVE PROPER

**TECHNIQUE
CONSISTENCY
And MINDSET**

move on to:



General Strategies

- ✎ Don't stand inside the baseline after your team serves - many players (the server and the partner) tend to take a step inside the baseline after the serve is hit, putting them in a bad position to hit the third shot. Your opponent may then catch you on your heels, making your third shot difficult to execute and keeping you from advancing to net. Don't lose a rally because of this simple mistake.
- ✎ From a set position, hit your drop shots with forward momentum - use your forward momentum to advance towards the net after your shot. Hitting with forward momentum always puts your body in a good position to hit your shot with better accuracy and consistency.
- ✎ Move as one with your partner (front to back and side to side).

Drop Shot Types

Before you make a drop shot, visualize whether you're going to make a:

- ✎ Basic Drop Shot: This is the foundational drop shot aimed to land softly in the opponent's non-volley zone (kitchen).
- ✎ Third Shot Drop: One of the most crucial shots in pickleball, the third shot drop is used after the serve and the return. Its purpose is to allow the serving team to advance to the net.
- ✎ Cross-Court Drop: This variation involves hitting the ball diagonally across the court into the opponent's kitchen. The added distance due to the diagonal trajectory gives the player more time to approach the net.
- ✎ Sideline Drop: This drop shot aims close to the sidelines of the non-volley zone. It's effective for stretching your opponent out wide, making their return challenging.
- ✎ Soft Angle Drop: Similar to the cross-court drop but with a sharper angle, this shot is used to force the opponent further off the court.
- ✎ Deep Drop: Aiming for the far end of the kitchen, the deep drop shot forces the opponent to move back towards their baseline or stretch to hit a low ball.
- ✎ Dink Drop: This is a softer, more refined drop shot played from closer to the net, often during a dink rally. The aim is to suddenly change the pace and trajectory of the ball, making it drop just over the net in the opponent's kitchen.
- ✎ Slice drops and topspin drops can be added at higher levels of play.

Shot Placement

After deciding what shot to make, determine where you're going to place it:

- ✎ Your Opponents' Backhands – most pickleball players have weaker backhands than forehands. As a result, targeting backhands will usually lead to more errors for your opponents and greater success for you and your partner on the pickleball court.
- ✎ The Middle of the Pickleball Court – the middle of the court will give you the most margin for error, as you will be hitting into the largest area on the pickleball court - away from the sidelines. You will also be hitting over the lowest part of the pickleball net - the middle. Lastly, your opponents might fight over the pickleball (making a bad, or no shot at all!)
- ✎ The Opponent that Hit the Return of Serve –this opponent will be moving from the baseline to the NVZ line. When on the move, it's more difficult to hit a good shot and puts a person on the defensive.
- ✎ The Sidelines - If you hit your drop shots to the sidelines it makes it difficult for your opponent to hit a good attacking shot straight on and forces them to play a cross court dink that is easier for your team to handle.