



“Wanna Drive It” Student Handout

FOR STARTERS:

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

Serve Basics:

- 🌀 Develop a pre-serve routine such as bouncing the pickleball with your hand, hitting the pickleball a few times with your paddle, or fixing your hat – whatever works best for you and whatever you feel comfortable with. A pre-serve routine will help to make sure you are both mentally and physically ready for to play and win the point.
- 🌀 Develop one serve that you can hit with consistency – depth, speed and placement.
- 🌀 Watch for proper foot placement (avoid foot faults), and stance. Hold your paddle with a neutral grip, relax your body, select a target and use your shoulder to swing with an upward motion.
- 🌀 A general serving strategy is to serve deep to your opponents’ backhands – a deep serve pushes your opponents back on their side of the pickleball court, making the return of serve more difficult for them.

Return of Serve Basics:

- 🌀 The main goal is to return the serve deep to keep the serving team at the baseline - power is not as important as control.
- 🌀 Wait behind the baseline for the serve to permit moving forward to hit the return.
- 🌀 Hit the ball in your hitting zone, follow through and use your body’s momentum to get to the net (avoid running around your backhand – be set when you hit the ball) – move .. stop .. hit .. move.
- 🌀 Avoid a short return which brings the serving team forward and negates the receiving team’s advantage.
- 🌀 Although your return of serve should be deep, give yourself a margin for error (a few feet) - a missed return (unforced error) is an easy point for your opponents.
- 🌀 If you realize you can’t make it all the way to the NVZ line before the ball is hit by the opponent, stop and assume the ready position. Return the ball, then continue to the NVZ line. Stop again if necessary using the “split step.”
- 🌀 If you consistently have trouble advancing to the NVZ line after you hit your return of serve, consider using a lob (vs. drive) return of serve to give you more time.

Groundstroke Drive Basics

- 🌀 The purpose of the 3rd shot drive is to set up what comes next. Don’t ever expect your drive to be a winner. Good players will hit them back, and hit them back well if you make it easy for them. Use the drive to set up an easy put away for your partner or to set up an easier drop shot for yourself.
- 🌀 Hitting technique: move to get set, 2: pivot shoulders and hips so the non-paddle shoulder is facing the approaching ball, 3: step forward with the front foot toward the direction the ball is intended to go to create forward momentum, 4: begin the backswing - some players extend the opposite arm forward for balance, 5: bring the paddle forward to contact the ball in front of the body, 6: follow through to straighten the body and return to the ready position. move ... hit ... set
- 🌀 Keep the ball low over the net – this forces the opponent to hit up on the ball – creating a popup for you. A high drive may go out or will give the opponent offensive shot choices.

Punch Drive Volley Basics

- 🏓 At the NVZ line always be in ready position, with paddle up, expecting a hard return.
- 🏓 Take the ball in front of you – watch timing so you don't get jammed and don't overextend - have a stable wrist and punch the ball 6 – 12" (the paddle does the rest).
- 🏓 Decide where to place the ball: If you're hitting a fourth shot, hit the ball deep with pace to keep pressure on your opponent. If the shot is a counter attack, try to force the ball down and onto your opponent's court. Many times, the team who can get the ball on the ground from a volley battle improves their chances of winning

WHEN YOU HAVE PROPER TECHNIQUE CONSISTENCY MINDSET and BASICS move on to:

Serve Types

After mastering one serve that is consistent in both depth and placement, move on to develop others so that you are not predictable like:

- 🏓 A driving serve – has a lot of pace or speed on the pickleball
- 🏓 A lob serve – causes the pickleball to take a very high trajectory and bounce higher
- 🏓 A top spin serve - causes the pickleball to nose dive into the court and bounce higher
- 🏓 An inside out serve - puts side spin onto the pickleball and causes the pickleball to curve right if hit by a right-handed player and left if hit by a left-handed player
- 🏓 A hook serve - puts side spin onto the pickleball and, because the server gets some top spin onto the pickleball, causes the pickleball to curve left if hit by a right-handed player and right if hit by a left-handed player;
- 🏓 A drop serve - where the pickleball player hits the serve off of a bounce, which could alter timing or allow the serve to get aggressive top spin or backspin on the pickleball; and
- 🏓 Other creative serves!

Return of Serve Shot Placement

- 🏓 Return Middle - may cause your opponents to fight over the pickleball and will reduce your opponents' angles of attack on the third shot. Plus, you will be returning the serve into the largest area of the court, meaning that you will have more margin for error.
- 🏓 Return to the Weaker Player – and in particular, target your opponent that has the weaker third shot. Find your opponents' weaknesses and isolate them.
- 🏓 Return to Backhands – which are often the weaker shot of the opponent. If the backhand of the weaker opponent is in the middle of the pickleball court, the first three return of serve strategies would combine into one!
- 🏓 Return Down the Line – If you have good control over your return of serve, see that the opponent has shifted to the middle or opponents are stacking.
- 🏓 Return to the More Aggressive Player - if your opponents like to “Shake and Bake” or poach, then consider hitting your return of serve to the more aggressive player to keep him/her back and make them hit the third shot from deep in the pickleball court.

Drive Shot

- ⚡️ Avoid driving the ball when you are deep in the backcourt or behind the baseline. Hitting drives from back there give your opponents plenty of time to react and keep you from moving to the net. Whenever you take a drive from behind the baseline or deep in the backcourt, you are putting yourself at a disadvantage. A drop shot in those situations is a much better decision.
- ⚡️ When one opponent stays back, drive it to them to keep them back (watch out for a poach, though)
- ⚡️ When your opponents are out of position or if they are crowding the center then drive it down the line
- ⚡️ Driving cross-court is generally less effective because the ball has to travel a greater distance and allows for more reaction time.
- ⚡️ If one of your opponents doesn't handle the drive very well, target them
- ⚡️ When a return of serve is high, shallow, and lands in the midcourt, you have the perfect opportunity to drive the ball.
- ⚡️ Hit the ball to your opponents heels when they are not standing at the Non-Volley Zone line. If your opponents are ever caught in the middle of the court, the hardest shot for them to hit is a low volley. 9/10 times your opponent will hit that shot into the net or pop it up for you if you hit it there again.

Defending a Drive

- ⚡️ Predict a drive shot before it has a chance to surprise you
- ⚡️ Have your paddle up at all times - you won't have much time getting in ready position while ball is heading your way
- ⚡️ Avoid swinging at a power shot when at the NVZ line. It's a normal and natural reaction, but not very wise. First, you won't be able to swing the paddle fast enough to intercept the ball, and second, you're highly likely to miss or miss-hit the ball.
- ⚡️ Stick your paddle out front to block a power shot or punch it back deep. Stay calm and return the shot back at your opponent's feet.
- ⚡️ Avoid hitting a sharp angle or painting the line - this opens the door for unforced errors. It's better to block or punch the shot and return at your opponent's feet and let them make the error.
- ⚡️ Watch for opponent's looking to poach your return.
- ⚡️ Counter a drive with a shot that takes away the opponent's ability to control a 5th shot drop or drive (return low, short, soft, at the feet).
- ⚡️ Stop hitting those high balls – they're most likely going out!