



# ARIZONA PICKLEBALL PLAYERS LEAGUE

## League Rules

- I. GENERAL.** The following rules apply to all leagues in the Arizona Pickleball Players League (APPL) organization unless otherwise specified. All APPL leagues will follow current USA Pickleball (USAP) rules other than those noted in the APPL Rules.
- II. PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS**
- A.** All participants in APPL pickleball are bound by the APPL rules, as well as those of the USAP. Not all possible incidents and ramifications may be covered in the following rules. Participants in unusual or undocumented situations will have to abide by the decision of the Rules Committee and/or the Board of Directors. If there is a conflict in an interpretation of any rule, APPL Rules shall supersede. The APPL Rules as provided herein shall apply to all APPL players unless such rules are revised, amended, or otherwise changed by the APPL Board of Directors and/or the Rules Committee. In such an event, the APPL Rules shall be updated on the APPL website.
  - B.** All leagues are open to men and women players in their respective gender divisions and mixed divisions. Players participating in APPL regional leagues must be 18 years of age or older.
  - C.** There are three age defined leagues in each region in each division (Men's, Women's & Mixed).
    - 1. **18+ League:** All teams are not age restricted. Players must be 18 years or older by the league start date.
    - 2. **50+ League:** Players must be 50 years or older during the calendar year of the league start.
    - 3. **65+ League:** Players must be 65 years or older during the calendar year of the league start.
  - D.** Players may play one or more of the age defined leagues within a region provided they meet the requirements for each league.
  - E.** Players may play in more than one region provided they meet the requirements for the league they are participating in. In the event that more than one of the player's teams qualifies for the same flight in the State Championships, the player must coordinate with the team captains at least three days in advance so it is understood which team they are committed to for the Championships.
- III. ROSTER REQUIREMENTS**
- A. MEMBERSHIP FEE.** All players must have paid the player registration fee for each team they participate in prior to participating in the league each season.
  - B. WAIVER.** All players must have agreed to the waiver release of liability prior to participation in the league each season.
  - C. PLAYER SKILL LEVEL RATINGS.** Team rosters must consist of players with skills that are consistent with the flight skill level in which their team is playing. The list below indicates the ratings that will be used for APPL. Players who have previously played in APPL will not need to enter a rating.
    - 1. **APPL Index:** If a player has an APPL Index, the skill level they may play in is their APPL Index rounded down to the next 0.5 value, the "roster rating". **FOR 2025 ONLY:** Players whose APPL Index fell BELOW the skill level of the team they played on in 2024 may be able to continue to play in that flight in 2025 as an Automatic Variance depending on the degree of drop. Refer to Appendix A in these rules for the APPL Index FAQ on this topic with specific examples. An Automatic Variance Declaration Form, found on Player Resources on the APPL website, shall be submitted to notify APPL of this choice prior to player registration. The revised roster rating will show with a "V" after it.
    - 2. **Captain's Rating:** Players who are new to APPL will receive a Captain's Rating for their first year in APPL. The player is required to discuss their rating with their captain prior to registration. The player will enter the agreed upon rating as a "Captain's" rating when registering. A "C" will show on the roster rating.

3. **Appealed Rating:** Ratings appeals shall be submitted and ruled upon prior to player registration. If a player has requested an appeal of their APPL Index, and it has been approved by APPL, their roster rating will reflect the change and will show “A” for Appealed.

For all ratings, it is the responsibility of the team captain to assure the ratings are accurate and defensible, no matter what the level.

**D. TEAM ROSTER SKILL LEVELS.**

1. 2.5-4.5 skill level teams may contain up to three players with a 0.5 rating point below the team’s flight skill level. For example, a 4.0 team may include up to three 3.5 players as exceptions.
2. 5.0 teams must have at least one 5.0 rated player with all others being 4.75 or above.

**E. PLAYER APPL INDEX APPEALS.** On occasion, a player’s APPL Index may not accurately reflect the player’s current skill level. To appeal a player’s rating, captains shall submit a request for a rating change to the APPL Central Appeals Committee using the form (Rating Appeal Request) located on the APPL website, and provide data supporting why the player’s true skill level is different from their APPL Index. A Free Agent player can apply as an individual on their own behalf, as Free Agents are players who have yet to commit to a team. **Note: Appeals are valid for one (1) year or until the next player registration whichever is shorter.**

**F. TEAM MEMBERS.**

1. Players may play in more than one age-defined APPL league (18+, 50+ or 65+) and/or more than one division (Mixed or Gender Doubles), but cannot be on more than one team in the same flight within a league within the same region. (Example: a player may play on a 3.5 Men’s division team in the 18+ league and play on a Men’s 3.5 team in the 50+ league but not on two Men’s 3.5 teams within the same league, either 18+ or 50+).
2. A player who registers for a team may not switch teams within the same flight once the season has started unless approved by the League Coordinator.
3. Team members are not required to be from any particular club. Captains may recruit players from any location. It is the captain’s responsibility to ensure their roster meets the requirements of their home court venue if there are specified requirements or restrictions defined by the venue.

**G. TEAM NAMES.** Captains will submit an initial team name to the league during team registration. It is first come, first served, in case two submittals are identical in the same flight. Team names can be changed after registration provided no other team in the same flight is using the same name.

**H. ROSTER SIZE.** There is no limit to roster size. Captains should be aware that in order for players to participate in the next level of competition (playoffs, state championships) players must meet the player playoff qualification criteria.

**I. PLAYER PLAYOFF QUALIFICATION CRITERIA.** In order to participate in a sub-flight playoff players must have played in at least one complete APPL regular season match. In order to participate in a State Championship players must have played in at least two complete regular season matches or one complete regular season match and a complete sub-flight playoff.

**J. ROSTER ADDITIONS.** Captains may add players to their roster through the player registration process until the cutoff date published on the APPL calendar under Get Started on the APPL website.

**IV. TEAM REGISTRATION**

**A. DEADLINES.** All teams must have registered online by the published registration deadline.

**B. CAPTAINS.** All teams must have a designated captain and co-captain. Captains shall monitor their rosters as players begin to register for correctness and adherence to league rules.

**V. COURTS, BALLS, PADDLES, STARTING SERVER BANDS**

**A. COURTS AND FACILITIES.** Each team is required to guarantee the use of three hard outdoor courts. Indoor venues are acceptable provided they use typical hard outdoor court surfaces. Pickleball courts for match play must be at an APPL approved facility. For facility approval contact your League Coordinator. Courts must be available simultaneously for a minimum of two hours (2.5 hours preferred).

**B. BALLS.** Balls used for all APPL league games must be USAP approved outdoor balls, either new or in good condition, with an enhanced color for visibility similar to “optic yellow” or “neon”. Pink is

not allowed. The team listed as the home team supplies the balls. It is recommended that at least six balls be available at each match. The same make, model and color ball must be used for all games in the match.

**C. PADDLES.** Paddles must be USAP approved for tournament play.

**D. STARTING SERVER BANDS.** The home team shall decide whether to use starting server wristbands, and provide them for all players if required.

## VI. SCHEDULE AND LOCATIONS

**A. SCHEDULING REQUIREMENTS.** All league captains must submit their home team match location, day and time when they register online prior to the deadline published. (See Team Registration Section IV.)

**B. MATCH TIMES.** Match times posted on the schedule are the times the match is required to begin. Captains are expected to contact their opposing captains in advance of the match and inform them if there are courts available prior to the match start time for warm-up.

**C. MATCH LOCATION & FREQUENCY.** Match locations will be published in the schedule. Teams will typically play a minimum of two matches against each team in its flight (one as home team, one as away team). This may change depending on the size of the flight.

### D. SCHEDULE CHANGES.

- 1. East Valley, West Valley and Southern Regions:** Any changes to the published schedule after the pre-season rescheduling period, other than for inclement weather, are discouraged and must be approved by the League Coordinator. Schedule changes that involve public courts must be requested a minimum of five days in advance of the original scheduled date.
- 2. Casa Grande Region:** Rescheduling of matches is only done by the Regional Director due to inclement weather. This is required because all matches are pre-scheduled at days and times approved by the City with very few opportunities for makeups.

**Note:** For complete requirements for schedule changes see the APPL Reschedule Policy on the Captain Resources page of the APPL website.

**E. SHORT LINE-UPS FOR 2.5-4.5 TEAMS.** If a captain (from Team "A") cannot field three doubles teams from their roster, and rescheduling the match is not feasible, then that captain shall bring two doubles teams to play (line 1 and line 2 on the scoresheet) and forfeit all of its line 3 doubles team games. **The opposing team (Team "B") shall still bring all six of its players** as each of its team pairs will play against the opponent's line 1 team and line 2 team. The scoresheet will reflect a score of 11 - 0 for each forfeited game in each round and Team "B" will be awarded two team points for each forfeited game (i.e., four points per round). Scoring of the games played will be the same as found in the "Match Process" section VII.D. If a captain can only field one doubles team pair, the entire match will be forfeited, earning the winning team 36 points and one win in the standings.

## VII. MATCH PLAY

**A. FORMATS.** All games are played to 11, win by 2 points.

- All **2.5-4.5** team matches will be three rounds with two games played on each line as follows (see APPL scoresheet):

Round 1:

- (1) Home team line 1 plays Visiting line 1.
- (2) Home team line 2 plays Visiting line 2.
- (3) Home team line 3 plays Visiting line 3.

Round 2:

- (4) Home team line 1 plays Visiting line 2.
- (5) Home team line 2 plays Visiting line 3.
- (6) Home team line 3 plays Visiting line 1.

Round 3:

- (7) Home team line 1 plays Visiting line 3.
- (8) Home team line 2 plays Visiting line 1.
- (9) Home team line 3 plays Visiting line 2.

- 5.0 gender** teams matches will be two rounds of three games as follows:

Round 1:

- (1) Home team players 1 & 2 play Visiting team players 1 & 2.

- (2) Home team players 3 & 4 play Visiting team players 3 & 4.
- Round 2:
- (3) Home team players 1 & 2 play Visiting team players 3 & 4.  
 (4) Home team players 3 & 4 play Visiting team players 1 & 2.
3. **5.0 mixed** team matches will have two men and two women (4 total) per team, playing three rounds of two games as follows:
- Round 1:
- (1) Home team men play Visiting team men.  
 (2) Home team women play Visiting team women
- Round 2:
- (3) Home team man1/woman1 play Visiting team man1/woman1.  
 (4) Home team man2/woman2 play Visiting team man2/woman2.
- Round 3:
- (5) Home team man1/woman1 play Visiting team man2/woman2.  
 (6) Home team man2/woman2 play Visiting team man1/woman1.

Home teams stay on the same courts for each round. Visiting teams switch courts after each round.

**B. MATCH DAY TEAMS.**

1. **2.5-4.5 teams:** On match day the captain will bring six players to play on three doubles teams.
2. **All 5.0 Teams:** On match day the captain will bring four players to play on two doubles teams.

Lineups identifying the doubles teams and substitute(s) on the scoresheet will be exchanged prior to the start of the match after which they may not be changed. The doubles team partners will stay together for that day's match unless substitutions are made (see substitution rules). Captains or their designees are required to be on-site at each match.

**C. LATE PLAYER.** Unless otherwise specified, the schedules state the time matches are to start. It is always a good idea to verify the start time with your opposing team captain a few days prior to the match. The following rules apply to late players:

Matches shall start no later than five (5) minutes after the posted match start time. If a player has not arrived by then, the identified substitute may be utilized in the place of the late player or the game(s) can be forfeited. Upon arrival, if games(s) were forfeited, the late player may play in any ensuing games. If the sub has played, the late player will fulfill the role of substitute for the remaining matches. In order for the late player to play in the second game of a round, they must arrive before the last of the other teams has started the second game in that round. No warm-up time is allowed.

All games forfeited will be scored 11-0 against the team with the late player.

**D. MATCH PROCESS.** To begin a match, the visiting teams choose serve, receive or end. Each lineup of doubles team will play two games to 11 (win by 2). Teams shall switch sides after the first game. At the end of each round the visiting doubles teams will switch courts to play the next home doubles team noted on the lineup/scoresheet. Therefore on team match day, except for 5.0 gender doubles, each doubles team will play four-six games (two-three rounds): two games against the opposing line 1 doubles team, two games against the line 2 team, and two games against the line 3 team.

**E. MATCH SCORING.** Two team points are awarded for each game won by a doubles team. If the losing team scores 6 or more points in a game they are awarded 1 team point. No team points are awarded for a score of 5 points or less. Whichever team earns the most team points in all the games played in a match, will be the winner of the match and will be awarded a win in their flight team standings.

**F. BREAKS.** A break of one minute is allowed between games. After each round of two games, a break of up to five minutes is allowed commencing at the time the last two opposing doubles teams in the round complete their second game.

**G. TIME OUTS.** A single one minute time out is allowed per game per team. Water breaks are not meant to be time outs, and should be limited to 10 seconds with no talking. Bathroom breaks should be taken between rounds. One medical time-out is allowed per player per match, limited to 5 minutes, at which time the player may continue, a substitute may be used or the line forfeited.

**H. COACHING.** Per USAP rules, coaching by anyone is only allowed after completion of each game, between rounds and during time outs.

- I. SUBSTITUTIONS DURING MATCH DAY.** Each team is allowed one substitute once play has begun, but only if the substitute had been identified on the line-up sheet prior to the start of the match and only in the event of: a) an injury that occurs during the match and prevents a player from continuing to play; b) a physical ailment that develops during the match which prevents a player from continuing to play; or c) a player is late (per Rule VII.C.). Any such substitution is permanent for the remainder of the match. Players removed due to injury or physical ailment may not return to the match. Substitutions may only be made with players on the current team roster. There is no warm-up time allowed for the substitute unless a time out is used. The scoresheet shall reflect the player who finished the game and match. Captains should not include in the line-up players who are injured or sick prior to the start of a match. For Mixed Doubles one substitute for each gender is allowed.
- J. WARM UP COURTS.** APPL does not require facilities to provide warm-up courts before a match is scheduled to begin. Visiting team captains should check with the home team captain in advance of the match to determine if warm-up time is available. In any event, teams are allowed a five minute warm up after the posted match start time, to be monitored jointly by the team captains.
- K. MATCH PLAY OVER THE ALLOTTED RESERVATION BLOCK.** If a match or game exceeds the allotted reservation block, the players must relinquish the court if other people are waiting to play. The game(s) in process can be completed on an open court abiding by the rules of the venue (i.e. paddle rotation system, etc.). The games cannot be rescheduled to another day. If no other court options are available, all games in process will terminate and scoring will be recorded as follows:
  - 1. The team with the highest score will be the winner and will get two team points. If the losing team has scored at least half or more of the points of the winning team, they will be awarded one team point.
  - 2. If the game is tied, a sudden death point shall be played. The winning team will get two points and the losing team will get one point.
  - 3. If there are unplayed games, they will be scored 0-0.
- L. USAP NON-REFEREED MATCH RULES.** USAP non-refereed match rules apply to all APPL matches. This includes that players shall not call a ball "out" unless they can clearly see a space between the line and the ball as it hits the ground.

### **VIII. OTHER CAPTAIN AND PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. SCORE REPORTING:** The home team captain must report the score within 48 hours. After the score is posted, the visiting team captain will have 48 hours to contest the score. The score will become official if not contested after the 48 hour time period.
- B. RECORDS:** All captains are to keep records of all match results until the end of the season in case of discrepancies or disputes.
- C. CONDUCT:** Captains and players are to monitor behavior to assure conduct is in accordance with the APPL Code of Conduct.
- D. RULES:** Captains and players are to read and understand the APPL rules and USAP rules.
- E. DISPUTES:** Players involved in a dispute during a match that cannot be resolved on the court can declare that the match is being played under protest and must continue the match to its conclusion.
- F. GRIEVANCES:** A player or captain may file a formal grievance within 48 hours for a Rules/Sportsmanship/Code of Conduct issue. The form is posted on the Player Resources page of the APPL website.

### **IX. REGULAR SEASON FLIGHT STANDINGS**

- A. STANDINGS PUBLISHING:** Throughout the season the standings of each division skill group will be posted and updated on the APPL Regional website. Placement in the standings is based on Standings Points (SP) and is determined and published as follows: Teams get 2 points for a win, 1 point for a tie and 0 points for a loss.
- B. TIES:** In case of a tie in Standings Points (SP), the team with the highest Total Team Points (TP) is placed higher in the standings. In case of a tie in Total Team Points the team with the lowest Total Opponent Points (OP) is placed higher in the standings.
- C. FINAL STANDINGS:** Section A and B above illustrates how the standings will be published throughout the season. At the end of the season, if there are more than two teams tied in Standings Points, the teams with the lowest total points will be eliminated until there are two teams remaining. At this point, the two-way tie process outlined below will take effect until a winner is determined.

1. Head-to-head results between the two teams.
2. Total team points scored during their matches against each other.
3. Total team points scored during the regular season
4. Lowest total opponent points.

## X. **PLAYOFF & CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT STANDINGS, TIEBREAK CRITERIA**

- A. INDIVIDUAL MATCHES:** If both teams have an equal number of Team Points at the end of a regional playoff or state championship match, the two-way tie process outlined below will take effect until a winner is determined:
1. Most games won.
  2. Most game points earned.
  3. Most rounds won.
- B. PLAYOFF & STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ROBIN FLIGHTS:** If more than two teams have the same win/loss record, the teams with the fewest games won will be eliminated (or fewest game points if games won is tied) until there are two teams remaining. Then the head-to-head winner of their match will be declared the champion.

## XI. **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- A. RESCHEDULING.** Rescheduling of matches due to inclement weather is warranted in cases of rain and/or sustained winds of at least 20 mph. **The match to be cancelled shall NOT be called any earlier than the travel time for the Away team plus 10 minutes.** The Captain(s) seeking to reschedule the match due to inclement weather shall take a screenshot of the weather forecast for the locale where the match is scheduled to be played, send the screenshot to the League Coordinator, and then follow the Rescheduling Policy instructions to identify a new match date. In the Casa Grande Region, the Regional Director will work with the captains to reschedule according to available dates.
- B. MATCH CANCELED PRIOR TO START.** In the event a match cannot be played due to inclement weather, the match can be rescheduled to play any time prior to the end of the season. Captains shall follow the procedures for rescheduling the match and notifying the League Coordinator as outlined in the APPL Rescheduling Policy. Matches that are rained out during the last week of the season will not be rescheduled. If this happens the team's winning percentage will be used to determine the final standings. In the Casa Grande Region, the Regional Director will work with the captains to reschedule according to available dates.
- C. MATCH CANCELED AFTER START.** Once the two games are completed in a round, that round is considered completed for those two teams, and will not be repeated or replayed. Any scoresheet lines not completed in a round will be replayed from the beginning of the round (i.e. replayed starting with game 1). All scoresheet lines completed before the cancelation will stand and be recorded. Captains will reschedule the match to play the incomplete and remaining rounds for the match.

**EXAMPLE:** A match must be canceled in the middle of round 2. Two scoresheet lines have been completed and the third was not. Captains will record the scores for round 1 and the completed lines of round 2. Then they will reschedule to play the remaining line of round 2 and all of round 3. **NOTE:** The most efficient way to accomplish this reschedule is to have players play round 3 first (using all players), and then only the affected players have to stay to play the unfinished line of round 2 beginning with game one.

If only the third round is needed to be completed, it is not required that the players all convene to play at the same time and location. Captains/players may arrange their own independent foursome and report the third round scores to their captains.

- D. LINE-UPS AFTER MATCH CANCELLATION.** If the match is to be replayed in its entirety the captain is not required to field the same team lineup. If at least one round has been completed, the captain may bring one different player in the new lineup as the permanent player to replace a player that is unavailable to play in the rescheduled match and one different player to serve as the substitute for injury or physical ailment of a player during the rescheduled match. Substitution rules for injury or physical ailment still apply.

## APPENDIX A: 2025 Play Options

**My APPL Index is different from the skill level I played in during the 2024 season. What should I do?**

**Example 1:** Your skill rating has dropped **MORE than 0.5 below** the skill level previously played:

Hypothetical 2.90 player who was on a 3.5 team in season 2024 could opt to:

1. Play on a 2.5 flight.
2. Appeal up to 3.0, provided adequate justification can be provided to justify the appeal.\*  
If approved:
  - Play on a 3.0 flight, as that will now be the player's new team roster rating.
  - Play on a 3.5 flight, as the player's APPL recognized skill level is now within 0.5 of the 3.5 skill level rating. You would count as one of the team's 3 exception spots.If not approved:
  - Play on a 2.5 flight.
  - Play on a 3.0 flight, as the player's APPL Index is now within 0.5 of the 3.0 skill level rating. You would count as one of the team's 3 exception spots.

**Example 2:** Your skill rating has dropped **NO MORE than 0.5 below** the skill level previously played:

Hypothetical 3.34 player who was on a 3.5 team in season 2024 could opt to:

1. Play on a 3.0 flight.
2. Play on a 3.5 flight as an automatic variance for the 2025 season only. You will NOT count as one of the team's 3 exception spots in 2025.
3. Appeal up to 3.5, provided adequate justification can be provided to justify the appeal.\*  
If approved:
  - Play on a 3.5 flight, as that will now be the player's new team roster rating.If not approved:
  - Play on a 3.0 flight.
  - Play on a 3.5 flight as an automatic variance for the 2025 season only. You will NOT count as one of the team's 3 exception spots in 2025.

**Example 3:** Your skill rating **has gone up**:

Hypothetical 4.10 player who was on a 3.5 team in season 2024 could opt to:

1. Play on a 4.0 flight.
2. Appeal down to 3.5, provided adequate justification can be provided to justify the appeal.\*  
If approved:
  - Play on a 3.5 flight, as that will now be the player's new team roster rating.If not approved:
  - Play on a 4.0 flight.

**Example 4:** You played on a team as **an exception** in 2024:

Hypothetical 3.34 player who was on a 3.5 team as an exception in season 2024 could opt to:

1. Play on a 3.0 flight.
2. Play as an exception again with the Captain's approval.
3. Appeal up to 3.5, provided adequate justification can be provided to justify the appeal.\*  
If approved:
  - Play on a 3.5 flight, as that will now be the player's new team roster rating.If not approved:
  - Play on a 3.0 flight.

## Revision History:

- 9/29/21: Section VI-D.: Removed old reference to substitution pool.
- 7/31/22: Considerable rewrite in several areas
- 7/31/22a: Minor edits for clarity
- 10/28/22: Section III.D.: added examples for clarity  
Section III.F.: added clarity to grandfathered ratings  
Section V.B.: added additional requirements for ball color
- 7/26/23: Considerable rewrite in several areas
- 11/13/23: Minor edits for clarity
- 8/31/24: Updated for APPL Index throughout  
Section III.C.: revised accepted ratings and added roster rating information  
Section III.D., VII.A., B., D.: revised for new 5.0 flight rules  
Section VII.C.: revised late player rules  
Section VII.G.: added rule for medical timeouts and water breaks  
Section XI.A.: added a timeframe for when an inclement weather cancellation can be called  
Section XI.C.: clarification of which matches need to be replayed  
Added Appendix A for 2025 APPL Index Play Options