



ARIZONA PICKLEBALL PLAYERS LEAGUE

2026 Season 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 birth 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. Open League: No age restriction except 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. Players with a Self-Rating or Appealed Rating may ONLY play at their approved roster rating level, and may not play as an Exception on any team at another level (gender or mixed).
 - 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. PLAYER 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.** For all ratings, it is the responsibility of the player and team captain to assure the ratings are accurate and defensible, no matter what the level. 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.
 - 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".
 - 2. Self-Rating: Players who have skipped a year or more of APPL play may NOT use the self-rating process to change their prior roster rating. All players NEW to APPL will be required to submit a Self-Rating Assessment Form online (under Player Resources on the APPL website) to be approved at a specific Roster Rating (3.0, 3.5, etc.). The player must complete the Form and provide a copy to their team Captain (once their Captain has been determined). Self-Rated players may **ONLY** play at this approved Roster

Rating for their first season in APPL and are not eligible to play as an Exception except in 65+. Their roster rating will show an "S" for Self-Rating.

3. **Appealed Rating:** Roster ratings appeals shall be submitted and ruled upon prior to player registration (see III.D.). 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.

D. **PLAYER APPL INDEX APPEALS.** On occasion, a player's APPL Index may not accurately reflect the player's current skill level. To appeal, the player shall submit a request for a roster rating change to the APPL Appeals Committee using the Appeal Form (located on the APPL website under APPL Player Resources).

1. Appeals are valid for one (1) year or until the next player registration whichever is shorter.
2. Players with an Appealed Rating may ONLY play at this approved roster rating level, and may not play as an Exception on any team at another level (gender or mixed), except for a 65+ team.

E. **TEAM ROSTER SKILL LEVELS AND EXCEPTIONS.**

In the spirit of encouraging players to improve their skills, teams may contain up to three players with a roster rating of 0.5 points below the team's flight level. NOTE: Players with an Appeal (Fast Track or regular) or a Self-Rating are not eligible to play as an Exception.

1. **Open & 50+ Teams:** 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. **65+ Teams:** Teams must have at least four players at the team's flight level. There is no limit on the number of Exceptions or how much lower their roster rating is below the team's flight level, and Appealed or Self-Rated players may be utilized. For example, a 4.0 team must include 4 x 4.0's, and may include 3.5's, 3.0's, 3.5A's or 3.0S's in any combination of numbers and roster ratings.

F. **PLAYING ON MULTIPLE TEAMS.** Players may play in more than one age-defined APPL league (Open, 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 Open 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 Open or 50+). NOTE: Players with a Self-Rating or Appealed Rating may ONLY play at their approved roster rating level, and may not play as an Exception on any team at another level (gender or mixed), except for a 65+ team.

G. **OTHER TEAM MEMBER RULES.**

1. 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.
2. 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.

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.
- C. **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.
- D. **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.

- E. **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.

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. Courts must be available simultaneously for a minimum of two hours (2.5 hours preferred). Pickleball courts for match play must be at an APPL approved facility. For facility approval, contact your League Coordinator, who must obtain the agreement of the Regional Director.
- B. **BALLS.** Balls used for all APPL league games must be new, USAP approved, outdoor balls, 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 sanctioned 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, and must not be delayed more than 5 minutes. 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.** The schedule is presumed to be final at the end of the rescheduling period. 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 STANDARD FORMAT MATCHES.** A “short line-up” is not the same as a “forfeited match”. 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.
- F. **FORFEITS.** A “forfeited match” is not the same as a “short line-up”. Forfeits (less than four players available) are poor sportsmanship and a violation of the APPL Code of Conduct due to their power to change the outcome of a flight by giving the opposing team an automatic 36-0 match win. The following consequences will be applied if a team forfeits a match or matches:
 - 1. First forfeit: The forfeiting team loses a standing point.
 - 2. Second forfeit: The forfeiting team will be removed from the league and all their matches will be removed from the standings.

VII. **MATCH PLAY.**

- A. **FORMATS.** All games are played to 11, win by 2 points. Home teams stay on the same courts for each round. Visiting teams switch courts after each round.

1. **Standard** APPL 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.
2. **Quad gender** team 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. **Quad 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.

B. MATCH DAY TEAMS.

1. **Standard APPL matches:** On match day the captain will bring six players to play on three doubles teams.
2. **All Quad 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 at the start of the match. Once provided, teams cannot deviate from the lineup order provided. The doubles team partners will stay together for that day's match unless substitutions are made (see substitution rules). Captains or their designee 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:
 1. 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.
 2. Upon arrival, if games(s) were forfeited, the late player may play in any ensuing games. 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.
 3. If the sub has played, the late player will fulfill the role of substitute for the remaining matches.
 4. 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 teams 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 Quad 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 shall 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 (not during water breaks). Coaching is verbal or nonverbal communication during a game from anyone other than a player's partner, that is offered to assist a player in a match (i.e. providing direction for strategy, line calls, time outs, etc.).
- 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. 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.
1. The scoresheet entries shall reflect both the original player who began the match and the substitute who finished the remaining game(s) in the match. The original player shall receive credit for any round(s) they completed when the scoresheet is entered online.
- 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 match scores within 48 hours of the match. 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. If a substitute was used, refer to rule VII.I.1. for instructions on completing the online record.
- 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. Following the match, a single grievance form may be filed by the team who played the match “under protest”. See Rule VIII.F. for the grievance procedure.
- F. **GRIEVANCES.** A formal grievance may be filed within 48 hours for a Rules/Sportsmanship/Code of Conduct issue. The form is posted on the Player Resources page of the APPL website.
- G. **VIDEOTAPING.** Videotaping is allowed by APPL unless a home team’s local club policy prohibits its use (private courts only).

IX. INCLEMENT WEATHER.

- A. **RESCHEDULING.** For complete requirements for schedule changes see the APPL Match Rescheduling Policy on the Captain Resources page of the APPL website. 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 planned travel time for the Away Team plus 2 hours.** Both Captains must agree that a reschedule of the match is warranted under APPL policy. If for any reason the Captains cannot agree, then the League Coordinator shall be contacted to decide whether the match should go forward or be rescheduled. To reschedule the match, Captains must 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 CANCELLED 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 CANCELLED AFTER START.** Once the both games are completed in a round, that round is considered completed for those two teams, and will not be repeated or replayed. Any games not completed in a round will be replayed from the beginning of the unfinished game. All games completed before the cancellation will stand and be recorded in the online score reporting for the match. Captains will reschedule the match to play the incomplete and remaining games and rounds for the match.

EXAMPLE: A match must be cancelled in the middle of round 2. Three games have been completed and the fourth game was not finished by all the teams (i.e. all of round 1, and game 1 of round 2, have been completed). Captains will record the scores for round 1 and the completed game of round 2. Then they will reschedule to play the remaining game 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 game(s) of round 2.

If only the third round needs 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.

X. PUBLISHED REGULAR SEASON FLIGHT STANDINGS.

- A. **STANDINGS.** 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 published standings during the season. In case of a tie in Total Team Points the team with the lowest Total Opponent Points (OP) is placed higher in the standings.

XI. REGIONAL PLAYOFFS & TIEBREAKERS.

- A. **FORFEITS.** Forfeits are poor sportsmanship and a violation of the APPL Code of Conduct due to their power to change the outcome of a flight by giving the opposing team an automatic 36-0 match win. If forfeits are present in the record of the teams tied in Standings Points at the end of the season, the forfeited match score(s) will be manually substituted with the teams' average points won and lost during the season. The teams' total points will then be recalculated manually for the tied teams. This new total points calculation will be used for tiebreakers under B.2. and B.3. below.
- B. **END OF REGULAR SEASON TIEBREAKERS.** At the end of the season, if there are two or more teams tied in flight or sub-flight Standings Points, the tiebreakers below will be used to **eliminate** one team at a time, starting over after a team is eliminated, until a flight, sub-flight (A/B) or multiple sub-flights (A1/A2, B1/B2, etc.) winner is determined.
1. Head-to-head results between the tied teams.
 2. Lowest total team points amongst the tied teams.
 3. Highest total opponent points amongst the tied teams.
 4. The winning team will advance to a Regional playoff, if necessary, or will be named the Regional champion.
- C. **LARGE FLIGHTS.** In the case of flights with more than 15 teams, two teams will qualify for the State Championship, the winners of the A and the B sub-flights.
- D. **PLAYER QUALIFICATION CRITERIA.** In order to participate in a sub-flight playoff, players must have played in at least one complete APPL regular season match.
- E. **REGIONAL PLAYOFFS – EVEN NUMBER OF SUB-FLIGHTS.** The winners of each sub-flight or multiple sub-flights, if applicable, will play each other in a single playoff match using the standard APPL match format. All playoff matches will be scheduled by the Regional Director or League Coordinator, and played after the regular season games are completed. The winners of the multiple sub-flight matches will go on to play another playoff level. The winner of the final Regional playoff will be declared the Regional champion and will qualify to play in the State Championship.
- F. **REGIONAL PLAYOFFS – THREE SUB-FLIGHTS.** The winners of each sub-flight plus one “Wild Card” team will play in the Regional playoffs. The “Wild Card” team is the team with the next best win/loss record of all the teams remaining in the flight after the sub-flight winners are determined. The four teams will play a semifinal playoff match, with the winners of the semifinal rounds playing for the final Regional playoff.
- G. **REGIONAL PLAYOFF TIEBREAKERS.** If two teams tie in a Regional playoff match, the tiebreakers outlined below will take effect until a winner is determined:
1. Most games won in that match.
 2. Most game points earned in that match.
 3. Most rounds won in that match.

XII. STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS & TIEBREAKERS.

- A. **MATCH AVAILABILITY:** State Championship matches are held based on the overall number of teams within a given division/age/skill level. All merged flights will be separated. Flights with a limited number of similar teams in other regions may not be eligible for a State Championship.
- B. **PLAYER QUALIFICATION CRITERIA.** 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.
- C. **STATE CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH TIES.** If two teams tie in a State Championship match, the tiebreakers outlined below will take effect until a winner is determined:
 - 1. Most games won in that match.
 - 2. Most game points earned in that match.
 - 3. Most rounds won in that match.
- D. **STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ROBIN FLIGHT TIES.** If more than two teams have the same win/loss record, the teams with the fewest games won will be eliminated or, if games won is tied, the fewest game points until there are two teams remaining. Then the head-to-head winner of their match will be declared the State champion.

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scoresheet entry VII.I.1.

when allowable VII.I.

Teams

captain & co-captain req'd IV.B.

registration deadline IV.A.

roster addition deadline IV.E.

roster size IV.D.

team name IV.C.

Time outs VII.G.

medical VII.G.

Videotaping VIII.G.

Warm-up courts/ time VII.J.

five minutes VII.J.

none for substitutes VII.I.

when available VII.