



Guidance Note

Promoting Safe Participation in Pickleball

Purpose

Pickleball is recognised as one of the world's most accessible sports and can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. As participation continues to grow, many clubs are welcoming beginners, older adults and people living with long-term health conditions such as Parkinson's, arthritis, stroke recovery, Multiple Sclerosis and other mobility or neurological conditions.

This guidance is intended to help clubs, venues, coaches, activators and volunteers create a safe and enjoyable environment whilst recognising that every participant remains responsible for making decisions appropriate to their own physical capabilities.

Key Principles

- Pickleball England believes that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy pickleball in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Participation should be encouraged, not restricted. However, inclusion should never mean encouraging participants to exceed their own physical capabilities.
- The role of clubs, coaches and volunteers is to create a safe environment, provide appropriate information and encourage sensible decision-making. They are not expected to assess medical conditions or determine an individual's fitness to participate.

Responsibilities

Clubs and Venues

Clubs should:

- Provide a safe playing environment.
- Encourage the use of appropriate indoor court footwear.
- Ensure participants understand the nature of the activity.
- Encourage players to play within their own capabilities.
- Record and review any accidents or near misses to identify opportunities for improvement.

Clubs are not expected to assess medical conditions or make decisions about whether an individual should participate.

Participants

Participants remain responsible for:

- Deciding whether they are fit to participate.
 - Playing within their own physical capabilities.
 - Wearing suitable clothing and footwear.
 - Stopping if they experience pain, dizziness, fatigue or discomfort.
 - Seeking medical advice where appropriate.
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Guidance for Coaches, Activators and Volunteers

Where a participant advises they have a medical condition or mobility limitation:

- Welcome the conversation.
- Ask whether there is anything you should know to help make the session enjoyable.
- Encourage the participant to play at their own pace.
- Encourage regular breaks where appropriate.
- Never pressure participants to attempt movements they are uncomfortable making.
- Remember that the participant knows their own body better than anyone else.

Coaches and volunteers should avoid attempting to assess medical conditions or providing medical advice.

Teaching Safe Decision-Making

- One of the most important skills in pickleball is learning which balls not to chase.
 - Many beginners, particularly those with previous racket sport experience, instinctively attempt to retrieve every ball.
 - Clubs are encouraged to explain that:
 - not every ball needs to be reached;
 - allowing a difficult ball to go is often the safest decision;
 - enjoyment and continued participation are more important than winning a rally.
 - Introducing this concept early helps reduce unnecessary falls and injuries for players of all ages.
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Informal Practice ("Knock-Ups")

During informal practice or introductory rallies, clubs are encouraged to remind participants that:

- the purpose is to become familiar with the game;
- there is no expectation that every ball will be retrieved;
- players should avoid sudden lunges or overreaching;

- it is perfectly acceptable to allow difficult balls to pass.
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Footwear

- Appropriate indoor court footwear helps reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls.
 - Clubs may remind participants of suitable footwear requirements but should avoid making individual assessments or guarantees regarding the suitability of a particular shoe.
 - Ultimately, participants remain responsible for ensuring their footwear is appropriate for the activity.
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Health Conditions

- People living with Parkinson's, dementia, arthritis, joint replacements, Multiple Sclerosis, stroke recovery and many other health conditions are increasingly enjoying pickleball.
- Pickleball England encourages clubs to welcome these participants and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

However:

- participation should always remain voluntary;
 - participants should play within their own capabilities;
 - clubs should avoid making assumptions based solely on a diagnosis;
 - individuals should always be empowered to make their own decisions regarding participation.
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Accident Reporting

Where an accident occurs, clubs should:

- provide appropriate first aid;
- record the incident as soon as possible;
- retain any relevant witness statements;
- review whether any lessons can be learned.

The aim of reviewing incidents is continuous improvement, not the attribution of blame.

Pickleball England Safety Principles

These principles may be incorporated into club policies, induction materials, coaching sessions and participant briefings.

Pickleball England Safety Principles

- Play within your own physical capabilities.
- It is always acceptable to let a difficult ball go.
- Good footwork is more important than reaching every shot.
- Stop immediately if you feel pain, dizzy, unwell or excessively fatigued.
- Wear appropriate indoor court footwear.

- Tell the session leader if you have any concerns before playing.
 - There is no expectation that every ball should be chased.
 - Enjoy the game safely - playing another day is more important than winning a rally.
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Conclusion

- Pickleball's greatest strength is its accessibility.
- By encouraging sensible decision-making, respecting individual responsibility and creating welcoming environments, clubs can help people of all ages and abilities enjoy pickleball safely for many years to come.

“Pickleball England encourages participation, not risk. Our aim is to remove unnecessary barriers to playing while empowering every participant to make informed decisions about their own safety.”