Suggested 45-minute Parkinson's Pickleball Taster Session

For people living with Parkinson's, a pickleball taster should be welcoming, low-pressure and highly adaptable, with the emphasis on enjoyment, movement and social connection rather than learning the full game.

Suggested 45-minute Parkinson's Pickleball Taster

Timing	Activity	Purpose
0-5 mins	Welcome and Introductions	Build confidence and explain that everyone can participate at their own level
5-10 mins	Gentle warm-up	Mobility, posture, balance and range of movement
10–15 mins	Paddle familiarisation	Holding paddle, tapping ball, simple hand-eye coordination
15–20 mins	Ball activities	Rolling, catching and gentle throwing with a partner
20–30 mins	Introduction to hitting	Coach feeds slowly; participant returns ball
30-38 mins	Cooperative rally	Partners work together to keep the ball moving — no scoring
38–42 mins	Fun target activity	Hit or roll towards large targets
42–45 mins	Cool-down & social time	Gentle movement, refreshments and conversation

Key adaptations

- Keep instructions short:

Demonstrate first, then let the participant try.

- Allow extra time:

Parkinson's can affect movement initiation, balance and coordination, so avoid rushing someone to respond.

- Use repetition:

Repeating the same movement can help participants become comfortable with the activity.

- Reduce the distance:

Bring players closer together and use gentle feeds to create early success.

- Consider seated pickleball:

Have chairs available and allow participants to play seated if standing balance or fatigue is an issue.

- Avoid unnecessary competition:

For a first session, cooperative games are often more appropriate than keeping score.

- Build in rest periods:

Fatigue can be significant. Participants should be encouraged to take breaks whenever needed.

- Think about the environment:

Keep the playing area uncluttered, provide good lighting and minimise distractions.

Coach/volunteer approach

The most important message for volunteers is:

- Don't coach Parkinson's – coach the person.

Every participant will have different symptoms and abilities. Some may have excellent ball skills but difficulty with balance; others may have reduced movement but enjoy the social interaction enormously.

Volunteers should therefore focus on:

- Patience
- Encouragement
- Simple instructions
- Demonstration
- Individual adaptation
- Dignity
- Enjoyment

And importantly, don't assume someone can't do something because they have Parkinson's. Give them the opportunity to try and adapt the activity if necessary.

Pickleball England message
MOVE • CONNECT • ENJOY

The objective of the taster isn't to produce pickleball players in 45 minutes.
It is to give someone living with Parkinson's the experience of thinking:
"I enjoyed that. I was able to do it. I'd like to come back."

Version 1. September 2026