2026
RULEBOOK CHANGE DOCUMENT

GPF

2026 USA Pickleball Rulebook Change Document
Global Pickleball Federation Edition

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USA PICKLEBALL

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USA Pickleball / GPF Rulebook Change Document
Purpose and Explanation

Purpose:

The USA Pickleball / GPF Rulebook Change Document outlines all new and revised rules for 2026, explains the reasons behind each change, and helps players and referees understand and apply the updates. It also serves as a historical record for future reference.

The Change Document should not be viewed as a substitute for the Rulebook.

Explanation:

Each entry is numbered for reference. Each entry has a four-digit number in blue that links to the USAP New Rule Database and shows the original rule revision or request. Next is the 2025 rule number being revised. Next to that rule number is the new 2026 Rule that corresponds to the 2025 Rule. The 2026 rule that now applies is listed next to the 2025 rule behind a back slash. Key Words describing the rule change are in the next box. A "View Details" link then directs the reader to the specific page and rule associated with that entry.

Rules changes in black font are editorial. Some rules were edited by request for clarity or grammar. The changes contain actions that can be taken as a result of a rules violation. **If the Key Words appear in red, the rule or something in the rule is new to the USA / GPF Pickleball rulebook.**

In some cases, an Additional Information section was included to provide more details on the change. This will give a scenario or further description as to how this rule will be used.

Both USA Pickleball and GPF hopes that all players, spectators, and Tournament staff have the opportunity to read either the 2026 USA Pickleball Rulebook or the 2026 Global Pickleball Federation Rulebook edition. This document gives the audience a quick guide as to what has changed and why.

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1. 2068 Serve Should Land in the Correct Service Court

2025 Rule:
4.M. Service Faults. During the serve, it is a fault against the server resulting in loss of serve if:
4.M.4. The served ball lands outside the service court.

2026 Rule:
7.E Serve Placement. The server must serve to the service court diagonally opposite their correct position. (See Rule 14.B.3 for mini singles.) The served ball must clear the opponent's non-volley zone, with or without touching the net, and land in the correct service court.
7.E.1 Fault – Serve Lands Out of Bounds. When a served ball lands outside the correct service court, it is a fault against the server.

Reason for this change:
This provides a minor but technically accurate clarification of the rule.

2. 2070 Net Post Winner

2025 Rule: 11.K
11.K. Net Posts. It is a fault if a player contacts the net post while the ball is live. A ball contacting the net post results in a dead ball and the team that hit the ball loses the rally.

2026 Rule
10.C.5 Fault – Ball Hits Permanent Object After Landing. When a player fails to return a ball that has bounced in that player's court before the ball contacts a permanent object, it is a fault against that player.

Reason for this change:
Editorial. This more clearly states the intent of the rule.

Additional Information:
This would allow a ball to cross the net, bounce in the opponent's court, and then—due to spin or wind—touch the net post, awarding the rally to the player who hit the shot.

3. 2071: Round Robin Withdrawals, Retirements and Forfeits

2025 Rule:
12.C.4.a. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin without a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating. If a player/team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin with a playoff then that player's/team's match results will not count toward the standings of that round robin and the player/team will not be eligible to move on to a playoff elimination draw. The match results will count towards a player's/team's rating.

2026 Rule:
15.B.4.a Withdrawal, Retirement, or Forfeit. When a singles player or doubles team withdraws, retires, or is forfeited from a round robin event, then that player's or team's match results will not count toward the standings of that event and the player or team will not be eligible to participate in any elimination playoff or medal match for that event. The match results will count towards the player's or team's rating.

Reason for this change:
Editorial. This more clearly states the intent of the rule.

4. 2072 Act of Volleying - definition

2025 Rule:
9.B.1. The act of volleying begins when the ball is struck out of the air before bouncing (volleyed) and ends when the player's movement from the follow-through action (momentum) stops.

2026 Rule = Definition
Volleying, Act of. The act of volleying begins when the ball is hit out of the air before bouncing (i.e., volleyed) and ends when the player's movement from the follow-through action (i.e., momentum) stops.

Reason for this change:
Changed from a Rule to a Definition

5. 2073: Round Robin Tiebreaker Process

2025 Rule:
12.C.4. Round Robin. All players/teams play each other. Games may use any of the approved tournament scoring options. (See Rule 12.B.) The winner is determined based on number of matches won. If two or more teams are tied, ties shall be broken in accordance with 12.C.4.a. through 12.C.4.e. The method that succeeds in breaking the tie will be used to rank all tied teams.

2026 Rule:
15.B.4 Round Robin. All singles players or doubles teams play each other. The winner is determined based on the highest number of matches won. When two or more teams are tied for the number of matches won, ties must be broken in accordance with the sequence in Rules 15.B.4.a through 15.B.4.f. The method that succeeds in breaking the tie will be used to rank all tied teams.

15.B.4.f Fifth Tie-Breaker. The fifth tie-breaker is the highest number of points scored across all matches in the round robin. This tie-breaker does not apply across multiple pools where the number of teams in each pool is not equal.

Reason for this change:
Added a fifth tiebreaker in a round robin to decide standings.

Additional insight:
Although rare it is possible that in a small Round Robin that all teams could have identical won loss records. This would take the total number of points scored as the fifth ties breaker for standings.
Example: Teams A, B, C play. Scores are: A verses B 11-5, B verses C 11-1, C verses A 11-2. A has 11+2 =13 points, B has 5+11 = 16 points, C has 1+11 points = 12. B is the winner followed by A then C.

6. 2075: Spectators Must Not Be Consulted on Calls

2025 Rule:
13.C.2.a. Spectators should not be consulted on any calls.

2026 Rule:
8.J Spectator Involvement. Spectators must not be consulted on any call.

Reason for this change:
Changing words Should Not to Must Not. The proposal is appropriate. The current rule is not mandatory, and it should be. Section 13.G.1 lists the various actions for which a verbal or technical warning can be issued, so it is appropriate to add a subsection to clearly establish the potential consequence.

Additional Information:
In a non-officiated match, the players may summon the Head Referee or Tournament Director if their opponent or partner uses spectators for any calls. In an officiated match the referee could issue a warning, Verbal, Technical or Technical Foul for violation or repeated violation of this rule.

7. 2080: **Update to Cross-Court Definition.**

2025 Rule:
3.A.5. Cross-Court – The court diagonally opposite of the court from which the ball was last struck.

2026 Rule:
Deleted

Reason for this change:
There is no need to define or create a rule for cross court.

8. 2090: **Ejections for Assault**

2025 Rule:
13.M. Ejections and Expulsions. The Tournament Director may eject a player from the tournament for flagrant and particularly injurious behavior that, in the opinion of the Tournament Director, impacts the success of the tournament. An ejection can occur due to actions any time the player is at the tournament venue and may include, but is not limited to:
13.M.2. Injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse.

2026 Rule:
22.L Ejection or Expulsion. Any time a player is at the tournament venue, the Tournament Director is authorized to eject a player from the tournament or expel a player from the venue for:
22.L.2 Injurious Paddle or Ball Abuse. Damage to the venue or injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse or other acts of physical violence.

Reason for this change:
It is appropriate to eject or expel a player for any type of physical violence that results in an injury to a person. The use of a ball or paddle to cause injury is now included. This includes before during or after play.

9. 2091: Ejections for Willful Damage to Property

2025 Rule
13.M. Ejections and Expulsions. The Tournament Director may eject a player from the tournament for flagrant and particularly injurious behavior that, in the opinion of the Tournament Director, impacts the success of the tournament. An ejection can occur due to actions any time the player is at the tournament venue and may include, but is not limited to:
13.M.1. Using ethnic, religious, racial, sexist, or homophobic slurs.
13.M.2. Injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse.
13.M.3. Spitting or coughing on a person.
13.M.4. Not exhibiting "best effort." This includes but is not limited to, defaulting, forfeiting, or not giving best efforts in matches, whether for their own benefit or otherwise.

2026 Rule
22.L Ejection or Expulsion. Any time a player is at the tournament venue, the Tournament Director is authorized to eject a player from the tournament or expel a player from the venue for:
22.L.5 Other Behavior. Other flagrant, injurious, or egregious behavior that the Tournament Director deems detrimental to the tournament.

Reason for this change:
This change includes other behavior that the tournament director feels is appropriate to remove a player or spectator. It is appropriate to include damage to the venue as a basis for ejection or expulsion. The amendment accomplishes it by combining it with current rule 13.M.2 without using language that requires one to determine the intent of the offending player.

10. 2093: Penalties Before Match Starts

2025 Rule:
13.G.3.e. Verbal warnings, technical warnings, and technical fouls may be assessed any time the players are at the court. This includes during warm-up time. Play shall not be stopped to assess a warning or foul. The assessment of the warning or foul shall be applied after the rally has ended.

2026 Rule:
22.A Referee Authorization. The referee is authorized to assess verbal warnings and penalties to a singles player or doubles team any time during a match while the players are in the vicinity of the court, including before the match starts.

Reason for this change:
Some players have demonstrated unruly behavior prior to the match beginning, including during the warmup time, and outside the court. This rule reminds players that they are responsible for their behavior when the match has been called and, on their way to and arriving at the court.

11. 2106: Double Hit Rule

2025 Rule:
11.A. Double Hits. Balls can be hit twice, but this must occur during a continuous, single-direction stroke by one player. If the stroke made while performing the serve or during a rally is not continuous, or not in a single direction, or the ball is struck by a second player, it is a fault.

2026 Rule:
10.D Double Hit. Balls can be hit more than once, but the stroke must be continuous in a single-direction by one player.
10.D.1Fault – Double Hit. When a player hits a ball more than once using a stroke that is not in a continuous and in a single direction, it is a fault against the player.
10.D.2Fault – Two-Player Hit. When a player and their partner both hit a ball to return it, it is a fault against the players.

Reason for this change:
On rare occasions a triple hit is possible by the same player as in 10.D. This will be treated the same as a double hit.

12. 2108: Pre-Match Briefing

2025 Rule:
13.C.4.b. Point out approved rule modifications, court abnormalities and non-standard court conditions that could be potential safety issues, including but not limited to court repairs or seams, different distances from end lines to back fences, and spectators and their seating.

2026 Rule:
17.C.2 Rule Modifications and Hinders. Point out approved rule modifications, court abnormalities, and non-standard court conditions that could be potential safety issues.

Reason for this change:
Make this rule clearer.

13. 2131: Change Doubt to Conflict

2025 Rule
6.C.8. In doubles play, if one player calls the ball "out" and the partner calls it "in," then doubt exists, and the team's call will be "in." Any player may appeal the team's call to the referee or defer a line call to their opponent up until the next serve occurs. If the referee or opponent did not see the ball, the ball is considered in.

2026 Rule:
8.H. Partner Disagreement (Doubles). When partners disagree on a line call, then conflict exists, and the team's call will be "in."

Reason for this change:
This changes the word doubt to mean a stronger disagreement between players.

14. 2135: Game Potentially Won by a Technical Foul

2025 Rule:
12.B.1.c Scoring the Game-Winning Point. The game-winning point can only be scored by the serving player or team. When a player or team is at game point and the opponent serves and loses the rally, it is a side out and no point is awarded.

2026 Rule:
4.B Winning the Game. The first singles player or doubles team to score the winning point wins the game.

Reason for this change:
Clarity and shorten the rule.

Additional Information:
A non-serving team can win a game if the serving team has zero points and the receiving team is one point away from game point. If the serving team is assessed a Technical Foul, the receiving team is awarded one point—giving them the game.

15. 2156: Paddle Adding Spin to the Ball at Contact During a Serve

2025 Rule:
4.A.5. The serve shall be made with only one hand or the paddle releasing the ball. While some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball, the server shall not impart manipulation or spin on the ball with any part of the body or the paddle because of the release. Exception: The server may allow the ball to roll off the face of the paddle by gravity.

2026 Rule:
7.B.2 No Manipulation or Spin Upon Release. Some natural rotation of the ball is expected during any release of the ball. The server must not manipulate the ball to add spin with any part of the server's body or the paddle prior to hitting the ball to make the serve, except that the server may allow the ball to roll off the face of the paddle by gravity. Spin may be applied to the ball upon contact by the paddle.

Reason for this change:
This means a player may legally apply spin to the ball with the paddle during the serve, as long as all other serving rules are followed. In other words, adding spin at the moment of paddle contact is allowed.

Additional Information:
This is one of the most misunderstood rules. When the ball is released—whether for a volley serve or a drop serve—no spin may be applied by the hand. However, spin **may be added by the paddle** when it contacts the ball. In other words, players are allowed to apply spin to the serve using their paddle, just not with their hand during the release.

16. 2221: Prompt Line Calls

2025 Rule:
6.C.7. All "out" calls must be promptly signaled by voice and/or hand signal.
6.C.7.a. If a player/team returns the ball, the "out" call shall be made before the opponent hits the ball or the ball becomes dead.
6.C.7.b. If a player/team does not return the ball, they may make an "out" call, appeal the call to the referee, or defer to their opponents to make the line call up until the next serve occurs.

2026 Rule:
8.F "Out" Call and Signal. Players must promptly signal an "out" ball audibly by voice, visibly by a hand signal, or both.
8.F.3 Out Call Timing. If a player returns the ball, their "out" call must be made before the ball is hit by the opponent or before the ball becomes dead; otherwise, play continues. If a player does not return the ball, an "out" call made promptly will be recognized, even if the ball becomes dead before the "out" call is made.

Reason for this change:

Clarify that a player may promptly call a ball "out" even after it becomes dead. There is no legitimate reason for a player to delay making an out call. The current rule—allowing an "out" call to be made any time before the next serve when the ball is not returned—permits an unnecessarily long delay, invites potential gamesmanship, and creates complications for the referee, who must determine the rally's outcome to establish the correct score, server, receiver, and player positions for the next rally or time-out.

The proposed amendment to Rule 6.C.7.b (when the ball is not returned) addresses edge cases—such as when the ball bounces out and immediately contacts a player—by allowing the call to be made and accepted after the ball is dead, if it is made promptly. Rule 6.B.7.a (when the ball is returned) remains unchanged and continues to require the out call to occur before the opponent hits the ball and before it becomes dead.

In situations where a ball is clearly and unquestionably out—so much so that no one makes a formal call because they assume it is obvious to everyone, common sense should prevail. The ball should not be ruled in simply because no out call was made, nor should anyone insist on a late out call that could then be deemed untimely.

17. 2239: Doubles Player Retirement, Partner Continues to Play

2025 Rule

10.B.2.c. If the player cannot resume play after the 15-minute medical time-out period, the match will be declared a retirement. The player may use their available regular timeouts after the medical timeout has expired to allow more time before the match must be retired.

2026 Rule:

21.C.9 Match Retirement. A match retirement is imposed when a player is not able to continue play after the 15-minute medical time-out period expires. A player may use their available standard time-outs to allow more time before the match must be retired (Rule 21.A.4). In doubles, if the retiring player's partner decides to continue, the match will resume following all applicable rules. The retiring player must leave the playing surface.

Reason for this change:

There are situations where a player on a doubles team may need to retire from the game, but the partner is able to continue to play. The partner may continue to play provided all rules of the game are followed. The retired partner is not allowed to return to the game or match. This provides helpful clarification previously affirmed in an entry in the Casebook #1-25. The amended rule includes editorial improvements.

Additional Information:

The remaining players must remain in their original playing positions, which is starting server and rotation.

If the retired player should have been the server or receiver, a fault will occur. When the opposing team serves to the court that would have been occupied by the retired player, the serve must still be legal and in the correct service box for the point to count. If the retired player is the one who should be serving, an immediate fault is called after the score is announced. A 10-second serve count is not required.

18.A Once a player has elected to retire and is safely off the playing surface they may not return in that match. They may elect to return in future matches. If the player is not able to return to play in the next match, the team will be forced to Withdraw. **Rule 18F Reporting for Match.** Players must report to play a match within 10 minutes after the match is called. A match cannot begin until all players are present and the starting score is called.

18. 2240: Rescinding a Head Referee Call

2025 Rule

13.J. Challenging Referee Rulings or Decisions. If a player disagrees with a referee's ruling or decision, that player may challenge the referee's ruling or decision by asking for the Head Referee, Tournament Director, or the Tournament Director's designee. If the referee's ruling or decision is determined to be correct, the player or team will lose a time-out and be given a technical warning (see 13.G.1.g). If no time-outs are available and the referee's ruling is correct, the player/team will be given a technical foul (see 13.G.2.d). When the referee's ruling or decision is incorrect, the ruling will be reversed and, if applicable, the rally will be replayed.

2026 Rule

20.J Officiating Decision Challenge. Players may appeal any officiating decision to the Head Referee or Tournament Director.

20.J.1 Rescinding Challenge Request. After a request for the Head Referee or Tournament Director has been acknowledged by the referee, the player may rescind the request; however, the player or team will be charged a standard time-out. When a standard time-out is not available, the referee will assess a technical foul against the player or team.

Reason for this change:

Players may request a Head Referee or Tournament Director to resolve an on-court issue, even if an official is not present. This often causes a delay in play. The rule change makes it a penalty to request a Head Referee or Tournament Director and then withdraw the request after benefiting from the delay. For the reason given by the submitter. The referee does not "record" Head Referee requests. The amendment therefore clarifies the point in time that the request cannot be rescinded. After the Head Referee or Tournament Director has been officially summoned.

Additional Information:
Players need to be aware of **Rule 20. J.2 Technical Warning or Technical Foul – Correct Ruling by Referee. When the Head Referee or Tournament Director concurs with a referee's ruling, the referee will assess a technical warning and charge a standard time-out against the singles player or doubles team that challenged the ruling. When a standard time-out is not available, the referee will assess a technical foul against the player or team.** The on-court referee will not advise the player to call or rescind their call for the Head Referee or Tournament Director. The referee can advise the player on how many standard time outs they have remaining.

19. 2241: Rescinding Medical Time Out

2025 Rule:
10.B. Medical Time-Out. A player needing medical attention during a match should request a medical time-out from the referee. Once the medical time-out has been requested, the following guidelines shall be used:
10.B.1. The referee shall immediately summon on-site medical personnel, or the Tournament Director if no medical personnel are present, to assess the situation and render appropriate first aid.
10.B.1.a. When medical personnel or the Tournament Director arrive, the referee shall start the 15-minute timer.
10.B.2. If medical personnel, or the Tournament Director, if no medical personnel are present, determine that a valid medical condition exists, then that player will be allowed no more than 15 minutes for the medical time-out.

2026 Rules:
21.C.4 Rescinding Medical Time-Out Request. If the player rescinds the medical time-out after the medical personnel have been called and before they have arrived, a standard time-out will be charged and the medical time-out will not be charged. When a standard time-out is not available, the referee will assess a technical foul against the player or team for delay of game.

Reason for this change:
Players may request a medical time-out, which usually results in a stoppage of play while medical staff travel to the court. If a player rescinds the medical time-out after causing this delay, they will be charged a regular time-out. If the player has no time-outs remaining, a technical foul will be assessed for the delay in play. This revision clarifies the conditions under which a medical time-out request can be rescinded. It is not appropriate to charge a medical time-out before medical personnel arrive, as that timing is beyond the player's control. The amended rule also allows a player to rescind the request, typically just moments after it is made—without forfeiting their medical time-out.

Additional Information:
Players needing medical attention are encouraged to stop the match and request medical support. Some players find however that after a minute they are not injured and are able to continue. If the referee or court monitor has summoned the medical team the player has two choices. They can use their standard time out or continue with the one medical time out and receive treatment. If they elect to rescind their medical time out and have no standard time outs remaining, their delay of the game will result in a Technical Foul for Delay of Game. The on-court referee will not advise the player to continue or to rescind the medical time out. The referee can advise the player on how many standard time outs they have remaining,

20. 2242: Rally Scoring Winning Point

2025 Rule: 30. 2378: Scoring the Game-Winning Point – Rally Scoring

2025 Rule:
4.F.1 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Option. A player or team scores a point for each rally won except game point is scored only when serving.

2026 Rule:
14.A.2 Point Scoring. A point is scored by the singles player or doubles team that wins each rally.
15.C.2 (Provisional Rule) Rally Scoring Match Formats. The Tournament Director has the option to use rally scoring except for double-elimination doubles events, all 2026 USA Pickleball Golden Ticket events, and the 2026 USA Pickleball National Championship events. The tournament rally scoring options are:
15.C.2.a One game to 11 points, 15 points, or 21 points.
15.C.2.b Best 2-of-3 games to 11 points, 15 points, or 21 points.
15.C.2.c Best 3-of-5 games to 11 points, 15 points, or 21 points.
15.C.2.d For inclement weather considerations, the Tournament Director may approve game scoring to 7 points with an end change at 4 points in a single-game match or the tie-breaker game of a multiple-game match.

Reason for this change:
USA Pickleball conducted extensive research on rally scoring using a third-party firm. The firm analyzed hours of recorded rally-scoring matches and observed players of various skill levels playing rally-scoring games in multiple formats at a private facility. Based on this research, USA Pickleball has elected to continue with rally scoring as a provisional format for 2026. Tournaments may use rally scoring under the conditions outlined in Rule 15.C.2.

Research and polling conducted at USA Pickleball, APP, and other tournaments showed that most players and spectators preferred awarding a point on every serve, including when the receiving player has game point. Under the 2025 rules, a receiver could not be awarded a point if it would end the game. This rule was changed for 2026.

Additional Information:
In 2026, when the receiving team has game point, they can win the rally and thereby win the game or match, since a point is now awarded on every rally. This change was requested by a majority of players. USA Pickleball will continue to study rally scoring and will decide in 2027 whether to extend the provisional period, make the format permanent, or discontinue its use in sanctioned tournaments.

1. 2282: Wheelchair-Specific Faults

2025 Rule:
In previous years' rulebooks the wheelchair rules were mixed in with other rules.
For 2026 USA Pickleball has added a specific section for wheelchair play to make it easier for players and tournaments to find and apply these rules.

2026 Rules:
25.A Wheelchair Play. Section
25.A Applies to wheelchair players and events that include one or more wheelchair players. Wheelchair players must comply with Rules 25.A.1 through 25.A.12.
25.A.1 Player Eligibility. An eligible wheelchair player is any person, with or without a disability, who plays the game in a wheelchair.
25.A.2 Doubles. Players in doubles who use a wheelchair may play with a standing partner, an adaptive standing partner, or a partner who uses a wheelchair, except as provided for in Rule 25.A.12 for tournaments.
25.A.3 Power Wheelchairs. Players unable to propel a manual wheelchair for the duration of an entire match are permitted to utilize wheelchairs powered by electric motors. Power wheelchairs must be controlled by the player only and cannot exceed ten miles per hour.
25.A.4 Part of Body. A player's wheelchair is considered part of the player's body. The large rear wheels are treated like a standing player's legs for positioning.
25.A.5 Contact with Seat. A wheelchair player must have at least one buttock in contact with the wheelchair seat when they strike the ball.
25.A.5.a Fault – Failure to Contact Seat. When a wheelchair player does not have at least one buttock in contact with the wheelchair seat when they strike the ball, it is a fault against the player.
25.A.6 No Ground Contact by Lower Extremities. Except as provided for in Rule 25.A.7, a wheelchair player's lower extremities, which are the buttocks, hips, thighs, knees, calves, ankles, and feet, must not contact the ground or any wheelchair wheel while the ball is live, regardless of intent.
25.A.6.a Fault – Contact with Ground or Wheel. When a wheelchair player's lower extremity contacts the ground or any wheelchair wheel while the ball is live, it is a fault against the player.
25.A.7 Propelling Wheelchair with Foot. A player who is unable to propel their wheelchair with one or both upper extremities (arms) for the entire duration of a match is permitted to propel the wheelchair using a

single foot against the ground. The player is then subject to the following restrictions for the entire duration of the match:

1) The player must not utilize their upper extremities for propulsion.
2) The player's foot must not be in contact with the ground when the player strikes the ball to make a shot.
3) The player's lower extremities must not contact any wheelchair wheel.

25.A.7.a Fault – Prohibited Actions. For a wheelchair player who is allowed to use a single foot against the ground for propulsion, when any upper extremity contacts a wheelchair wheel, their foot is in contact with the ground when they hit the ball, or any lower extremity contacts any wheelchair wheel, it is a fault against the player.

25.A.8 Serving. The moment the ball is served, both large rear wheels must be on the playing surface behind the baseline and must not touch anywhere outside the correct serving area. The front (smaller) wheels are allowed to extend into the court when the serve is hit.

25.A.8.a Fault – Wheel Not Grounded. If either or both large rear wheels of a server's wheelchair is off the playing surface when the serve is hit, it is a fault against the server. (Modifies Rule 7.A.1.a)

25.A.8.b Fault – Wheel Contacting Court. If a large rear wheel of a server's wheelchair is in contact with the court when the serve is hit, it is a fault against the server. (Modifies Rule 7.A.2.a)

25.A.8.c Fault – Wheel Outside Serving Area. If a large rear wheel of a server's wheelchair is in contact with the playing surface outside the correct serving area when the serve is hit, it is a fault against the server. (Modifies Rule 7.A.3.a)

25.A.9 Two-Bounce Allowance. A wheelchair player may allow the ball to bounce twice before returning the ball. The second bounce can be anywhere on the playing surface. (Modifies Rule 10.B)

25.A.9.a Fault – Failure to Return Ball Before Third Bounce. When a wheelchair player does not return a ball before it bounces three times, it is a fault against the player. (Modifies Rule 10.B.1)

25.A.10 Volleying. The front (smaller) wheels and the rear stabilizing wheels may contact the non-volley zone at any time. (Modifies Rule 11.A)

25.A.10.a Fault – Non-Volley Zone Contact While Volleying. When a large rear wheel of the player's wheelchair, or anything that has contact with the volleying player (including the player's partner) contacts the non-volley zone, it is a fault against the player. (Modifies Rule 11.A.1)

25.A.10.b Fault – Non-Volley Zone Momentum. When a volleying player's momentum causes a large rear wheel of the player's wheelchair to contact anything (including the player's partner) that is in contact with the non-volley zone, even after the ball becomes dead, it is a fault against the volleying player. (Modifies Rule 11.A.2)

25.A.10.c Fault – Failure to Exit the Non-Volley Zone Before Volleying. After contacting the non-volley zone, when a player volleys a ball before both large rear wheels of the player's wheelchair contact the playing surface completely outside the non-volley zone, it is a fault against the player. (Modifies Rule 11.A.3)

25.A.11 Playing Surface Dimensions. The recommended playing surface area for wheelchair play is 44 feet (13.41 m) wide and 74 feet (22.55 m) long. The recommended surface area for wheelchair play in a stadium court is 50 feet (15.24 m) wide by 80 feet (24.38 m) long. (Modifies Rule 3.A.3)

25.A.12 Tournament Events. Wheelchair players may compete in any tournament event, other than an adaptive standing-only event, and may partner with or compete against either standing players, adaptive standing players, or wheelchair players. Only wheelchair players are allowed to play in wheelchair-only

events. In all cases, the specific rules governing wheelchair players apply to any player who uses a wheelchair, regardless of the event format or the classification of their opponents or partners.
25.A.12.a Transition Between Standing and Sitting. When playing in a non-wheelchair event, a player is permitted to transition between rallies from being a standing player to a wheelchair player, or from a wheelchair player to a standing player, but only once per match. The transition will be treated as an equipment timeout.
25.A.12.b Replay – Questionable Wheel Contact with Serving Area. When it is questionable whether both wheels of the server's wheelchair were in contact with the serving area when the serve was hit, the referee may call for a replay. (Modifies Rule 20.E.2.d)
25.A.12.c Replay – Questionable Wheel Contact Outside the Serving Area. When it is questionable whether a large rear wheel of the server's wheelchair was in contact with the playing surface outside the serving area when the serve was hit, the referee may call for a replay. (Modifies Rule 20.E.2.e)

Reason for this change:
USA Pickleball collaborated with members of the wheelchair community to develop new, specific rules for the 2026 Rulebook. These rules apply to sanctioned tournament play. USA Pickleball encourages all players—not just wheelchair athletes—to become familiar with them to help expand inclusive play opportunities for everyone.

22. 2286: A Wheelchair is an Extension of the Body

2025 Rule:
None

2026 Rule:
25.A.4 Part of Body. A player's wheelchair is considered part of the player's body. The large rear wheels are treated like a standing player's legs for positioning.

Reason for this change:
Added a specific rule to the rulebook that was not covered in previous years.

23. 2299: "Flat Serve" No Upward Arc.

2025 Rule:
4.A.7. The Volley Serve. The volley serve is made by striking the ball without bouncing the ball off the playing surface and can be made with either a forehand or backhand motion. A proper volley serve includes the following elements:
4.A.7.a. The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc at the time the ball is struck with the paddle.

2026 Rule:
7.C Volley Serve. The service motion for a volley serve must comply with Rules 7.C.1 through 7.C.4.
7.C.1 Upward Arc. The server's paddle must be moving in a clear upward arc when the paddle contacts the ball.
7.C.2 Paddle Head. The highest point of the paddle head must clearly not be above the highest part of the server's wrist joint when the paddle contacts the ball.
7.C.3 Ball Height. The ball must clearly be no higher than the server's waist when the paddle contacts the ball.

Reason for this change:
The addition of the word Clearly makes it a stronger and more enforceable rule.

24. 2308: Wrong Score Called

2025 Rule:
4.K. Wrong Score Called. If the wrong score is called, the referee or any player may stop play before the return of serve to correct the score. The rally shall be replayed with the correct score called. After the return of serve, play shall continue to the end of the rally and the score correction made before the next serve. After the return of serve, a player who stops play to identify or ask for a score correction will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally. A player who stops play after the serve to identify or ask for a score correction when the score was correctly called will have committed a fault and shall lose the rally.

2026 Rule:
6.F Challenging the Score Call. A player may stop a rally to ask for a score correction before the return of serve is hit and before the ball becomes dead.
6.F.1 Replay – Incorrect Score Called. When an incorrect score is called and the rally is stopped before the return of serve and before the ball becomes dead, the rally must be replayed with the correct score called.
6.F.2 Fault – Correct Score Called. When a player stops a rally to challenge a correct score call, it is a fault against the player who stopped the rally.
6.F.3 Fault – Late Challenge to Score Call. When a player stops a rally to ask for a score correction after the return of serve is hit, it is a fault against the player who stopped the rally.
6.F.4 Incorrect Score Identified After Rally. When an incorrect score was called and the rally is completed, the result of the rally stands, and the score must be corrected before the next serve.

Reason for this change:
This change makes it more specific what actions a player has when an incorrect score has been called.

25. 2335: Adaptive Standing Play

2025 Rule: N/A

2026 Rules:

25.B Adaptive Standing Play. Adaptive standing players must comply with Rules 25.B.1 through 25.B.4.

25.B.1 Player Eligibility. Adaptive standing players must have a permanent physical disability that significantly affects their mobility, balance, or coordination, and not use a wheelchair during play. Examples include, but are not limited to, players with lower-limb amputation above the knee, limb difference, cerebral palsy, stroke, neurological or orthopedic conditions that affect movement coordination, severe balance limitations, or spinal cord injury with ambulatory function, and players using crutches or braces who cannot move quickly to the ball. Players with below-knee amputations or minor impairments without significant balance or mobility limitations are eligible as adaptive standing players but are not eligible for the two-bounce allowance option (see Rule 25.B.3.a.)

25.B.1.a Confirmation of Eligibility. Adaptive standing player eligibility may be verified by self-assessment.

25.B.2 Assistive Devices. Players may use assistive devices such as prosthetics, orthotics, braces, crutches, or canes during play.

25.B.2.a Part of Body. Assistive devices are considered part of the player's body.

25.B.2.b Prohibited Use. Assistive devices must not be used to strike the ball or to intentionally alter its flight. If an assistive device contacts a live ball, the ball becomes dead and the rally ends.

25.B.2.c Dislodged Device. If an assistive device becomes dislodged during a rally, the rally must continue to completion.

25.B.2.d Fault – Non-Volley Zone Contact While Volleying. When a player's assistive device, or anything that has contact with the volleying player (including the player's partner) contacts the non-volley zone, it is a fault against the player. (Modifies Rule 11.A.1)

25.B.2.e Fault – Non-Volley Zone Momentum. When a volleying player's momentum causes the player's assistive device to contact anything (including the player's partner) that is in contact with the non-volley zone, even after the ball becomes dead, it is a fault against the volleying player. (Modifies Rule 11.A.2)

25.B.2.f Fault – Outside Serving Area. If a server's assistive device is in contact with the playing surface outside the correct serving area when the serve is hit, it is a fault against the server. (Modifies Rule 7.A.3.a)

25.B.3 Two-Bounce Allowance. Eligible adaptive standing players may use the two-bounce allowance option in an adaptive standing or hybrid event.

25.B.3.a. Eligibility and Declaration. Players that may be eligible for the two-bounce allowance option include above-knee amputees, players with significant mobility impairments, players with neurological conditions (e.g., cerebral palsy, stroke) that significantly affect their movement, balance, or coordination, and players using crutches or braces who cannot move quickly to the ball. If a player has any doubt about their eligibility for the two-bounce allowance option, the player must not use the two-bounce allowance option. The two-bounce allowance option must be declared prior to the start of a match and must be used for the entire match.

25.B.3.b Second Bounce Location. The second bounce can be anywhere on the playing surface. (Modifies Rule 10.B.)

25.B.3.c Fault – Failure to Return Ball Before Third Bounce. When the player does not return a ball before it bounces three times, it is a fault against the player. (Modifies Rule 10.B.1.)
25.B.3.d Dead Ball. When the ball strikes a permanent object (e.g., fence, wall) before the second bounce, it is a dead ball and the rally ends.
25.B.3.e Player Identification Marker. At the Tournament Director's discretion, adaptive standing players using the two-bounce allowance may be required to wear a unique visible identification marker (e.g., a wristband) during a match.
25.B.3.f Hybrid Events. Players not qualified for the two-bounce allowance in an adaptive standing event are not eligible for the two-bounce allowance in hybrid events.
25.B.4 Tournament Events. Adaptive standing players may play in any event that allows standing players with either standing players or partners, or wheelchair players or partners. Only adaptive standing players are allowed to play in adaptive standing-only events. Adaptive standing players may play in hybrid events. In all cases, the specific rules governing adaptive standing players apply to any player who is eligible, regardless of the event format or the classification of their opponents or partners.
25.C Hybrid Doubles Play. Hybrid doubles events must comply with Rules 25.C.1 through 25.C.3.
25.C.1 Tournament Event. Hybrid Doubles is a doubles event in which each team consists of one wheelchair player and one standing player, able-bodied or adaptive.

Reason for this change:
USA Pickleball, in coordination with Adaptive Standing players and advocates, created a dedicated rules section for both recreational and tournament play. As the Adaptive Standing community grows, clear rules are needed to support their participation in events. USA Pickleball encourages all players to review these rules so that everyone can enjoy the sport together.

26. 2347: Additional Ball Visible or Dropped

2025 Rule:
7.N. In non-officiated matches, players may carry an additional pickleball(s) as long as the ball(s) is carried in a way that the ball(s) is not visible to their opponent(s) during play. If an additional ball that a player was carrying falls on the playing surface during play, a fault shall be declared.

2026 Rule:
24.B Extra Ball. An extra ball carried by a player during a rally must not be visible to the opponent and must remain in possession of the player.
24.B.1 Fault – Extra Ball Visible or Ball Falls. When an extra ball carried by a player falls is visible to an opponent or falls to the playing surface while the ball is live, it is a fault against the player.

Reason for this change:
The public and the USAP agreed that a stricter penalty should be enforced for a player dropping or displaying a non-playing ball during a live rally.

27. 2375: Hitting a Person vs Putting Them at Risk

2025 Rule:
13.G.2. Technical Fouls - The referee is empowered to call technical fouls. When a technical foul is called, one point shall be removed from the score of the offending player/team unless their score is zero, in which case, a point shall be added to the score of the opposing side. Actions or behavior that shall result in a technical foul (without a technical warning being issued beforehand):
13.G.2.g. Deliberately throwing or hitting a ball that is not in play with negligent disregard of the consequences which inadvertently hits a person.

13.I.1. The referee will impose a match forfeit based on a combination of Technical Warnings or Technical Fouls when either of the following occurs:
13.I.1.c.2 Aggressively or recklessly striking or throwing a ball or paddle out of frustration or anger that puts an individual or facility property at risk or in danger.

2026 Rules:
22.I Match Forfeit by Referee. The referee will impose a match forfeit on a singles player or doubles team for:
22.I.1 Dangerous Paddle or Ball Abuse. Aggressively or recklessly striking or throwing a ball or paddle in frustration or anger that strikes an individual or damages facility property.
22.L Ejection or Expulsion. Any time a player is at the tournament venue, the Tournament Director is authorized to eject a player from the tournament or expel a player from the venue for:
22.L.2 Injurious Paddle or Ball Abuse. Damage to the venue or injury to a player, official, or spectator through an act of paddle or ball abuse or other acts of physical violence.

Reason for this change:
This rule changes defines the difference between ball abuse and ball abuse with the intent to injure and the penalties for each.

28. 2377: Line Judge Blocked Signal

2025 Rule:
13.E.2. Line judges will make the assigned line and foot fault calls within their jurisdiction and will signify by loudly calling “out” (or “service foot fault”) and showing the “out” signal (outstretched arm pointing in the out-of-bounds direction).

2026 Rule:
19.H Immediate Call by Referee. If a line judge shows the “blocked/blinded” signal at any time, the referee must make the call immediately if they clearly saw where the ball landed. If the referee cannot make the

call on a rally-ending shot, the referee must canvass other appropriate members of the officiating team to assist in making the call.

Reason for this change:
This is to further clarify the process for a line judge match where a call needs to me made on an out ball.

29. Calling a Time-out

2025 Rule: 10.A.3. If a team has any remaining time-outs, any player on that team may call a time-out before the next serve occurs.

2026 Rule:
21.A.2 Requesting Time-Out. Any player may call a time-out between rallies before the next serve occurs or between games. The time-out must be called audibly by voice or visibly by hand signal, or both, and must be directed toward the opposing player or team and to the referee.
21.A.2.a Fault – Late Time-Out Request. When a player calls a time-out after the serve has been hit, it is a fault against that player.
21.A.2.b Verbal Warning or Technical Warning – No Audible or Visible Request. If the time-out call is not made audibly by voice or visibly by hand, the referee may assess a verbal warning or technical warning for delay of game.

Reason for this change:
Players must ensure that their opponents—and the officiating team, if present—are aware that play has been paused for an official time-out. Players may not leave the playing area without clearly calling for a time-out.

Credits:

USA Pickleball would like to thank the many individuals who contributed to the 2026 rules process. A thank you to all the members who proposed new rules or modifications to existing rules, which did so with the goal of making the rules clearer and better for everyone. USA Pickleball sincerely appreciates the 2025 Rules Committee for their time and dedication in reviewing more than 200 submissions and spending over 90 hours evaluating every proposed rule change. A special thank you also to the GPF Director of Officiating who was added this year to provide a more global perspective.

USA Pickleball would also like to thank the wheelchair players and advisors, as well as the adaptive standing players and advocates, who helped develop and refine the new rules for 2026. It is our sincere hope that these rules support both tournament play and recreational participation. Pickleball is for all.

Notes:

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