



PCPC Levelled Play

The following is the description of how the PCPC describes and manages its play events. This document is a PCPC Governing Document, and as such, must be followed as amended from time to time, to maintain membership in the PCPC.

Why PCPC Levelled Play?

PCPC uses an organized levelled play model. We understand that no rating system is perfect, but having a system that we follow and enforce is important for the organization of competitive play in our club. Whether you are just starting, or an experienced veteran of the sport, levels help us create space for balanced competitive play at all skill levels and helps us predict and schedule adequate court time.

It is important to remember that all members in our club want to have fun when they play pickleball. As individuals, we can vary in what we think that should look like. Some players may have no interest in ratings or competitive play, but for others that is what makes the sport fun. It is important that we respect and allow room for all play styles in our pickleball community.

Establishing Your PCPC Play Level

All members must sign up to play with PCPC in the Open Sports App. As part of your Open Sports profile, you will be asked to indicate the skill level that **best defines your current skills**. PCPC has adopted expectations of the skills expected for a member at each level.

If you are not sure of your level or would like assistance in improving your skill set, contact the board at board@communitypickleballclub.org.

PCPC Descriptions of Levelled Play

Below are descriptions of our play levels. Not all play levels are offered at all times, for example, Beginner and Novice are only offered seasonally during new member learn to play campaigns.

(B) BEGINNER PLAY

This is where new to the sport players will start. These sessions will often be mentored by an Intermediate or Advanced club member player. This is where you will learn the rules of the game and how to play. You will gain the confidence that you need to join NOVICE play. Beginners will need to demonstrate that they understand the rules of the game and how to keep score, as well as other basic skills including the ability to sustain a short rally to graduate into Novice play. **This level is 100% organized and mentored by volunteer club members. The fee may sometimes be higher.**

(N) NOVICE PLAY

This level is for Novice players. If you are new to the game but not a “Beginner” you are a Novice player for our Club purposes. Novice play is not mentored, but periodically experienced club members will come and play with you. Novice players are required to learn and follow our Club mandated player rotation guidelines. Novice players must be proficient in the skills listed in Beginner play and must also be able to sustain longer rallies, show skill in the basic strokes, and have reduced unforced errors. It’s expected that you will have limited control on dinks/serves. This is where you grow your skills in a safe and supportive environment.

(IR) INTERMEDIATE RECREATIONAL PLAY

This level is for Intermediate players. Intermediate is a very broad spectrum. This level is where players will spend the most time on their journey up the levelled play ladder. Intermediate players demonstrate consistent serves/returns, good court awareness, understand basic strategy (like hitting to opponent's weak side), demonstrate reliable strokes, and are developing shot variety. Intermediate Recreational play is a softer, less intense version of play. **Mutual respect, kindness and a whole lotta FUN lives here!**

(IC) INTERMEDIATE COMPETITIVE PLAY

This level is for solid intermediate players who enjoy a more competitive and faster paced game. You will have mastered the skills listed in Intermediate Rec play, and be at the top of that skill set. To advance to IC you must demonstrate strong intermediate skills, sustain longer rallies, return harder shots, and keep up with faster play. **FUN is the focus.**

(AR) ADVANCED RECREATIONAL PLAY (Approval Required)

This level is for players who are looking to move beyond Intermediate Competitive (IC), but don’t feel ready for Advanced Competitive (AC) play. Players at this level demonstrate advanced skills that include: good court awareness, strategic shot selection, consistent performance under pressure, good shot placement, an understanding doubles strategy, and anticipation of opponent's shots. It is advanced play without the level of competition of Advanced Competitive. It is for players who

can sustain a rally, return harder shots, and keep up with faster play. **FUN, greater skill, and a faster pace is the focus.** Please use the “Level Advancement Request Form” found on our website to obtain permission before moving from 🔥 IC to this play level. <https://communitypickleballclub.org/contact-us/>

A (AC) **ADVANCED COMPETITIVE PLAY** (Approval Required)

Advanced Competitive (AC) is a level for skilled players who enjoy a faster and more competitive game, and who demonstrate the skills of an advanced player. These skills include: excellent court awareness, strategic shot selection, consistent performance under pressure, good shot placement, an understanding of doubles strategy, anticipation of opponent's shots, and fewer unforced errors. This is intended to be a high-skill and fast-paced competitive play level. You must be a relatively skilled player to play in this level, and you must appreciate and enjoy a faster paced and more competitive game. This will likely also mean the balls will be traveling faster and harder. While you can always expect a more challenging game in the Advanced Competitive level, **all players are required to uphold our club mandate, which requires us to prioritize mutual respect and kindness over competition.** Advanced Competitive, just like all of our levels – should still be **FUN for everyone!** Please use the “Level Advancement Request Form” found on our website to obtain permission before moving from ♦ AR to this play level. <https://communitypickleballclub.org/contact-us/>

♦ (AC+) ADVANCED COMPETITIVE PLUS (Approval Required)

ADVANCED COMPETITIVE PLUS is a level for skilled players who enjoy a faster and more competitive game. Players in this level should demonstrate proficiency of all shots, be able to use a variety of shots with excellent consistency, use sophisticated strategy (like combination third shot drives and drops, and effective and consistent dinking), demonstrate minimal unforced errors, pace control, mental toughness, and be comfortable receiving hard and fast paced shots. This is the most skilled, and fastest paced competitive play level in our Club and you must appreciate and enjoy a harder, faster paced, and more competitive game to play this level. **While you can always expect a more challenging game in the ♦ AC+ level, fair play and excellent sportsmanship are an absolute must.** Players may be required to qualify in advance to play in this level.

NOTE: ♦ AC+ is a new level for our club. As a pilot project, this is an invitation-only play, and entry is by invitation or application only. We anticipate that this skill level will draw players that prefer strategic and skilled play, and in keeping with the trend of the sport, a harder level of play when appropriate. Please use the “Level Advancement Request Form” found on our website to obtain permission before moving from **A** AC to this play level. <https://communitypickleballclub.org/contact-us/>

PCPC guidelines for advancing levels

You are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the skills described in your level before advancing to a higher level. Once you have mastered that skill set, you can proceed to a higher level using the process described below (advancement approval maybe required.)

1. You must be able to play to the level of the court on which you sign up to play.
2. You must have an established play history in the level from which you are advancing. An established play history for our purposes means at least 3 months of club play at least 2-3 times per week.
3. You must not skip play levels. For example, you cannot move from 🌟 Intermediate Rec directly to 💎 Advanced Rec, without first mastering 🔥 Intermediate Competitive.
4. To advance to the next play level, you must be winning most of your games in your current play level. That means, when you play, you and your partner win the vast majority of your games (~80%). Your skill should be in the top 20% of your current level before advancing.
5. When advancing to the next play level you must start by playing only on double courts of 12 players. Do not start in a more advanced level by playing on single courts of only 6 players. Play on double courts of 12 until you have fully integrated into the new level.
6. Please choose an accurate play level and stick to your play level. It is not possible to effectively organize play when members randomly bounce between play levels simply because they prefer a time slot. If you would like to see a new time slot for your play level, reach out to us at scheduling@committee.communitypickleballclub.org
7. If you are playing in a level that does not match your skill, you may be asked to change play levels.
8. If your skills have improved and now align with next higher level of play, you can request advancement permission by completing the Level Advancement Request Form found under the contact us tab on our website and submitting your request to the board.
9. Once a player has been approved to move to a higher level, there will be a 1-month probationary period during which the player is expected to demonstrate that they were appropriately moved.

PCPC Levelled Play Assessment

In some cases, at the discretion of the PCPC board, the club will arrange a group assessment event at which any player that chooses to move to a higher level can attend and be rated by a professional pickleball coach. The coach will make recommendations to the board on the appropriate level of play for each applicant. These assessment events will be scheduled as needed.

If a question arises about a member's chosen level of play, the PCPC Board of Directors may also review and assess a player's appropriate level of play in accordance with

Section 4 of the PCPC Issues & Feedback Policy, which can be found here
<https://communitypickleballclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025IssuesandFeedbackPolicy.pdf>.