

Pickleball Etiquette 101: Unwritten Rules Every New Player Should Know



Pickleball is one of the most welcoming and social sports out there, but like any game, it comes with its own set of **unwritten rules**. As a certified instructor, I always tell new players that learning good **etiquette** is just as important as learning how to dink or serve. It helps you feel confident, makes the game smoother for everyone, and earns you respect on the court, no matter your skill level.

Here are a few etiquette basics that every beginner should know:

✓ Call the Score Loud and Clear

Before every serve, call the score. Loudly. Clearly. And in the correct order: **your team's score, their score, then server number**. It's not just a rule—it's a courtesy that helps everyone stay on the same page.

✓ Wait Your Turn—Respect the Paddle Stack

At busy courts, players stack paddles to indicate who's next in line. Don't jump the line or start forming your own game before those ahead of you play. Wait your turn and play with whoever is next—that's part of the community spirit.

✓ Don't Coach Unless Asked

We've all been tempted to offer advice after a missed shot. Resist the urge unless someone specifically asks for help. Even well-meaning tips can feel like criticism, especially during a game.

✓ Call "Out" Balls Honestly—And Only On Your Side

You can only call balls “out” on **your side of the court**. If you’re not 100% sure, the ball is “in.” Good sportsmanship means giving your opponent the benefit of the doubt.

✓ **Apologize for Net Cords (and Mean It)**

If your shot hits the net and dribbles over for a winner, don’t cheer—say “Sorry!” and mean it. You got lucky. It happens.

✓ **Paddle Tap at the End of Games**

Win or lose, tap paddles at the end of every game. It's pickleball’s version of a handshake and part of what keeps the sport friendly and inclusive.

✓ **Control Your Temper**

We all miss shots. We all make mistakes. Stay positive, don’t slam paddles or mutter curses, and remember—it’s just a game.

Learning the game is important, but learning how to *share the court* with others is what makes you a true pickleball player. Practice good etiquette and you’ll always be invited back to play—win or lose.

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