



American Team Pickleball League Rules

The following rules govern all competitive play within the American Team Pickleball League (ATPL). These rules are intended to promote fair, consistent, and sportsmanlike play across all American Team Pickleball Leagues, divisions and championship events nationwide.

All ATPL competitions will follow the most current USA Pickleball (USAP) Official Rulebook unless otherwise specified in these ATPL Rules. ATPL rules will take precedence.

Revisions or clarifications to these rules may be issued at any time by the ATPL Board of Directors or the ATPL Rules Committee, and the most current version will be published on the official ATPL website.

Participants in unusual or undocumented circumstances must abide by the decisions of the ATPL Rules Committee, Board of Directors or Tournament Director as applicable which will serve as the final authority on rules interpretation and application.

I. SPORTSMANSHIP

ATPL is committed to fostering an environment of integrity, respect, and camaraderie. All players, captains, and spectators are expected to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship before, during, and after competition.

II. PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

To preserve the integrity and competitive balance of the ATPL, all participants must meet the eligibility and conduct standards below.

A. Age Requirements

1. Players must be 18 years of age or older as of the start date of their league season.
2. Divisions may include additional age brackets (e.g., 50+, 65+), which require players to reach the minimum age during the calendar year of the season.
3. Players may participate in younger divisions (“play down” in age), but not older divisions (“play up” in age).

B. Eligibility to Participate

1. All players must electronically sign the ATPL liability waiver prior to their first match each season.
2. Players may appear on more than one roster if they meet the eligibility requirements for each league and division, provided they are not on more than one team in the same flight within a division.

C. Cross-Division and Multi-Region Participation

1. Players may participate in more than one age-defined league (18+, 50+, 65+) and/or more than one division (Men’s, Women’s, Mixed) if they meet all eligibility requirements.
2. Players may compete in multiple affiliated league regions, if applicable, but if more than one of their teams qualifies for the same flight in a State or National Championship, the player must select and commit to only one of those teams for championship play.

III. PLAYER ROSTER REQUIREMENTS

Each team participating in an ATPL event or a local league conducted by an ATPL affiliate must submit and maintain a complete and eligible roster in accordance with the following requirements. Captains are responsible for ensuring that all rostered players meet ATPL/Local affiliated league eligibility and registration standards. ATPL Divisions must meet the three- team minimum to be included in the national event.

A. Team Composition

1. Teams must roster enough players to field a complete match line-up and provide reasonable coverage for absences or injuries.
2. There is no maximum roster size; however, all players listed must be active and eligible to participate during the season.

B. Registration

1. For ATPL events all players must be listed on the Team Registration forms with the information required by the form.
2. Captains must forward the Team Registration form to the ATPL coordinator prior to registration for the event

C. Eligibility Verification

1. Captains are responsible for verifying the eligibility of their players, including age and skill-level requirements for the division entered.
2. Players who do not meet eligibility standards may be removed from the roster by the tournament director in ATPL events or the Local league affiliate's Rules Committee.

D. Roster Changes

1. Roster additions or removals after registration closes for ATPL events are subject to ATPL approval and must be requested through a director of the affiliated Local league.
2. When allowed, any player added for postseason play must have been registered and active in an ATPL affiliated league during the current season.
3. Added players must meet age, division, and skill-level requirements for the team they are joining.
4. Players must have participated in two matches in the same season to be eligible as an addition
5. Exceptions due to injury throughout the season may be approved if requested by a director of the affiliated league.

6. No roster additions may be made after the team has registered for the post-season event.
- E. Wildcard Selection
1. If a qualified team declines or is unable to participate in postseason competition, ATPL may designate a replacement (wildcard) team.
 2. In the event that a championship division needs additional teams in order to provide a minimum of matches for the competing teams ATPL may add additional wildcard teams.
 3. Wildcards may be selected based on standings, team points, competitive balance, or other factors as determined by the ATPL Board or Rules Committee.

IV. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

While the American Team Pickleball League (ATPL) encourages captains and players to resolve on-court disagreements respectfully and promptly, some disputes may require formal resolution. This section establishes a consistent process for handling match-related disputes.

- A. On-Court Resolution
1. Captains are expected to work together in good faith to resolve scoring, line-up, and rule interpretation issues during the match.
 2. Matches should continue while the issue is discussed to avoid unnecessary delays, unless the dispute prevents play from proceeding.
- B. Involving a League Official
1. If captains cannot agree, they may request a ruling from a local League Coordinator or, in the case of an ATPL National event, a designated ATPL official.
 2. The decision of the official on-site will be binding for that match.

V. INCLEMENT WEATHER (ATPL National Events)

Weather-related delays and cancellations are sometimes unavoidable. These rules are intended to ensure consistency and fairness when matches are affected by unsafe conditions such as rain, lightning, or high winds.

- A. Match Not Started
1. If a match is cancelled before any play begins, it will be restarted using any special conditions defined by an ATPL Director.
- B. Match In-Progress

1. If play is stopped before a round is completed, that round must be replayed in full or played using any special conditions defined by the ATPL Tournament Director.
 2. If play is stopped after one or more full rounds are completed, those completed rounds will stand, and the match will resume from the start of the next round using any special conditions defined by the ATPL Tournament Director. The decisions of an ATPL Director are final.
- C. Line-Ups for Rescheduled Play
1. When a match is resumed on a different day, captains may adjust their line-ups, if a player on the original line-up is no longer available and provided all players are on the team's official roster and meet eligibility requirements.
 2. Substitution rules for injury or illness still apply.
 3. When a match is restarted on the same day, the captain must use the original line-up.

VI. MATCH PLAY

This section establishes the standard format, procedures, and expectations for all official American Team Pickleball League (ATPL) team matches. These rules apply to all affiliated league levels and championship events unless a written exception is approved by the ATPL Board or Rules Committee.

Captains and players are jointly responsible for ensuring that all matches in the American Team Pickleball League (ATPL) and league affiliates are conducted in an organized, professional, and sportsmanlike manner. The following expectations apply to all league and championship play.

- A. Match Formats
1. Standard Format
 - a) *Each match consists of three rounds of play.*
 - b) *Each round includes three doubles lines (Line 1, Line 2, Line 3).*
 - c) *Each doubles team plays two games to 11, win by 2 in each round.*
 2. Round Pairings:
 - a) *Round 1: Line 1 vs Line 1, Line 2 vs Line 2, Line 3 vs Line 3*
 - b) *Round 2: Line 1 vs Line 2, Line 2 vs Line 3, Line 3 vs Line 1*
 - c) *Round 3: Line 1 vs Line 3, Line 2 vs Line 1, Line 3 vs Line 2*

- B. Line-Ups and Match Day Procedures
1. Each captain must bring the required number of players (6 plus the substitute(s) in case of injury).
 2. Line-ups must be exchanged before the start of play and may not be changed once submitted, except for approved substitutions due to injury or illness.
 3. Doubles partners listed on the scoresheet must remain together for the full match unless replaced under substitution rules.
 4. Captains or their designees must be on-site throughout the match.
- C. Start Times and Late Players
1. Matches must begin at the posted time and no later than five minutes after the scheduled start.
 2. If a player is more than five minutes late, their team may use an eligible substitute if one was listed on the scoresheet; otherwise, games will be forfeited 11–0 until the player arrives.
 3. Once the late player arrives, they will assume the role of the substitute due to injury or illness.
- D. Match Process and Court Rotation
1. The visiting team chooses to serve, receive, or end to start the match. Teams switch ends & serve after the first game in each round.
 2. Visiting teams rotate to the next court after each round; Home teams stay.
- E. Match-Scoring
1. 2 team points for a win
 2. 1 team point for a loss scoring 6 or more points 0 team points for a loss scoring 5 or fewer points
 3. The team with the most total team points across all games wins the match and earns a win in the standings or moves on if playing in an ATPL play-offs. If teams are tied in team points at the end of the match, the tiebreakers are:
 - a) *Most games won,*
 - b) *Most total points scored*
 - c) *Fewest opponent points scored*

d) *Most rounds won.*

F. Breaks, Timeouts, and Coaching

1. Breaks: 1 minute between games; up to 5 minutes between rounds.
2. Timeouts: One per game per team (not including water breaks).
3. Coaching: Permitted only between games, between rounds, or during timeouts, in accordance with USA Pickleball (USAP) rules.

G. Substitutions During Match Play

1. One substitute per team is permitted during a match, only if:
 - a) *The substitute was listed on the line-up before the match began, and*
 - b) *A player becomes injured, ill, or is late.*
2. Substitutions are permanent for the remainder of the match.
3. Substitutes must already be on the team's roster and eligible for that division.

H. Score Reporting

1. ATPL event play: Both captains must submit the verified accurate match scoresheet to the tournament desk.
2. Scores must be entered through the designated ATPL reporting system (Pickleballscores).
3. Fielding an ineligible player may result in match forfeiture or other penalties determined by the ATPL board or local league coordinator.

VII. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The American Team Pickleball League (ATPL) National Championships represent the highest level of competition in the league, bringing together top teams from across the country to compete for national titles.

A. Qualification for National Championships

1. If State Championships are held the State Champions from each division will automatically qualify for the National Championships.
2. If a State Champion is unable to participate, the ATPL Rules Committee may select an alternate or "wildcard" team based on postseason performance and competitive record.

3. If a qualified team declines or is unable to participate in postseason competition, ATPL may designate a replacement (wildcard) team.
 4. If a championship division needs additional teams to provide a minimum of matches for the competing teams ATPL may add additional wildcard teams.
 5. Wildcards may be selected based on Regional Championships, standings, team points, competitive balance, or other factors as determined by the ATPL Board or Rules Committee.
 6. Each player competing in the National Championships must appear on the team's final roster, and have met the two match-minimum.
- B. National Championship Format
1. The format (round robin, pool play, single elimination, or double elimination) will be determined and published by the National Championship Director before the start of the event.
 2. All matches will follow the standard ATPL match format and scoring system unless otherwise approved by the ATPL Board or Rules Committee.
 3. The event will be scheduled to allow each team multiple matches over the course of the tournament.
- C. Determining National Champions
1. The team that wins its National Championship bracket will be named National Champion for its division.
 2. If multiple brackets are used in a division, the top finishing team(s) from each bracket may compete in a championship round to determine the overall National Champion.

National Championship Tiebreak Procedures for Round Robin Pool Play

In any round robin group where two or more teams finish with identical win-loss records, the following criteria shall be used **to eliminate one team at a time**, restarting the process after each elimination until final standings are determined. These criteria apply equally to all pool sizes.

1. **Head-to-Head Results Among Tied Teams** Compare the win-loss record among the tied teams. If one team is undefeated in those matchups, that team ranks highest. If the tie persists, proceed to the next criterion.

2. **Point Differential Among Tied Teams** Calculate total points scored minus total points allowed in matches played exclusively among the tied teams. The team with the lowest point differential is eliminated, and the procedure restarts with the remaining teams.
3. **Fewest Total Points Allowed (Defensive Strength)** If teams remain tied, the team allowing the fewest total points in matches among the tied teams shall be ranked highest.
4. **Most Total Points Scored (Offensive Strength)** If still tied, the team scoring the most total points in matches among the tied teams shall be ranked highest.