



Pickleball

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Pickleball was created in Bainbridge Island, Washington in the United States of America in 1965. So, it is a relatively new sport that is now growing very popular in the United States. Many see it as fun, social, and great exercise rather than competitive. Competitions are starting to take place though. It is not that difficult for beginners to learn and to keep up in a friendly game. What is Pickleball and how is it played?

It is like a cross between ping pong and tennis. Most people play on a tennis court, with the tennis net. The racquets are wooden like ping pong paddles, but they are larger for pickleball and are not covered with the layer of rubber as ping pong paddles are. The ball that players use is a whiffle ball. A whiffle ball is the size of a softball, is made of hollow, hard plastic and has 26-40 round holes all over it. Whiffle balls are often used by children to practice baseball swings off of tees.

Pickleball is played on a court that looks like a tennis court but is the size of a badminton court. In many towns, the recreation departments or parks have allowed pickleball groups to paint the lines for the smaller court in their existing tennis courts. Mariposa has done this so that you can use the courts for tennis or pickleball. It is easy to tell which lines are for pickleball because they have painted the pickleball court green, like a pickle. There is an area that is lined off around the net. Players are not allowed to step into that area. It is called “the kitchen” and players must stay out of the kitchen during play. There is a net that is touching the ground at the bottom and is thirty-six inches high. Players hit the ball over the net during the play. To play or practice, you need at least two people. It is fun to play with four people for two teams of two players.

Let’s imagine two players, Barbara and Karen are about to play. They decided that Barbara will serve first. She must stand at the very back of her court on the right-hand side, behind the back line. She must serve underhand. The ball must cross to the other side of the court, over the net, to the right-hand side. Karen will be waiting there to hit the ball. Karen

must let the ball bounce once before she may hit it. Karen will hit the ball back over the net to Barbara. Barbara has to let the ball bounce once before she hits it. Then the volley begins. The ball may only bounce once per side, but the players are not required to let it bounce once the first serve is returned.

To score points, players must hit the ball over the net and within the bounds or drawn lines of the court. The hope is that the opposing player is unable to successfully return the ball over the net, within the bounds and that will earn a point. Skilled players will try to aim the ball for places that will be difficult for their opponent to reach or return the ball. A player or team earns a point if they have won the point after they have just served. If Barbara serves and Karen makes a mistake, then Barbara will gain a point when she offers her next serve. If Barbara has served and makes a mistake, then Karen wins the serve and hopes that Barbara makes a mistake again so that she can gain a point. Players keep score and call out the score at the beginning of each serve. A game is usually played to eleven points and a player or team must win by a two-point lead. It is customary to play two out of three games and switch sides of the court after each game. That way if the wind or sun makes play difficult for one side, they take turns having the advantage of the side without the difficulties.

When there are teams playing, there are two people on each side of the court. Players must still stay out of the kitchen and must still serve from the back, right-hand corner of their side of the court. The rules that the serve must cross over, and bounce are still the same. There is a player in each half of the court, but they are allowed to move around as needed to win the point. The players will trade sides of their half of the court when it is their turn to serve.

When people are just learning to play, the goal is simply to be able to hit the ball over the net and within the bounds. A friendly game will find players hitting the ball to each other so that their friend has an opportunity to try to hit the ball. In a competitive game, the goal is to hit the ball in a place that the opponent is unable to hit the ball. Players work on skills such as being able to aim the ball to a part of the court that is farthest away from where their opponent is standing. Learning to hit the ball backhand is another important skill as players run to hit a well-aimed ball. Either way, Pickleball is great exercise. Whether you are swinging your arms to serve or hit the ball, are running to hit the ball, or walking to retrieve the balls that have gone out of bounds, you will burn many calories playing this fun game.

We have an amazing Pickleball group in Mariposa that is called Mariposa Pickleball. They play at the tennis courts at Mariposa Park on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 7:00 AM. That is very early for some, but it is best to play before it gets too hot, and some people want to play before they go to work. They are a wonderful group that will explain the rules, and some will share their equipment so that everyone gets a chance to play. If you are not ready to jump in, you are welcome to watch. Be sure to bring water, sunscreen, and a hat if you plan to play. We hope you have enjoyed learning about Pickleball. If you would like to see a video of the Mariposa Pickleball players, you can visit www.facebook.com/page/100928591354474/search/?q=Pickleball