

FOSPC Skill Level Ratings

SOME PICKLEBALL COURT TERMS

Below are some court terms that are used in the skill level ratings.

- **Baseline:** The baseline runs parallel to the net at the back of the court. The baseline can't be crossed when you serve.
- **Non-Volley Zone:** The non-volley zone (NVZ) is the area within 7 feet on both sides of the net.
- **Kitchen:** The kitchen is the nickname for the NVZ.
- **Transition Zone:** The Transition Zone is the area on the court between the kitchen and the baseline.

BACKGROUND

There are a couple of rating systems you should be aware of. There is the USA Pickleball Tournament Player Ratings (UTPR). This is the calculated player rating, based on tournament win/loss results and opponent's UTPR. The UTPR is not really applicable to FOSPC players. There is also the skill level ratings developed by the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association (IPTPA). These skill ratings are much more applicable to FOSPC players. *Each rating level has a series of skills and court play activity that are exhibited to help determine your skill level rating.*

The IPTPA skill level assessment criteria for levels 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5 can be viewed at: <https://iptpa.com/iptpa-rating-skills-assessment/>.

FOSPC SKILL LEVEL DETERMINATION

The FOSPC will use the skill level criteria listed below as a guide for determining each player's level. They were developed using the IPTPA skill level assessment criteria and refinements used by other pickleball clubs. ***The FOSPC's goal is to have players with certain skill levels playing against players of similar skill levels, but not make the skill level determination process cumbersome and too formal!*** As such, an individual player should be able to review the criteria for each skill level below and determine his/her own's skill level. In addition to reviewing the criteria below, you can go to the following website as a starter to assess your skill level: <https://picklrz.com/pickleball-skill-level-assessment-tool-slat/>. In summary, a player may self-rate their skills and determine their skill level. If needed, the player can seek advise from other players to help determine his/her skill level.

Note 1: Currently, the FOSPC categorizes players as either 2.0, 2.5, 3.0 or 3.5+ skill levels. Therefore, if a player determines he/she is level 3.5 or 4.0 (or above), that player will be categorized as skill level 3.5+ for their FOSPC skill level rating.

Note 2: Existing FOSPC members already have a skill level indicated on the membership listing (<https://fospc.com/membership-listing/>). For new players or new members of the FOSPC, after reviewing this document, just send Mark Welshinger an email (welshinr@gmail.com) and he'll add your skill level to the membership listing.

2.0 Skill Level

- The person probably falls into one of the two following categories:
 - Has just joined the club and may not be able to hit the ball across the net or return balls, doesn't know the rules of play, scoring, etc. This person probably has not played another racquet sport such as tennis, racquetball, paddle-ball, etc. This person should be encouraged to take the Beginner lessons prior to playing during drop-in.
 - The person either has had experience in other racquet sports, or has taken Beginner lessons, or has been playing with others for a while who have taught the person the basic rules of play and scoring.

If the person is in the 2nd category listed above:

- Knows the basic rules, including the two-bounce rule, and the scoring and player position relative to scoring.
- Demonstrates basic pendulum swing on the forehand & backhand side.
- Demonstrates proper ready position.
- Knows where to stand as the serve team and the return team.
- Developing eye-hand coordination.
- Demonstrates a serve.
- Demonstrates return of serve.

2.5 Skill Level

- Has played with other pickleball players and knows the basic rules of how to play the game.
- Has good mobility and can move forward in a safe and balanced manner.
- Has good eye-hand coordination.
- Is developing 3rd shot drop by long dinking from the transition area.
- Moving forward to approach the NVZ for dinks & volleys.
- Has not yet learned how to effectively “dink”, but could be attempting to do so.
- Keeps ball in play during short rallies.
- Beginning to demonstrate control on forehand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height).
- Uses a backhand ground stroke.
- Demonstrates ability to hit an overhead.
- Occasionally may lob with a forehand, although probably not well.

3.0 Skill Level

- Attempting to consistently dink while changing directions from cross court to down the line forehand & backhand.
 - Developing a sustained “dink” exchange at the net.
- Does not back up unnecessarily from the NVZ.
- Punches volley to the back ½ of opponent court.
- Sustains a short volley exchange at the net.

- Can perform 3rd shot drop by long dinking from the transition area.
- Moving forward as a team to approach NVZ for dinks & volleys.
 - Usually moves to the NVZ line quickly after the return of serve.
- Can perform an overhead with better control while maintaining proper position.
 - Still not consistent with the overhead smash.
- Has good mobility & quickness.
- Demonstrates improved control on forehand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height).
- Better control on backhand groundstrokes.
- Keeps ball in play during short rallies.
- Attempts offensive lobs during play.
- Demonstrates placement & depth on serves & return of serves.
 - Striving to place serves and returns deep in the court (nearer to the baseline).
 - Uses deeper & higher returns of serve to allow time to approach the NVZ line.
- Attempting to adjust to different ball speeds (serves, groundstrokes, volleys).

3.5 Skill Level

- Is beginning to dink with a purpose.
- Can consistently dink while changing directions from cross court to down the line forehand & backhand.
- Moving forward as a team to approach NVZ for dinks & volleys.
- Learning when to use soft shots versus power shots to their advantage.
- Punches volley to the back ½ of opponent court, to keep opponents at the baseline.
- Sustains a controlled volley exchange at the net.
- Performs 3rd shot drop from the baseline.
- Developing directional control while performing an overhead.
- Demonstrates control on forehand groundstrokes (direction, speed, depth, height).
- Demonstrates control on backhand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height).
- Keeps ball in play during rallies and is aware of minimizing errors.
- Able to communicate effectively with partner & utilize different strategies to expose opponent weaknesses.
 - Improving their skill to play with partners effectively, with proper communication and good team coverage of the court.
- Using deeper and higher returns to approach the net quicker.
 - Moves to the net quickly after returning serve, but may occasionally still lag back too long.
- Uses offensive lobs effectively.
- Demonstrates better placement and depth on serves.
- Demonstrates better placement and depth on return of serves.
- Improved control when adjusting to different ball speeds (serves, groundstrokes, volleys).
- Developing the ability to place their shots with accuracy.

- Gaining the reflexes and judgment to avoid hitting balls which may be going out of bounds.

4.0 Skill Level

- Sustains a volley exchange at the net and beginning to use directional control.
- Can demonstrate a block volley.
 - Can block strong volleys directed at them at the non-volley zone line or elsewhere, and can place their volleys with a good degree of accuracy.
- Able to hit winning volley when a ball is popped up.
- Better consistency when performing 3rd shot drop from the baseline.
- Can hit 3rd shot drop from baseline during match play with greater success.
- Moves effectively with a partner and easily switches courts to cover their partner's side when required.
- Has excellent footwork and moves forward, backward and laterally with ease and quickness.
- Controls play at the NVZ line by keeping their opponent back if they're at the baseline.
- Dink with a purpose to elicit a put away shot.
- Can demonstrate an effective poach, and understands when it's appropriate.
- Able to change a fast-paced strategy to a slow one and vice versa.
- Can consistently perform an overhead and beginning to place the shot for winners.
 - Hits overheads consistently "in," often with high velocity and striving to place them more effectively.
 - Developing the ability to return overheads hit at them or their feet.
- Demonstrates control on forehand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height, spin).
- Demonstrates control on backhand groundstrokes (direction, depth, height).
- Understands proper shot selection to minimize errors.
- Able to adjust to differing ball speeds consistently.
- Uses both forehand and backhand offensive lobs effectively.
- Beginning to use spin effectively on a variety of shots.
- Maintains greater patience in dinks & rallies.
- Beginning to anticipate shots more frequently (watching opponents paddle face).
- Good at avoiding returned shots which may be going out of bounds.