

## Special Olympics Pickleball Competition

**Governing Rules:** The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Pickleball shall govern all Special Olympics Competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon USA Pickleball rules found at [USA-Pickleball-Official-Rulebook-2023v2.pdf \(usapickleball.org\)](https://www.usapickleball.org/2023v2.pdf). In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Pickleball and SOI Article I shall apply. Refer to SOI Article 1, [Sports-Essentials-Article-1-Rules-2022.pdf \(specialolympics.org\)](https://www.specialolympics.org/Sports-Essentials-Article-1-Rules-2022.pdf) for more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Sports®. SOI will follow the safety rules, as well as skill levels defined for Pickleball. Special Olympics has created additional provisions to compliment the USA Pickleball rules and race guidelines. Coaches are responsible for following the safety rules and following the skills progression for athletes and Unified partners.

*\*All USA Pickleball rules will be followed except those that are modified herein.*

**Events:** Singles, Doubles & Unified Doubles

*\*For pickleball competitions/tournaments, it is recommended that athletes may play in no more than two events of their choosing, based upon the overall format and schedule for the event. Singles & Doubles, Singles & Unified Doubles or Doubles & Unified Doubles.*

### Levels:

○ Individual Skills Competition	Total Assessment Score	0 – 15
○ <u>Level 1</u> : Beginner	Total Assessment Score	18 – 35
○ <u>Level 2</u> : Advanced Beginner	Total Assessment Score	41 – 65
○ <u>Level 3</u> : Intermediate	Total Assessment Score	68 – 87
○ <u>Level 4</u> : Advanced	Total Assessment Score	98 – 154+

### Divisioning:

○ Athletes and Unified Partners will be divisioned by their play level and assessment score. ○ Divisions will be comprised of a minimum of 3 and no greater than 8 per division.

**Match Format:** Suggested: Pool play followed by final compass draw Competition Round.

**Game Format:** ***Competition/Tournament management team will determine the game format and are charged with advising the participants in advance of the event.***

*Recommended Formats:*

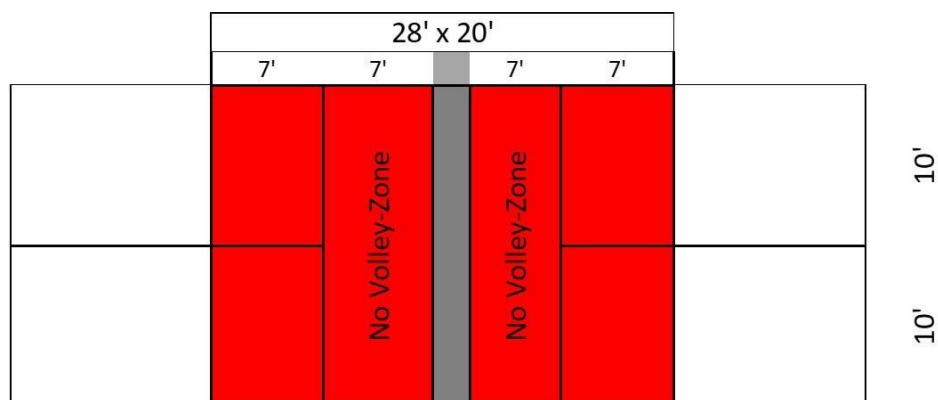
- ISC: Individual Skill Competition
- Level 1: One 9-point game, first to win 9 points by a margin of 2 points
- Level 2: One 9-point game or best of three 9-point games, first to win 9 points by a margin of 2 points
- Level 3: Best of three, 11-point games, first to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points
- Level 4: Best of three, 11-point games, first to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points

***\* A format may be adjusted on-site, based upon weather or extenuating circumstances.***

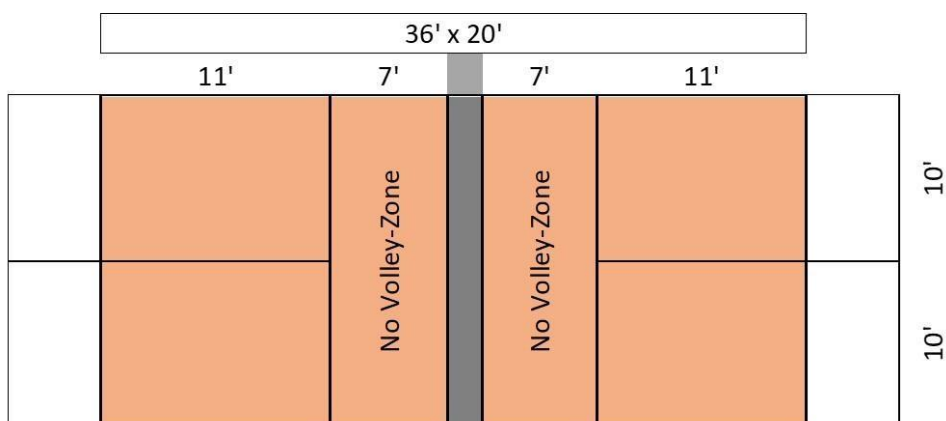
**Level 3 & Level 4:** Utilize one 15-point game, winning by a margin of 2-points. If Time limit needs to be utilized, during a competition, the recommendation is to utilize a duration of 45-60 minutes, across all levels.

**Ball Type & Court Size:** A Recreation ball may be used depending on outdoor court surface.

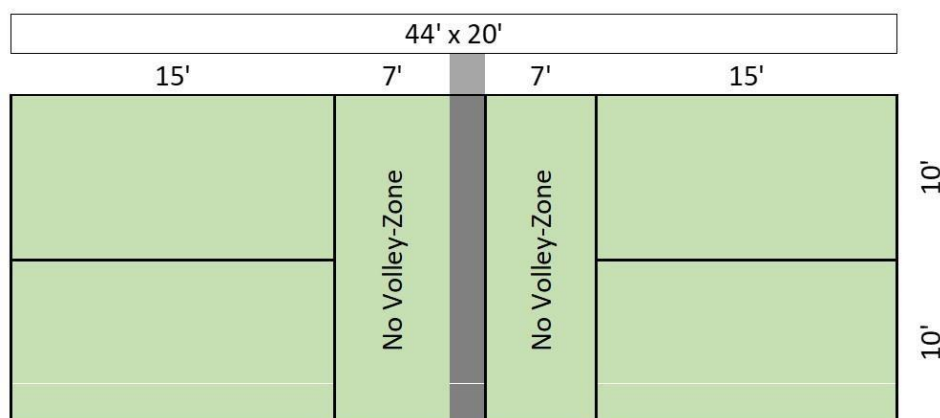
- **ISC and Level 1:** Indoor Ball /Recreational Ball (i.e. Onix Fuse outdoor pickleball)  
(slower, provides more response time, bridge between indoor and outdoor ball)



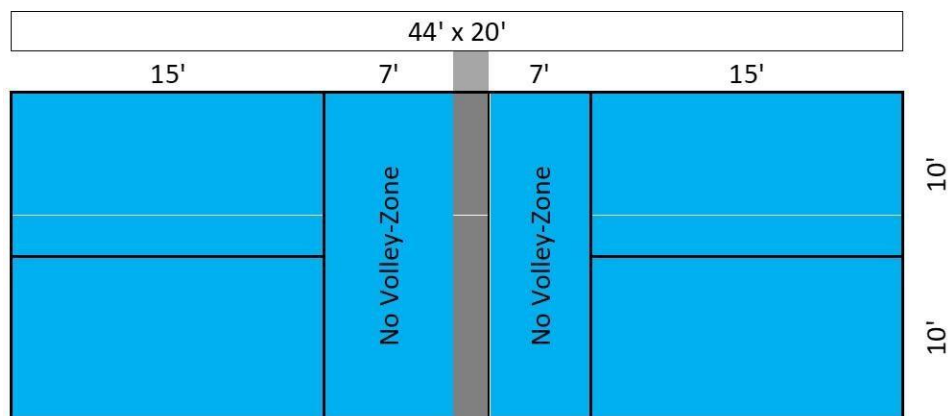
- **Level 2:** Indoor Ball /Recreational Ball (i.e. Onix Fuse outdoor pickleball)  
(slower, provides more response time, bridge between indoor and outdoor ball)



- **Level 3:** Competition Ball



○ **Level 4:** Competition Ball



**Scoring:**

- Points are scored by the serving competitor/team only. (No rally scoring should be used as per current USA Pickleball Rules.)
- In the absence of an official, coach (off court) or Unified Partner may call the score.

**Serves:**

- Serves must be made underhand and paddle contact with the ball must be below the server's waist, paddle below the highest part. Serves may be hit out of the server's opposite hand or dropped (not thrown downward) from any height and hit after the ball bounces. Neither foot may contact the baseline or court until after the ball is struck.

*\*Accommodations for serving can be made should a competitor be restricted to the use of one hand/arm.*

Level 1: May be allowed **one** service attempt and will be **allowed a "let serve" replay**, using the 28' x 20' court.

Level 2: May be allowed **one** service attempt and will be **allowed a "let serve" replay**, using the 36' x 20' court.

Level 3: Allowed **one** service attempt and will be **expected to play a "let serve"**, if the ball lands beyond the non-volley zone line.

Level 4: Allowed **one** service attempt and will be **expected to play a "let serve"**, if the ball lands beyond the non-volley zone line.

**Serve/Receive Position:**

*Please refer to rules 4.B.1 through 4.B.10 in the 2023 Official USA Pickleball Rulebook.*

**Non-Volley Zone:**

- Levels 1 & 2: Competitors may not stand in the non-volley zone unless they are returning a ball that bounces in the non-volley zone. A competitor may step into the non-volley zone if their momentum carries them after hitting the ball below the waist behind the line.
- Levels 3 & 4: Competitors may not stand in the non-volley zone unless they are returning a ball that bounces in the non-volley zone and then the competitor would need to step out of the non-volley zone.

**Traditional & Unified Doubles:**

- Teams comprised of athletes and/or Unified partners from two different levels must compete at the assessed level of the higher-rated competitor level.
- Athletes and/or Unified partners from Levels 1 and 2 could comprise a mixed level team playing at Level 2.
- Athletes and/or Unified partners from Levels 3 and 4 could comprise a mixed level team playing at Level 4.
- At no time can athletes and/or Unified partners from Levels 1 and 2 comprise a mixed level team with athletes and/or Unified partners from Levels 3 and 4.
- Athletes and/or Unified partners must be from the same program to compete in doubles.

**Coaching:**

- One designated coach may sit or stand near the court (off the playing surface).
- Each competitor, (athlete or Unified partner) or coach may call two time-outs per game, each lasting up to one minute in duration where coaching may be received.
- A request for a time-out must be made by the competitor or coach to the official or opponent prior to the next serve being played.