

# Pickleball Strategy

by Alden Briggs, September 27, 2020

**The following strategies are in no particular order.**

1. Control the **play at the net** by staying 2 inches back of the non-volley zone (NVZ) line.
2. If the ball is required to bounce, stay behind the baseline. If the ball is not required to bounce, get up to the NVZ line as soon as possible. Therefore, when you serve, **Serve and Stay** and when you return a serve, **Return and Run** to the NVZ.
3. Hit **down** hard, hit **up** soft.
4. Aim at your **opponent's feet**. The opposite foot to the dominate hand is the best target.
5. Aim at you **opponent's backhand**. This is the left foot for a right-handed player and vice versa.
6. **Always** aim at a **small target**, don't just hit the ball over the net.
7. The Serve and the Return should be deep, the majority of the shots from the third shot and afterwards should be into the NVZ.
8. Look for you opponent's weakness, then exploit it.
9. Do not attempt to spin every shot. This is especially true when you are relatively new to pickleball. Develop shot control first.
10. Do not attempt to make every shot a winner. The important thing is to get the shot in! Let your opponent miss the shot.

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11. When possible, give your opponent less time to react. Examples are taking dinks out of the air rather than letting the ball bounce and returning the balls with a hard shot. The caveat here is you do not do these things at the sacrifice of returning the ball successfully.
12. Never challenge the net on the return of serve. Your returned ball can be high, and preferably deep, because your opponents have to let it bounce.
13. Dink with a purpose. Pick a target, paddle up afterwards and always expect a fast return.
14. Get up to the NVZ line as soon as possible but in a controlled fashion with you paddle up tracking the ball. Stop before striking the ball even if you are not up to the NVZ line.
15. Stay at the NVZ and stay only 2 inches back from it. As a general rule – never back up unless you are forced. This is a war and you must defend the front line!
16. Aim your shots to be in the middle of the court quite often. The reasons are:
  - (1) the net is 2 inches lower,
  - (2) a lot more margin for error on an inaccurate shot, and
  - (3) creates confusion for your opponents - who returns the ball?
17. Poach when the opportunity arises.
18. Without causing an injury, get your shot over the net and in at all costs. Being consistent in getting your shots over is extremely important.

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19. Mix up your shots is also important. Don't do the same shot every time. For example, mix up your serve and don't hit to the same target every time.
20. Use your body when hitting the ball. **Minimize flicking your wrist.** Your paddle, hand and arm should all move as one for the vast majority of your shots.
21. Develop a good backhand shot.
22. Use the third shot drop often.
23. Use the lob shot very infrequently.
24. Be aggressive opposed to passive.
25. Easier to dink diagonally than straight across.
26. Always work as a team with your partner. Keep within 8 feet of your partner. Move up to the NVZ with your partner.
27. Move your feet rather than stretch and reach which causes you to lose your balance.
28. BBB mantra – Balanced, Breath and Believe.
29. Re-establish ready position after every shot – paddle up, weight on the balls of your feet and track the ball with your paddle.