

Keowee Key Pickleball Skill Level Guidelines

The following skill level definitions are a guide for evaluating your own level of play. They are based on existing guidelines listed by the USAPA on their website (www.usapa.org). The intent of the levels is to assist people to group in similar skill sets for maximum enjoyment of play for people at Keowee Key. The level numbers can be a potential guide for outside tournament play.

Beginner (1.0)

This player is just starting to play pickleball. Minimal understanding of rules of the game.

Novice (1.5)

This player has limited experience playing Pickleball. Can sustain a short rally with players of equal ability. Basic ability to keep score.

Advanced Beginner (2.0)

This player can basically keep score and can maintain a short rally.

FOREHAND:

Ability to hit a medium paced shot. Lacks directional intent and consistency.

BACKHAND:

Avoids using a backhand. Lacks directional intent and consistency.

SERVE / RETURN:

Able to hit a medium paced shot. Lacks depth, direction, and consistency.

3RD SHOT:

Generally hits a medium paced ball with little direction or intent.

VOLLEY:

Able to hit a medium paced shot. Lacks direction/inconsistent.

DINK:

Uses Dinks for warm-up but not in game play. Not yet developed the ability to control this shot.

STRATEGY:

Understands some fundamentals. Is learning court positioning. Knows the fundamental rules and can basically keep score.

Low Intermediate (2.5)

This player can keep score and is improving the ability to maintain a rally.

FOREHAND:

Ability to hit a medium paced shot. Some directional intent and improved consistency.

BACKHAND:

Continues to avoid using a backhand. Lacks directional intent and consistency.

SERVE / RETURN:

Improved consistency. Improving depth and direction,

3RD SHOT:

Generally hits a medium paced ball with little direction.

VOLLEY:

Able to hit a medium paced shot. Lacks direction/inconsistent.

DINK:

Does not consistently sustain a dink rally. Not yet developed the ability to control this shot.

STRATEGY:

Understands fundamentals. Is learning proper court positioning. Knows the fundamental rules and can keep score.

Intermediate (3.0)

This player can maintain a rally and is becoming aware of strategies and starting to integrate them into play.

FOREHAND:

Improved stroke development with moderate level of shot control.

BACKHAND:

Learning how to set up for more consistent stroke form but still avoids if possible.

SERVE / RETURN:

Calls the score correctly before each serve. Consistently gets serve/return in play with limited ability to control depth.

3RD SHOT:

Becoming aware that there are options: Drive, Drop or Lob. Developing the drop shot or lob as a way to get to the net.

VOLLEY:

Is able to volley medium paced shots with some directional control.

DINK:

Increased consistency, with limited ability to control height/depth. Sustains medium length rallies. Becoming aware of variations in pace of play.

STRATEGY:

Moves towards the non-volley zone (NVZ) when opportunity is there. Acknowledges difference between hard game and soft game and is starting to vary own game during recreation and competitive play. Lobs sometimes attempted to push opponents back, but if not deep enough can backfire. Can sustain short rallies. Is improving awareness of court positioning. Court awareness for balls potentially going out of bounds.

Advanced Intermediate (3.5)

This player is becoming more confident with use of strategies and integrating them into play.

FOREHAND:

Consistently hits with depth and control. Is still perfecting shot selection and timing.

BACKHAND:

Has improved stroke mechanics and has moderate success at hitting backhands consistently.

SERVE / RETURN:

Is able to make scoring corrections on the basis of court positioning. Places a high majority of serves/returns with varying depth and speed.

3RD SHOT:

Selectively mixing up soft shots with power shots to create an advantage with inconsistent results.

VOLLEY:

Able to volley a variety of shots at different speeds. Is developing consistency and control. Starting to understand the block/re-set drop volley. Becoming aware of the value of poaching.

DINK:

Increased consistency with moderate ability to control height/depth. May end dink rally too soon due to lack of patience. Is beginning to understand difference between attackable balls and those that are not.

STRATEGY:

Aware of partner's position on the court and is able to move as a team. Demonstrates ability to change direction in an offensive manner. Developing an ability to run down a lob defensively. Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the rules of the game. Has a moderate number of unforced errors per game. An understanding of stacking and when and how it could be used in play. Beginning to identify opponents' weaknesses and attempts to formulate game plan to attack weaknesses. Beginning to seek out more competitive play.

Advanced (4.0)

This player is confident with use of strategies and integrating them into play.

FOREHAND:

High level of consistency. Uses pace and depth to generate opponents' error or set up next shot.

BACKHAND:

Can effectively direct the ball with varying depth and paces with good consistency.

SERVE / RETURN:

Serves with power, accuracy, and depth and can also vary the speed and spin of the serve.

3RD SHOT:

Consistently executes effective 3rd shot strategies, drop shots or driving shots that are not easily returned for advantage. Able to intentionally and consistently place the ball.

VOLLEY:

Able to block hard shots directed at them and can consistently drop them into the NVZ. Comfortable hitting swinging volleys. Hits overhead shots consistently by moving to a solid setup position, often as winning put aways.

DINK:

Ability to place ball with high success at changing shot types while playing both consistently and with offensive intent. Recognizes and attempts to hit attackable dinks.

STRATEGY:

Has good footwork and moves around the court well. Able to change direction with ease. Very comfortable playing at the non-volley zone. Becoming skilled at a lob defense with overhead smash. Communicates and moves well with partner — easily “stacks” court positions. Understands strategy and can adjust style of play and game plan according to the opponent’s strengths and weaknesses and court position. Limited number of unforced errors.

Advanced (4.5)

This player is clearly confident with strategies, both offensive and defensive and integrating them into play. Able to “reset” points as necessary.

FOREHAND | BACKHAND | SERVE / RETURN:

Hits all shot types at a high level of ability from both the forehand and backhand sides including: touch, spin, and pace with control to set up offensive situations. Has developed good touch from all court positions. Has developed a very high level of placement variety, depth, and pace of serves.

3RD SHOT:

Mastered the 3rd shot choices and strategies to create opportunities for winning points. Able to drop and drive ball from both the forehand and backhand side with high level of consistency.

VOLLEY:

Able to block hard shots directed at them and consistently drop them into the NVZ or with aggressive directional control. Gets to solid setups for consistent overhead placement with ease for winners. Able to volley shots toward opponents’ feet consistently. Comfortable with swinging volley in both initiating and ability to attack back or neutralize return.

DINK:

Mastered the dink control and strategies. Ability to move opponents with shot placements. Exhibits patience during rallies with the ability to create an opportunity to attack utilizing the dink. Increased ability to change the pace of dinks strategically including flick power shots.

STRATEGY:

Mastered pickleball strategies and can vary strategies and styles of play in competitive or tournament matches. Skilled at running down lobs defensively. Is successful at turning defensive shots into offensive shots. Has efficient footwork and effective use of weight transfer for improved quickness on the court. Easily and quickly adjusts style of play and game plan according to the opponent’s strengths and weaknesses and court position. Rarely makes unforced errors.

Advanced (5.0)

This player is a top caliber player. Performance and tournament performances speak for this player's ability to consistently play at the highest level.