

# PICKLEBALL IS LIFE



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO  
FEEDING YOUR OBSESSION

ERIN McHUGH



HARVEST

*An Imprint of* WILLIAM MORROW

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# Demo Paddle Programs

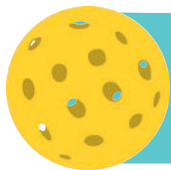
If you search the websites of different paddle manufacturers, you'll find some that will send you several paddles to try out for a week or two, often for just the cost of a shipping fee. But also, as of this writing, some pickleball equipment sites will do one better: they'll offer paddle loans from various manufacturers—and you can get several at a time.

Here are a few places to start looking online:

Total Pickleball ([totalpickleball.com](http://totalpickleball.com)) will let you choose three paddles to test for seven days; all you have to pay is the shipping cost.

With Pickleball Galaxy's program ([pickleballgalaxy.com](http://pickleballgalaxy.com)), you can try two paddles for seven days, for a fee that includes shipping and a credit if you end up buying one of the paddles. The big plus is the large array of different paddles they offer for demo purposes.

You can try out a paddle from places like Pickleball Central ([pickleballcentral.com](http://pickleballcentral.com)) and other online retailers that allow you to return an item within thirty days.



## PRO TIP

**Play first to your strengths,  
not to your opponent's weaknesses.**

# DIY Pickleball Court

## The Live Area

Of course, you're going to set up your court wherever you're lucky enough to find a spot. But your first consideration is to have enough space for the court itself; for safety's sake and ease of movement, the recommended area is 30 feet wide by 60 feet long, to give everyone plenty of room to swing, run, and act the hero. If you have the room for wheelchair pickleball, 44 feet wide by 74 feet long would be perfect. (Remember, wheelchair players are allowed to—and will!—hit a ball whose second bounce is outside the court boundaries.)

Oh, and if you're up for it? A 9- to 10-foot fence surrounding your court is also helpful.

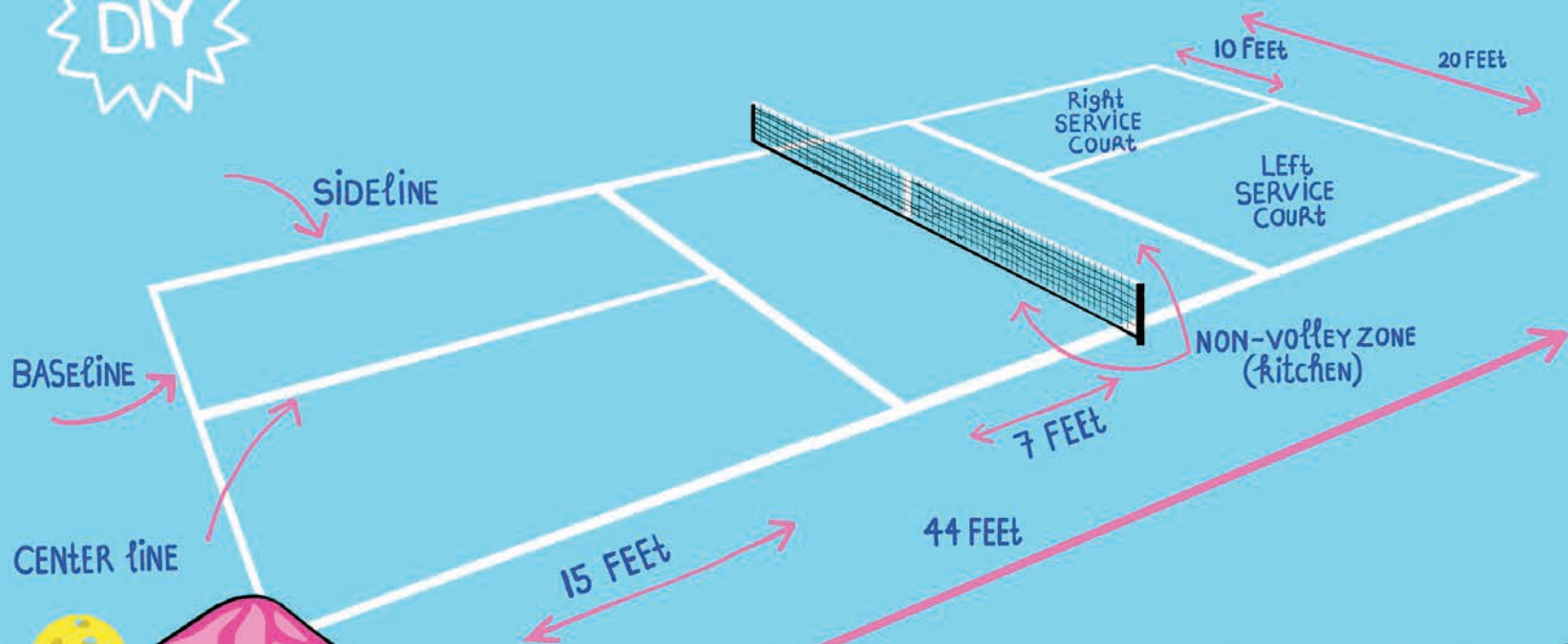
## The Court


A pickleball court's dimensions are much smaller than a tennis court's—the entire playing area is just 20 feet wide by 44 feet long—but are the same size as a doubles badminton court. And here's a cool and convenient factoid: a lot of city streets are exactly 20 feet wide! This has the added bonus of your never having to worry about an out call on the sidelines of the court. When the ball hits the curb or plops on the grass, it's OUT! No questions asked.

You'll find printable dimensions on the USA Pickleball Association website ([usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org)). Asphalt or concrete is likely the surface if you're playing outdoors. If you're indoors, at a community building or sports center, a court will often be on a hardwood floor—taping the pickleball court lines on part

# Court

# Dimensions





of a basketball court is not uncommon. Additional space on the sides and back ends of the court is desirable. If you're not lucky enough to have fencing surrounding your new court, you'll get in a lot more steps chasing the ball!

## The Net

There are a plethora of nets available, and the same ones can be used indoors and out. Try your local sporting goods store or look online for variety and price point. If you're planning on packing up your net after every use, make sure it comes with a carry bag, and read reviews to make sure users think the net you're considering is easy to assemble. It should take one or two people less than five minutes to put a net together. If you know you'll constantly be taking public transportation to your location, you may want to consider its weight as well. When the net is set up it should be 36 inches tall on the sides, and 34 inches in the middle. If you're going to leave your net out through all kinds of weather and seasons, make sure it's sturdy. Beware of net packages that include inexpensive paddles; you don't want to play with cheap wooden paddles—spend your money on the net, period.

## The How-To

This is one DIY project that won't break the bank. A bit of paint, a brush or two, a few rolls of tape, some string, a little chalk. Add a couple of buddies and a sunny morning and you'll be all set.



## Outdoors

*Painter's tape* is easy to use to set your court boundaries: it sticks well to the surface, yet is very easy to remove. You'll need exactly 396 feet, but make sure you have a little extra for overlapping end pieces when laying it down and some to box out a mark in the middle of the court where the net should be placed.

Let's build your court step-by-step.

- To paint even court lines, you will stick down two parallel lines of tape, one inside the other, with exactly 2 inches separating them. (The in-between space will be painted to create the lines.) Your court will be 20 feet wide and 44 feet long. The kitchen area is a total of 14 feet long, extending 7 feet on each side of the net. This leaves 15 feet for each backcourt, each bisected.
- First lay down what will be the outer lines of tape for the sidelines. The measurement between the sidelines of the court should be exactly 20 feet, measured across the court from outside edge to outside edge of the lines. That's your court width. The sidelines—that is, the length of the court—are 44 feet long.
- Next, put down a line of tape parallel to the first, set 2 inches into the court. Once the space between the tape lines is painted, the court should measure 19 feet 8 inches from the inside edge of one sideline across the court to the inside edge of the other sideline. Measuring from the outer edges of the painted sidelines should yield exactly 20 feet.
- Now lay down your two sets of tape for the baseline on each end. Remember that the distance between the far edges of



your painted lines should measure 44 feet total, so lay your interior lines of tape 2 inches in.

- The kitchen line goes from sideline to sideline on each half of the court. Make a guide mark for yourself in the middle, exactly 22 feet from each baseline, and measure 7 feet each way toward the baseline. (The far edge of your kitchen line should be 7 feet from the middle of the court, with the near edge 2 inches closer to the net.)
- Mark the exact center of the length of the court with a bit of paint on each sideline so you can put your net down perfectly each time you set it up.
- The only lines left to tape now are your center court lines for each side. Mark the exact middle from the outside edges of your sideline, and your taped line should extend an inch to each side. The center lines go from the baseline to the kitchen line, so that the backcourt is bisected. The kitchen is not bisected.
- The best way to make your lines straight:
  - Measure carefully and frequently along each line you're preparing.
  - Use chalk as a guideline before you set down your tape.
  - Make a plumb line end to end with string or twine and it'll be straight as an arrow.
- Now paint! A small brush or a 2- or 3-inch roller gets the job done fast and easily. Paint in between all your parallel pieces of tape. Again, each painted line should be 2 inches wide.

*The paint* needs to be chosen wisely. Make sure it has no sand in it; that kind of paint can lead to tripping and falling. It needs to be durable in all kinds of weather and over time. A good suggestion is traffic-marking paint: the bright white, neon



yellow, or blue paint used on streets and parking lots to mark crosswalks and spaces. A couple of quarts will be enough. A good, bright latex outdoor paint will only need one coat, and will dry in a few hours.

Be sure to read these steps again once you have the tape in your hand. Then once more. You know what they say about wallpaper: measure twice, cut once. Same goes here.

## Indoors

*Vinyl tape* is available to use on indoor courts. Available at hardware stores, it sticks well on wood, concrete, and tile, and will not trip players. It is meant to last a long while (though it will start to fray and come up in places over time), so isn't as easy to pull up as painter's tape. The tape is 2 inches wide, the same width as a court line.

*Chalk* is another simple—though perhaps less exact—tool for marking your court. Purchase a big box of sidewalk chalk, leave it in your car with your portable net and a tape measure, and you're ready for a pickup game just about anywhere. A chalk court is quick to lay out, and isn't permanent. These factors make chalking the perfect choice for many spots, especially those in public places, where recreational space is shared or is only available for temporary use. When playing on a chalk court, you might consider being more forgiving than usual about calling a ball out given that drawn chalk lines will be less exact than lines on a permanent court—and there's nothing wrong with relaxing a bit.

The great thing about chalking a court? It sort of makes you like the neighborhood pickleball Zorro: a bandit who swoops in,



puts down a court-for-a-minute and a net, and disappears once darkness falls.

### **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**

**Always keep your eye on your opponents. Occasionally, the server's partner will forget to stay back at the baseline and will be positioned up at the kitchen line to prepare for your return. As their mortal enemy, it's perfectly reasonable for you to keep your piehole shut and not alert them. Then enjoy hitting a smack-in-the-belly-button return. No hard feelings. All's fair in pickleball.**

# Pickleball Recipes

## THE Cornichon Martini

A pickly twist on a dirty martini: prepare your gin or vodka martini to your usual specifications, but make it dirty by grabbing a jar of cornichons, adding some of the juice, and garnishing with a couple of the tiny pickles.

**2½ ounces gin or vodka**

**½ ounce dry vermouth**

**½ ounce cornichon brine**

**2 cornichons**

Add the gin or vodka, vermouth, and cornichon brine to a mixing glass filled with ice and stir. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a skewer of cornichons.

# THE Pickleback

The pickleback is a bit more down and dirty than the sophisticated martini, but this popular drink will do the job just the same—and probably a whole lot quicker. If you've never heard of it, a pickleback has a couple of variations: either a shot of whiskey chased by a shot of pickle juice, or a shot of whiskey followed by a bite of an actual pickle. Either is a perfect capper to a tough day on the court.

If you're wondering where such an odd-sounding combo came from, anecdotal history cites its genesis to Brooklyn's Bushwick Country Club in 2006. Evidently, someone came in and ordered a shot of Old Crow whiskey with some pickle juice on the side, convinced the bartender to join her in a few rounds, and a star was born. Eventually, the novel drink gained popularity, though the . . . less elegant booze was often replaced with Jameson whiskey, and a "pickle juice back," as bar lingo goes. Thus, pickleback entered the lexicon.

**1½ ounces whiskey of your choice**  
**(Irish whiskey preferable)**

**1½ ounces pickle juice**

Into one shot glass, pour the whiskey. Into another, pour the pickle juice. Take a drink of the whiskey, immediately followed by a blast of pickle juice. If you prefer to bite into a dill pickle instead of drinking the juice, *salud!*

# Dill Pickle Dip

This delicious dip is perfect with chips, crackers, or crudité and makes plenty for a hungry foursome of picklers.

**One 8-ounce package cream cheese**

**8 ounces sour cream**

**¼ cup dill pickle juice**

**1 cup dill pickles, chopped**

Combine all the ingredients in a medium bowl. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to four hours.

# Peanut Butter AND Pickle Sandwich Bites

And they say pickles aren't elegant. These tasty sandwiches have been around since the Great Depression and have garnered their own culinary niche over time.

For your PB&P, any white bread will do, along with your choice of bread-and-butter or dill pickles, sliced lengthwise or into coins. Toast the bread if you like, slather each slice with peanut butter, and lay on the pickles. For extra crunch and saltiness, add potato chips. Cut into triangles and bon appétit!

# Easy Refrigerator Pickles

This is as crisp, cool, and delicious a snack as you're ever going to find on a hot summer afternoon—perfect for a post-match treat.

It's quick to assemble, and you're likely to have most of the ingredients for the process in your pantry, other than the cucumbers (yes, that's where pickles come from).

**1½ cups distilled white vinegar**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt**

**2 cups thinly sliced onions**

**4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon mustard seed**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon celery seed**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground black pepper**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon crushed red pepper**

**16 dill sprigs (optional)**

**2 pounds cucumbers, sliced into spears**

Make the brine: In a saucepan, combine all the ingredients except the cucumber and bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved.

Fill mason jars with as many cucumber spears as possible, and then pour in enough liquid to fill the jars. Screw the lids on tightly and refrigerate the jars at least overnight—a few days will improve the flavor even more! The pickles will last for about 2 weeks.

# Cream Cheese Pickles

You can hardly go more retro than cream cheese pickles; they have been a part of the culinary wayback machine for so long that this recipe calls for luncheon meat. But these pickles are a treat with staying power, and tasty always wins.

**8 slices of your choice of luncheon meat**

**(ham, salami, bologna, etc.)**

**8 ounces cream cheese, softened**

**2 teaspoons prepared horseradish (optional)**

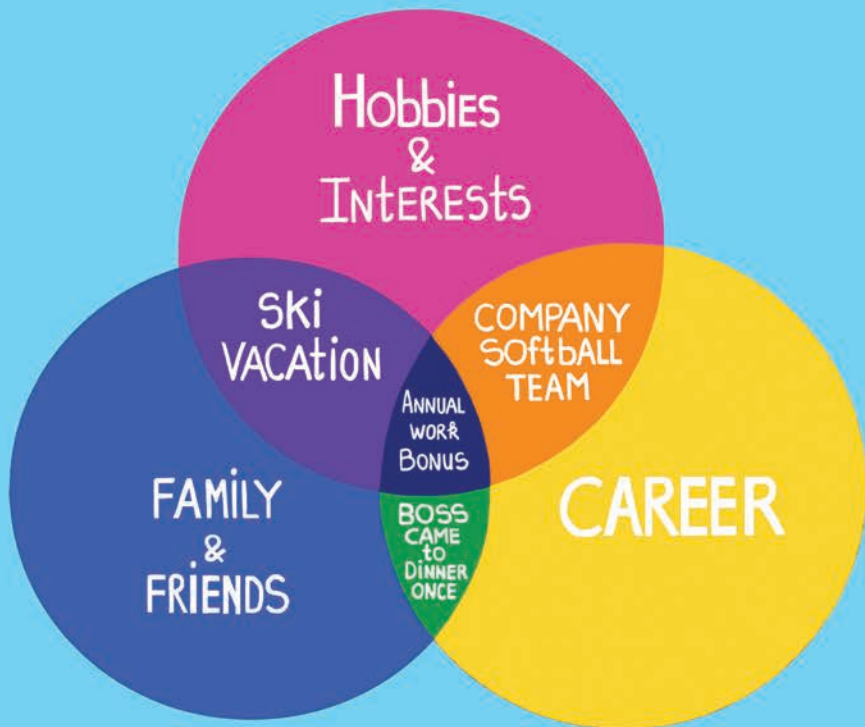
**8 dill pickle spears**

Lay out the meat slices and pat dry with paper towels. Slather each slice with cream cheese—and horseradish, if desired. Place one pickle spear at one end of a cream-cheese-covered meat slice and roll the meat up around the pickle. Refrigerate for 30 minutes, then cut the rolls into 1-inch portions. Serve with toothpicks.

## Pickle Juice

Pickle juice isn't just for cocktails, it seems. Many people swear it has medicinal magic, and research is showing there's some truth to the tale. Occasionally, après-pickle may include some aches and pains, not just drinks and snacks. If you experience leg cramps after exercising or during the night, drinking 2 to 3 ounces of pickle juice can relieve the discomfort within a minute or two. Bottoms up!

# My Changing World



MY SO-CALLED HAPPY  
LIFE BEFORE PICKLEBALL





LIVING MY OBSESSION

# Resources

Here is a partial list of organizations offering programs (more pop up all the time) to investigate:

USA Pickleball ([usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org))

EngagePickleball ([engagepickleball.com](http://engagepickleball.com))

Selkirk Sport ([selkirk.com](http://selkirk.com))

Golden Pickleball ([goldenpickleball.com](http://goldenpickleball.com))

PickleballCentral ([pickleballcentral.com](http://pickleballcentral.com))

Big Dill Pickleball Co. ([bigdillpickleballcompany.com](http://bigdillpickleballcompany.com))

Landing Creek Pickleball ([lcpickleball.com](http://lcpickleball.com))

# My Pickleball Journey

One of the greatest things about pickleball is that you never feel like you've peaked as a player. You always believe you can reach the next level, improve, and learn new strategies and tricks.

And you can! And while you're at it, why not keep track of your playing stats? Chart, plot, and celebrate your progress in the designated areas in this section.

## Start Date: My Introduction to Pickleball

Where, when, and with whom did I begin? Best (and worst) memories of my early days.

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## Lessons

Location	Instructor	Lesson	Concentration
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## Ranking

Level Achieved

Pro

Location

Date

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## Tournaments Played

Partner

Location

Date

Outcome

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## Pickleball Camp and Retreat Wish List

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## My Favorite Pickling Companions

Name

Email

Phone

Play Level

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# Acknowledgments

You can play pickleball alone or with a partner, but making a book takes a whole team of folks. Having been in the publishing business my entire career, I know the life of my book depends on so many people I will never even meet, including some of the sales and marketing team at HarperCollins, the printers who get these beautiful color illustrations right, and the thousands of knowledgeable booksellers who actually put my book in a customer's hand and say, "Get this. You'll love it." A thank-you for the kindness of all these strangers.

Closer to home, I want to bow to Team Pickle at HarperCollins and Harvest, led by its brilliant and insightful leader, the great Deb Brody. She took me in sight unseen, and I am grateful and really, really happy about that. Emma Peters kept me on course with the daily machinations of getting things done, and we managed to have fun doing it, too. Tai Blanche held my hand through the artistic development and incredible design of the book, and she also found our very talented, delightful illustrator, Jackie Besteman. If Jackie's color palette doesn't knock your socks off, then I don't even know. And Mumtaz Mustafa made sure we had the most irresistible book cover possible—nearly as irresistible as pickleball itself.

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The story of pickleball's invention is a fun and serendipitous one, and I still cannot believe that the children of the sport's founders, Allison Bell Wood and Frank Pritchard, offered to speak with me. Hearing about the inception of this sport from the kids who were there—and remember it so well!—was a wonderful and extremely kind gift, and it has given the book a warmth and a sweetness that is unique. Allison and Frank, I thank you so very much for sharing your families' adventures.

And, of course, to all the people who got me out there, shoveled snow with me, played with me patiently and watched me improve, brought towels so we could wipe up the puddles, didn't mind when I was injured and had to play with my other hand, and are basically as nutty as I am: you guys are great. We are lucky beyond measure to have found a new way to enjoy life together.