

THE PICKLEBALL GURU'S TIPS FOR "PLAYING UP"



When you want to play with or against players who are STRONGER than you:

- ✓ **Ask Politely and Give Them an Out.** For example, *"Do you all mind if I get a game in with you, or would you rather play on your own?"*
- ✓ **Ask at the Beginning or End of the Day.** Approach when they are warming up or cooling down. DON'T go when they are in the midst of a streak of higher-level play.
- ✓ **Accommodate Their Flow.** If you DO approach them in the midst of higher-level play, accommodate their flow. Ask *"Hey, do you mind if I get a game in with you all before you quit today?"* so that they can continue playing, but will hopefully commit to playing with you later.
- ✓ **Be Conscientious.** If they do play a few games with you, make it easy for them to bow out and play with other higher-level players so that they will be more likely to want to play with you again in the future. You might say, *"Hey, I see you can get a good game in against those guys, I'll sit this one out and maybe we can play again later if you have a chance."*
- ✓ **Hit to Them!** No one likes to watch their partner hit all the balls during recreational play. The higher-level player is doing you a favor by playing with you, so hit the ball to them *at least half the time*. It will make you a better player, make it more fun for them, *and* make it more likely that they will play with you again next time.
- ✓ **Don't Be Obnoxious If You Win.** It can be challenging to stay focused when playing with weaker players, so they may not be playing at the top of their game. Or, they may be focusing on improving their own shots. Either way, be gracious.
- ✓ **Show Your Appreciation.** If they give you feedback on your game, have an open mind and be appreciative of them taking the time to play and help you.
- ✓ **Don't Take It Personally.** Some people just aren't going to be very friendly about it. Don't let them get to you. Remember, it's only pickleball! 😊

THE PICKLEBALL GURU'S TIPS FOR "PLAYING DOWN"



When you play with or against players who are WEAKER than you:

- ☑ **Remember Where You Came From.** Who took you under their wing when you first started playing? Chances are you've improved your game since then by getting to play with better players, so pay it forward and make a point to regularly play with players who are weaker than you. You could regularly play a warm-up game with them, or once a week decide to dedicate the last 30-45 minutes of your play to playing with them, it's up to you. Just find a way to pay it forward.
- ☑ **If Now's Not Good, Say When.** If someone asks to play with you and you opt to play a higher-level game instead, let them know when you WOULD be willing to play, perhaps later in the day, or later in the week.
- ☑ **Give Them a Head's Up On How Long You'll Stay.** When you do play, let them know in advance how long you're planning to play, you might say, *"I'd love to play with you all for a game or two, but then I'd like to get in with those other players."*
- ☑ **Don't Be Patronizing -- Or, Overly Aggressive.** Instead of focusing on who wins or loses, find a way to make it challenging for yourself. Pick a shot you want to improve upon and focus on hitting that shot. Or, try to reduce your number of unforced errors. Focus on consistency and keeping the ball in play rather than slamming every put-away shot you get.
- ☑ **Limit Your Feedback.** If you notice something they could be doing better, limit your feedback to one aspect of their game during play. Giving them too many pointers can overwhelm them. Plus, they're probably already a little nervous about being on the court with you, so don't be too critical. Afterwards, if you want to give them more background info on your pointer, or give them one additional pointer, go ahead, but start out by asking permission first, *"Would you like to hear more about what I noticed about your game?"*