



# USAPA/IFP Line Judge Guide

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## *Introduction*

Line judging is an important part of pickleball officiating. It is more than simply staying awake, staring at the assigned line, and calling balls “out.” Although calling the assigned line is the primary responsibility of the line judge, he/she is part of the officiating team and may be asked for his/her opinion regarding other actions that occur during the match [Rule 13.F].

Generally, line judges are used only during medal matches, and even then it may be only during Gold Medal matches. This typically is due to a shortage of people willing to line judge -- not to mention *qualified* people willing to line judge. This *Line Judge Guide* is intended to establish standardization and consistency in how line judges are trained and how they perform their duties on the court.

The Guide explains the USAPA/IFP best practices for line judging and the responsibilities of referees working in unison with line judges. A shortened version is contained in the *USAPA Referee Handbook* and *Referee Trainer Guide*.

To test your knowledge of line judging best practices take the 25-question *Line Judge Quiz* at [usapa.org](http://usapa.org) under the *Rules & Referees/Rules Test* dropdown menu.

## *Referee Responsibilities:*

Accurate line calls are important. The referee is responsible for the line judges.

- Prior to the match, if possible, gather line judges for instruction.
- Review with the line judges their responsibilities and reiterate the line-calling procedures to be used.
- Line judges should be reminded that players often continue to make their own “out” calls and not to be influenced by that or spectators making line calls.
- Make sure line judges are ready before starting the match, after time-outs, between games, or any situation that delays the game.
- If line judges do not make their calls loud, clear, and immediate, and both verbally and visually, the referee should call time and restate the agreed upon procedures.
- If a line judge does not perform to standards, he/she should be replaced. The referee has that authority and responsibility [Rule 13.J].
- Inform players that they are still responsible for calling the centerline.

### *Line Judge Code of Conduct:*

Like referees, line judges must adhere to a *Code of Conduct*. It is important that line judges:

- Be professional.
  - Avoid overfriendliness with players and spectators while on duty.
  - Treat players, referees and spectators with respect.
  - Avoid emotional reactions, either positive or negative, to the play of either side.
  - Do not comment, either positively or negatively, regarding the play of either side.
  - Avoid anger or confrontation if challenged.
  - Avoid being argumentative.
- Be attentive and alert, and devote full attention to the match being judged.
- Do not converse with spectators during the match.
- Turn off cell phone while on duty.
- Make all calls impartially, fairly and consistently.
- Refrain from volunteering to line judge a match in which a spouse, playing partner or close friend are participating.

### *Line Judge Positioning Options:*

- A line judge for each baseline and each full sideline (four line judges).
- A separate line judge for each half of each sideline, plus baseline judges (six line judges).
- The referee with a supporting referee may each call their respective sideline, while two line judges call the respective baselines (two baseline judges and two referees, the least accurate technique).

*Line Judge Placement:* Line judges should sit or stand directly in line with the assigned boundary line. Look over a fence rather than through it, if possible. Secondary to focusing on the line, visually follow the ball and be alert and aware of the action on the court in case the referee seeks your opinion.

### *Line Calls:*

- Call every ball that is “out” for your assigned line, regardless of whether you feel it was obvious; the referee may be concentrating on the striking players’ feet at the NVZ and not see the ball land.
- Loudly and clearly say “OUT” and give an arm signal:
  - A raised arm outstretched in the out-of-bounds direction.
  - Arm signals are important to confirm that the “out” call came from the line judge and not a spectator or player.
- Make calls immediately and confidently.
- Do not signal a ball “in” unless it was close or unless you are asked for confirmation (referee or player may just look in your direction). The signal for a ball that is “in” is both arms outstretched forward and downward with palms facing down.

### *Service Foot Faults:*

- Baseline judges call service foot faults – stepping on the baseline or court before striking the ball [Rule 4.L.3.].
- Sideline judges call service foot faults – serving from outside the imaginary extension of the sideline [Rule 4.L.1.].

Although line judges are charged with calling service foot faults, the ultimate responsibility lies with the referee.

Depending on the line you are assigned, you should also watch for the following, but do not offer your opinion unless asked by the referee.

#### *Sideline NVZ Faults:*

Sideline judges should be the referee's second set of eyes watching for NVZ sideline violations when a player goes around or through the NVZ to volley a ball [Rule 9.D].

- Jumping across NVZ – player cannot touch NVZ or post/net. Watch sideline for NVZ foot faults.
- Stepping through NVZ – both feet must contact the surface outside NVZ before ball can be legally contacted. Watch sidelines for NVZ foot faults.
- The referee has the responsibility to call a violation, but may seek your opinion.

#### *Around the Post Shots:*

When a player returns a ball around the net post the line judge(s) on the destination side should rule on whether the ball is in or out, just like any over-the-net shot [Rule 11.M]. Be prepared because this type of action happens fast!

*Blocked From A Line Call:* If your view is blocked and you do not clearly see the ball contact the playing surface:

- Do not make a call.
- Place your hands over your eyes to signal the referee that the ball was blocked from your view.
- If neither the line judge nor the referee is able to make a line call, unless all four players agree to replay the point, the ball will be considered "in." [Rule 13.D.3.c.].

#### *Disputed Calls:*

As the line judge you are positioned where you look directly down the line.

- For your line you have the best and most exact view of anyone on the court.
- Never solicit, be influenced by or acknowledge the opinions of players or spectators.
- Do not be intimidated by spectators or players who might call a ball out. You, not the players, are responsible for making line calls.
- Players have the option to appeal your call to the referee.

*Overruling:* The referee does have the authority to overrule a call made by a line judge.

- This rarely occurs if the line judge is alert and following standards and procedures.
- If the referee has a good angle and clearly sees a ball differently from the line judge, the call may be overruled, if appealed.
- A player may ask the referee to rule on a line call made by a line judge. If the referee overrules the line judge call, the referee's decision will either result in a point awarded, a service loss, or a replay [Rule 13.C.2.].
- If a call is overruled, forget it and continue to make the calls the way you see them.

#### *Readiness:*

As soon as the referee announces 15 seconds until time in, line judges should immediately become ready to start.

Questions regarding line judge procedures should be directed to [ref-certification@usapa.org](mailto:ref-certification@usapa.org).

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