



2017 Pickleball Fact Sheet

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net set to a height of 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball similar to a whiffle ball and composite or wooden paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played indoors or outdoors and is easy for beginners to learn, but can develop into a fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players. In addition, the game has developed a passionate following due to its friendly, social nature, and its multi-generational appeal.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles. New players can learn the basic rules quickly in a single session. No special apparel is needed – just something comfortable and appropriate for a court sport. Equipment is inexpensive and easily portable. The game can be played by all ages and is particularly popular in school P.E. programs and in adult living communities.

The sport is governed by the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA.org), which maintains the rules, promotes the sport, sanctions tournaments, and provides player rankings. For more information, please visit: www.usapa.org

History

2017 marks the 52nd anniversary of pickleball, as it was invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle, by three enterprising dads – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum. Their children were bored with their usual summertime activities. It evolved from the original handmade equipment and simple rules into a popular sport throughout North America and is now taking off in other parts of the world.

The origin of the game's name is thought to be derived from the co-inventors' family cocker spaniel, "Pickles", who loved to chase stray balls and hide them in the bushes.

The Court

A pickleball court is 20' x 44' for both singles and doubles. The net is hung at 36" at the ends and hangs 34" in the middle. A non-volley zone extends 7' back from the net on each side, commonly called "the kitchen". In 2017, USAPA and the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) co-produced and released an official pickleball courts construction and maintenance manual for the industry. Copies of this manual can be purchased at:

<https://www.sportsbuilders.org/publications/>

The Equipment

Competitive paddles used in pickleball are constructed from a high-tech composite, ranging in cost from \$50-\$150 each. An official pickleball is made of plastic and is between 2 7/8 inches to 3 inches in diameter and weighs between .08 and 1.02 ounces. There are no color restrictions other than the ball must be a single, consistent color. The USAPA has tested and approved a number of outdoor and indoor balls for official tournament play. For more information on equipment approved for sanctioned play, see the following:

[Approved Balls](#)

[Approved Paddles](#)

Places to Play

Every US state and all Canadian provinces have pickleball venues. Senior residence communities, YMCAs, local community recreation centers, schools and parks are just some of the places likely to have pickleball courts. The USAPA compiles the most up-to-date and comprehensive listing of places to play at <http://usapa.org/ptp/index.php>. The known places to play increases approximately 80 per month and is quickly approaching 5,000 locations in 2017.

Tournaments

The USAPA supports and sanctions tournaments throughout the United States. See <http://usapa.org/schedule/index.php> for a current list of upcoming pickleball tournaments. In 2009, the USAPA held the first Nationals Pickleball Tournament in Buckeye, Arizona. Over 400 players participated in divisions for all ages. In 2016, USAPA Nationals VIII was the largest tournament to date, with more than 850 registered players competing in Casa Grande, Arizona. See <http://www.usapa.org/nationals-viii/> for detailed information. The 2017 USAPA National Championships will be held this year again at Palm Creek Club in Casa Grande, AZ (Nov. 4-12).

Estimated Pickleball Players Within the United States

Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2016 Pickleball Participant Report, they reported pickleball currently has **2.5 million** players. SFIA is the premier trade association for top brands, manufacturers, retailers and marketers in the American sporting goods and fitness industry 1906. Additional details from the 2016 SFIA Report:

- 1.57 million were “Casual” participants who play 1-7 times a year
- 930 thousand were “Core” participants who play 8 or more times a year
- The rate of growth in participation from 2014 to 2015 was 1.8%, from 2.462 million to 2.506 million (Note: this growth rate is likely underestimated since 2014 was the first year for including pickleball in the SFIA report and the base number is open to question)
- Comparing Casual and Core participants:
 - Casual were 63% male and 37% female
 - Core were 73% male and 27% female

Fact Sheet | Page Three

- The age breakdown for Casual and Core are very different... with Core players being, on average, significantly older
 - ages 6-17: Casual 18.5%; Core 0.8%
 - ages 18-34: Casual 11.7%; Core 5.5%
 - ages 35-54: Casual 29.4%; Core 19.2%
 - ages 55-64: Casual 7.7%; Core 31.8%
 - age 65+: Casual 5.4%; Core 42.7%
- 13% of Casual participants and 75% of Core participants are age 55 and older
- The 2.5 million total participants represent 0.9% of the US population
- The regions with the largest number of Core participants were
 - Pacific (CA, OR, WA) = 263,000
 - East North Central (WI, MI, IL, OH, IN) = 200,000
 - South Atlantic (FL, GA, SC, NC, VA, WV, DC) = 174,000

Any citation of this data should reference the SFIA report as its source.

The USA Pickleball Association www.usapa.org

The USAPA was formed in 2005 to promote the sport. It maintains the official rules, sanctions tournaments, provides player rankings and produces the annual National Pickleball Tournament. It is run by an Executive Director and a volunteer board of directors supported by thousands of dues-paying members.

USAPA Ambassador Program

USAPA currently has a network of over 1,400 volunteer ambassadors who have pledged to promote the sport of pickleball and the USAPA in their local area. They serve as local representative for USAPA for all activities related to pickleball within the area they represent. Ambassadors support and abide by all official rules, assist with local clinics/tournaments and look for opportunities to add/grow the game in their community. A list of all current USPA ambassadors (by state) can be found at www.usapa.org.

The USAPA also provides assistance through programs such as:

Training Grants

The USAPA Grant program provides funds to subsidize training programs for school students, local residents, organizations or individuals who are pickleball novices and do not belong to a pickleball club or other organized group.

USAPA Social Media

Visit [Facebook.com/USA Pickleball Association](https://www.facebook.com/USA-Pickleball-Association).

2016 USAPA Facts and Highlights

- USAPA Places to Play Database: 4,747 (increase of 970 or 80.8 per month)
 - Total Courts: 16,549 (increase of 3,760 or 313.3 per month)
 - Members: 16,793 (increase of 6,491 or 540.9 per month)
 - Ambassadors: 1,454 (increase of 225 or 18.7 per month)
- Christine Barksdale was hired as the new Managing Director of Competition
- USAPA and Dollard Publishing teamed up and produced 6 pickleball magazines during 2016. For more information and to view a sample copy:
<http://www.usapa.org/pickleball-magazine/>
- A new contract was issued to Pickleball Central for USAPA apparel and the new usapastore.com
- A third party lab was contracted to do all ball and paddle testing
- A new, fully automated membership system was deployed
- USAPA awarded 128 pickleball grants
- USAPA launched a Juniors program – for information, send email to: juniors@usapa.org
- 2nd annual USAPA ambassador retreat was hosted at Club Med in Florida with nearly 200 ambassadors attending
- USAPA launched a new referee certification program
- Nationals VIII was held in November of 2016 with record attendees and all medal matches had USAPA certified referees
- Social media expanded with livestreamed coverage of several pickleball tournaments
- St. Jude Children’s Hospital was named as official charity partner of USAPA
- USAPA endorsed TrackitHub ladder league management software
- The number of officially rated players went from 6,000 on 1/1/2016 to 8,638 on 12/31/16. That's a 2,638 annual increase in initial ratings for new players which was roughly a 30% increase in one year. In addition, there were about 800 players, who already had a rating, that had a rating change