



## 2018 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 wiffle 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](http://www.usapa.org)

### History

2018 marks the 53<sup>rd</sup> 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 Joel Pritchard's 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 .78 to .935 ounces and 2.874 to 2.972 inches in diameter. 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. Visit [http://ifpickleball.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IFP\\_Paddle\\_Test\\_Results.pdf](http://ifpickleball.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IFP_Paddle_Test_Results.pdf) and <http://ifpickleball.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/List-of-Approved-Balls.pdf> for testing results.

## 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 <https://www.places2play.org/>. The known places to play total 5,883, in increase of 1,136 or 94.6 locations per month during 2017.

## Tournaments

The USAPA supports and sanctions tournaments throughout the United States. See <https://www.usapa.org/events/> for a current list of upcoming pickleball tournaments. In 2009, the USAPA held the first National Pickleball Tournament in Buckeye, Arizona. Over 400 players participated in divisions for all ages. In 2017, the USAPA National Championships was the largest tournament to date, with more than **1,300** registered players competing in Casa Grande, Arizona. See <https://usapa.org/2017-national-championships/> for detailed information. CBS Sports Network carried a two hour nationally televised broadcast of the event.

## Estimated Pickleball Players Within the United States

Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2017 Pickleball Participant Report, they reported pickleball currently has **2.815 million** players in the US an increase of 12.3 % over last year. 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 detailed **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

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](http://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 **1,600** volunteer ambassadors who have pledged to promote the sport of pickleball and the USAPA in their local area. They serve as local representatives 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 USAPA Ambassador Search feature can be found at [https://memberleap.com/members/directory/search\\_USAPA.php?ambassadors](https://memberleap.com/members/directory/search_USAPA.php?ambassadors).

### **Community Grant Program**

A USAPA Community Grant will provide current USAPA members a maximum of \$250 reimbursement for the purchase of qualified pickleball equipment dedicated to a specific location. Special considerations will be given to locations with written “new player” training programs, areas with few pickleball locations in the vicinity, and individuals and groups that USAPA deems most in need of financial assistance. For more information please click on the following link:

<https://www.usapa.org/usapa-grant-program-rules/>

### **High School Grant Program**

The High School Grant Program will award a maximum of \$350 in reimbursement to USAPA members for the purchase of start-up pickleball equipment for regular high school physical education classes and after school programs. The grants funding will be equally targeted to every defined USAPA region and when feasible awarded to different communities within the region. Considerations will be given to schools and districts where pickleball is being introduced into the high school physical education curriculum and schools that USAPA deems most in need of financial assistance. For more information please click on the following link: <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-high-school-grant-program/>

### **USAPA Social Media**

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

## 2017 USAPA Facts

- **Places to Play:** USAPA Places to Play Database: **5,883**
- **Membership :** **22,321** (increase of 5,526 or 460 per month)
- **Total Courts:** **21,154** (increase of 4,605 or 384 per month)
- **Ambassadors:** **1,640**
- **Grants:** USAPA awarded 119 Community Grants and 1 High School Grant, distributed over \$24,000 for pickleball equipment in local communities. Pickleball Central joined USAPA and donated over 700 wooden paddles to various programs.
- **2017 USAPA Nationals:** USAPA 2017 Nationals set a new player registration record with over **1,300** registered players
- **Fundraising:** USAPA raised over **\$8,000** in support of the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
- **Player Ratings:** The number of officially rated players went from **6,000** on 1/1/2016 to **8,638** on 12/31/17. 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 approximately **800** players who had a rating but required a rating change.
- **Certified Referees:** USAPA certified referees grew to **104** certified referees
- **Referee Evaluators:** USAPA trained and approved **5** new certified Referee Evaluators
- **USAPA Regions:** expanded from **8 to 11** regions
- **Medal Matches:** All medal matches in the 2017 USAPA Nationals were called by certified referees
- **Hall of Fame:** USAPA and the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association (IPTPA) launched a new Pickleball Hall of Fame
- **Facebook Live Streaming:** USAPA Facebook team carried several live matches on Facebook and had a total reach of over **1.5** Million viewers
- **Newsletter:** USAPA produced **6** newsletters in 2017. You may view archive copies of the newsletter at <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-newsletter/>
- **Pickleball Magazine:** USAPA partnered with Dollard Publishing and produced **6** Pickleball Magazines during 2017 see <http://usapa.org/pickleball-magazine/>
- **Referee Handbook:** The USAPA Referee Handbook was updated in 2017 by the Certified Referee Handbook Committee
- **Paddles:** **USAPA** tested and approved **107** paddles in 2017
- **National Senior Games:** USAPA provided administrative support for the 2017 National Senior Games which set a new player registration record of over **900** players – Visit <http://nsga.com/>

Editors Note: The information contained herein is accurate as of December 31 of 2017. USAPA will update the Fact Sheet as necessary and post the results at [www.usapa.org](http://www.usapa.org)