



2019 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 like 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

History

2019 marks the 54th 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 very interesting, especially since no pickles are used. Accounts of how the name originated differ. According to Joel Pritchard's wife (Joan), she started calling the game pickleball because "the combination of different sports reminded me of the pickle boat in crew where oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats". However, according to Barney McCallum, the game was officially named after the Pritchards' dog Pickles who would chase the ball and run off with it. According to McCallum, "The Pritchards had a dog named Pickles, and you're having fun at a party, right? So anyways, what the hell, let's just call it pickleball."

Others claim both accounts may be true. In the early years, no official name was assigned to the game. However a year or two after the game was invented, the Pritchards purchased a cocker spaniel and named it Pickles. As the game progressed, an official name was needed and “pickleball” was it.

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 several 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 now 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 on a new dedicated website: places2play.org. The known places to play total of 6,885 at the end of 2018 represents an increase of 1,016 or approximately 85 new locations per month.

Tournaments

The USAPA supports and sanctions tournaments throughout the United States. See [Upcoming Events List](#) 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 2018, the Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were held at the world-renowned Indian Wells Tennis Garden, just outside of Palm Springs, CA. The event was the largest pickleball tournament to date, with more than **2,200** registered players competing for \$75,000 in prize money; the largest cash purse in the history of the sport. [Click here](#) for detailed information. The event also marked the first time, the sport was covered by

ESPN with 17 hours of live broadcasting on ESPN3 and a 1-hr. special presentation which aired on ESPNEWS.

Estimated Pickleball Players Within the United States

Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2017 Pickleball Participant Report, they reported pickleball currently has **3.1 million** players in the US – an increase of 12% over the previous year. SFIA is the premier trade association for top brands, manufacturers, retailers and marketers in the American sporting goods and fitness industry 1906. In 2016, SFIA produced a detailed Pickleball Participation Report which provided the following details:

- 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 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 USA Pickleball National Championships Tournament. It is run by an Executive Director, staff and a volunteer board of directors supported by an all-volunteer ambassador corp. and thousands of dues-paying members.

USAPA Ambassador Program

USAPA currently has a network of over 1,800 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. The USAPA Ambassador Search feature can be found on the USAPA website. [Click here.](#)

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 here.](#)

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: [Click here.](#)

USAPA Social Media

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

Visit (Instagram link)

2018 USAPA Facts and Highlights

- **Places to Play:** USAPA Places to Play Database: **6,885**
- **Membership: 30,803** (increase of 8,649 or 720 per month). Since 2013, USAPA membership has increased 650%
- **Total Courts: 20,933**
- **Ambassadors: 1,812**
- **Grants:** USAPA awarded 131 Community Grants and 22 High School Grants, with a total allocation of \$40,000. Pickleball Central

joined USAPA and donated 880 wooden paddles to various programs.

- **2018 National Championships:** The Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships set a new player registration record with over **2,200** registered players and a highest cash purse of \$75,000.
- **Fundraising:** USAPA efforts raised over **\$40,000** in support of the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital – the official national charity of USAPA.
- **Certified Referees:** USAPA added another 57 certified referees bringing the new yet growing list to **161** certified referees.
- **Referee Evaluators:** USAPA trained and approved **2** new certified Referee Evaluators bringing the total to 10.
- **Medal Matches:** All medal matches in the 2018 Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were called by USAPA certified referees.
- **USAPA UTPR Ratings:** USAPA partnered with Pickleballtournaments.com to produce and launch the sports first results-based tournament player ratings (UTPRs). See <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-tournament-player-ratings/>
- **Professional Pickleball Registry:** USAPA partnered with the newly formed Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR), a subsidiary of the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR). During their first six months in operation, PPR has certified over 1,000 new pickleball instructors. See <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-ppr-agreement/>
- **Desert Champions, LLC:** USAPA entered into a multi-year agreement with Desert Champions, LLC to host the National Championships at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, CA. See <https://usapickleballnationalchampionships.com/>
- **Hall of Fame:** 2018 Inductees were Fran Myer, Earl Hill and Bob Lanius.
- **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 2018. Archive copies of the newsletter are available at <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-newsletter/>
- **Pickleball Magazine:** USAPA’s publishing partner, Dollard Publishing produced another **6** Pickleball Magazines during 2018 see <https://usapa.org/pickleball-magazine/>
- **Referee Training Page:** To help educate and inform referees and the general public on referee matters, the USAPA launched a comprehensive webpage. See <https://www.usapa.org/referee-training-tools/>

- **Referee Handbook:** The USAPA Referee Handbook was updated in 2018 by the Certified Referee Handbook Committee.
- **Referee QuickStart Video:** The USAPA produced and released a comprehensive training video designed to educate the public on the basics of refereeing pickleball matches. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=M2QDfbI4ovg
- **Ambassador Handbook:** The first USAPA Ambassador Handbook was developed in 2018 by a special committee of ambassadors. The book was distributed in December and will be updated periodically with new sections.
- **Paddles:** USAPA tested and approved **132** paddles in 2018.

For photo requests and media inquiries

Email: [Media Relations](#)

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