

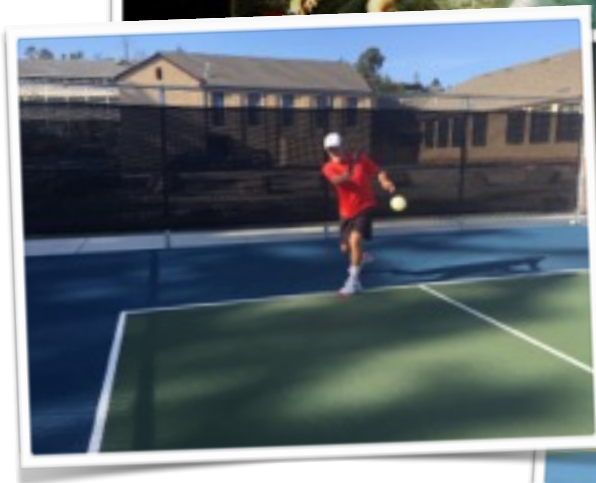
DRILLS FOR SKILLS

Drills can be a great way to develop techniques
for consistency and ball placement



Controlling Factors for Ball Placement:

Pace, Height, Angle, and Spin



Drills For Skills

Strategies to be a better player

No matter what your skill level is in pickleball, drills can be a great way to learn the fundamentals, develop proper techniques, improve consistency, fine tune your shots, establish sound strategies, build confidence, and accelerate your development.

There are two types of drills:

1. Feeding Drills, where every type of ball that a player will encounter during a match is fed so you can work on the mechanics needed to return the ball effectively. This allows you to develop all the shots with either topspin or under spin. On feeding drills, each shot is worked on with a fed ball at a speed which primarily is comfortable and then secondarily is accelerated to challenge you.

2. Tactical or game based drills in which players learn to play pickleball by playing with each other. The goal is to make learning more dynamic, fun, and closer to the reality of the game. Drills are set up in common play scenarios and keeping score can add the competitive spirit.

All drills should have targets or target areas discussed so the players understand the strategies of where to hit the higher percentage shots. All experienced and winning players know that being able to place their shots is extremely important. Once you learn how to hit the shot, then it moves to the accuracy of where to hit the shot.

Drills will develop your hand eye coordination and help in your timing of hitting the ball.

Drills allow you to hit a much greater number of shots in a lot less time.

Drills will get you moving and proper footwork should be emphasized. The basic movements (split step, lunges, back step, side shuffle) should be part of all drills.

So learn these drills and introduce them to your friends. You will find out that you may hit more balls in minutes of drills verses hours of games. Once the value of fun and challenging drills and games is discovered, it will be a win win situation for all.

So here are some drills for you to do with your partners and friends.

There is an art to doing drills more effectively, so follow these suggestions:

1. Drills are not meant to put the ball away but rather rally the ball. The speed and placement of your shots should be calibrated according to the skill level of your drill partners.

2. Work on a specific shot with the technique or mechanics. The partner should feed the ball like a ball machine so the hitter has a controlled ball to hit. Sometimes it is a good idea to toss the ball so the fed ball is controlled and accurate. This gives the student a much easier ball to practice and develop the shot.

3. Develop your placement so your partner would have a more difficult ball to attack. The reason that there are long rallies at the highest level is in part because of their accurate placement.

4. When you get a “pop up”, reset the ball by placement.

5. There are games with scoring for many of the drills, so save your

winning shots for these games.

Note: There are drills when the intent is not to always reset the ball but practice putting the ball away. This is

generally done when you have a basket of balls and not in a drill with one ball.

Drills For Skills

Drills are designed to help players work on the skills required to hit specific shots, simulate play situations that actually occur during pickleball points, and provide an efficient practice that best helps you improve your skill level.

The drills are organized by the names of the shots or skill.

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Backboard Drills



Skills Developed:

Hand eye coordination; paddle skills; pace control; footwork; development of all shots.

Set Up:

Use a backboards or wall.

Description:

A backboard is a great way to hit lots of balls in a short period of time. It is just you and the backboard and the wall does not miss. You will have to develop ball control in order to have a rally. Start out with hitting slower paced shots and get used to how far the ball deflects back to you. Don't stand close and hit hard.



The Progressions of the skill:

1. Start out by hitting the ball into the backboard and catching the ball with your hand.
2. Hit the ball into the backboard and chip and catch the returning ball.
3. Hit the ball with slow speed as in a dink and try to have a dinking rally.
4. Back up and hit drives and try to have a rally.
5. Move forward and hit the ball into the backboard and try to have a volley rally.

Backboard Drills



Strategies:

The ball deflects off of the backboard with an angle. So if you hit the ball with your forehand and straight ahead, the ball will come back to your forehand. If you hit the ball with a slight angle to the left, the ball will deflect to your backhand. With practice, you will be able to hit only forehands, only backhands, or vary the return to alternate forehands and backhands.

Catch the Ball



Skills Developed:

Hand eye coordination; hand positions; footwork and court movement.

Set Up:

You and your partner stand across the net from each other on your NVZ line and can be straight across or cross court.

Description:

You toss the ball underhand so the ball bounces in front of your partner. They catch the ball with two hands and toss the ball back. You can also toss the ball so the ball is caught on the fly with their hitting hand. If the ball is low, the fingers should be pointing down. If the ball is high, the fingers should be pointing up.

The Progressions of the skill:

Throw the ball faster and make your partner move or shuffle from side to side or up and back.

Strategies:

The catch should be made out in front. Think about a baseball player and catching the ball in their glove. There is no backswing or follow through. So catching the ball with your hand is developing the hand and paddle face to be making contact out in front.

Games:

Play a game with regular scoring on half the court like skinny singles. One player catches the ball and tosses the ball back into play. The other player plays with their paddle and tries to win the point. If the "catcher" catches a high ball with their fingers up, they can throw the ball back harder. If they catch a low ball with their fingers down, they must toss the ball back into play. Both players can come forward if they want.



Chip and Catch



Skills Developed:

Taking speed off incoming ball; ball control; ball placement to all depths on the court, hitting the ball back with under spin.

Set Up:

You and your partner stand across the net from each other on your NVZ line and can be straight across or cross court

Description:

Hit the ball into a wall, backboard, or have a partner hit or toss a ball to you. Your objective is to chip the ball up so it can be caught with your nonpaddle hand. This should always be the technique used when the ball is hit to you when it is your turn to serve. Do not hit the ball into the court to gather it. Chip the ball up which will develop ball control for many different shots. Stand on the baseline and chip up and catch serves being hit to you. Hit the serve back and your partner does the same thing.



The Progressions of the skill:

1. If this is the first time or beginners, have players stand at their NVZ lines and toss the ball to each other. Each player will take their paddle and block or chip the ball up so the ball can be caught with their non paddle hand.

Chip and Catch



2. Chip the ball up, let the ball bounce, and hit the ball back to your partner.
3. Chip the ball up and volley the ball back to your partner.
4. Stand at the NVZ line and Chip and Catch a Drive.
5. Your partner and you stand in the middle of each side of the court and hit varying balls to chip and catch.
6. Place targets on the court, i.e. hula hoops, and chip the ball into the different target areas.

Games:

Play a game of pickleball with a variation that each shot you chip the ball up, let it bounce, and then hit the ball back over the net to your partner.

Strategies:

The Chip and Catch is the most important skill to acquire if you want to develop a drop shot, drop volley, and shot placement by ball control. The chip and catch allows you to take the speed off of an incoming ball which gives you the control to place your shot in front of your opponent no matter where they are on the court. When playing against slower players or older players, you can hit a drop volley if they are behind their baseline. When playing against attacking players who hit a Drive and move forward to hit an attacking Volley, hit a Drop Volley so the ball lands in front of their feet. When moving forward and you are in the middle of your court, take any ball your opponent hits and Drop the ball into their kitchen which is called a Drop Volley which resets the point.

Footwork



Skills Developed:

Positioning to the ball; foot movements.

Set Up:

One player doing footwork exercises; partner tossing balls.

Description:

Getting into the ideal position to hit the ball is key to the placement of your shots. The mechanics of hitting the ball breaks down with the inability to move to proper positioning. Exercising and strengthening are beneficial to your performance.



Footwork Exercises:

Lunges- Step forward with your right foot, bend your knee for a low ball, and push back up to ready position. Alternate to left foot.

Shuffle- Side shuffle to the right and left.

Back Step- To move back, you want to pivot or take a step back with your right foot to run back to your right. To reverse to your left side, your first step is with your left foot taking a step back.

Walking- Walk at a brisk pace.

Running- Very short sprints will aid in your quickness.

Squats- Practice to strengthen your legs.

Starting Off A Rally



Skills Developed:

The mechanics or how to hit the two main techniques: topspin and under spin.

Set Up:

Wherever you are on the court, start the rally off with both your forehand topspin and under spin and your backhand topspin and under spin.

Description:

Starting off a rally is the primary way to develop the different shots in the game. Start off rally with the shot that you are working on in a drill. For example, if you are doing a drill of Backhand dinks, then start the rally off with a backhand dink. If you are working on an under spin drop volley, do not start the rally off with a topspin forehand. You want to start each rally off with a specific shot.

The Progressions of the skill:

Start off with dropping the ball, let it bounce, and hit the ball over the net to start off a rally. Learn and develop the bounce serve with both your forehand and backhand. Hit the ball with topspin and under spin and hit all the shots from serves, drives, lobs, and drops.



Strategies:

The main strategy is to develop all the shots in the game. The vast majority of players only start off a rally off with their forehand and therefore have an under developed backhand. The main problem that I see in players is they do not start off the rally with the shot that they are working on in a drill. For example, if you are doing a drill for your backhand dink, then start off the rally with a backhand dink. Learn to start off rallies with all of the different shots.

Server Uses Chip and Catch to Gather the Ball



Skills Developed:

Chip and catch; ball control; taking speed off of incoming ball; good touch; nice feel.

Set Up:

The player who is going to serve next hustles to get back to the baseline in order to practice moving to the ball and developing a chip and catch.

Description:

One of the most important skills to develop is the Chip and Catch. When you are the server, here is a prime opportunity to practice and develop footwork to move to the ball being hit to you and then develop the touch to gain control of the incoming ball in order to serve the next point. The server needs to gather the ball to serve the next point. When one of the players on the other side hits the ball, and hopefully to you, then take the opportunity to move to the ball and do a chip and catch after one bounce. You only get one bounce to hit a return of serve and one bounce to hit the third shot, so don't become lazy in this situation. Force yourself to get back and now get ready for the other player to hit the ball to you. Now move to the ball and chip it up with control. Do not hit the ball down into the court. Don't catch it with your paddle and hand. Don't let the ball go by you and walk back to the fence to pick it up unless you are so tired that you need to rest :)



Server Uses Chip and Catch to Gather the Ball



The Progressions of the skill:

Anytime that you and your partner are waiting for the opponents to get ready to play the next point, you and your partner hit the ball back and forth with the chip and catch technique. You can hit dinks or soft volleys.

If the ball that you are playing the game with is hit to you but your partner is the server, then chip the ball to your partner. Any time that you have to get the ball to the other side because it is their serve, pick the ball up and practice one of your shots. A lob is a good shot because you hit the ball up in the air and that gives your opponent time to get under the ball and hopefully chip it up and catch it. The objective is for you to practice one of the shots in your arsenal, so don't hit only a topspin forehand. Hit the ball to the other team with your backhand and vary the height and spin.

Strategies:

What is the answer to "great feel", "nice touch", and "soft hands"? It is the ability to take speed off on an incoming ball and that is done with a chip and catch. The chip and catch is done with under spin. Develop this skill so you can learn to hit a drop volley, soft dink, or a drop shot. When you are the server, practice the chip and catch when the ball is hit to you.

Dining Room



Skills Developed:

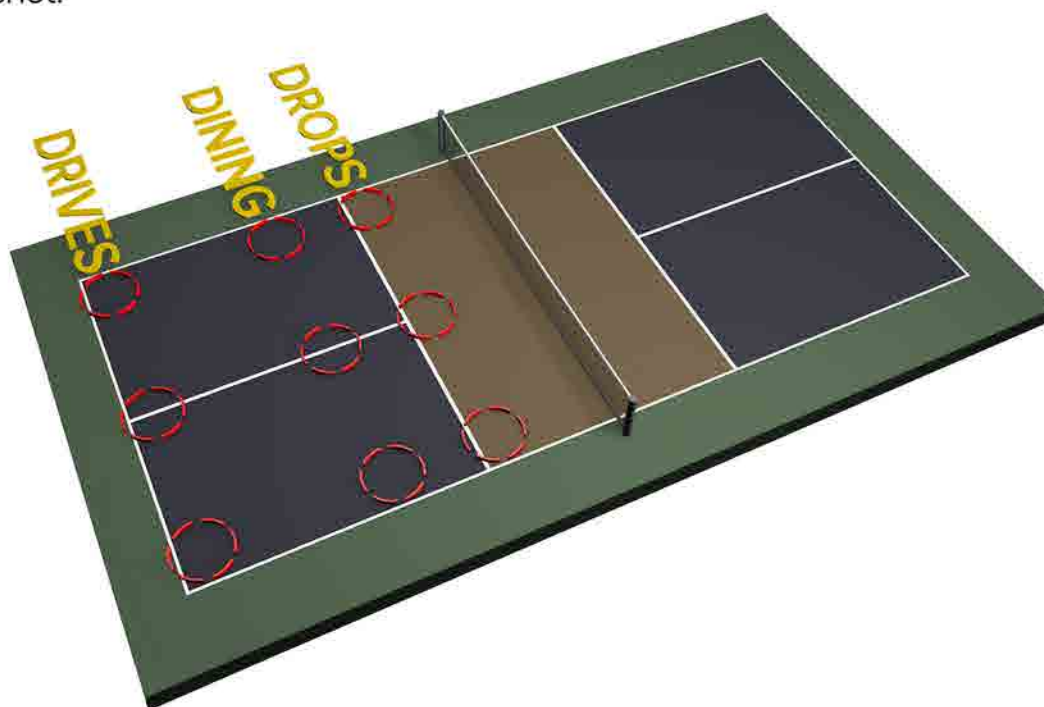
Develop the Pace control to hit the ball up to 3 feet past the NVZ line. Develop the under spin for the control to take pace off of the incoming ball to control the shorter distance. Additionally, apply the other main spin, topspin, that causes the ball to curve back into the court for the shorter distance.

Set Up:

You stand at the baseline and have your partner feed a ball from the NVZ line. Mark off a target area up to 3 feet past the NVZ line.

Description:

The Dining Room shot is designed to land past the NVZ line where often players are positioned, the ball will be low to challenge their volley and the target area is larger than the drop shot.



The Progressions of the skill:

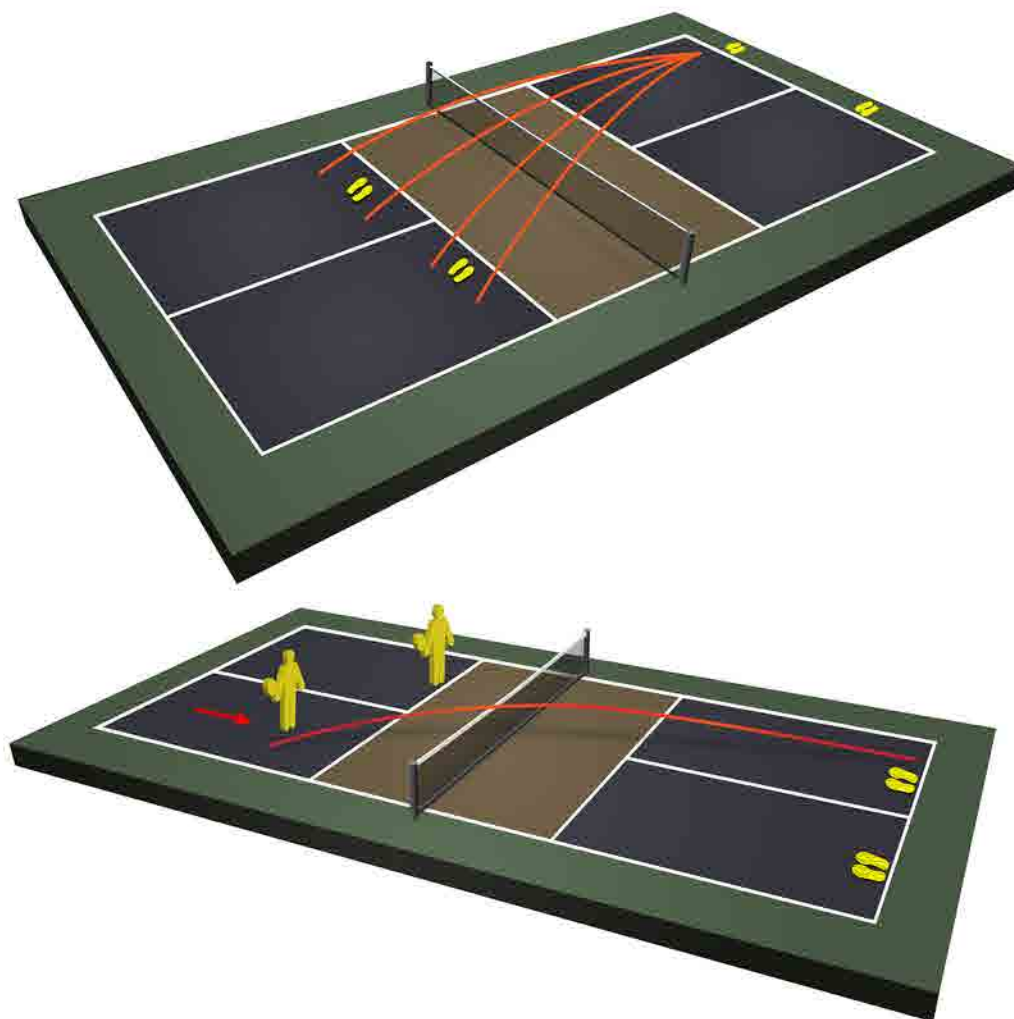
For the under spin, start with the chip and catch and progress with the distances to have the ball land up to 3 feet past the NVZ line. For topspin, control the height, spin, and pace in order for your shot to clear the net and land in the target area up to 3 feet past the NVZ line. Practice hitting deep serves and short serves.

Dining Room



Games:

Play out points where one player stays back near the baseline hitting balls as dining room shots forcing the partner 3 feet behind the NVZ line into hitting half volleys or low volleys. Play to 10 points.



Strategies:

A good strategy is to hit deeper serves which will result in your opponents being farther away from the NVZ line when you are hitting your third shot. If your opponents do not have a drop volley, the dining room shot is a save ball to hit and stay back. You have set up a "match up" of your opponent hitting low volleys verses you hitting dining room shots.

Attacking Dinks



Skills Developed:

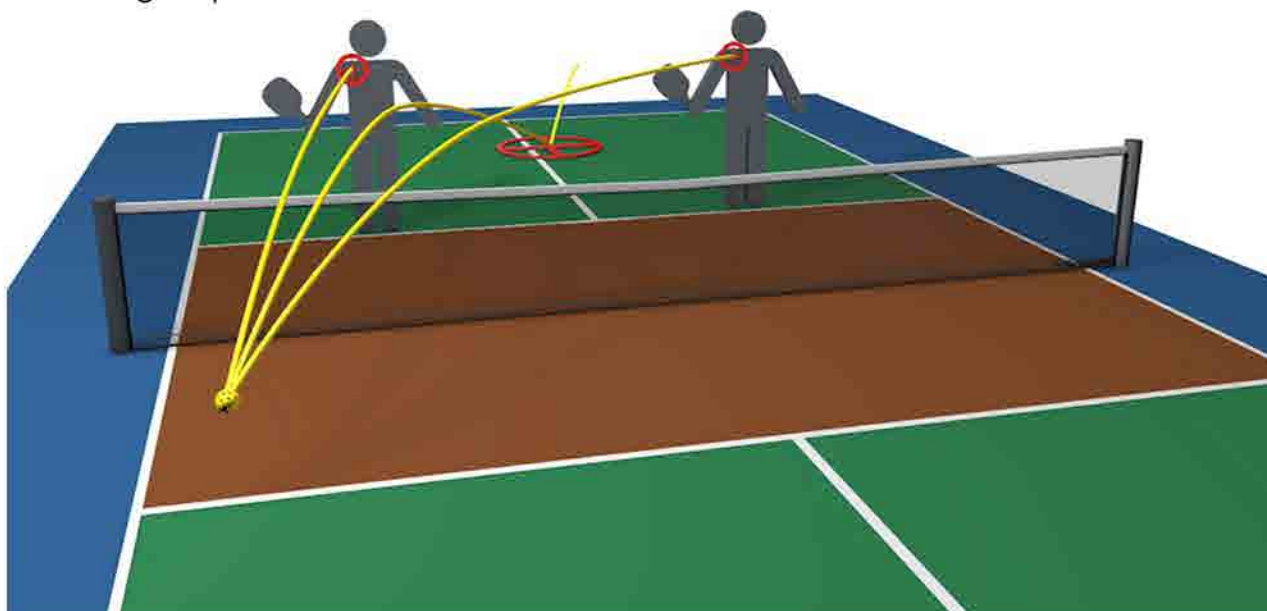
Applying topspin; control the height and pace; recognizing balls that have a better percentage to hit as an attacking shot.

Set Up:

Two or 4 players up at the NVZ line.

Description:

The attacking dink is hit with more pace to surprise your opponent; topspin is added so the ball will spin inside the baseline; the angle is very important so you are attacking a specific area.



The Progressions of the skill:

1. Start out with a ball being tossed or fed easily.
2. Start a rally and one player is designated the attacker and waits for an easier ball to attack.
3. Have one player attack and the other player reset with a Drop Volley.
4. Hitting an angled cross court forehand dink to slower players is a good shot to develop.

Games:

Play a game with regular scoring starting with all 4 players up at the NVZ line. Start each point with a dink crosscourt. After 2 hits, the ball can be hit past the NVZ line.

Attacking Dinks



Strategies:

1. In order to play with weaker players, learn to hit controlled dinks to give them a reasonable chance of returning the ball.
2. Dink to different areas to get your opponents to move which can open up holes in their defense.
3. Most players cover the middle of their body with their backhand volley, so when you attack, hit the ball to their forehand side and particularly to the shoulder to get them to have a chicken wing volley.
4. Against players other than fast talented players, hit a cross court dink off the court with a topspin forehand dink.



Defensive Dinks



Skills Developed:

Hand eye coordination; height and pace control; placement; footwork; patience.

Set Up:

Two to four players set up at their NVZ line and across the net from each other for cross court dinks or straight ahead dinks.

Description:

Start a rally to hit your dinks to the forehand and backhand sides of your partner. On a full court, there are 3 basic areas to target your dinks. Cross court, to the middle, and down the line. Playing half of the court, you have cross court and down the middle. Work on your dink placement so your shot lands inside of the NVZ line. Study the chapters of the two types of spin: topspin and under spin and hit each dink with one of these in your shot selection.

The Progressions of the skill:

1. One drill is to chip up the ball, let it bounce, and hit a dink. The chip and catch are the skills used to take speed off of an incoming ball which helps control the distance of your returning shot. Practice dinking with a chip, let the ball bounce, and dink back in play.
2. The main drill is to keep the ball in play and work on 2



areas when hitting the ball: cross court and to the middle.

3. You can do the drill with adding topspin to each shot.

Games:

1. Play a game to 11 with rally scoring with your partner either cross court or down the line. The ball must land in the kitchen.
2. Have 4 players on the court and play a game to 11 with rally scoring. Each shot must land in the kitchen.
3. Have 4 players on the court with a line of waiting players. Start a rally and any player hitting a ball that doesn't land in the kitchen goes to the end of the line with a new player coming in.

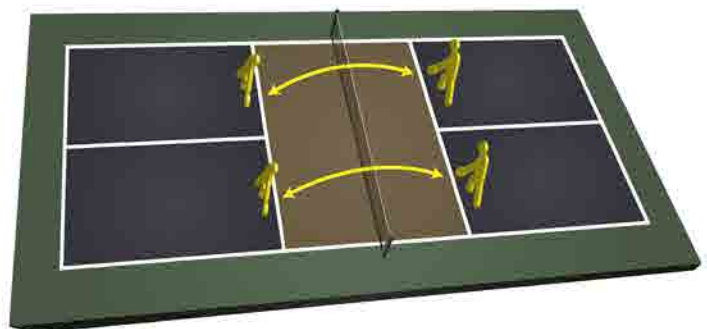
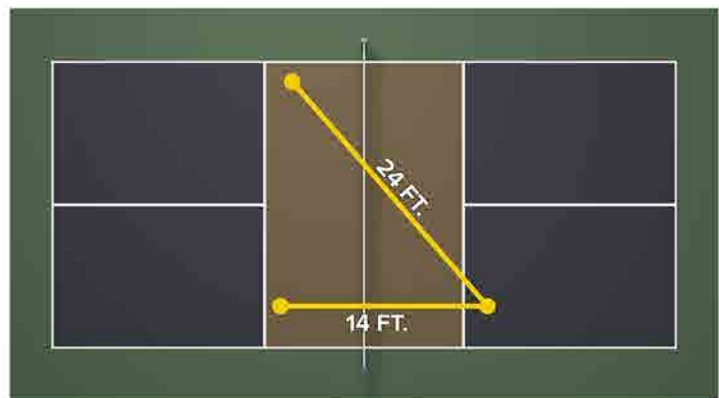
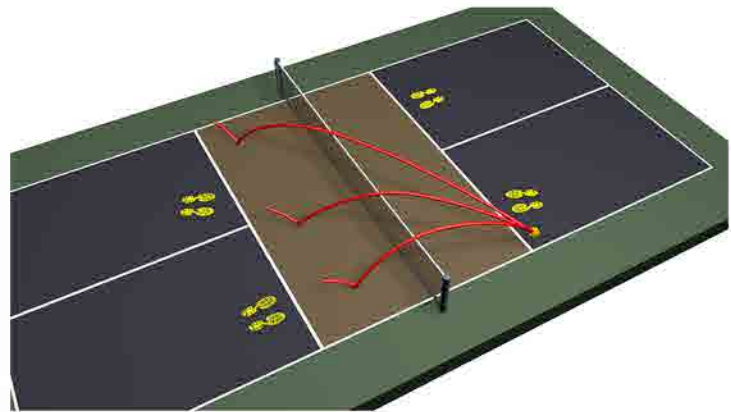
Defensive Dinks



4. Play a game with 4 players and you rotate clockwise on any ball not hit in the kitchen. Keep track of mistakes and with 5, you are out of the game and now play with 3 and eventually 2.
5. Play a game called "Dingles". See description under Games.

Strategies:

These drills are designed to play defensively without hitting attacking shots that would land past the NVZ line or tag your opponent. Move the ball around to move your opponent and develop the patience and ball control to have long rallies. Hitting the ball a little faster to force opponents into hitting a low volley or half volley inside the NVZ line is a good tactic. Moving the ball from side to side will get some "pop ups" from less skilled players



Lob Dinks



Skills Developed:

Control of height and pace.

Set Up:

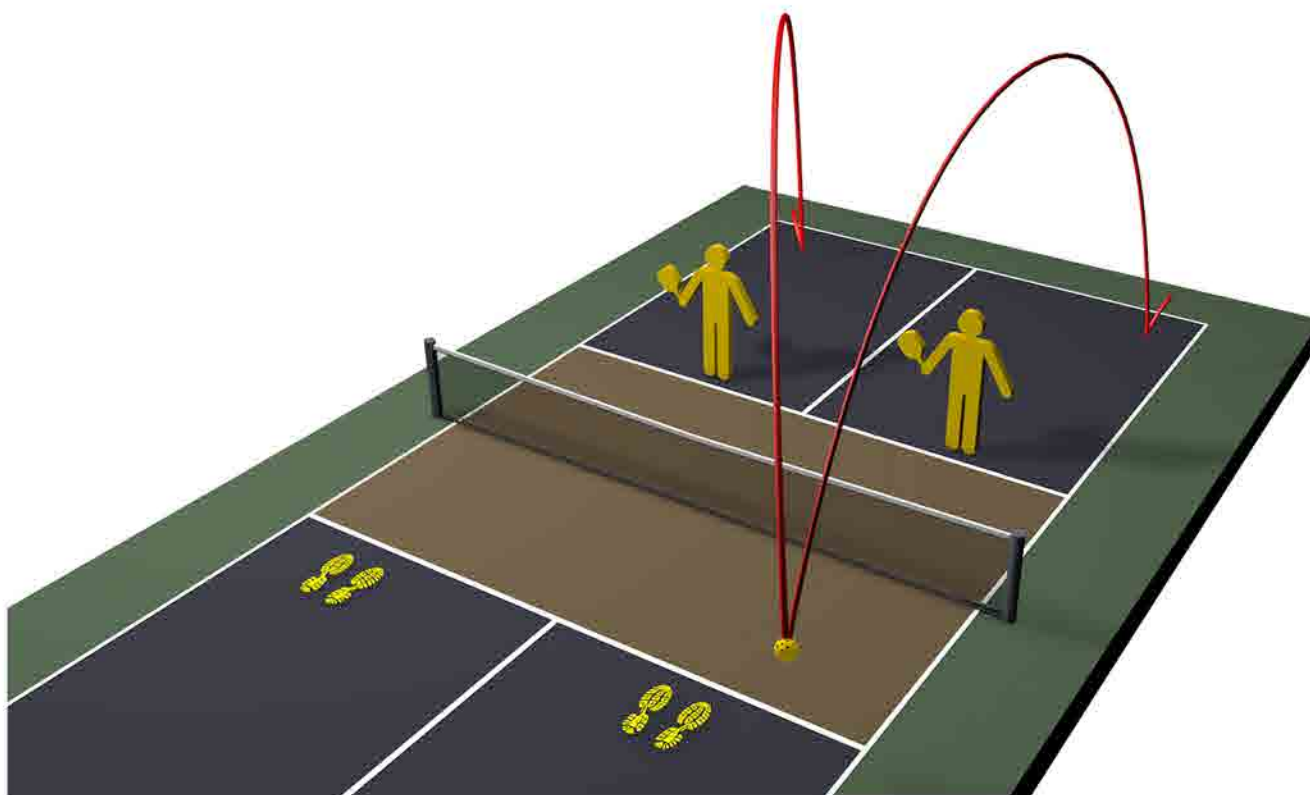
Two players across the net at your NVZ line.

Description:

Start a dink going straight ahead and after a couple of dinks, one player lobs the ball over the backhand side of their partner.

The Progressions of the skill:

Start feeding the ball easy and then increase the speed and difficulty. Line up with 2 players opposite each other on the even side. Toss or hit a ball wide and the player moves laterally and hits a Lob down the line which would be over the backhand side of right handed players.



Lob Dinks



Strategies:

The art of hitting a lob from your NVZ line is based on surprise, height, and pace in order to hit the ball high enough to clear the opponent's reach as well as have the ball land inside the baseline.



Scissoring Dinks



Skills Developed:

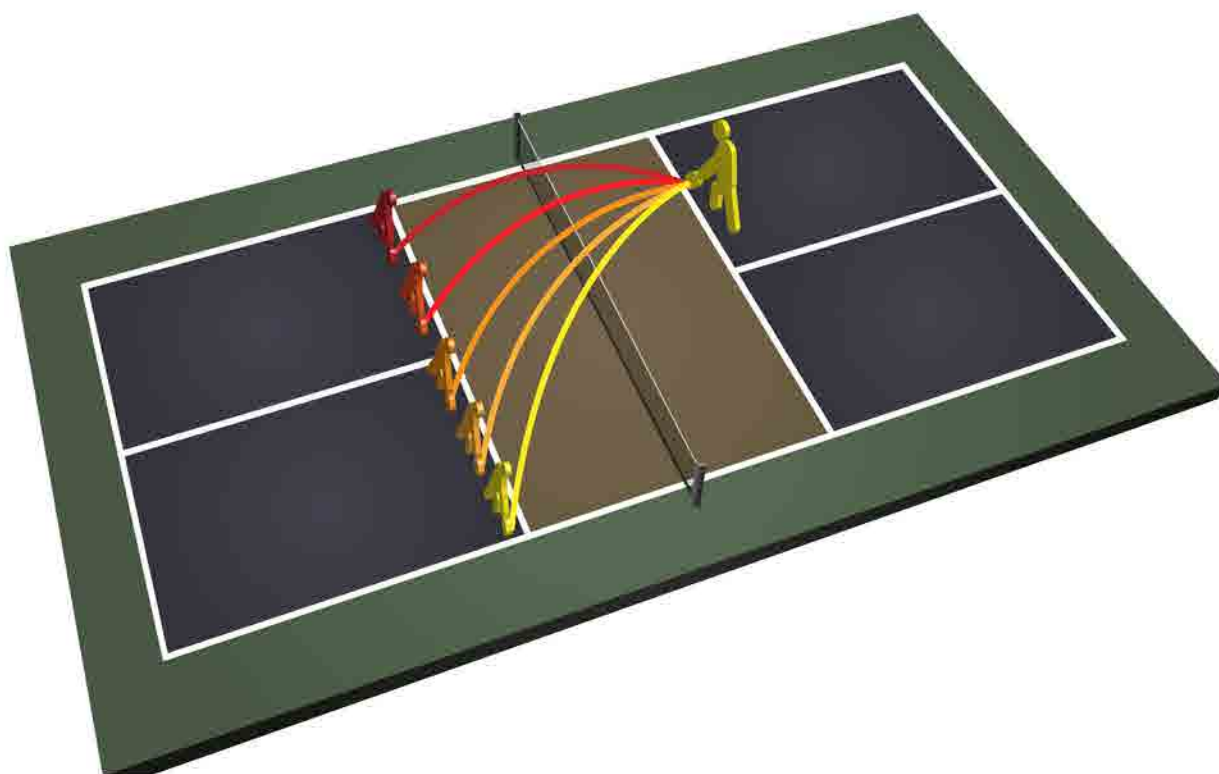
Consistency in dinking, ball control, footwork.

Set Up:

Have 2 players stand straight across the net from each at their NVZ line.

Description:

One player is the feeder and hits dinks to move the other player across the court and back to the starting point. The player moving across hits dinks back to the feeder. Ideally the player is moved across the court hitting dinks incrementally.



The Progressions of the skill:

You could do the drill to include volleys and half volleys.

Strategies:

Both players should begin the drill by hitting the dinks that land in front of each other's feet so it is a drill of hitting dinks. Then both could hit longer dinks forcing each other to hit occasional half volleys and low volleys.

Slinky Dinks



Skills Developed:

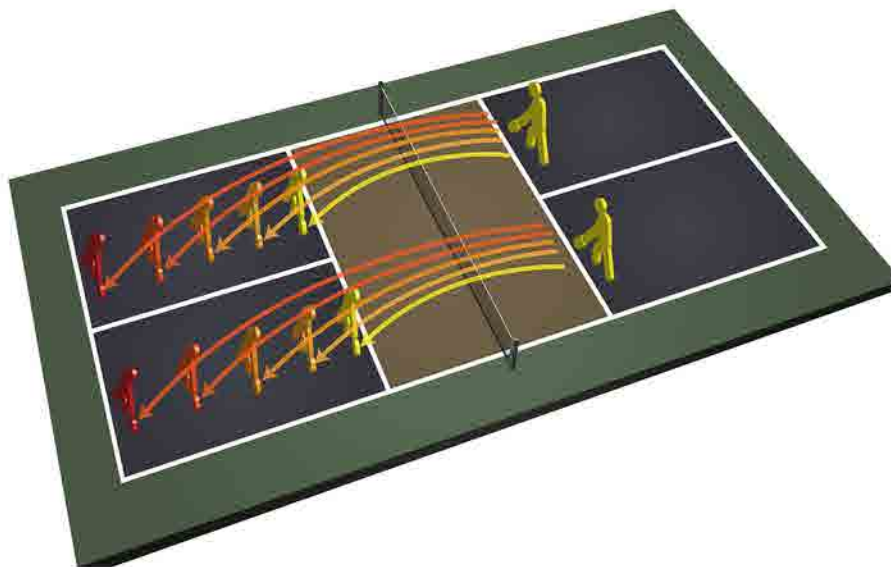
Control of the depth of your dink and drop shots; footwork; backing up.

Set Up:

One player up at their NVZ line and one player across the net at their NVZ line.

Description:

The slinky drill is designed to have one player stay at the NVZ line and the other player incrementally backs up to the baseline and then moves forward to the NVZ line. As the one player is backing up, the player up continues to hit dinks to the distance that their drilling partner is positioned. The player backing up works on hitting drop shots into their drilling partner's kitchen. This drill is training one player to hit drops and the other player to hit dinks.



The Progressions of the skill:

The player up hits volleys when the drop is hit too far and the player moving back and up hits drop volleys and half volleys when forced to.

Strategies:

The strategy of developing drop shots into your opponent's kitchen is the best and most effective way to advance up to your NVZ line. You need to develop the touch to hit drop shots from all areas of your court. Likewise, as players are advancing forward after a drop shot and you are at your NVZ line, you need to develop the touch to hit your dink to have your shot bounce in front of the advancing player's feet.

Drives and Drops



Skills Developed:

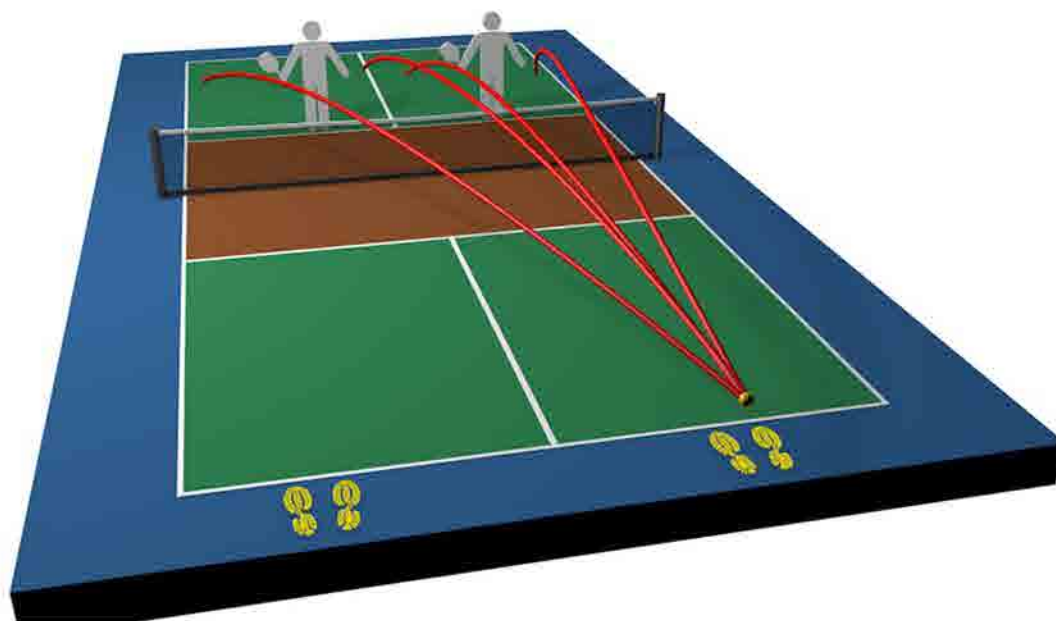
Shot selection; control for both drives and drops; footwork; anticipation for short volley.

Set Up:

One or two players up at their NVZ line and one or two players back at their baseline.

Description:

This drill is designed to have 1 or 2 players stay back and hit drives against 1 or 2 players up at the NVZ line. Hit drives to make the player(s) up hit a volley. You have to defend your side of the court and the area from the NVZ line to the baseline. Hit drives and drops and keep the ball in play. When a volley is hit short, move forward to hit a drive or drop and then back up. The players up do not try to hit drop volleys into the opponent's kitchen.



The Progressions of the skill:

There is a time for the baseline players to move forward. When the players at the net hit a volley short in the court, move quickly forward and either hit another drive or drop shot as you make your way to your NVZ line.

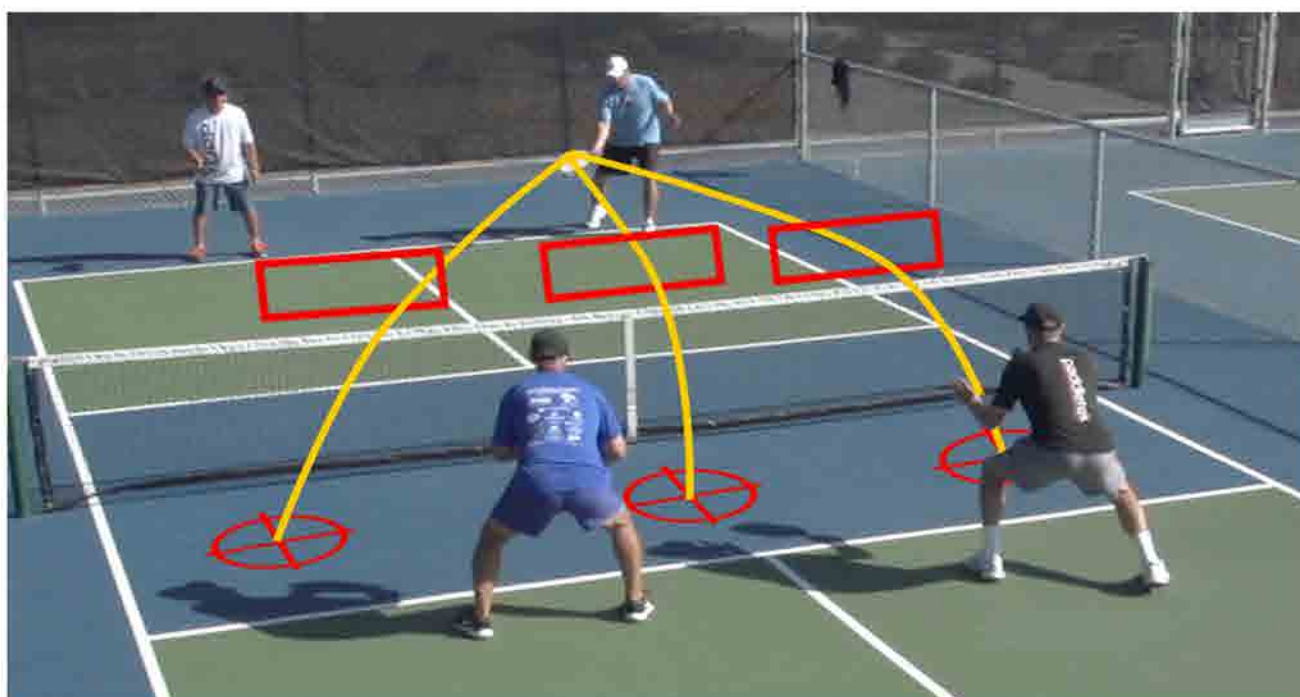
Games: Keep score to make things interesting and switch roles.

Drives and Drops



Strategies:

In the world of pickleball, very few players know how to hit a drop volley. So hitting a drive and staying back can be an effective strategy. Drives are easier than drop shots, so until you have a consistent drop that allows you to move forward, hit drives and play their volley like you defend against player's serves and return of serves. This drill is to illustrate that defending your service box area can be done without moving all the way forward and getting into a volley duel. You can defend hard volleys and overheads from your baseline.



Drives Baseline to Baseline



Skills Developed:

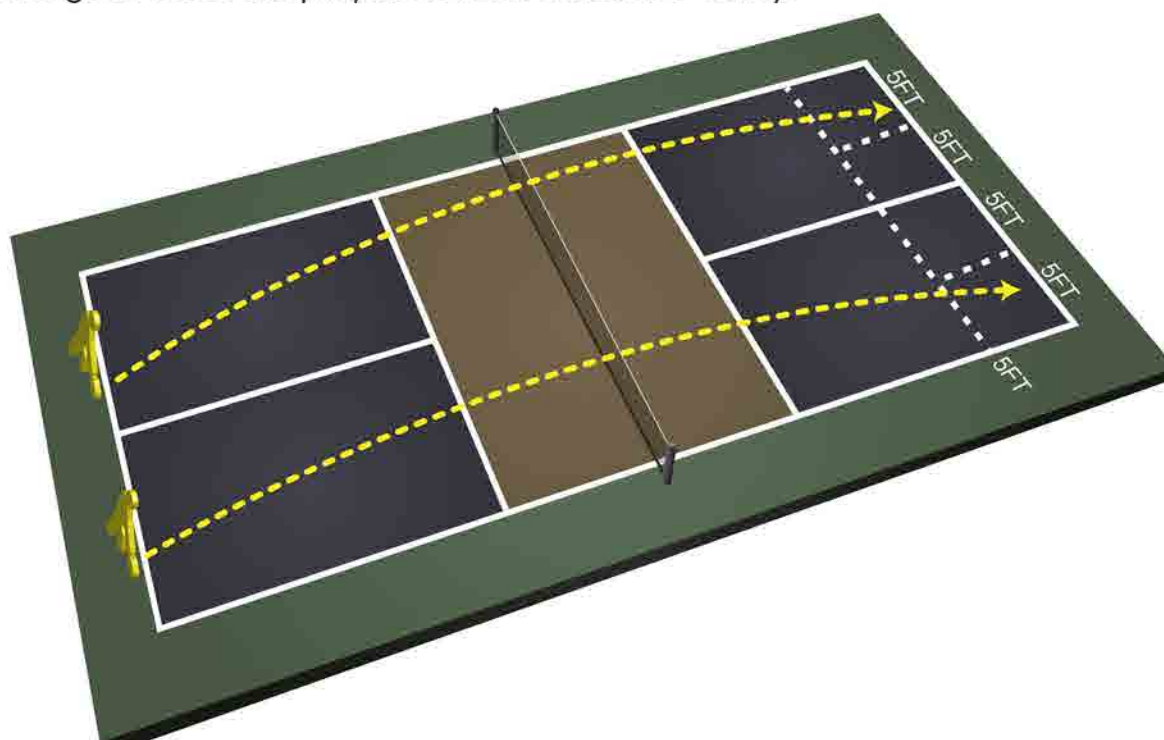
To develop hitting a Drive that would be similar to your Serve.

Set Up:

The easiest drill is to have your partner toss a ball to you as you stand near the baseline. Work on the timing and mechanics of hitting a topspin drive and also an under spin drive. Second drill is your partner hits an easy serve and you practice hitting both drives back to your partner.

Description:

The Drive is a commonly played shot on your return of serve and the third shot of a point. The serving team has hit a serve, the returning team has hit the return, and now both players are near the NVZ line as the serving team is hitting the third shot. A high percentage shot is to hit a Drive. A Drive against players in your skill level should pose a challenge to force the players to hit a defensive Volley.



The Progressions of the skill:

Divide the opponent's court into 5 foot wide sections. Place colored markers to identify each of the 4 sections which are 25% of the width of the court. Hit Drives to a specified section which targets the opponent's forehand or backhand sides.

Drives Baseline to Baseline



Games:

1. All players stay back and hit drives. Play to 10 points.
2. Have 4 players on the court with a line of additional players. The four players hit drives and with any mistake, that player goes to the end of the line with the first player in the line replacing the player who made a mistake.

Strategies:

A good strategy to employ is to hit a Drive and play your opponent's volley after the ball bounces. If the volley is short, then move forward and hit a drop shot into their kitchen and you should be able to get all the way up to your NVZ line. On a short volley, you could also move forward and hit another drive which could



force an error by the players up. If the Volley is deep, no problem, hit another Drive.

There are two underlying points for you to consider:

1. Can you physically cover your side of the court? It is only 10 feet wide and 15 feet up to your NVZ line. Can you physically move in order to get your paddle on your opponent's volley? Most players do not have a Drop Volley so you can hit a Drive and move to their shot just like you do to their serve or return of serve and keep the ball in play.
2. The other strategy is the hit your Drive and move forward. You now will have to have much better skills to hit a volley or half volley. These are difficult shots for most players which is why advanced players have developed their drop shot to move forward on. So practice hitting a drive and staying back and only move in when their volley is hit short or you have developed your drop shots.

Drive vs Volleys



Skills Developed:

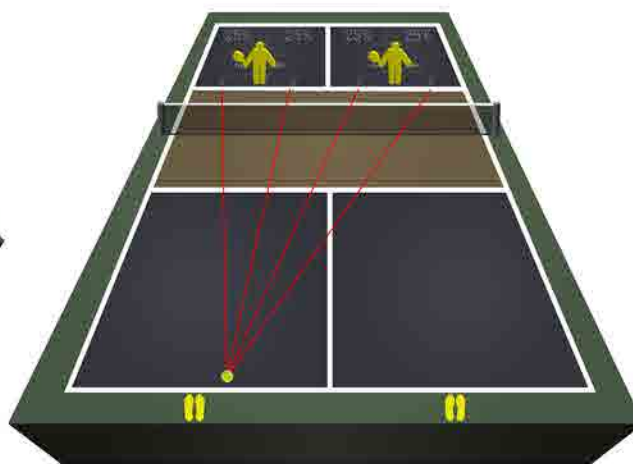
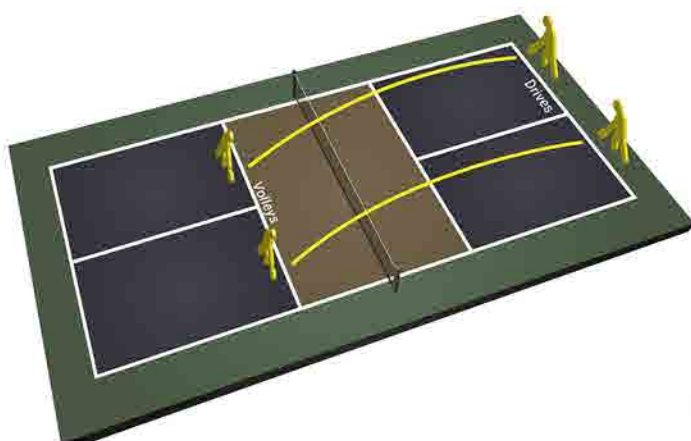
Consistency; placement; pace of drive; topspin; under spin.

Set Up:

One or two players at the baseline to hit drives and one or two players at the NVZ line to hit volleys.

Description:

Most of pickleball is played with the team returning to serve to have one player hitting the return and the partner is positioned up at their NVZ line. After the player hits the return of serve, that player moves up towards the NVZ line which creates the 3rd shot of the point by one of the two players on the serving team. So this drill is to practice hitting drives and all players stay back and hit drives. Move around so that you hit both forehands and backhands. Do not run around your backhand and only hit forehands. Start off the rallies with both your forehand and backhand. Drives can be hit with both topspin and under spin, also called slice or backspin. So practice both.



The Progressions of the skill:

The object of drills to have rallies and then increase the depth and pace.

Place targets 5 feet in front of the baseline and hit deeper drives.

Place 4 targets 5 feet in front of the baseline and spread out the width of the court to identify four 5 foot areas. Hit drives to one of the 4 targets.

Drive vs Volleys



Strategies:

1. The first strategy is to eliminate unforced errors. So in a game, the first objective of the drive is to force your opponent into hitting a volley.

2. The second objective is to be accurate with your drive and hit to opponent's forehand or backhand volleys.

3. A well hit drive against players in your skill level should force them into hitting a defensive volley where they are trying to keep the ball in play and not make a



mistake. A percentage of their volleys will land short in your court, so you must be ready to move forward quickly just as you might have to do on a short serve or short return of serve.

4. An aggressive strategy is called a "Shake and Bake". This is where one player hits a strong drive that forces a defensive volley and the partner is advancing before the drive is hit and is planning on poaching or playing the defensive volley. The point is a strong drive can and will force defensive volleys and errors.

Drive vs Volleys



5. A strategy called “Third Shot Drive and 5th Shot Drop”, is a very good strategy to employ. Hit a strong drive, anticipate a short volley, and when that is hit, both you and your partner move forward quickly, hit a drop shot into their kitchen. You now have advanced forward through the middle of the court without having to play a difficult volley or half volley,

Games:

Play a game to 10 with keeping score of the driving team verses the volleying team.



Drop Shots



Skills Developed:

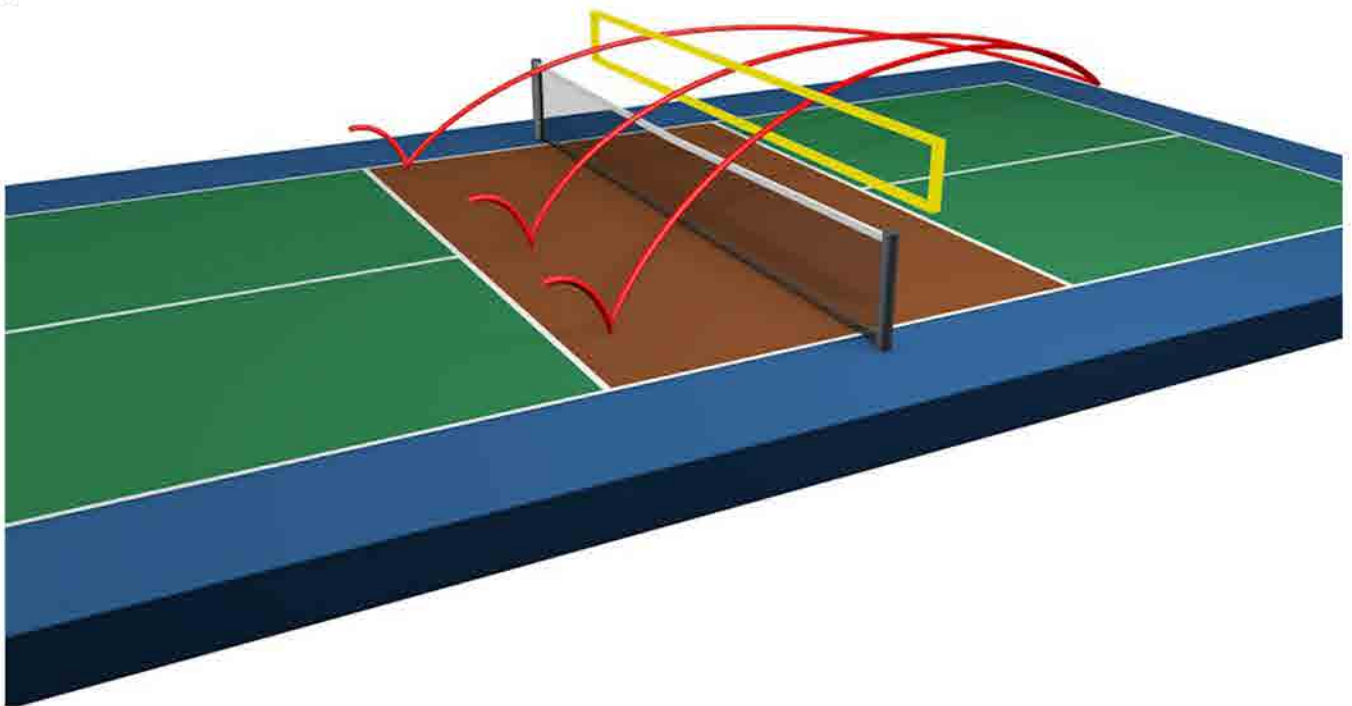
The ball control to hit the ball into the kitchen from all areas on the court; developing the touch and feel in order to hit the drop shots the appropriate distances; footwork to get in position to return deep balls and mid court balls.

Set Up:

One player stands at the baseline and the partner feeds balls from the NVZ line.

Description:

The ball is fed to the player on the baseline and drop shots are hit into the kitchen. Drop shots can be hit with varying amounts of spin and you should practice both spins: topspin and under spin. Balls hit with less spin are controlled by the pace that you use.



The Progressions of the skill:

Start with the player on the baseline starting a rally by hitting the ball into the kitchen. Then progress to hitting drop shots off of an easy fed ball from your partner. Next have the partner feed balls with moderate pace, fast pace, wide shots, and overhands. The partner feeds the ball shorter which requires the player to move to the mid court area to hit a drop shot.

Drop Shots



Games:

1. Play out points with one player staying back and hitting drop shots while the player up hits the ball back to the player at the baseline.
2. Play out points by hitting a drop shot and moving forward. The goal is to play out points like in skinny singles but the emphasis is on hitting drops, transition to your NVZ line with drops, drop volleys, half volleys, and play out the point with defensive dinks.



Strategies:

The Drop Shot is the safest way to move forward because the ball bounces lower than the net. That forces the opponent into hitting up on the ball to clear the net. When you hit the ball too high where your opponent can hit a hard fast volley, it is better if you back up or stay back and play their shot after the ball bounces like you do when the ball is served to you or returned to you after you serve.

There are two techniques that are commonly used by the best players. One technique is topspin and the other technique is under spin. The vast majority of players hit under spin, called slice, on backhand drops. On the forehand side, both under spin and topspin are used and you should practice both to get a feel for them.

Drop Shots

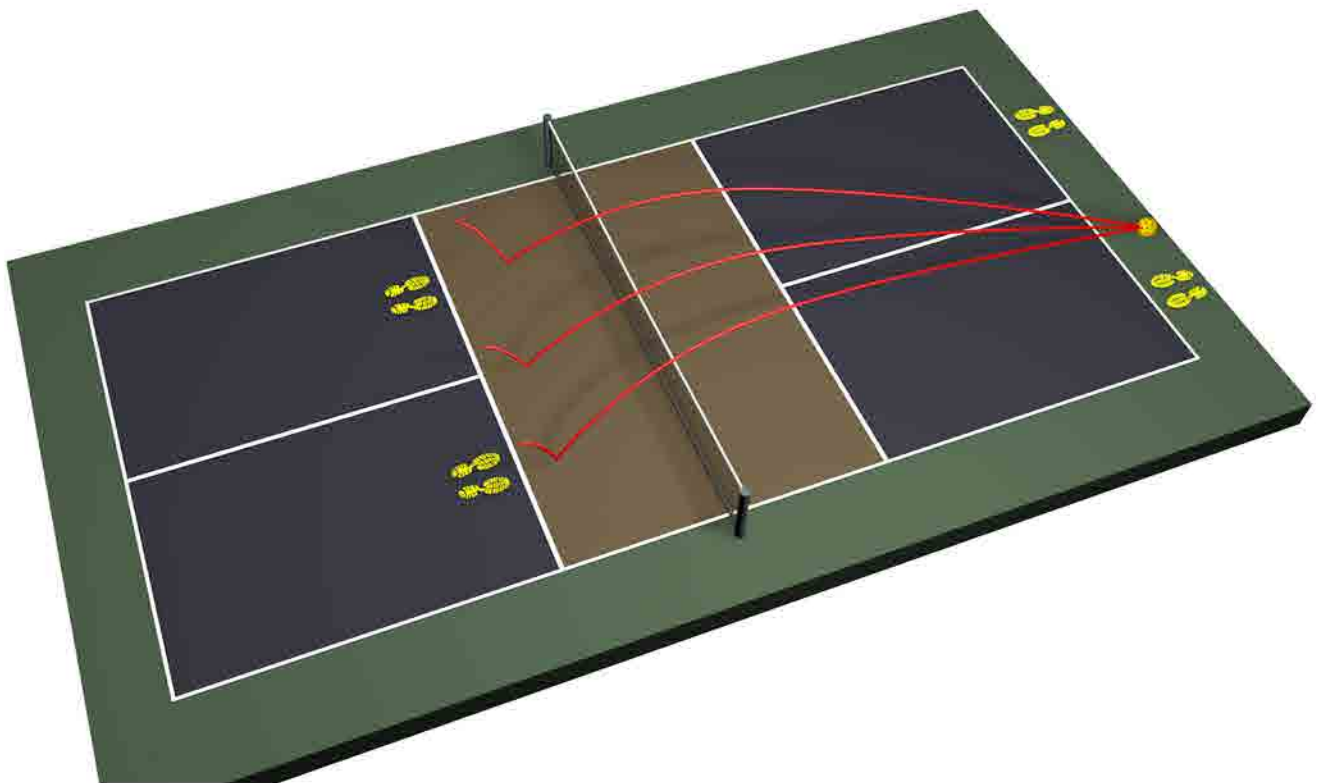


Hitting the drop shots to the middle of the court has your shot going over the lowest part of the net.

Hitting the drop shot cross court has a little longer distance.

Hitting the drop shot the player who returned the serve has the advantage of that player having to move from the baseline to the NVZ line and older players often don't get all the way up.

To transition through the middle of the court to your NVZ line will require drops shots and drop volleys to keep your shots landing in front of your opponent's feet.



Drop Shots in Transition



Skills Developed:

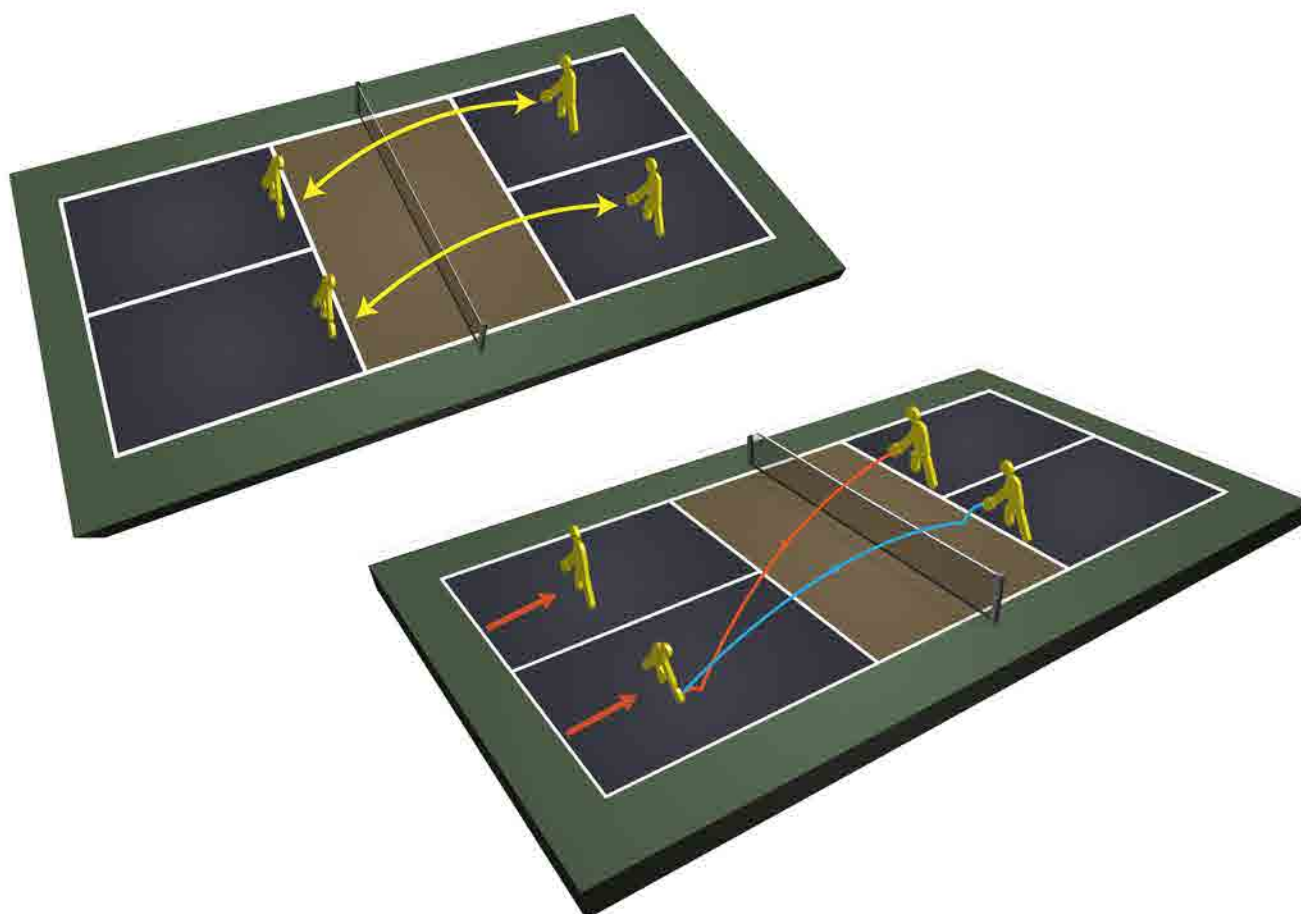
The ball control to hit drop shots into the kitchen from different distances; footwork to move forward; split steps; the touch to hit a ball right after you are moving forward.

Set Up:

One player stands at the NVZ line and the drilling partner stands on the baseline. The player at the NVZ line feeds the ball to the mid court area forcing the partner to move forward to hit a drop shot. Have the drilling partner position themselves in the mid court area and stay there to practice numerous drop shots.

Description:

Drop Shots need to be hit from different areas of the court as players transition forward and sometimes backwards. The ball is fed to land in front of the partner's feet as the partner moves forward from the baseline or backwards from the NVZ line. The mid court player moves to play each ball after it bounces as you are trying to focus on drop shots from different areas of the mid court. A player's ability to hit drop shots from the transition area is called having "good touch", "soft hands", and "great feel".



Drop Shots in Transition



The Progressions of the skill:

Progress to the ball being fed from the NVZ line with slow pace, then moderate pace, and fast pace. With your drilling partner standing near the baseline, hit a short ball that requires your partner to run forward to hit a drop shot into the kitchen. This adds another element to the drop shot because you have forward momentum which can add pace to your shot and have the ball fly longer.

Games:

Play out points with one player staying in the mid court area and hitting drop shots while the player up hits the ball back to land in front of the mid court player.

Strategies:

The Drop Shot is the safest way to move forward because the ball bounces lower than the net. That forces the opponent into hitting up on the ball to clear the net. When you hit the ball too far or too high where your opponent can hit a hard fast volley, it is better if you back up or stay back and play their shot after the ball bounces like you do when the ball is served to you or returned to you after you serve.



To transition through the middle of the court to your NVZ line, you will be required to hit drops shots, volleys, drop volleys, and half volleys. This requires you to develop the touch to hit the ball different distances to keep your shots landing in the kitchen or in front of your opponent's feet.

Moving Forward- Transitioning to NVZ line



Skills Developed:

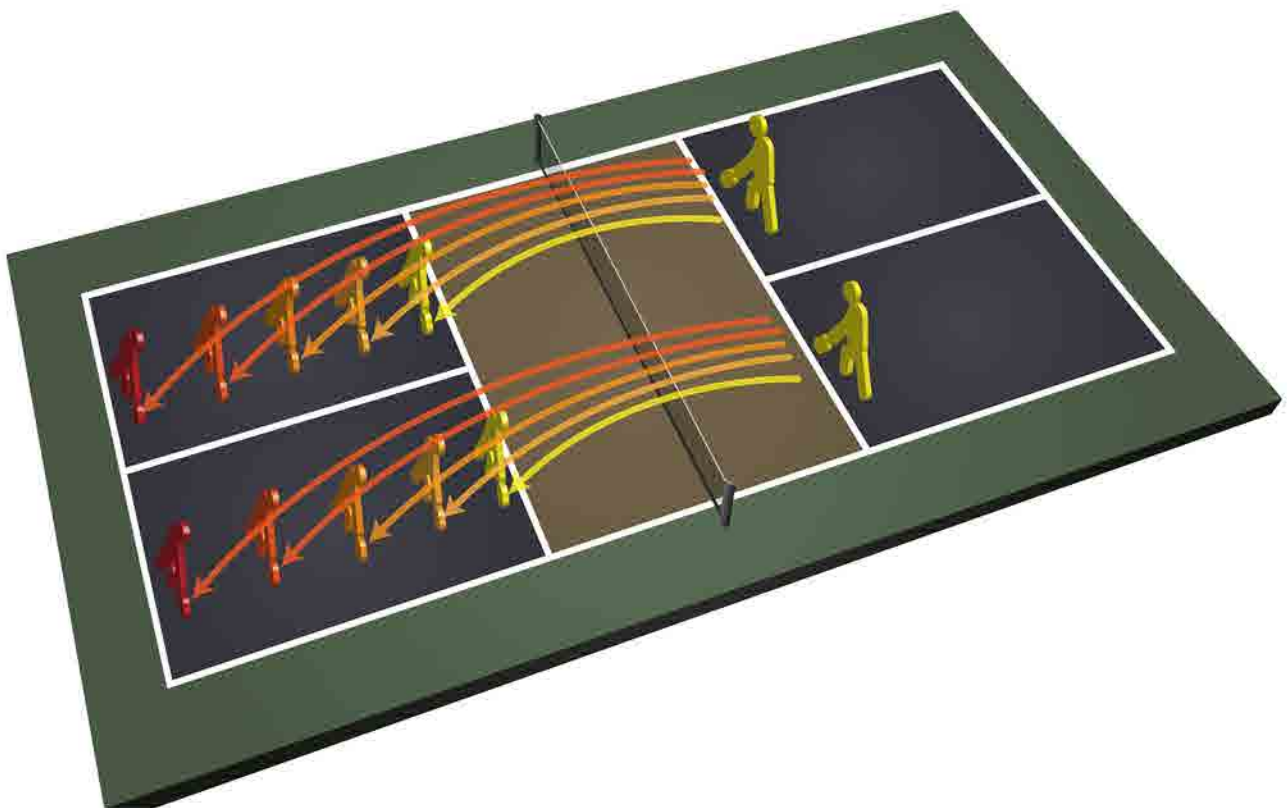
Footwork; drop shots; drop volleys; half volleys; attacking shots.

Set Up:

One or two players at their baseline and one or two players at their NVZ line.

Description:

The serving team is near their baseline as the returning team has one player up and generally the receiver moves in quickly after returning the serve. The serving team ideally wants to transition to their NVZ line which requires advanced skills and developed ball placement. Young advanced players are quick enough to get to their NVZ line after a drop shot. The vast majority of players will not be able to get all the way up and will have to hit shots as they transition to their NVZ line. The player(s) methodically move forward one step at a time to develop shots into the NVZ line from all distances.



Moving Forward- Transitioning to NVZ line



The Progressions of the skill:

Adjust the location and pace of the shots to the player(s) in the mid court area. Start out with softer slower balls and increase the pace to make the shots more difficult to reset. A good feeder will be able to hit the ball low to force the advancing players into hitting half volleys and low volleys.



Strategies:

It is more difficult to win a point from the mid court. So these players should work on resetting their shots with drop volleys and drop shots. Power will work at times so they can also hit hard shots to challenge the volleys of the players up.



Half Volley



Skills Developed:

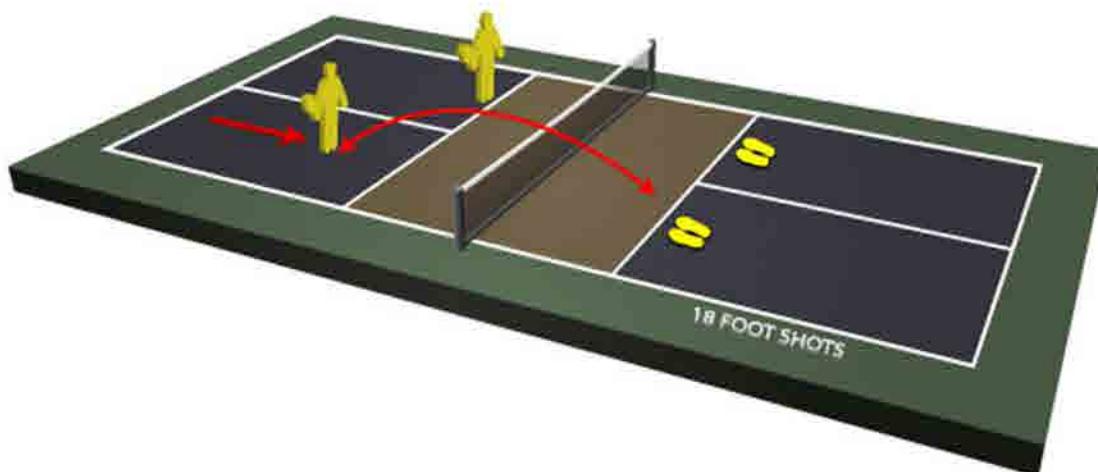
Hand eye coordination; soft touch: compact and short motion.

Set Up:

Have the player who is developing the shot first stand at the NVZ line and then move back in increments.

Description:

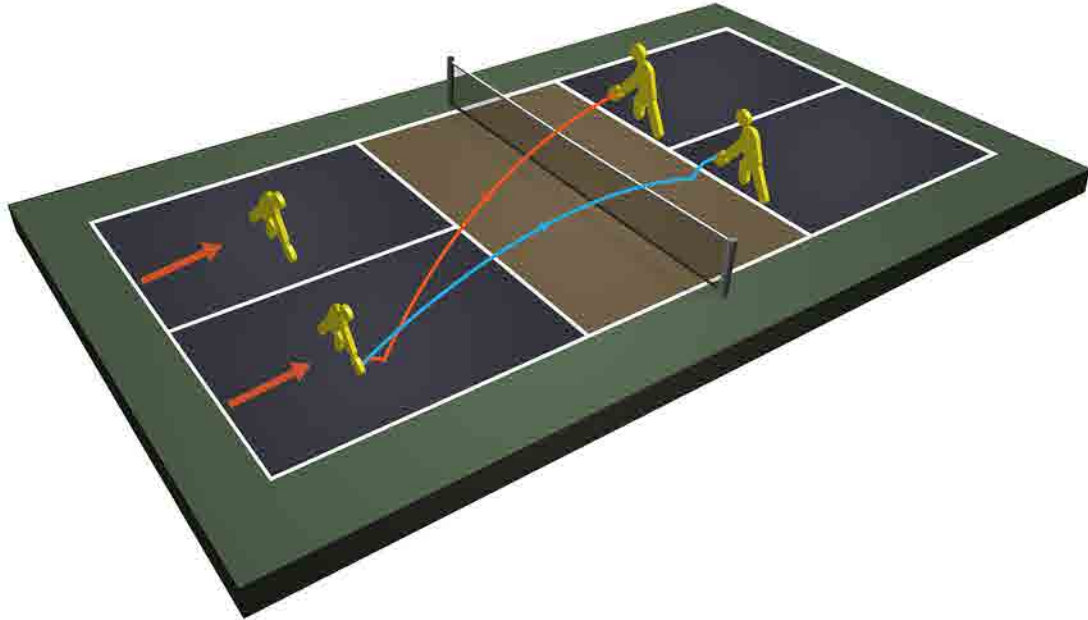
The Half Volley is an important shot to recognize your opponent's well placed shot. You will be forced to play the ball just after the ball bounces. The speed of your opponent's shot did not allow you time to back up to play the shot or hit the ball on the fly. So you want to develop the half volley which is played right after the bounce. Since the ball is bouncing just in front of your feet, keep your paddle down at that level and have a short and low scooping hit keeping your paddle face facing the ball. Do not have a high follow through. The touch or feel to be able to place your shot back in front of your opponent's feet is the important part of the shot.



The Progressions of the skill:

The player working on the Half Volley must try to play each ball as a Half Volley. Against good players you will be forced to hit them. So move to play the ball after it bounces and the sound of the ball bouncing and hitting the paddle should be very close together. It should be Bounce-Hit. The player starts at the NVZ line and the partner tosses a ball to land in front of the player. Use a small soft blocking scoop motion to return the ball back into the kitchen. Increase to speed of the ball being fed. Have the player back up to play from the mid court. Try playing a Half Volley against a Serve. Try returning an Overhead with a Half Volley.

Half Volley



Strategies:

The team that hits the most Half Volleys in a game will generally lose. When you are forced to hit Half Volleys, it is because of the accuracy of your opponent's shot. Developing a good Half Volley is the epitome of having "good hands", "nice touch", and "great feel". That is because the player has developed the skill of taking a well placed ball and hitting it back into the kitchen of the attacking player. A good Half Volley is resetting the point. Some players have developed their Return of Serve to be played with a Half Volley.

They move to play the ball just after it bounces and that does give them forward momentum to advance forward. Most players elect to stay back and play the ball at the highest point of the bounce.



Lobs



Skills Developed:

The Height, Pace, and Angle of the shot, the touch to control the distance.

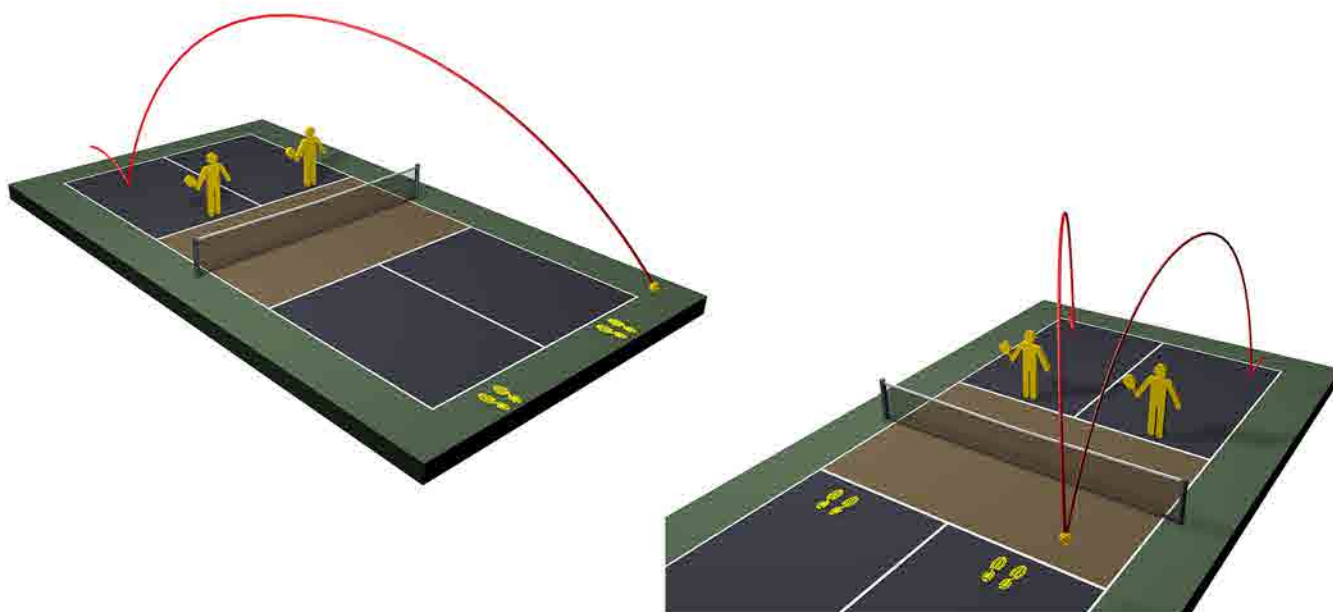
Set Up:

Different locations as you progress

1. One player up at the NVZ line and their drilling partner across the net at their NVZ line.
2. One player at the NVZ line feeding a ball to their drilling partner who is near their baseline.
3. One player at their baseline and the other player across the net at their baseline.
4. Both players at their baseline and hit lobs back and forth in a rally.

Description:

Lobs are high balls designed to go over the head of your opponent and land back near the baseline. Lobs can be hit on your serve, return of serve, on your third shot of the point, from a dink, and anytime that you are in a difficult situation. The lob gives you time to back up and play defense, and at many levels, a lob is a difficult ball for your opponent to put away if you are back at your baseline.

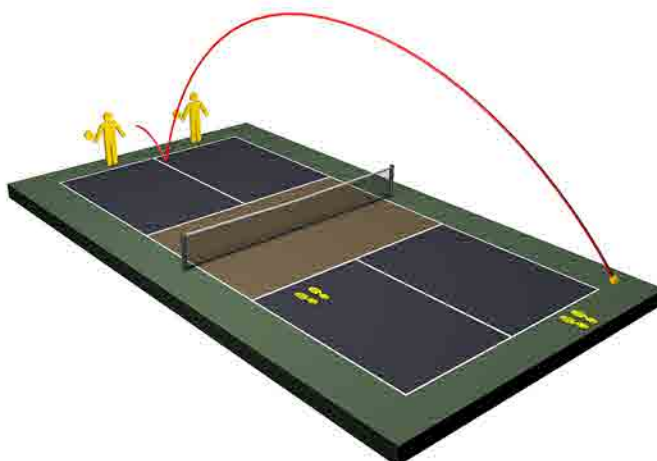
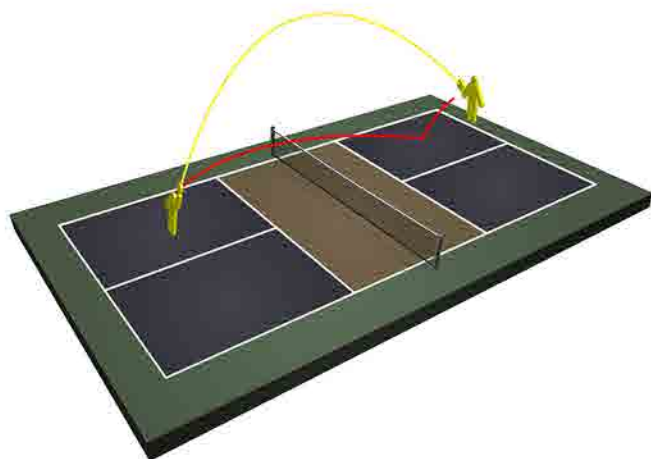


Lobs



The Progressions of the skill:

1. To make the skill of hitting a lob more easier, toss the ball from your NVZ line giving your partner at their NVZ line an ideal ball to hit up and over your head.
2. To increase the difficulty, hit a dink and have your partner hit a lob.
3. Have the drilling partner move back to their baseline. Feed a ball and have the partner hit high deep lobs. If you aim to keep the ball in play by making your partner hit an overhead, you can have a rally of lobs and overheads because when you are on the baseline, it is very difficult for your opponent to put the ball away.
4. Serve the ball and have the player hit a Lob as the return of serve. Then have the server hit a third shot lob and have a rally with lobs back and forth.



Games:

Try to have a rally of lobs and overheads and see how many in a row you can hit. Play a game with rally scoring to 5 points with two players back hitting lobs and two players up hitting overheads. Then reverse roles.

Strategies: The lob is best used against players who are not highly skilled, young, quick, or agile. It is best used in the intermediate or senior levels of play. Hitting your lob over the opponent's backhand side is better because if the lob is too short, you will be defending a high backhand verses an overhead.



Reset from Mid Court



Skills Developed:

Good hands, soft hands, nice touch, great feel, Drop Volleys, and Half Volleys

Set Up:

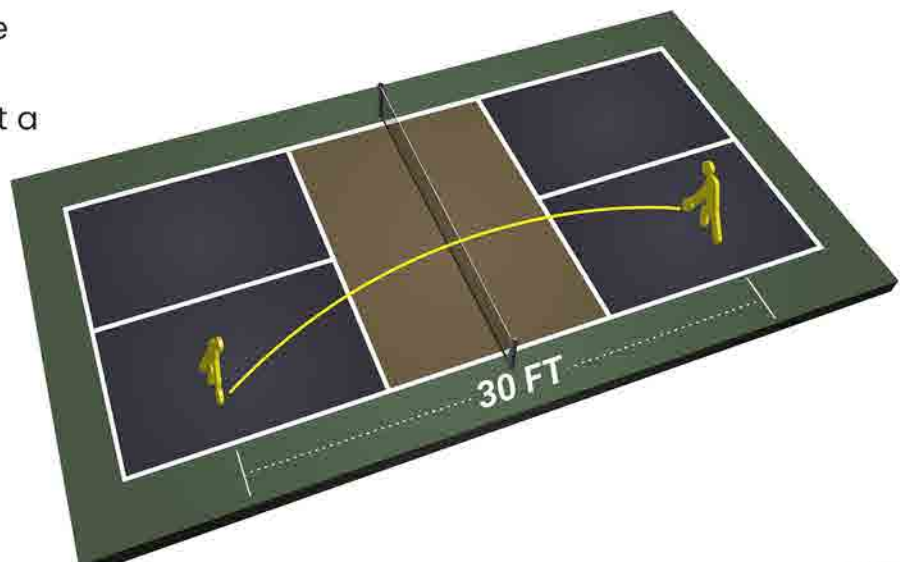
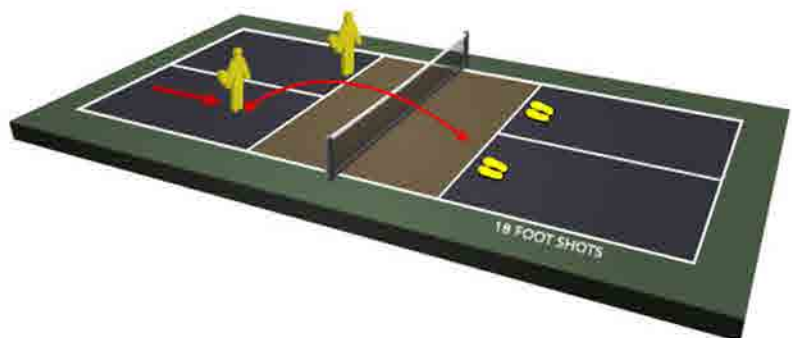
One or two players position themselves 5 to 7 feet behind the NVZ line with the other 1 or 2 players up at their NVZ line.

Description:

The drill is designed for the 1 or 2 mid court players to practice and develop resetting shots into the opponent's kitchen. The 1 or 2 players up hit shots with varying speeds and heights to challenge the mid court players. The players up do not hit drop shots into the kitchen as the drill is for the 2 mid court players to practice hitting defensive and some offensive shots from the mid court. So the 2 players back reset and can attack while the 2 players at the NVZ line hit their shots to challenge the other players.

The Progressions of the skill:

Start off the drill with slower paced shots because the emphasis is on the mid court players developing the mechanics for an under spin drop volley and a small motion for the half volley. The players up can increase the speed of their shots to challenge the mid court players. The players in the mid court area can hit attacking shots if they get a slower or weaker shot.



Reset from Mid Court



Games:

Play out points with scoring. It is more difficult to win a point from the mid court. So if that team wins, they stay at the mid court. If they lose the point, they move up to their NVZ line and the other two players move back to the mid court area.

Strategies:

The main strategy is for the up players to challenge the mid court players to hit up on their low shots aimed at their feet. When you want to work on drop volleys, then the up players hit higher balls. This is a common shot in many levels where players are advancing forward and have to play shots from the mid court or transition area of the court.



Overhead



Skills Developed:

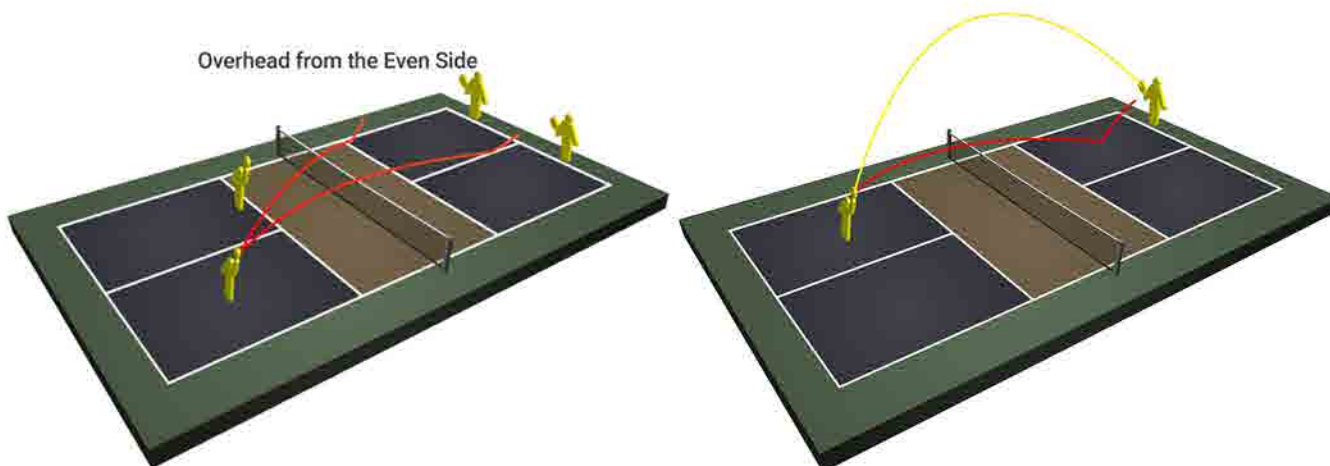
Footwork to get in position; judging the height and distance of the lob; timing to hit an overhead with your arm extending high to hit the lob.

Set Up:

One player up at the NVZ line and a partner back feeding a lob. The player feeding the ball can move closer for more accuracy. The overhead should be hit away from the feeder if they are close. Feeding a lob that can be hit as an overhead will challenge some players because many players don't practice lobs and overheads.

Description:

Overheads are the shot played against a lob. Many call the shot a smash. If you were catching the ball with your hand, you would want your hand to be extended high and above your head. Now with your paddle, you want your paddle to make contact with the ball as high as you can reach and to be in front of you.



The Progressions of the skill:

Please note that more injuries occur by players backing up, stumbling and falling backwards. If you do not have experience in backing up as in other sports like baseball, tennis, basketball, etc. then it is advised for safety reasons for you to turn and run in a half circle to hit the ball after it bounces. For those who have experience in backpedaling, then get in position to hit the ball.

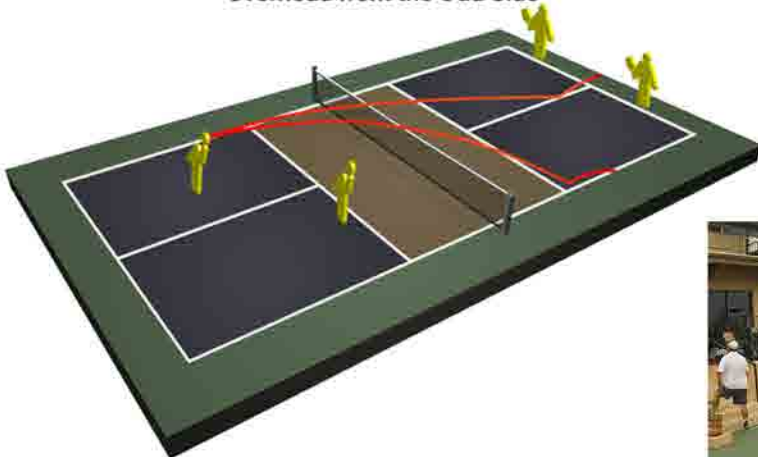
1. Have the feeder toss a lob so the player moves to catch the ball with their hand extended above their head.

Overhead



2. Have the feeder back up and hit a lob with their paddle and have the player up move to catch the ball with their hand above their head.
3. Have the feeder be to the side so the hitter doesn't hit the player tossing the ball. Underhand toss the ball up so the hitter makes contact with an outstretched arm and paddle.
4. The feeder backs up and feeds a lob with their paddle so the drilling partner can hit an overhead.
5. The feeder stands back behind the baseline, feeds a lob so the player can hit an overhead. The player hits the overhead back to the feeder who hits a lob back. Try to have a rally of lobs and overheads.
6. The feeder moves back and feeds balls with their paddle and the hitter being on the even side. Place a target about 10 feet past the NVZ line and 2 feet away from the sideline. Hit the overhead trying to hit the targets which will angle your overhead off the court.
7. Have the hitter stand on the odd side and then angle the ball off the court crosscourt.

Overhead from the Odd Side



Strategies: As with all shots, placement is very important. If you are near your NVZ line, angle your overhead crosscourt off the court. Hitting the ball down the middle will generally be returned by good players. When hitting a deeper overhead, aim down the middle of the court as an angled overhead is more risky and a lower percentage. If all players are up, hit your overhead to the feet of your opponents.

Return of Serve



Skills Developed:

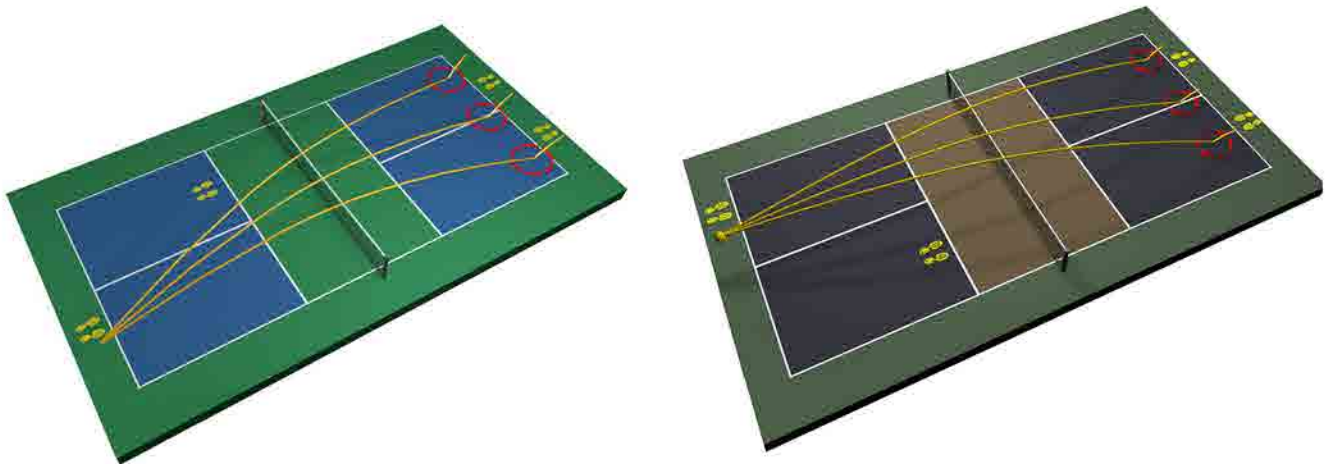
Hand eye coordination; paddle skills of controlling the paddle face; pace control; height; depth.

Set Up:

Place one player hitting serves and the other player hitting return of serves. Place 4 targets 5 feet inside the baseline. Divide the 20 foot wide court into 5 feet wide sections and hit the returns to one of these 4 target areas.

Description:

The return of serve is an extremely important shot. A mistake gives your opponent a point. You have the largest square footage area of any shot in a point. You can take a large swing, however, for consistency and accurate placement, using a short and concise blocking motion is best. Focus on the Height, Pace, and Angle for the placement.



The Progressions of the skill:

1. Practice moving to a serve and catch the ball with 2 hands or use just your hitting hand.
2. Use your chip and catch technique to develop the very important paddle skill of placing your paddle in front of the incoming ball and block it up and catch it. If the ball is on your right side, chip the ball up so it lands slightly in front of your right side. If the ball is on your left side, chip it up with your backhand, for right handers, so the ball lands on your left side and slightly in front of you.
3. Progress and develop the under spin slicing or blocking motion to return balls higher and deeper into your opponent's court.

Return of Serve



4. Work on returning serves to each of the 4 target areas. This will develop the accuracy of your return to first go to one side or one opponent. Then secondarily, the accuracy of the return to 5 foot sections coordinates to your opponent's forehand or backhand sides.
5. Hit the return of serve as a lob. The higher lob shot gives you additional time to move up to your NVZ line.
6. Perform a 3 shot drill where one player hits a serve, the other player hits a return of serve, and the server hits a third shot back. The partner performs a chip and catch and now does the 3 shot drill reversing the order.



Games:

Return 10 serves and score 2 points if your return is deep, 1 point if it is in the court, and minus one point if you make a mistake. Reverse the order with your partner and see who scores more points.

Strategies:

The main strategy is to return the ball deep. The deeper return gives you more time to advance and forces your opponent to hit the third shot from a deeper position giving you more time to react. Mid court returns are safe but also gives your opponent an easier ball to hit an attacking drive or an easier drop shot. Controlling the angle of the return is beneficial to first return to one side of the court or to a specific opponent. When playing recreational games, return to both players as they both came to play. Isolating one player should only be done in competition. Hit your return with accuracy down the middle and it is even better if you develop the accuracy to hit the ball slightly to one side of the middle causing confusion on who will play the ball. Hitting a lob return of serve gives you the maximum amount of time to advance forward. Hit your return to the player who has the better drop shot if you want to play a dinking game. Hit your return to the "banger" if you want to hit volleys.

Serve, Return of Serve, Drive or Drop



Skills Developed:

Consistency and placement for the 3 main shots for all points. Control the angle, height, and pace.

Set Up:

Both players are on opposite sides of the court in a position to hit a serve or hit a return of serve. You can place a target 5 feet inside the baseline to mark deeper serves and return of serves.

Description:

All points start out with a serve, return, and a third shot if no mistakes have been made. To be a better player, you do not want to make an unforced error on any of the first 3 shots.

The serve has a large target area of 10 feet wide and 15 feet wide. And you get to hit the ball that you toss to yourself. The return of serve has the largest area because anything over the net is in play. Your opponents must let the ball bounce, so there is really no pressure like on all the shots following.

The third shot of the point generally has one player who is the partner of the player hitting the return of serve and is positioned at their NVZ line. The player hitting the return generally moves up as well. So on your third shot of the point, you have two players up. So hit a drive and make one of them hit a volley. Play their volley after the ball bounces and hit another shot. Or hit a third shot drop, just make sure the ball goes over the net. It is much better to keep the ball in play otherwise you would lose the point. So the drill goes, player 1 hits a Serve, player 2 hits a Return of Serve, player 1 hits a Third shot Drive or Drop, and player 2 does a chip and catch. That reverses the order. Player 2 serves, player one returns, player 2 hits a third shot drive or drop, and player 2 does a chip and catch. Place a premium on hitting all 3 shots over the net to keep the drill going and this establishes a major accomplishment and consistency for a good game.

The Progressions of the skill:

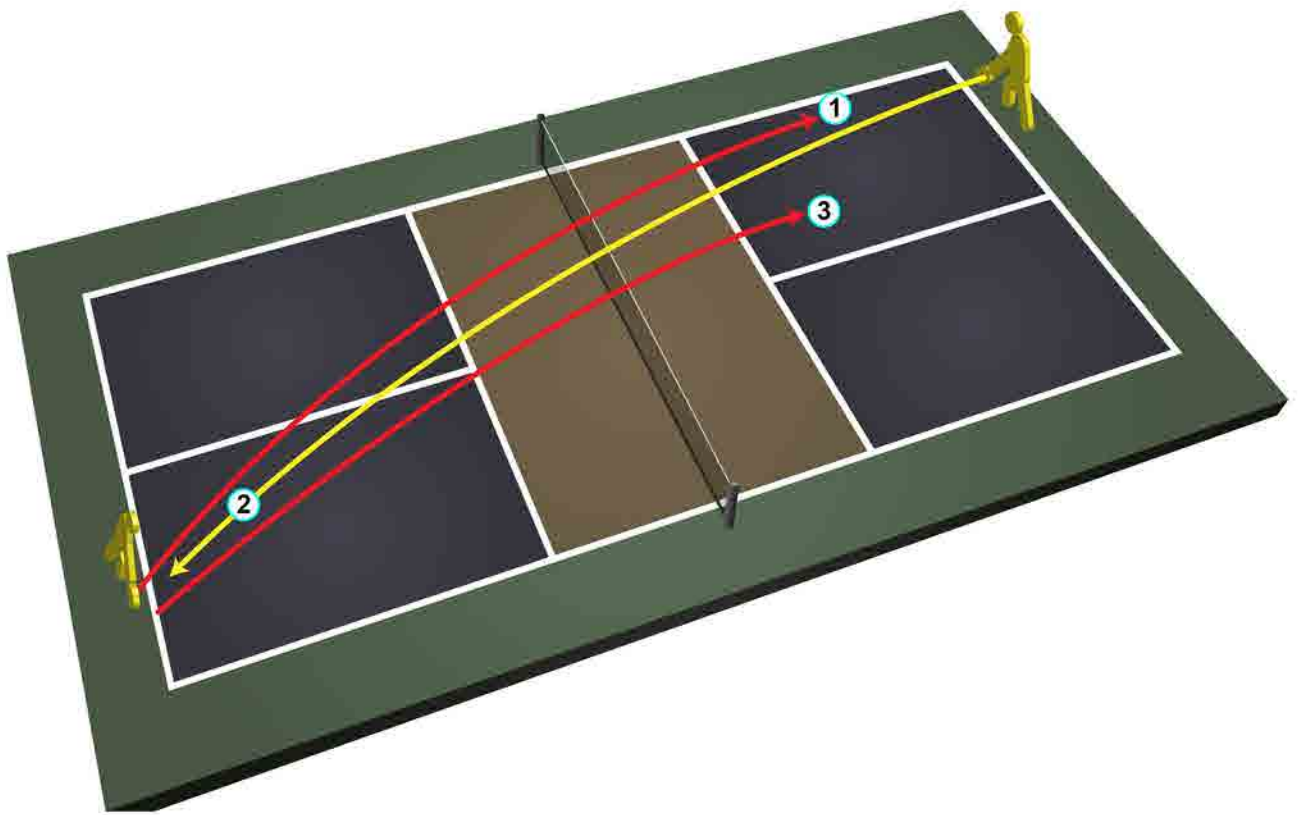
Utilize the targets and make sure that your shots are all landing over the marker 5 feet inside the baseline. Deeper shots are just more effective in the overall strategy of pickleball. Also hit a Third Shot Drop in this drill because to play at a higher level, drop shots are a key.

Serve, Return of Serve, Drive or Drop



Strategies:

The strategy of hitting a drive is based on your shot being a challenge to volley by the other players in your skill level. Most players are simply trying to get the serve in play and then keeping the return of serve in play. Since rarely does one hit a winner on either of these two shots, the percentage strategy is to hit a Third Shot Drive. A Drive has a target area of 150 sq. ft. to each side or 300 sq. ft. to the entire area from the NVZ line to the baseline. The Drop Shot, being a shot that lands in the kitchen, has about a 60 foot area to hit the ball into. The Drop Shot is more difficult to hit and through practice can be developed to be a huge asset in your game. The important aspect of this drill is to not hit the ball into the net, but keep all 3 shots in play. This is especially true when warming up in a tournament because most of the time you have very limited to warm up. Hitting each shot over the net keeps the warm up going and is the most important thing to do once you start to play in a game.



Serve with your Backhand



Skills Developed:

Backhand shots both topspin and under spin slice.

Set Up:

Stand at your baseline and hit backhand serves.

Description:

Any player that has a weak backhand needs to hit lots of backhand serves. Pickleball was designed to have one serve underhand to get the ball in play and start a rally or point. It is rare that an ace will happen, so hit some backhand serves to develop your backhand.

The Progressions of the skill:

Use a drop serve where you turn your side, drop the ball to your backhand side, and hit the ball over the net. Hit a backhand serve without bouncing the ball. Toss the ball and hit the serve below your belly button. Hit serves with both topspin and under spin, also called slice. Use the



backhand to start off rallies from all areas of your court.

Games:

Play a game with your partner where you both hit only backhand serves. Mark off the service box with tape being 5 feet inside the baseline. You score 2 points hitting a backhand serve over the tape, 1 point for in the service box, and 0 for a mistake. Play to 10 points.

Strategies:

Players who have weak backhands simply don't ever hit a serve with their backhand. Develop a backhand serve and start off rallies with all the different shots with your backhand. Do not start off every rally with your forehand.

Serve for Depth and Placement



Skills Developed:

To control the depth and placement by controlling the height and pace of your serve.

Set Up:

Get a bucket of balls and hopefully a partner on the other side of the net. Targets are placed in the service box. The box is 15 feet long so place one at 5 feet and one at 10 feet.

Description:

Hit the serve with the goal to have the ball land over the deepest target. The objective is to develop a deeper serve. Concentrate on the height that your serve clears the net and the pace or how hard you hit your serve. First aim for the middle of the service box because it gives you a good margin for error in all directions. Next hit the ball higher and harder to get the ball to land within 5 feet of the baseline.

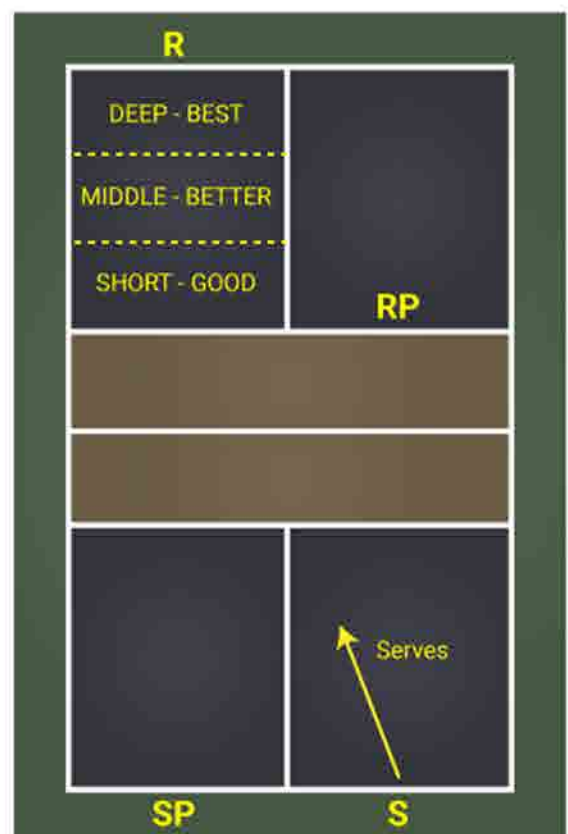
Hit the ball lower and softer to place the serve in the first 5 feet of the box. This develops the control for deeper and shorter serves and ball control. The shorter serve helps develop the drop shot while the deep serve develops the deeper return of serve.

Additional Challenges:

Mark off the service box with a line down the middle going from the NVZ line to the baseline. This equates to a serve to the opponent's forehand or backhand.

Games:

With a partner on the other side, play a game by keeping score. Since there are 3 areas each being 5 feet deep, you score 1 point for the shortest, 2 points for the middle, and 3 points for the deepest. You and your partner on the other side play a game to the first one to 21 or above.

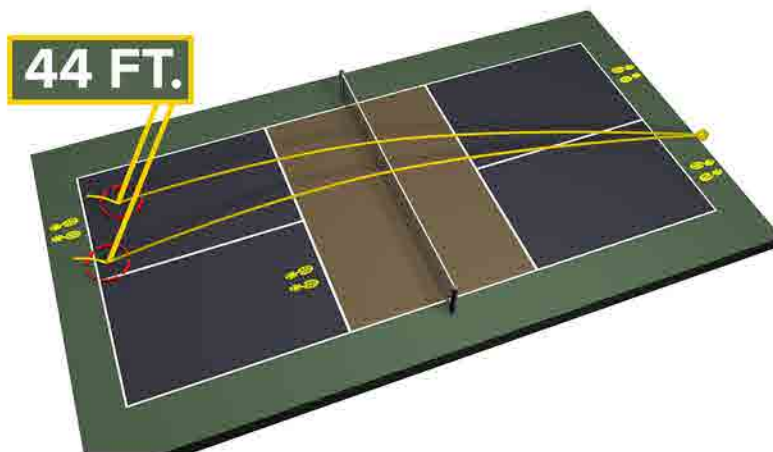


Serve for Depth and Placement



Strategies:

By developing the touch of hitting a Serve higher and deeper, you are developing the feel to hit a Return of Serve the same distance. Hitting both the serve and return deep are strategically the best as it keeps your opponent's farther back giving you advantages of more time to get to your NVZ line, their shots may be shorter, and deeper shots give you more time to react to their shots. By developing the touch of hitting a serve shorter, you are developing the feel to hit a Third Shot Drop or Dining Room shot



Volleys vs Drives



Skills Developed:

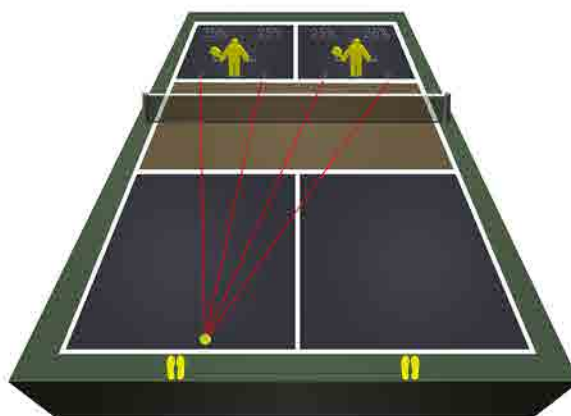
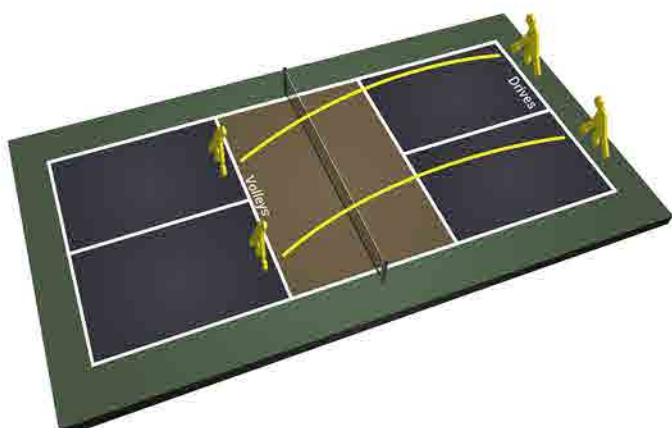
Hand eye coordination, getting paddle in front of incoming ball, consistency; volley to different areas of the court.

Set Up:

One or two players at the baseline to hit drives and one or two players at the NVZ line to hit volleys.

Description:

Most of pickleball is played with the team returning the serve having one player hitting the return and the partner is positioned up at their NVZ line. After the player hits the return of serve, that player moves up towards the NVZ line which creates the 3rd shot of the point by one of the two players on the serving team. So this drill is to practice hitting volleys against the two players who stay back and hit drives. This is a time to work on defensive volleys which is a blocking technique to place your paddle flat in front on all incoming shots.



The Progressions of the skill:

The object of drills to have rallies and then increase the depth and pace. Place targets 5 feet in front of the baseline and hit deeper volleys. The players hitting drives have a target of 5 foot wide areas which correspond to player one's forehand or backhand and player two's forehand or backhand.

Volleys vs Drives



Strategies:

1. The first strategy is to eliminate unforced errors. So in a game, the first objective of the volley is to keep the ball in play and block it back. If you could catch the ball with your hand then you should be able to block it back.
2. The second objective is to be accurate with your volley and hit the volley within 5 feet of the baseline and to one side or the other. opponent's forehand or backhand volleys.
3. A well hit drive against players in your skill level should force the players who are volleying to be conservative and block the ball back into play and not make a mistake.
4. When the players hitting the drive advance forward, you should try to control the depth of your volley to land in front of the advancing players.
5. When you hit a deep return of serve or a deep volley, you can hit a drop volley if your opponent is back behind the baseline. You must have developed the skill set for the drop volley.



Games:

Play a game to 10 with keeping score for the team hitting drives verses the volleying team.

Drop Volley



Skills Developed:

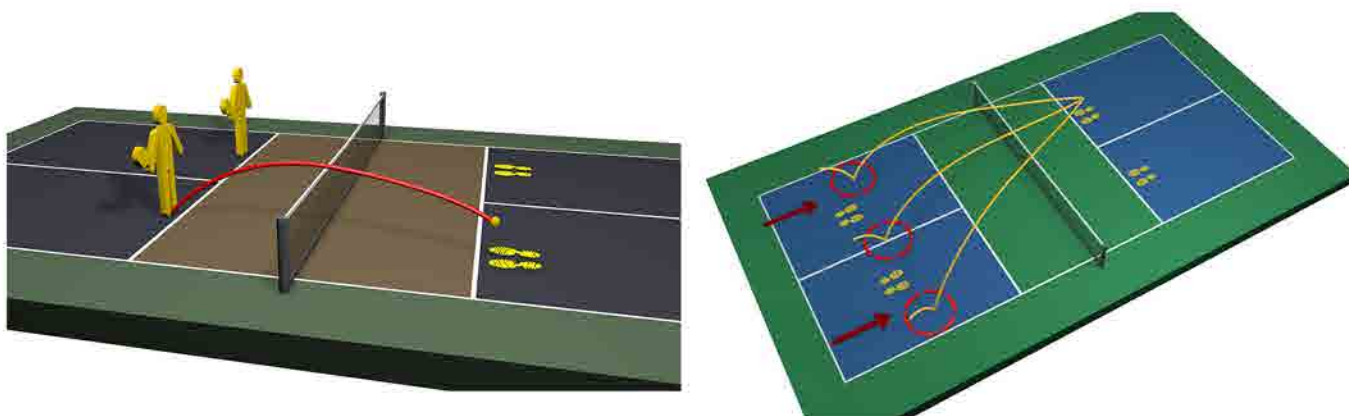
Soft hands; great touch; nice feel; placement into kitchen or in front of opponents feet.

Set Up:

The player developing the drop volley is positioned at the NVZ line and the partner is feeding balls from different distances.

Description:

The Drop Volley is a very important shot to develop so you can Volley the ball to different distances depending on where your opponents are..



The Progressions of the skill:

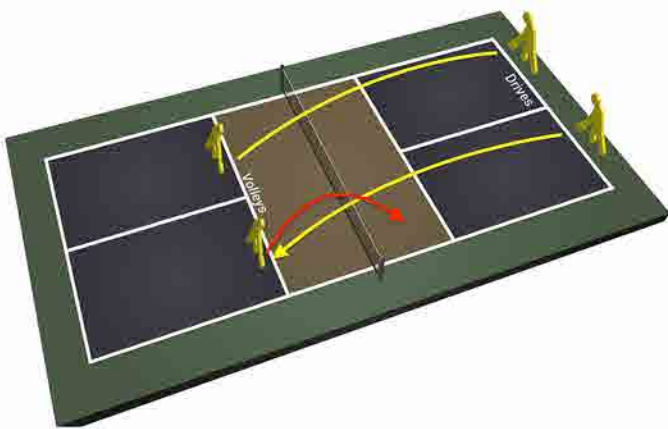
1. Start out at the NVZ line and toss a ball to your partner who chips the ball up and catches it with their non paddle hand.
2. The progression is to toss a ball and your partner slices the ball to impart under spin and hits a drop volley into the kitchen.
3. A third drill is to have the feeder back up to different depths and feed the ball so the player up hits volleys to land in front of the feeder's feet.
4. Another is to have the ball fed with the player hitting the ball with their paddle. The paddle will apply more speed which in turn forces the volleyer into taking speed off of the ball with the "chip and catch" technique.
5. Have one player hit attacking dinks and the partner hit drop volleys into the kitchen to reset the point.
6. One player stands at the baseline and hits their serve and the player up does a chip and catch. Then with a bucket of balls, the feeder hits drives and the player up hits drop volleys.

Drop Volley



Games:

Have one player be 5 feet behind the NVZ line and the partner at the NVZ line. Play out the point with one player back and the partner up. Play a rally scoring game to 10 and then reverse roles.



Strategies:

The strategies involve you deciding what balls to attack and what balls to defend with a drop volley. Speeding the ball up by attacking is risky against good volleys. You will often hear one player saying to their partner, "Sorry, I tried to speed it up" after losing the point with that attempt. As more players are moving forward to attack all shots, it is imperative that on a drive by your opponents that you volley the ball to land in front of their feet and that depends on where you think they will be. A blocked volley may very well fly too far and be attacked. This is where the really aggressive players use a strategy called the "Shake and Bake". A good partnership is one where both players understand each other and when and where to attack.

Drop Volley in Transition



Skills Developed:

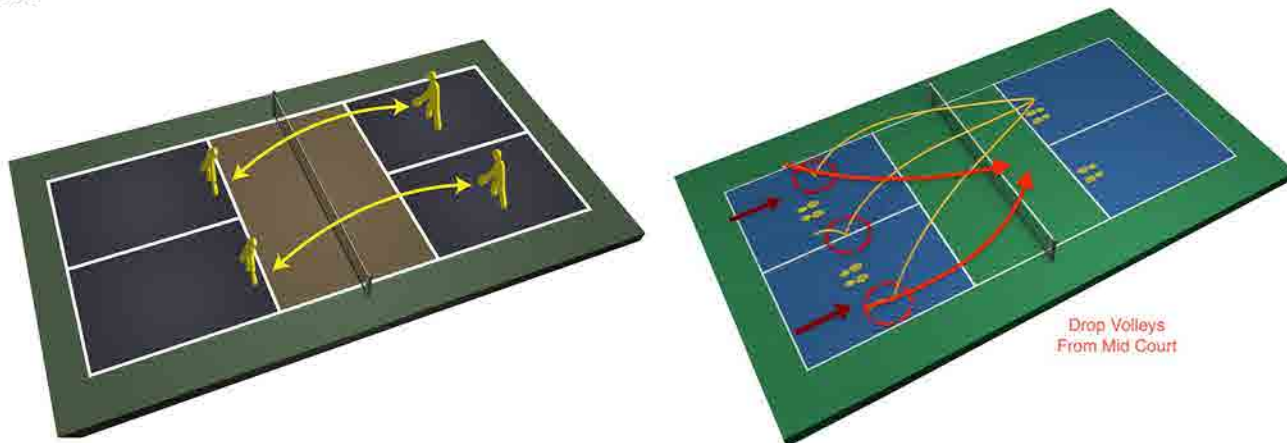
The ball control, named "soft hands", "good touch", "great feel", that allows you to hit a drop volley into your opponent's kitchen from various locations on your side of the court.

Set Up:

The feeder is at the NVZ line and the player who is developing their drop volley is in the mid court area.

Description:

As you transition from your baseline to your NVZ line, you will have to hit volleys. In order to hit the volley into your opponent's kitchen, you need to develop the touch to hit a drop volley. A drop volley that lands in your opponent's kitchen forces the opponent to hit up on the ball which makes it a much safer shot to advance forward on.



The Progressions of the skill:

Have the player in the transition area catch balls hit to them with their hitting hand. Have the player in the mid court chip and catch balls hit to them. Have the player chip the ball up, let the ball bounce, and hit it back into the kitchen. Hit the ball to the player in the mid court area so the ball is lower than their knees and the player hits a drop volley into the kitchen.

Games:

One player stays approximately 5 to 7 feet behind the NVZ line and hits drop volleys into the drilling partner's kitchen. Keep track of the score. Play a game to 10 with the positions being rotated when the player up at the NVZ line wins the point. It is much easier to win when you are the player up.

Drop Volley in Transition



Strategies:

When you are transitioning up to your NVZ line, you will have to hit volleys. The question becomes, do you hit a hard attacking volley or reset the point with a drop volley? Most players hit hard volleys because they have not developed the skill set to hit a drop volley. The safest way to advance is with a drop volley where your shot lands in front of your opponent's feet. But bear in mind, you are trying to get a high ball to attack



All in all, you will find out that the better players will keep the ball lower or their shots will bounce in front of your feet forcing you to hit a half volley. When you are playing weaker players, you can flex your muscles and hit hard shots to force errors. But you should also develop your touch and ball control to reset the point with drop volleys because that is what you will need to do at the higher levels of play. You will also find yourself at your NVZ line or in the mid court area when either you or your partner hits a high ball that will be hit hard. It is a better defense to back up giving yourself more time to react to the attacking shot. In other words, don't move forward on a high short lob.

Volleys Topspin



Skills Developed:

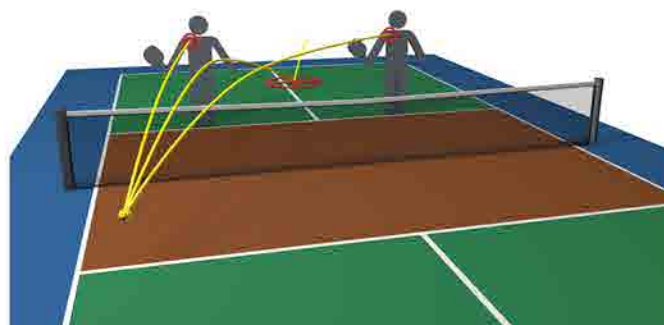
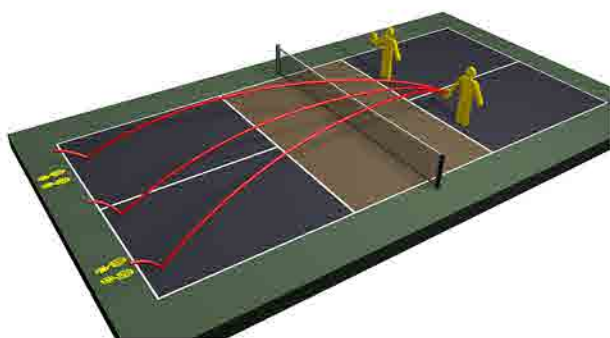
Recognizing balls in your strike zone for topspin; developing the low to high hit, roll or flick; develop the height, pace, spin, and angle of your topspin volleys.

Set Up:

Start up at your NVZ line and your partner feeds balls from the NVZ line. Secondly, feed balls from the baseline to the player up at their NVZ line.

Description:

Since the topspin volley is a low to high motion, feed the ball with an underhand toss to be above your partner's knees and below their chest. The ball will be hit with an upward motion and the paddle face will be vertical or very slightly closed in order to apply topspin. The topspin allows you to hit the ball faster and the spin causes the ball to spin back onto the court.



The Progressions of the skill:

Start at your NVZ line with the ball being fed, hit up with moderate pace and spin so your partner can catch your shot. Toss, hit, and catch.

Have the partner move back and feed balls with your paddle. It is important to place the ball accurately to their forehand and backhand sides. Move back to the baseline and hit drives and vary the speed to increase the difficulty. Remember, the drill is for the player hitting the volleys.

Games:

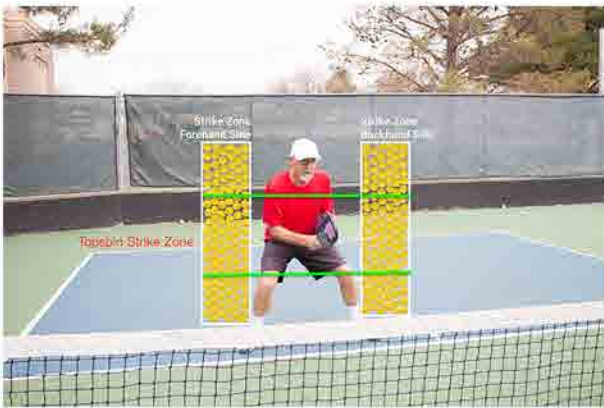
Play out the point with one player at the baseline and one player up at the NVZ line. Play a game to 10 points.

Volleys Topspin



Place a target with tape 5 feet inside the baseline and you get 2 points for a volley over the tape line and inside the baseline, 1 point for a ball in play, and 0 points for a mistake. Play 20 volleys and count how many points you get.

Reverse roles.



Strategies:

The topspin volley can be hit hard and the spin will curve the ball back into the court. The negative side is you cannot hit a soft drop volley which is used to reset the point. Topspin volleys are difficult to hit on balls outside of your ideal strike zone. The strategy of topspin volleys is first to identify if the incoming ball is in your strike zone so you can hit your shot up and over the net.

Secondarily, it is best to attack an opponent's forehand area because most players defend their mid section with their backhand and a shot to their forehand side and specifically their forehand shoulder area can be difficult to play. A smaller percentage of players have weaker backhand volleys, so in those situations, attack their backhand side.

Volleys Under Spin or Blocking

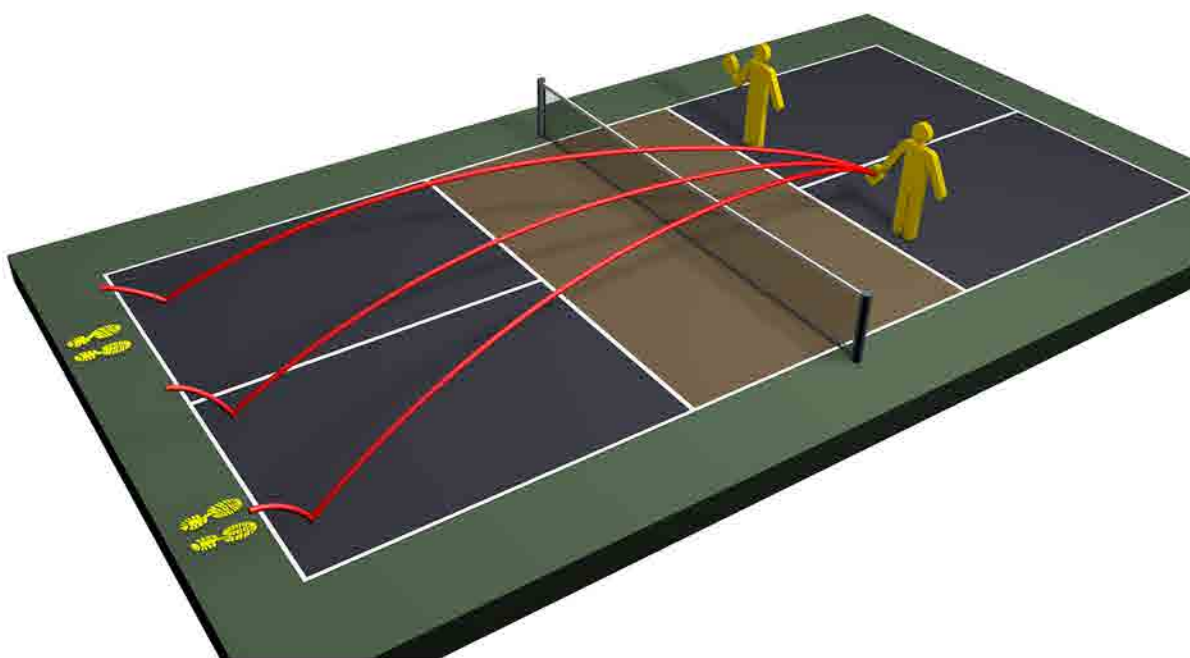


Skills Developed:

Hand eye coordination, hand speed, paddle angle positioning, paddle head speed; applying under spin. In returning all balls that are hit on the fly, you want to develop the paddle face to be open on low balls, flatter on mid height balls, and closed on high balls. Additionally, you want to develop the pace of your volley to control the depth. Develop hand speed to get your paddle in front of incoming balls.

Set Up:

1. One or two players up at the NVZ line and one or two players back near the baseline.
2. Two or four players up at their NVZ line.



Description:

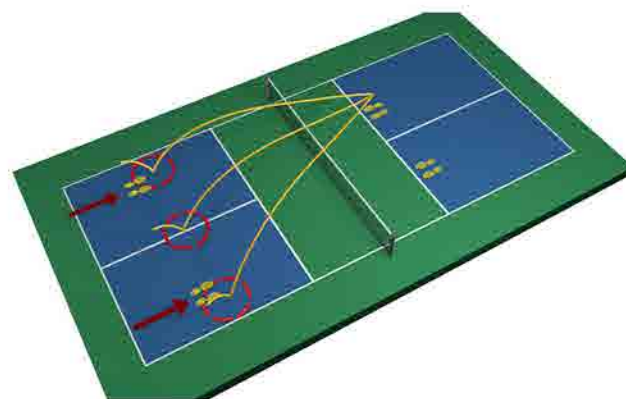
Volley the ball back to the player(s) at the baseline or to the player(s) if they are up at their NVZ line. Control the pace so you can keep the ball in play. You are trying to develop your hand eye coordination which is moving your paddle face to be like a small wall in front of the incoming ball. In order to control the depth of your volleys, you want to develop applying under spin to the ball as well as how hard you hit the ball. These two controlling factors of pace and spin allow you to hit volleys to all areas of your opponent's court.

Volleys Under Spin or Blocking



The Progressions of the skill:

1. Toss or hit a ball to your partner who chips the ball up and catches it with their other hand.
2. For beginners: toss the ball and have the player block a volley back to the feeder who catches the volley and tosses the ball again.
3. Hit volleys with your partner in 4 directions. FH to FH; BH to BH; FH to BH; BH to FH.
4. One or two players stand at the baseline and hit drives and one or two players stand at their NVZ line and hit volleys. Place a target area 5 feet from baseline and try to hit your volleys deep.
5. One or two players stand at NVZ line and one or two players stand at their NVZ line. Hit volleys with controlled pace and placement with the goal of having a rally.
6. Both players stand in the mid court areas and hit volleys to practice mid-court shots.
7. Have one player at NVZ line and other player in a mid-court area and practice hitting volleys to land at the feet of the mid-court player.
8. In all the drills, control the pace to keep the ball in play. Increase the speed incrementally as your skills develop.



Games:

1. When one player is up and the other player at the baseline, play a game to 11 with the match up of Drives vs. Volleys
2. Have 4 players on the court and all up at the NVZ line. Have a line of players to come in when one of the 4 players makes a mistake. Start a rally and if you make a mistake or hit a winner, you go to the end of the line. Challenge your partners at the same time of keeping the ball in play.

Volleys Under Spin or Blocking



Strategies:

The application of under spin gives you the control for the depth or placement of your volleys. The chip and catch takes the speed off of the incoming ball which illustrates this. If your volley flies long, you can take pace and the distance off of your shot by applying some under spin. The strategies of volleys involve placement and power. On high balls you can attack with power to break down your opponent's hand speed or their technique with too big of a backswing. On balls that are too low to attack, volley by controlling the pace and height to place your volleys in front of your opponent's feet no matter where they are on the court. On low balls, develop the drop volley.



Catcher vs Player



Skills Developed:

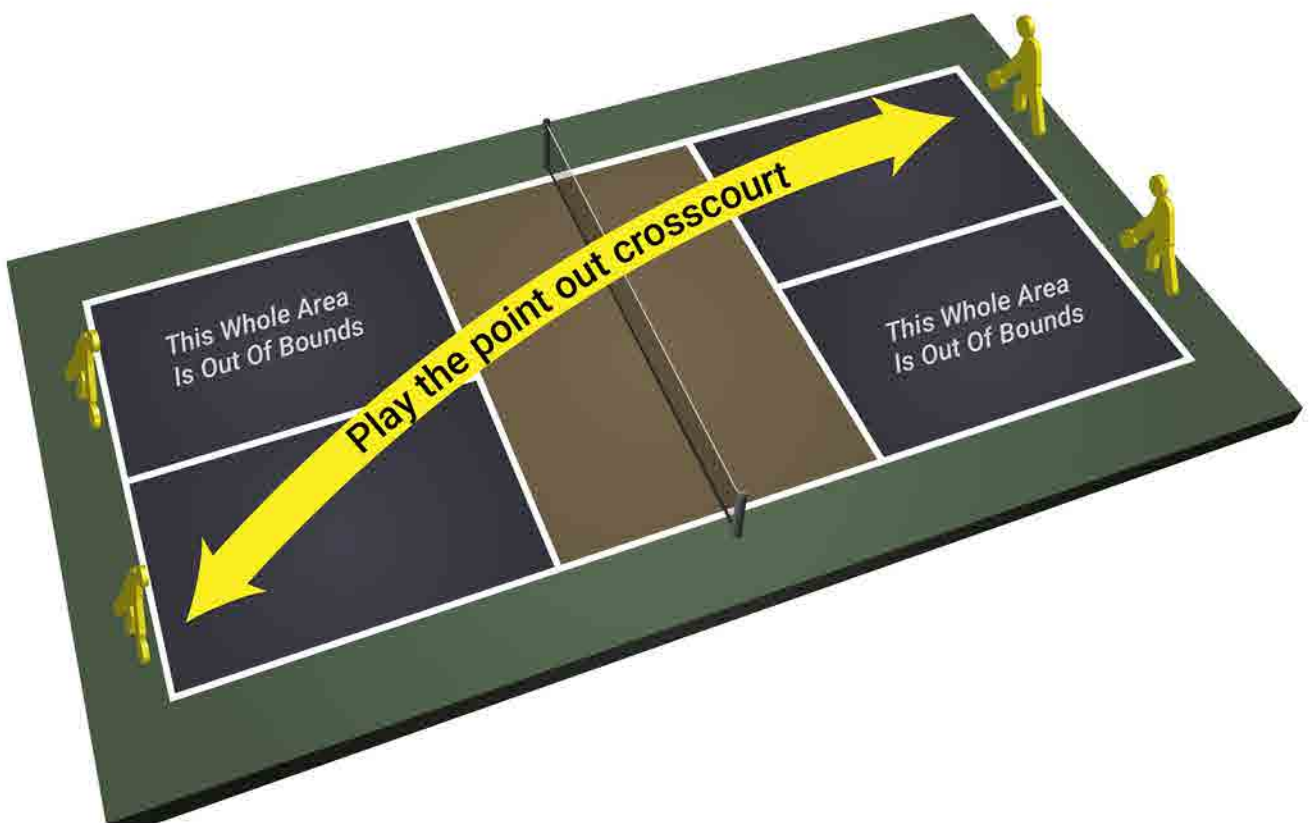
Footwork, hand eye coordination, placement of ball toss, strategy.

Set Up:

One player on baseline with paddle and one player on opposite side with no paddle. The game is to be played on half of the court like skinny singles.

Description:

This is a game to teach the catcher to move to the ball, keep their hand out in front, do not take a backswing, do not have a follow through but to catch and toss or throw the ball back. If the player hits the ball low to you and you have to catch the ball with your fingers pointing down, you have to underhand toss the ball back over the net. If the player with the paddle hits the ball high where you catch the ball with your fingers up, then you can throw the ball down aggressively or with an angle.



Catcher vs Player



Strategies:

This game will quickly teach you that if you can move and catch the ball on your side of the net, your opponent, with their paddle, will have a very difficult time to put the ball away. They will have to place the ball low because if they hit the ball high, you can catch and throw it at them.



Game:

Keep track of the score and play a game



Dinks Rotate After Miss



Skills Developed:

Shot selection of type of dink; covering angles; pace control; movement.

Set Up:

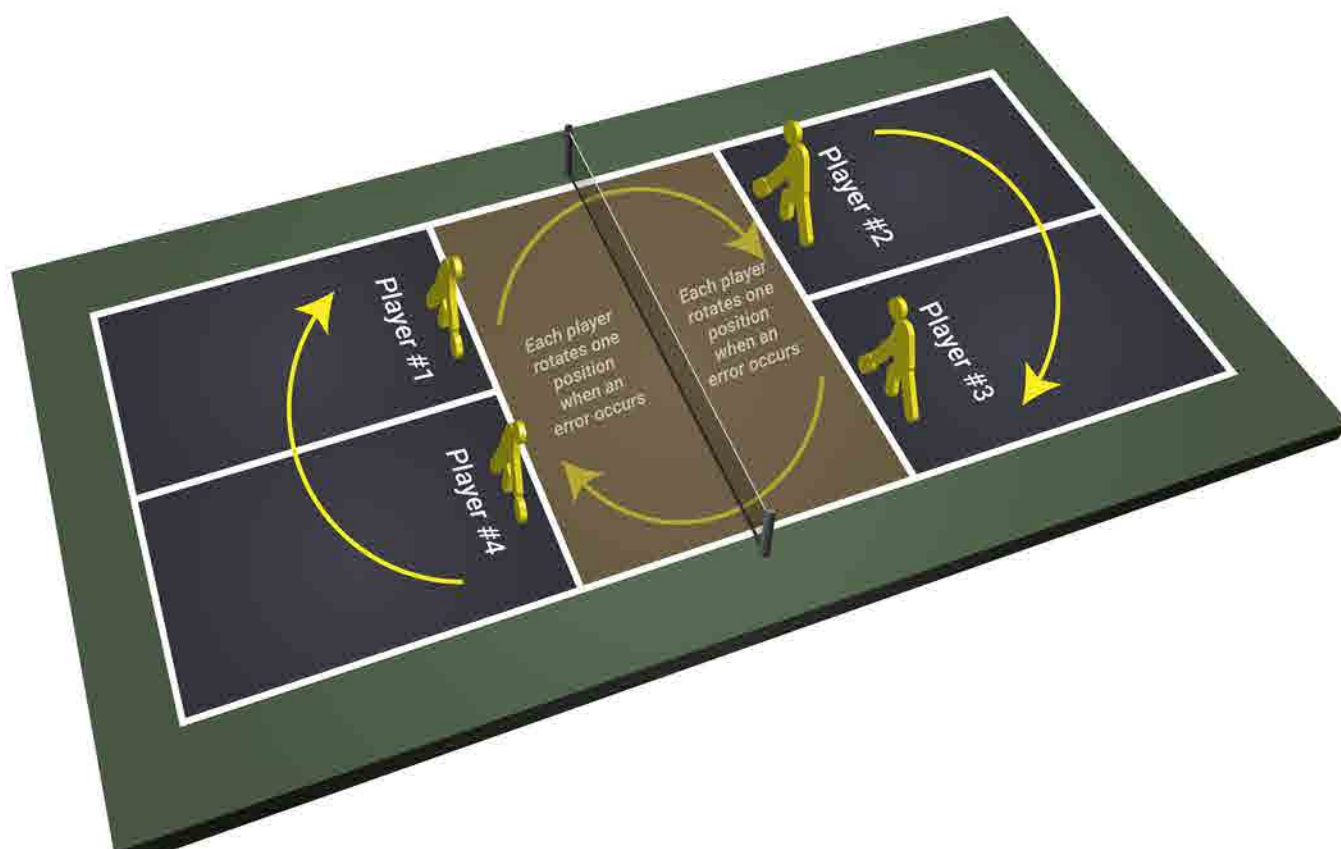
4 players at the NVZ line.

Description:

One player starts off a dinking rally and the ball must land in the kitchen. After a miss by anyone, the players rotate clockwise to the next position. Players will rotate through all 4 positions.

The Progressions of the skill:

The pace of your dinks can be increased; you can allow the ball to land on the other side of the NVZ line; you can play the points out to allow volleys



Dinks Rotate After Miss



Games:

Keep track of your misses and announce the number before the start each dink rally. When you have 5 mistakes, you are out and that leaves 3 players. When another player is out after 5 mistakes, the game is down to two players. Play until you have a winner.



Strategies:

Dinking strategies emphasize control and eliminating unforced errors. The phrase, "Dink Responsibly-Don't Get Smashed", communicates the truth about dinking. Against good volleyers, attacking is very risky. Against players that don't volley well, attacking is a good way to win the point. At the highest levels, the dinking is longer because the volleys are so good. At the lower levels, the dinking game has shorter rallies because a player is always attacking. This drill is to test how consistent each player can be.

Dinking with Line



Skills Developed:

Consistency, Pace and Height control, placement.

Set Up:

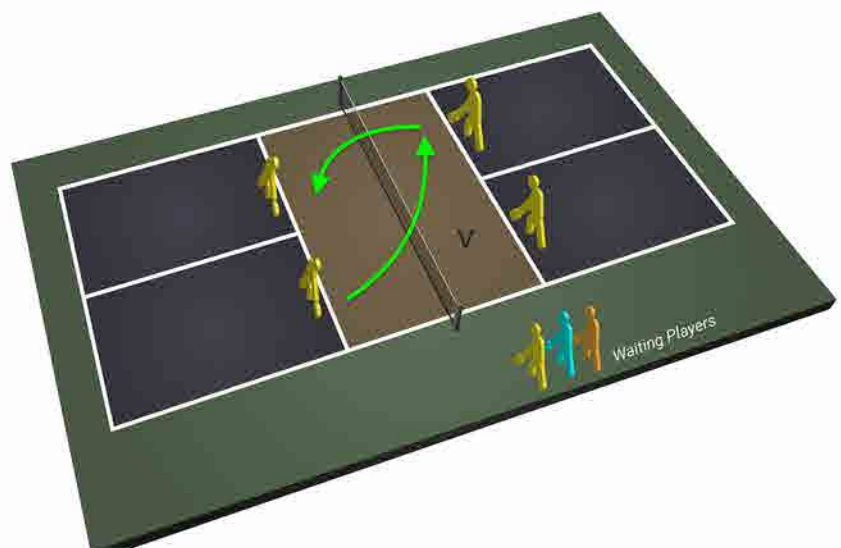
All 4 players up at the NVZ line. Players waiting in line on the side of the court where the first player in line replaces any player who makes a mistake.

Description:

The drill is set up to have 4 players dinking and when one of the 4 players makes a mistake, the first player in line replaces the player who made the mistake and that player moves to the end of the line.

The Progressions of the skill:

1. The drill is designed to have long rallies to develop consistency and placement. The ball must land in the kitchen with the NVZ line being in play.
2. The drill can progress to hitting longer dinks past the NVZ line, but balls should not be volleyed.



3. You can play this drill that after 4 hits, anything goes. This means that you can attack to make the opponents volley.

Strategies:

The drill is to develop the mentality of patience and consistency. Keep the ball in play and move the ball around to three common areas: down the line, cross court, and to the middle.

Crazy 8 Dinks



Skills Developed:

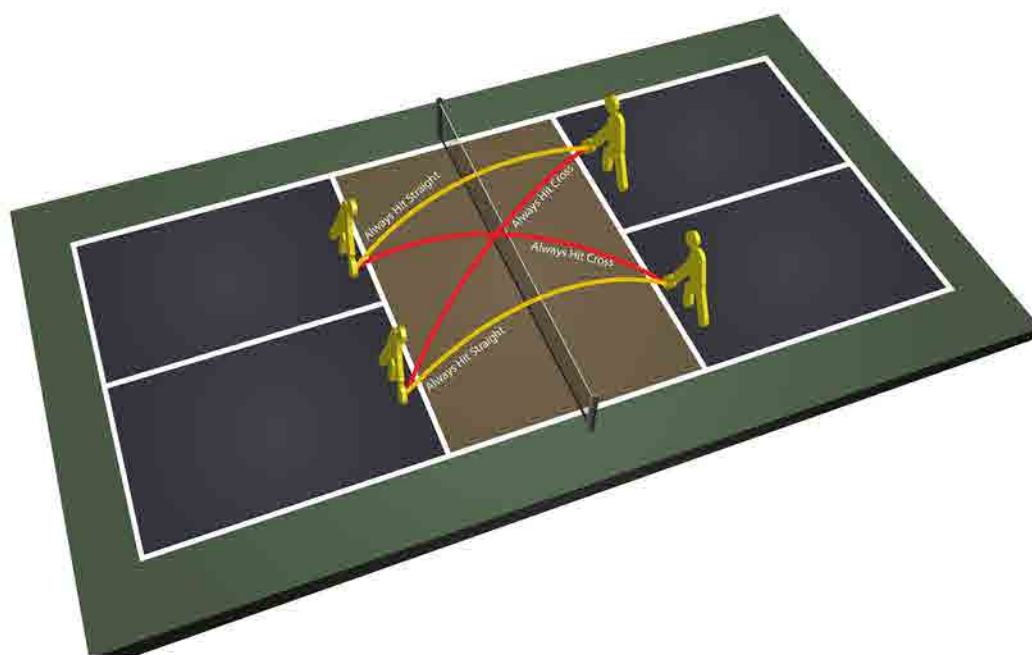
Ball control to hit angles down the line and cross court.

Set Up:

Four players are on their NVZ line.

Description:

The drill is designed to have the two players always hit the ball crosscourt and the other two players always hit the ball down the line. Start out like you do in a game with one player on the even side hitting the first ball crosscourt. The player receiving this ball hits the ball down the line. The third shot is crosscourt. The 4th shot is down the line which completes the crazy 8 where all 4 players will have hit the ball. Continue this drill and see how long you can keep the rally going.



The Progressions of the skill:

This drill is designed to only hit dinks. You can hit your dink to the designated player's forehand or backhand. Develop both topspin and under spin.

Strategies:

The idea of the drill is to keep the ball in play and have long rallies. Increase the pace to challenge your partners. Also work on placement to hit to your partner's forehand or backhand.

Dinking Game - Ping Pong Rally On



Skills Developed:

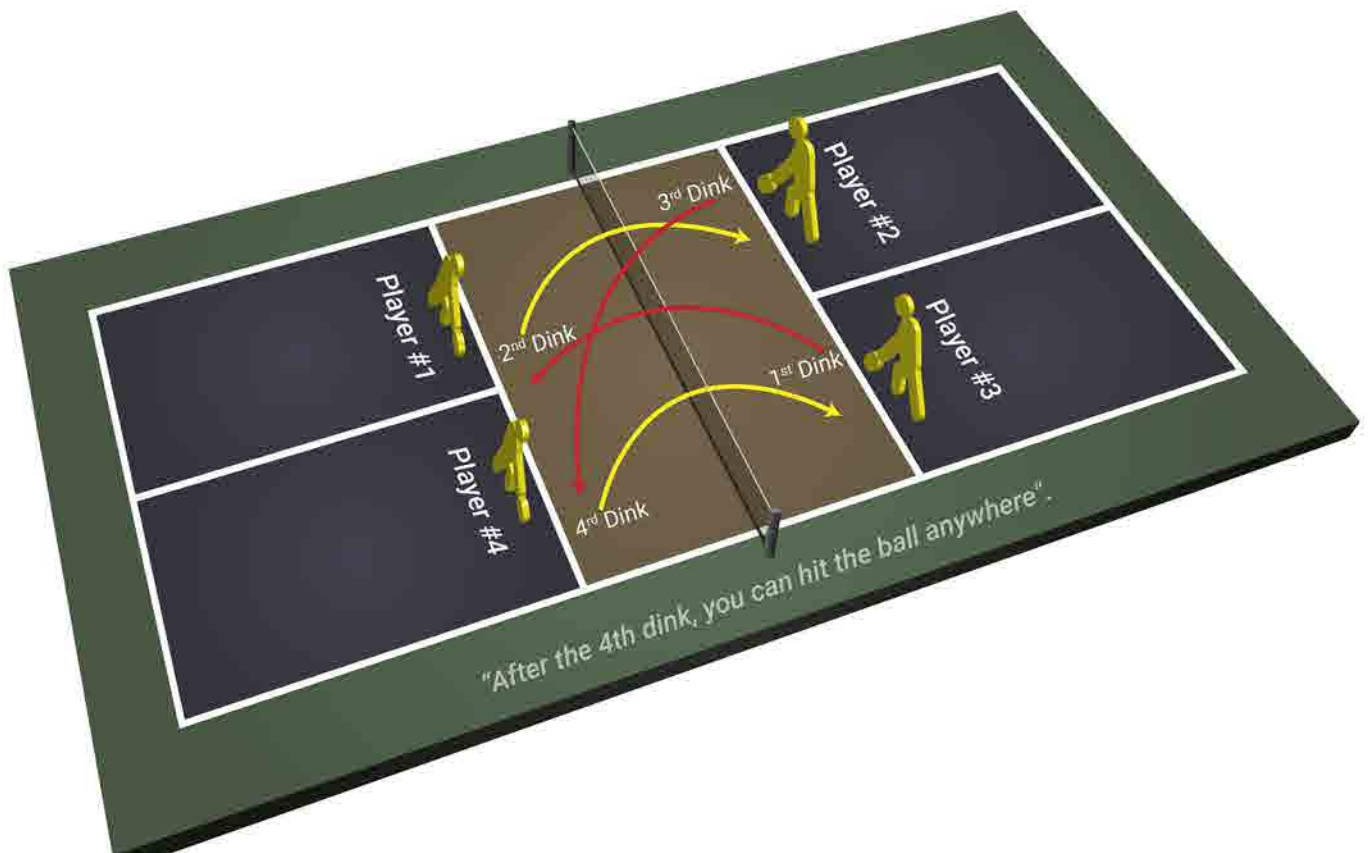
Footwork; covering angles; dinking control; reaction time to volleys.

Set Up:

Have 4 players up at their NVZ line.

Description:

One player starts of a dink and the ball must be hit 4 consecutive times which the starting player says, "Ping-Pong-Rally-On" as each of the 4 dinks are hit. The 5th dink and all dinks after can be hit anywhere. You can attack which initiates a volley duel, you could lob, or you can continue to hit dinks. The strategies are an important aspect of this game. The 2 main strategies are to hit dinks and be ready for the "opponent" to attack or you attack when your "opponent" gives you a higher attackable ball.



Dinking Game - Ping Pong Rally On



Strategies:

The strategies are an important aspect of this game. The main strategies are:

1. To hit dinks and work the point to be defensive and move the ball around in order to get a higher ball to attack or hit through an opening.
2. Hit more aggressive dinks that force your "opponents" into hitting a half volley or low volley.
3. Be the first to attack and initiate a shot at your opponent's weaker side and get ready to have a volley duel.
4. Hit a Lob off of a dink over one of your opponent's backhand side.



Dingles



Skills Developed:

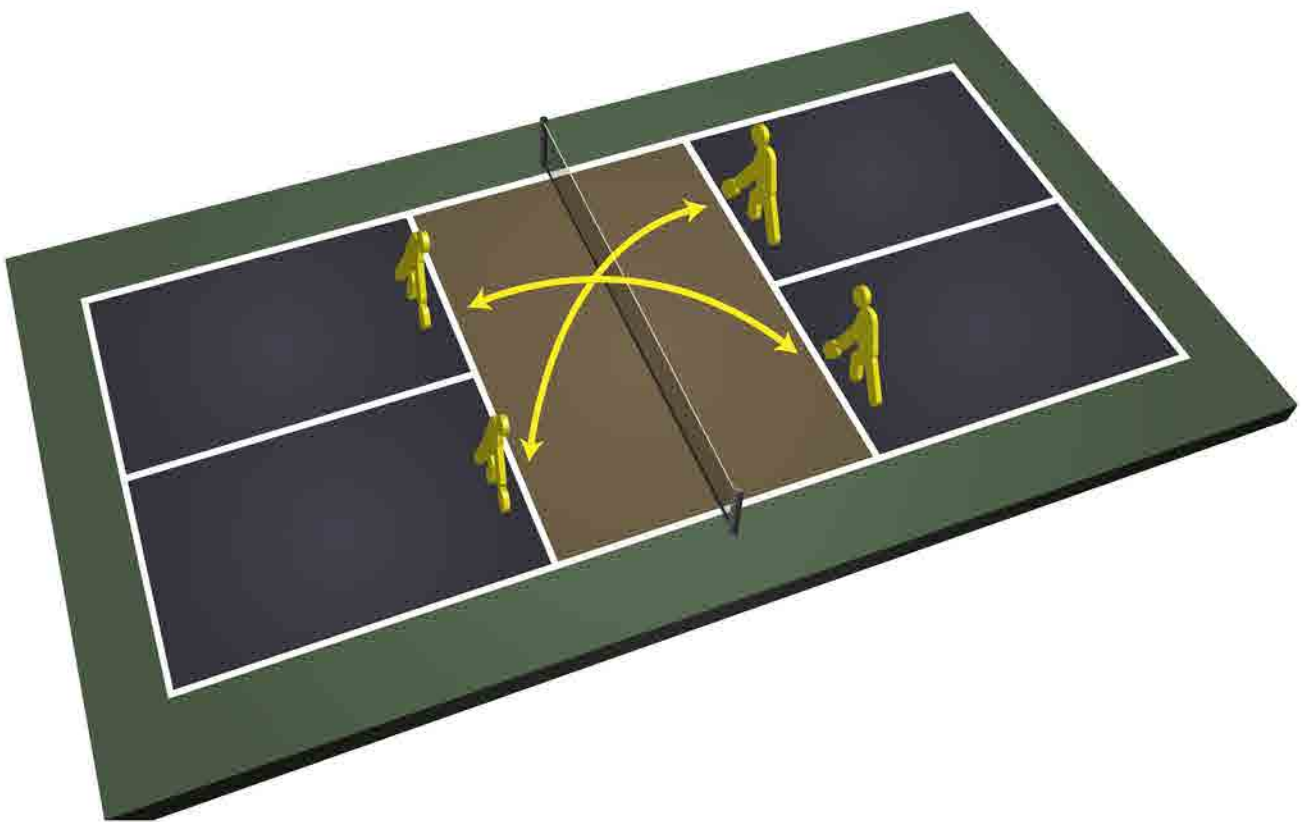
Consistency of your dinking game, pace control, depth control, spin development.

Set Up:

All 4 players up at the NVZ line.

Description:

You have two balls being played crosscourt at the same time. When two balls are being played, the ball must land in the kitchen. Try to keep each rally going but inevitably, an error will be made to which one or both of those players shouts "Dingles". Now the remaining ball can be played anywhere. The ball does not have to land in the kitchen. At this point, generally all hell breaks out and attacking shots come very soon and the point doesn't last long.



Dingles



The Progressions of the skill:

Develop consistency and once you have long rallies, develop placement to move your opponent or force them to hit backhands and forehands.

Strategies:

Hit your dinks softer to less skilled players and increase the speed and placement against better players.



Drives with a Line



Skills Developed:

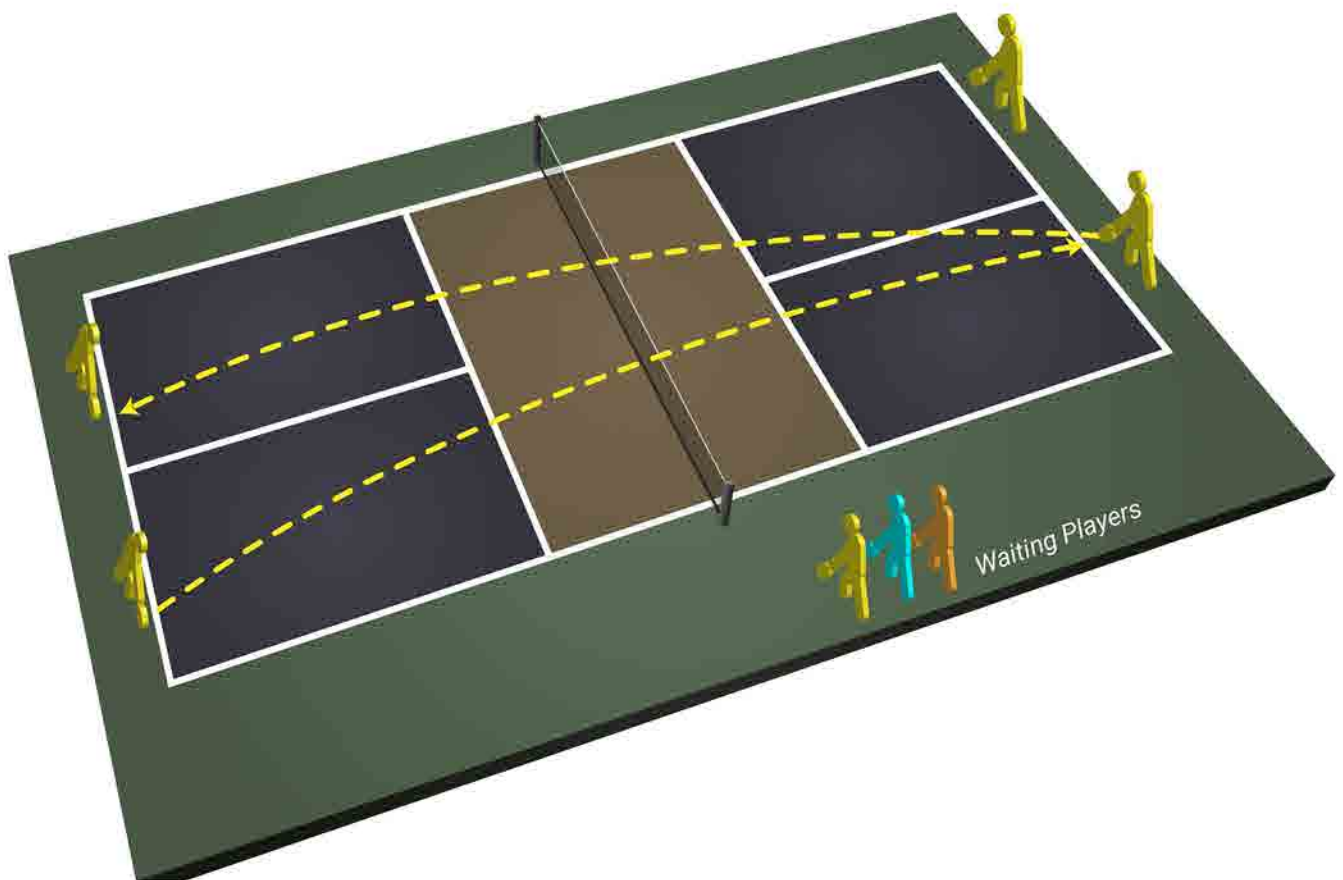
Consistency; placement to the even or odd side of the court; placement by controlling pace, height, and angle; develop your shot selection by deciding if you are going to hit topspin or under spin.

Set Up:

All 4 players start at the baseline. Players waiting in line on the side of the court.

Description:

The drill is set up to have 4 players hitting drives. When one of the 4 players makes a mistake, the first player in line replaces the player who made the mistake and that player moves to the end of the line. The players should be working on hitting their shots with both topspin and under spin.



Drives with a Line



The Progressions of the skill:

1. The drill is designed to have long rallies to develop consistency and placement. The ball must land over the NVZ line.
2. Hit your Drives with added pace and depth.

Strategies:

The drill is designed for you to develop consistency and control.



Crazy 8 Drives



Skills Developed:

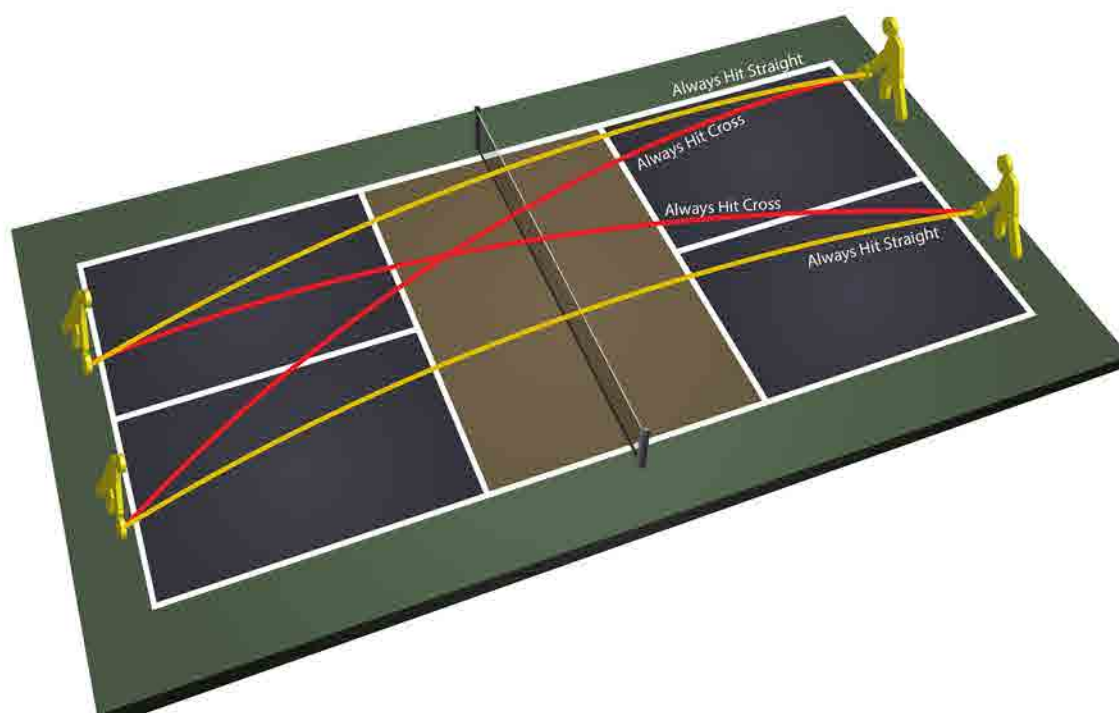
Ball control to hit angles down the line and cross court.

Set Up:

The drill is done from the baseline with 4 players.

Description:

The drill is designed to have the two players always hit the ball crosscourt and the other two players always hit the ball down the line. Start out like you do in a game with one player on the even side hitting the first ball crosscourt. The player receiving this ball hits the ball, which is the 2nd hit, down the line. The third shot is crosscourt. The 4th shot is down the line which completes the crazy 8 where all 4 players will have hit the ball. Continue this drill and see how long you can keep the rally going.



The Progressions of the skill:

You can progress with hitting deeper drives and adding more pace. Practice hitting topspin and under spin which is also called slice.

Strategies:

The idea of the drill is to keep the ball in play and have long rallies. Increase the pace and depth to challenge your partners.

Reset from Mid Court



Skills Developed:

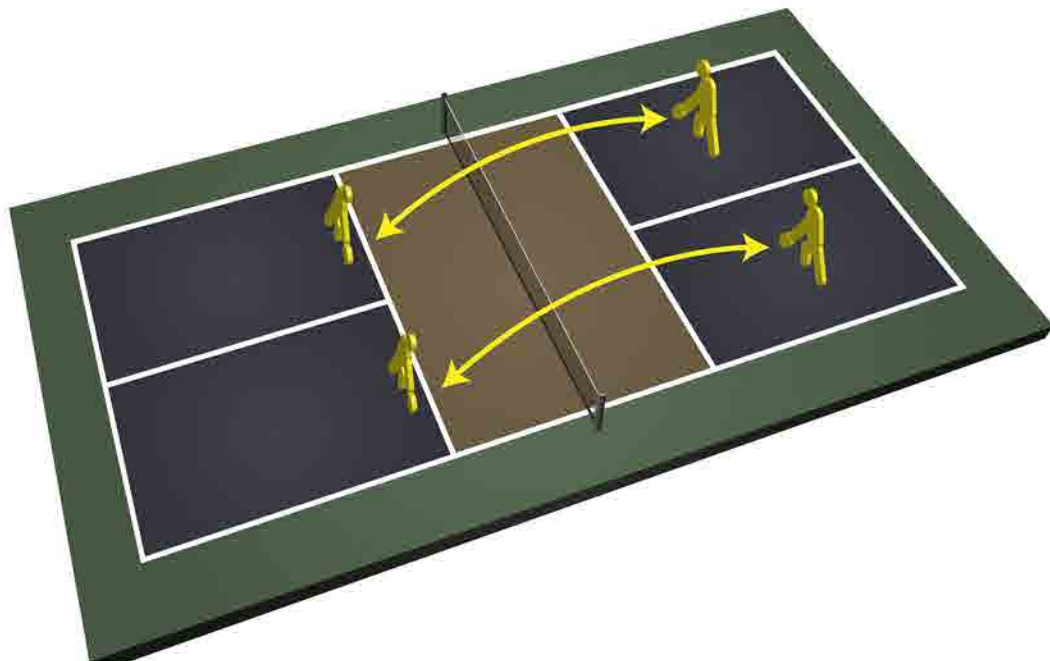
Good hands; nice touch; soft hands; great feel; Drop Volleys and Half Volleys.

Set Up:

One or two players position themselves 5 to 7 feet behind the NVZ line with the other 1 or 2 players up at their NVZ line.

Description:

The drill is designed for the 1 or 2 mid court players to practice and develop resetting shots into the opponent's kitchen. The 1 or 2 players up hit shots with varying speeds and heights to challenge the mid court players. The players up do not hit drop shots into the kitchen as the drill is for the 2 mid court layers to practice hitting defensive and some offensive shots from the mid court. So the 2 players back reset and can attack while the 2 players at the NVZ line hit their shots to challenge the other players.



The Progressions of the skill:

Start the drill with slower paced shots because the emphasis is on the mid court players developing the mechanics for an under spin drop volley and a small motion for the half volley. The players up can increase the speed of their shots to challenge the mid court players. The players in the mid court area can hit attacking shots if they get a slower or weaker shot.

Reset from Mid Court



Games:

Play out points with scoring. It is more difficult to win a point from the mid court. So if that team wins, they stay at the mid court. If they lose the point, they move up to their NVZ line and the other two players move back to the mid court area.

Strategies:

The main strategy is for the up players to challenge the mid court players to hit up on their low shots aimed at their feet. When you want to work on drop volleys, then the up players hit higher balls. This is a common shot in many levels where players are advancing forward and have to play shots from the mid court or transition area of the court.



Skinny Singles or Sick Trx is Playnig all 4 Patterns



Skills Developed:

Movement, all the shots, strategies.

Set Up:

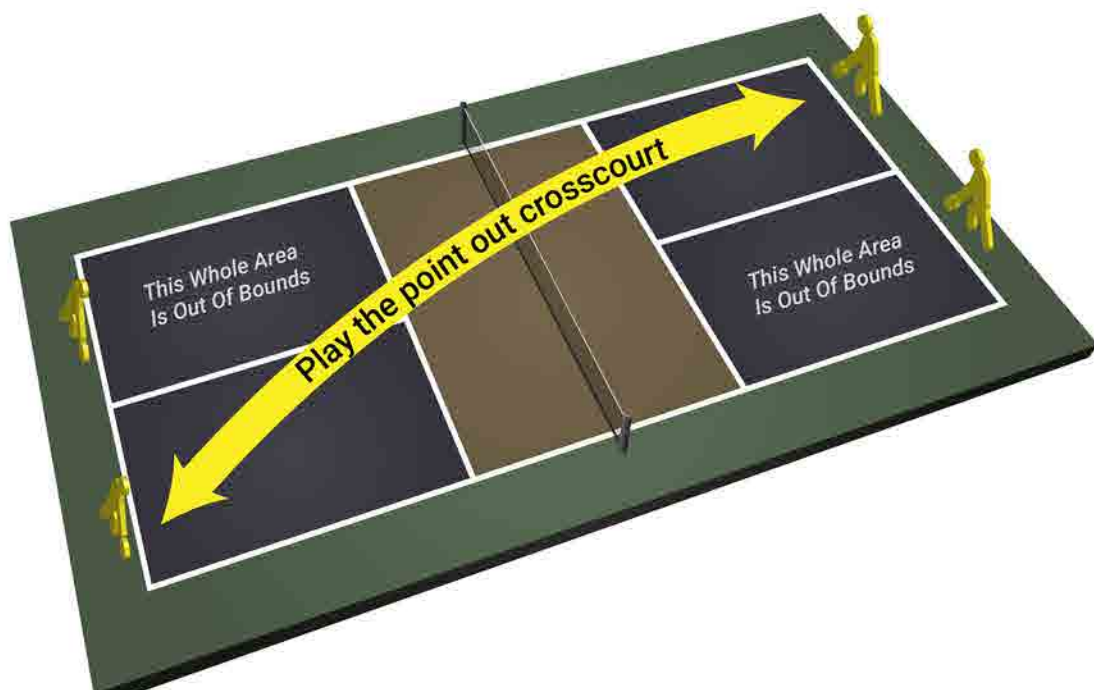
One player on each side of the net at the baseline like you are starting a game. You can place a piece of tape going from the center net strap to the NVZ line which makes each side of the court 10 feet wide.

Description:

Skinny Singles is playing Pickleball on one half of the court to your opponent's half of the court. You can play straight ahead or cross court. Skinny Singles is basically a drill that will test one's ability to keep the ball in play and who has the best hands for offensive and defensive shots. When you are playing one half of the court straight ahead, the court is 10 feet wide and therefore very difficult to hit a winner.

The game or drill will test your ability and skills in many ways:

- * To keep the ball in play.
- * To keep the ball low to your opponent so they can't hit overpowering shots.
- * To be consistent with defensive shots.
- * To develop quickness to move to your opponent's shot on your side of the court.
- * To develop your skills to keep your paddle face in the correct position to return shots.
- * To develop offensive shots with power when a ball is hit high enough to attack.



Skinny Singles or Sick Trx is Playnig all 4 Patterns



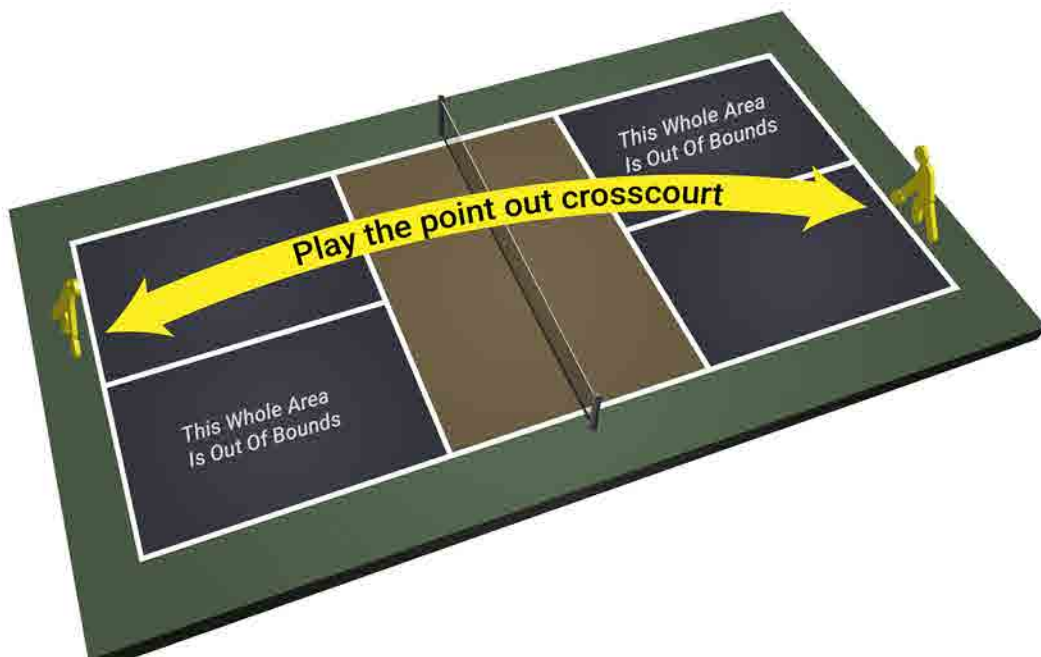
Skinny Singles really becomes a test to see who has the better hands. By that I mean, who can keep the ball in play longer. Most pickleball is played in doubles and opponent's generally hit the ball to the weaker player. In Skinny Singles, there is no one to blame but yourself. You are in a showdown of you verses another player on the court where you have narrowed the court size to eliminate winners and simply see who is more skilled in all of the shots played in a game.

Strategies:

One player hits a Serve to start the point. The Receiver hits a Return of Serve and can move forward as they generally do in normal play. This gives the Server the Third Shot and the shot can be hit as a Drive or Drop. The two different shots develop the two different strategies for doubles play. When you hit a Drive, it is safer to stay back as the Volley may very well land right at your



feet if you were to move forward. You can use the strategy of hitting Drives until you get a weaker or shorter return which forces you to move forward to play the ball.

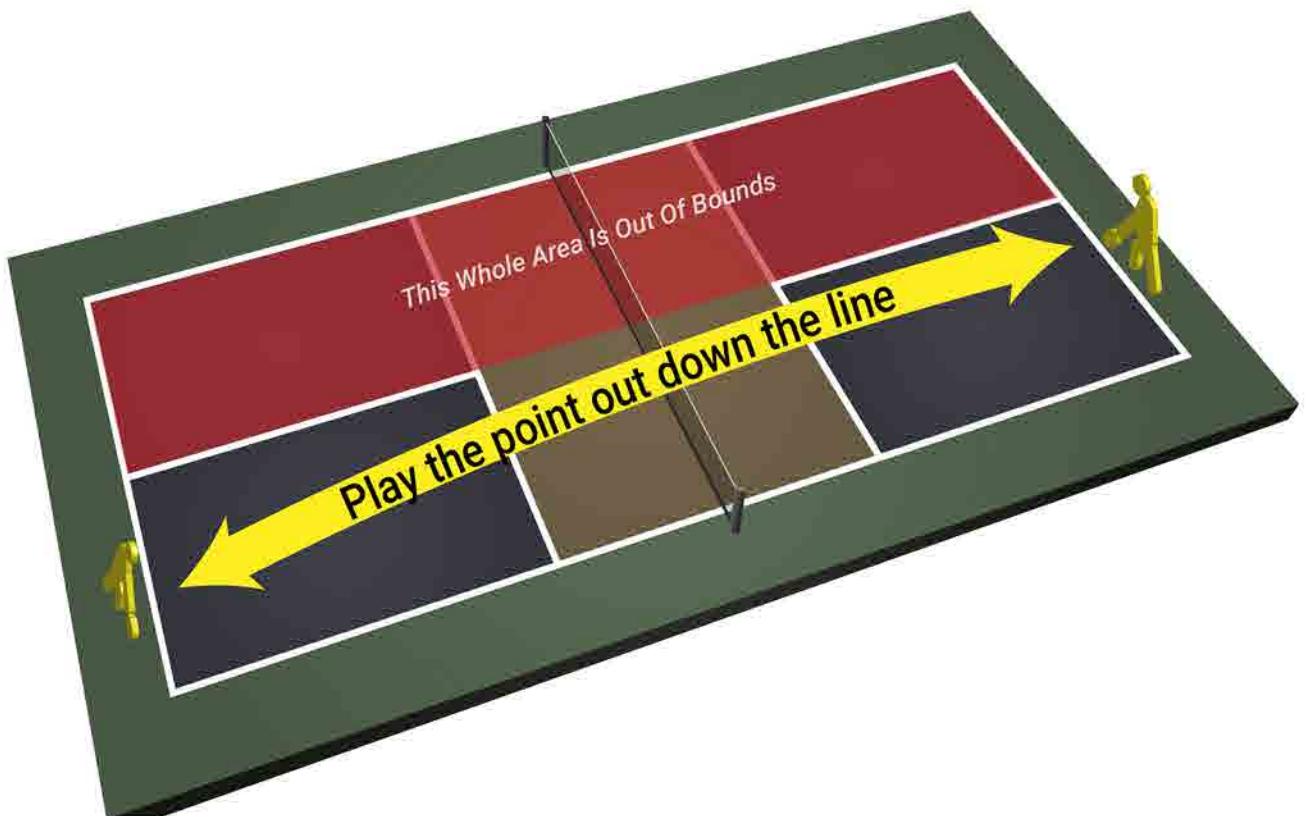


Skinny Singles or Sick Trx is Playnig all 4 Patterns



You can also hit a Drop Shot on the Third Shot and move in to start the kitchen showdown. There are very limited angles when playing straight ahead. When you play Skinny Singles crosscourt, there are more angles. If you get a wide ball off the court, you are allowed to try an ATP, (around the post) to win the point. This will teach you not to hit the ball too wide as the best players are quite capable of getting to your shot and hitting an ATP.

The strategies can boil down to beating your opponent with power or placement or a combination of the two. At the higher levels of pickleball, the volleys are so good that many play the game defensively by placing the ball low and in front of your opponent which forces your opponent into hitting up on the ball to clear the net. Then there are players who use power and try to hit the ball hard enough to force errors. Now you have the option of hitting a Drop Shot into your opponent's kitchen which starts the kitchen showdown.

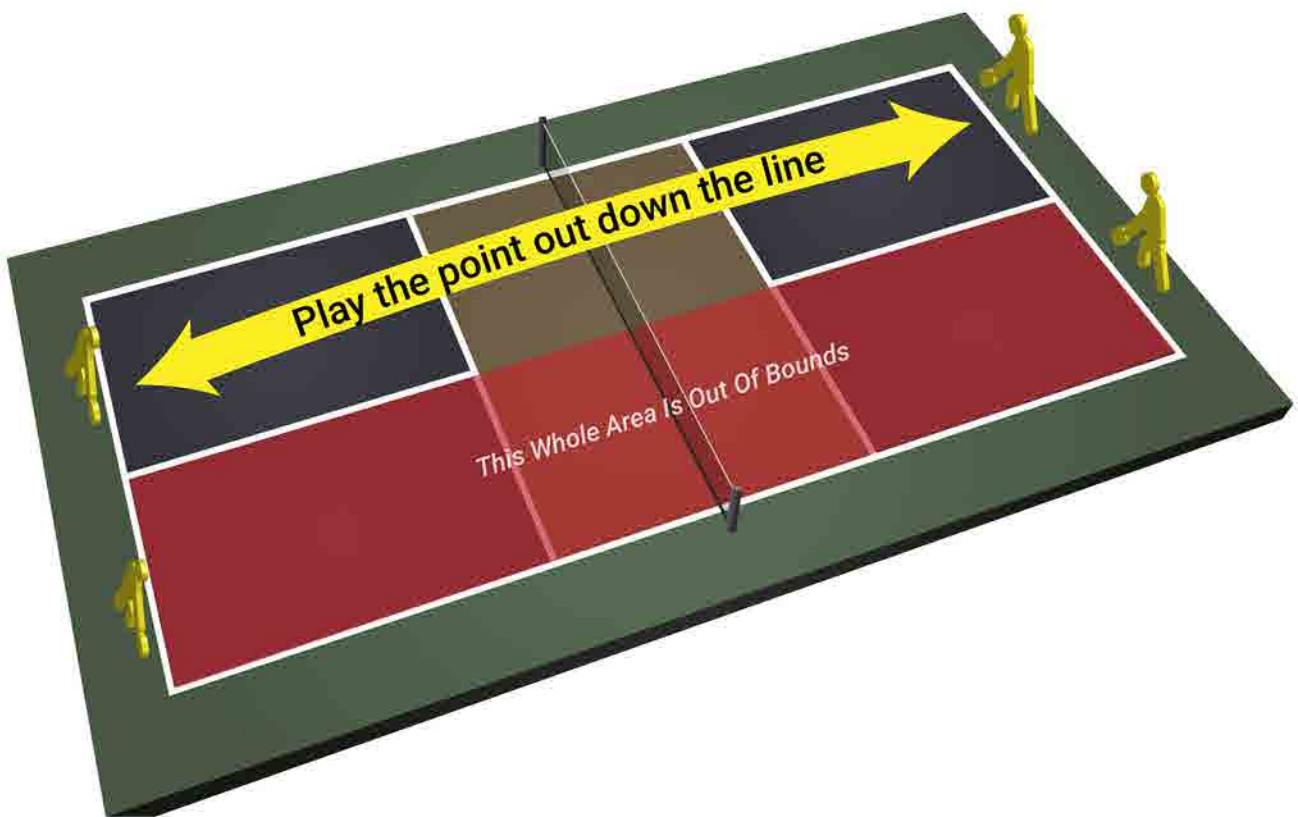


Skinny Singles or Sick Trx is Playnig all 4 Patterns



Scoring:

In Skinny Singles, you always serve according to your score. You only play out points crosscourt depending on the server's score. In Sick Trx, you play out each point according to YOUR score. For example, when the first point is won, the server would move over to the odd side but the receiver stays on the even side because they have 0 points. In Sick Trx, points are played in each of the 4 patterns as long as both players eventually win a point.



Volleying with a Line



Skills Developed:

Good hands to get your paddle on the ball; great touch to develop the pace and placement; appropriate pace to have rallies.

Set Up:

All 4 players up at the NVZ line. Players waiting in line on the side of the court where the first player in line replaces any player who makes a mistake. You can designate a player who is the judge to rule if a volley was hit too hard and / or a winner. Winners are ruled a mistake and that player moves to the end of the line. The purpose of the drill is to eliminate unforced errors and not hit winners. You want to develop placement and power to challenge your partner's volleys.

Description:

The drill is set up to have 4 players volleying and when one of the 4 players makes a mistake, the first player in line replaces the player who made the mistake and that player moves to the end of the line.



Volleying with a Line



The Progressions of the skill:

1. The drill is designed to have long rallies to develop consistency and placement. The ball must be hit with the pace controlled to give the player hitting the ball a reasonable chance to keep the ball in play.
2. The drill can progress to hitting faster volleys to fit the skill set of the players on the court. Remember that the drill is still designed to have long rallies. So volley the ball to extend the rally and challenge your opponents but don't hit overpowering winners.

Strategies:

Work on placement to specifically force your opponents into hitting a forehand or backhand volley. Develop placement and pace control.



Crazy 8 Volleys



Skills Developed:

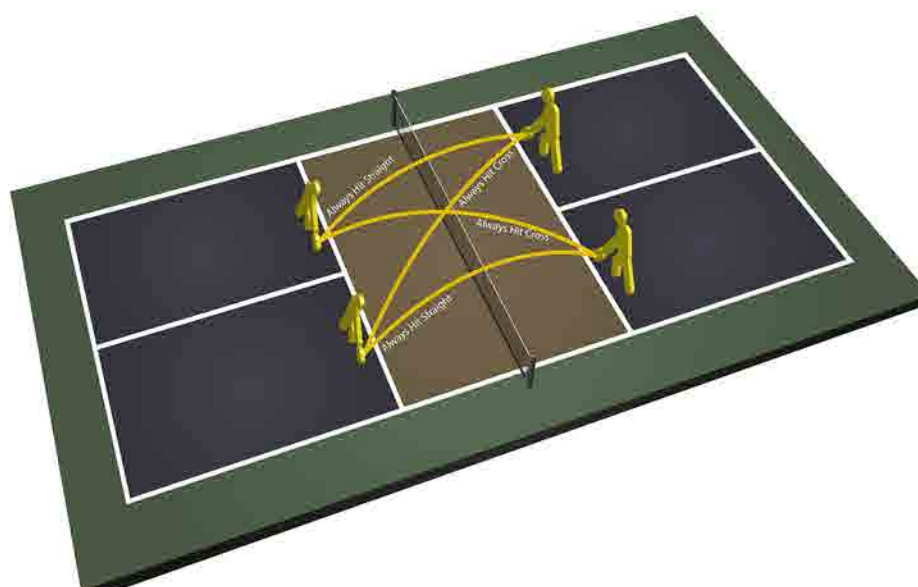
Ball control to hit angles down the line and cross court.

Set Up:

The drill is done from the NVZ line and you need 4 players.

Description:

The drill is designed to have the two players always hit the ball crosscourt and the other two players always hit the ball down the line. Start out like you do in a game with one player on the even side hitting the first ball crosscourt. The player receiving this ball hits the ball, which is the 2nd hit, down the line. The third shot is crosscourt. The 4th shot is down the line which completes the crazy 8 where all 4 players will have hit the ball. Continue this drill and see how long you can keep the rally going.



The Progressions of the skill:

This drill is designed to only hit volleys. You can hit your volley to the designed player's forehand or backhand. Develop both topspin and under spin volleys but control the pace as to not over power your partners. Challenge them but don't try to win the point.

Strategies:

The idea of the drill is to keep the ball in play and have long rallies. Increase the pace to challenge your partners. Also work on placement to hit to your partner's forehand or backhand.

Third Shot- Drive or Drop?



Skills Developed:

Understanding, developing, and recognizing the two main options for the third shot which are the Drive or Drop.

Set Up:

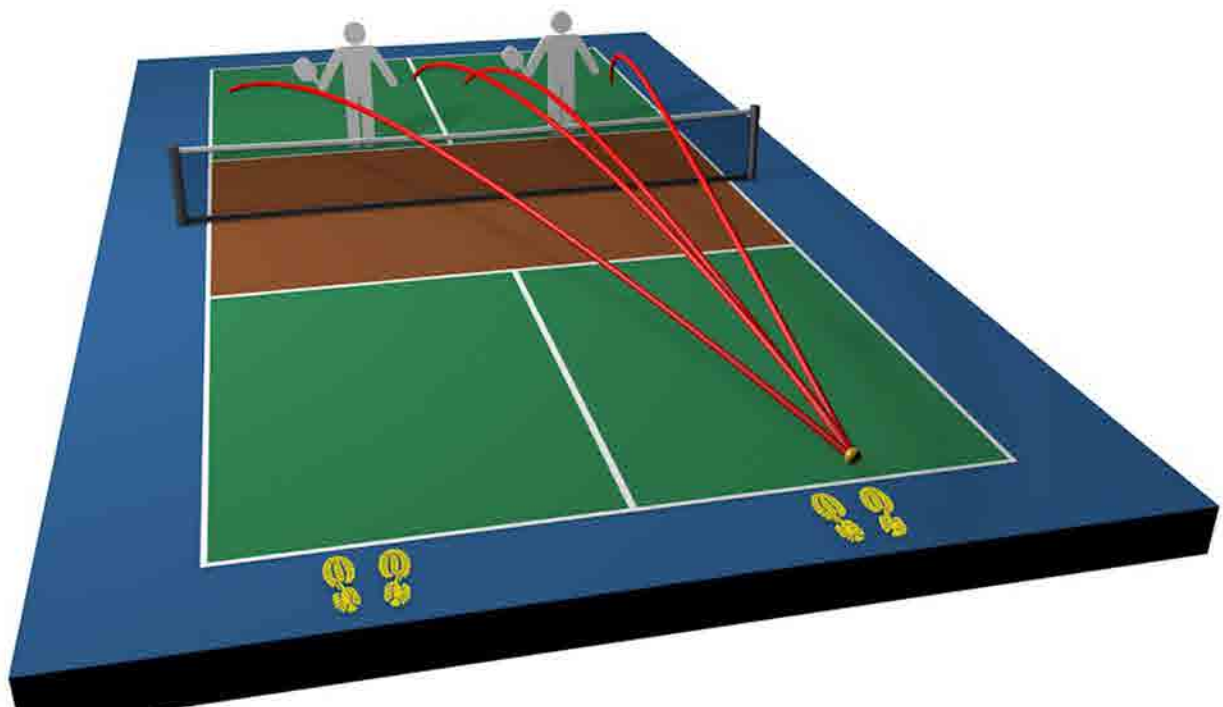
One or two players stand behind their NVZ line and one or two players stand near the baseline.

Description:

The player at the NVZ line feeds a ball to the player at the baseline. The ball is fed easy to more difficult. The player hitting the ball from the baseline area wants to develop both their drive and drop. Choosing which shot to hit should be based upon their strategy and skill set.

One of the objectives is for the player at the baseline to recognize which balls will be difficult to hit a drop shot. For example, some return of serves has excessive spin which makes it difficult to hit a drop shot. On balls that you think are difficult, it is easier to keep the ball in play by hitting a drive and staying back.

As a player develops more ball control, hitting a drop shot allows for the serving team to advance forward to their NVZ line more safely.



Third Shot- Drive or Drop?



The Progressions of the skill:

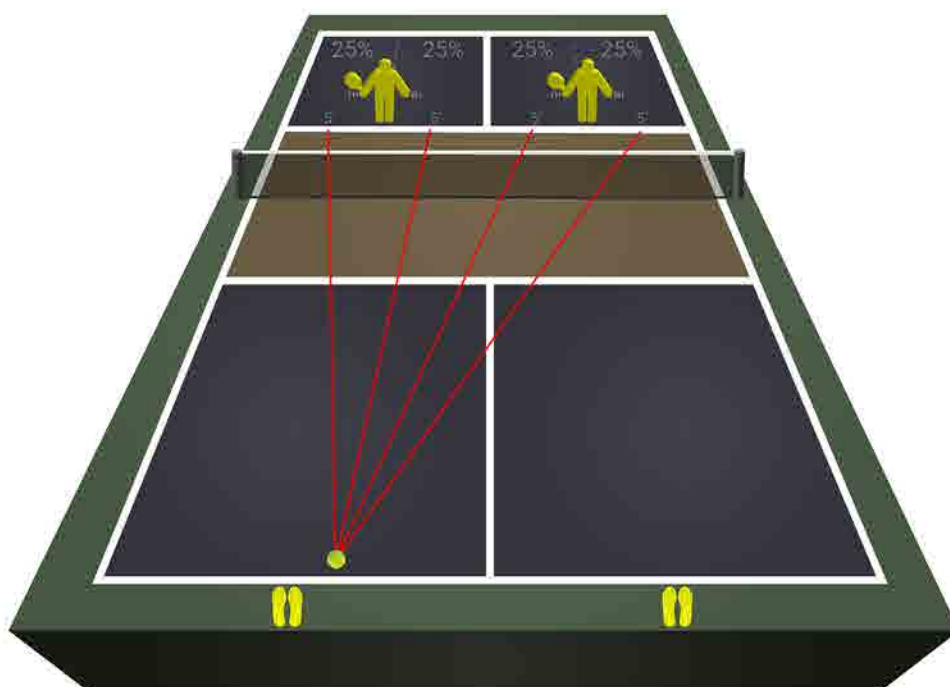
Feed 10 easy balls and count how many Drops are hit into the kitchen. Feed 10 easy balls and see how many Drives are kept in play. Increase the difficulty of the ball being fed and keep a mental track of balls that are difficult to drop.

Games:

Hit Drives and Drops and stay back to test yourself moving to your opponent's shots. Hit Drives and Drops and always move forward and play out the point.

Strategies:

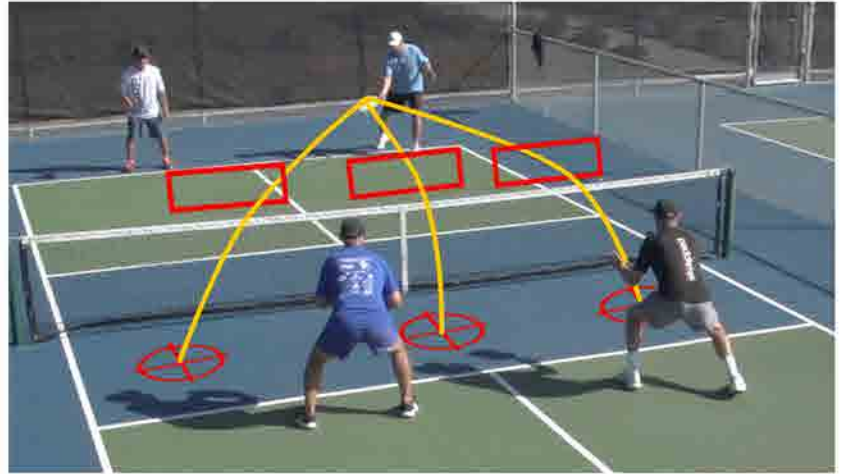
There are a number of strategies on your choice of hitting a drive or drop. The main objective is to keep the ball in play. If your skill set has not advanced to the level of hitting a consistent drop shot, then hit a drive and play their volley like you do against their serve or return of serve. The drive has a much larger target area. When hitting a drive, the player(s) back must be ready to move to the volley. The drive is designed to hit to the larger target area, challenge your opponent's volley, and play their volley after the ball bounces. When your opponent hits their serve, you almost always have a very good attempt to return their serve. When your opponent hits their return of serve to your side of the court, you almost always have a very good attempt to hit a returning shot. The point is, covering returning shots that land in your service box is fairly easy to do.



Third Shot- Drive or Drop?



The strategy of the drop shot is to follow your shot up to your NVZ line. A well hit drop shot will bounce in front of your opponents and force them to hit up on the ball to clear the net. If you have good volleys, that gives you an advantage. Hitting a drive and moving forward will require you to have better skills to defend and / or attack your opponent's volley. You will be forced into hitting volleys, low volleys, and half volleys. You may get an occasional pop up volley and that is generally when your drive is somewhat overpowering. Hitting a third shot drive and playing the returning volley after the ball bounces is a good strategy named the "Third Shot Drive and 5th Shot Drop".



Hitting a forceful drive and moving forward is named "The Shake and Bake". But if your drive does not force a defensive pop up volley, it could be called "The Shake and Cooked", because you will lose against good volleyers.

Backing Up Defense



Skills Developed:

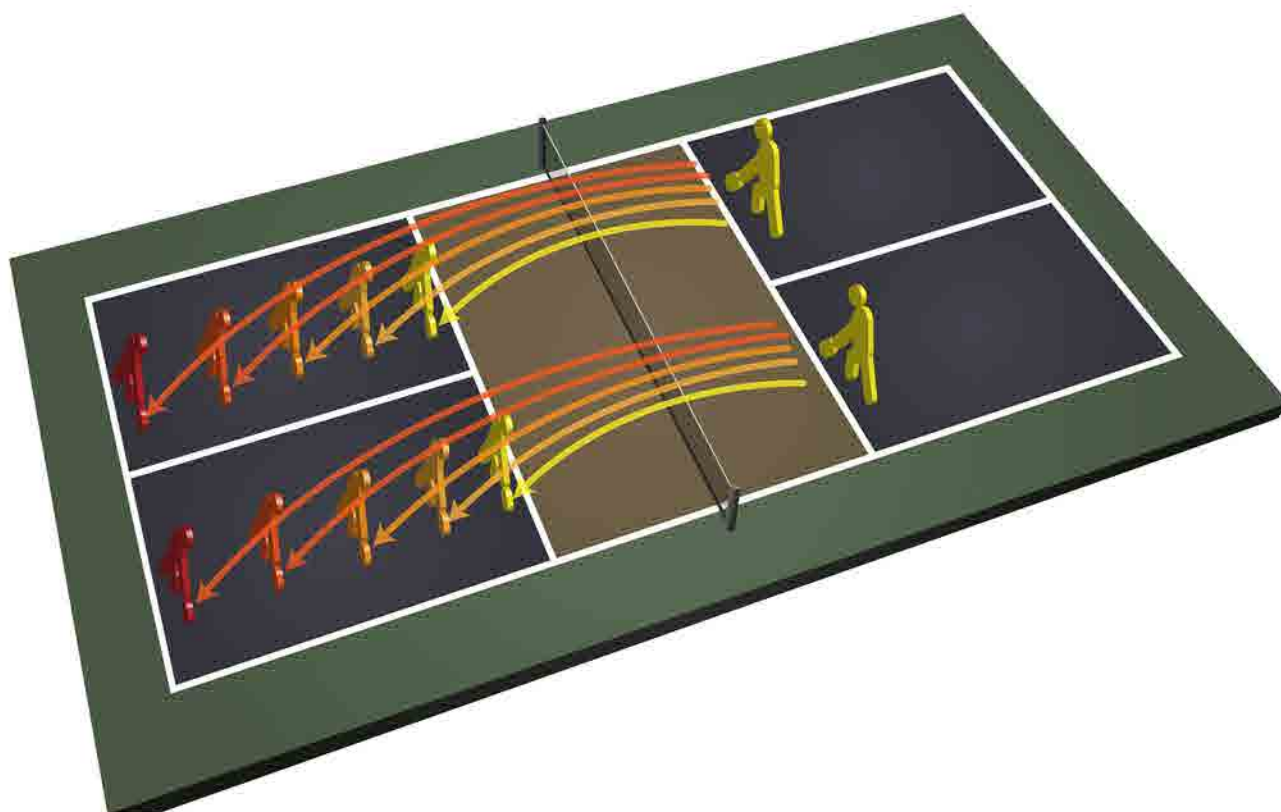
Footwork of backing up; good hands to block balls; nice touch to return balls into the kitchen; shot selection.

Set Up:

Both players at their NVZ line.

Description:

This drill is designed to practice good defense while backing up as well as develop drop shots into the opponent's kitchen from different depths. In a regular game of pickleball, there will be times when the ball is popped up or simply hit high enough for the opponents to hit hard and attack. A common play scenario is when you are advancing through the transition area of your court, also called the mid court or no man's area, and either you or your partner hits a ball too high that can be attacked. A sound defense is to back up giving you more time to react to the incoming hard shot. It is a drill designed to develop your defensive skills.



Backing Up Defense



The Progressions of the skill:

The partner who stays at the NVZ line while the opposing player is backing up should hit challenging shots but not overpowering shots. The idea of drills is to challenge and give your drill opponent a reasonable chance to get the ball back into play. When you are warming up with your partner before a game, generally you both start up at your NVZ line hitting Dinks. After dinking for a while, one of you will back up to end up at the baseline hitting drops and drives. As you back up, your partner wants to hit balls to make you return shots from all different areas. Drills are designed to keep the ball in play and at the same time challenge your partner. So hit the ball accordingly.

Strategies:

It is a lousy strategy to hit a short lob and move forward. Likewise, if you or your partner tries a lob from your NVZ line and you recognize that the lob is too short, it is a good defense to back up and keep your paddle out in front of you as you do. Your paddle becomes your shield to not only protect you but also hopefully block the attacking shot back into play. This drill is designed to work on moving back through your transition area because there are times to move back. It is not always an area to move forward.



5 Minute Warm Up



Skills Developed:

All shots and skills are used in this complete all around drill.

Set Up:

Generally both players start out at the NVZ line. From there, after Dinks and Volleys have been hit and warmed up, one player will begin to back up incrementally to hit all shots from mid court and then from the baseline. Then this player moves forward to their NVZ line and the partner backs up to hit all shots from mid court to the baseline, which can include lobs and overheads. Then at the 4 minute mark, both players get to the baseline and do the 3 shot drill which is Serves, Return of Serves, and the Third Shot Drive or Drop.

Description:

The 5 minute warm up is used in tournaments where you consistently have only 5 minutes to warm up before the referee starts play. In this 5 minutes, both you and your partner want to understand a routine so that you both hit all the shots that will be used in a game. The drill progresses from Dinks, to Volleys, mid-court shots, baseline Drives and Drops, and Lobs and Overheads. The order is then reversed for the partner. The end of the 5 minute warm up is hitting Serves, Return of Serves, and the Third Shots

The Progressions of the skill:

You have to develop the timing of this drill so that all the shots by both players are accomplished in the short 5 minute period of time. One key to this drill to make sure you hit the ball higher over the net than into the net. The other key is to view it as a warm up and don't hit the ball too hard or harder than your partner can handle.

Strategies:

The 5 minute warm up drill is designed to have both players warm up all of the shots from different areas on the court. It should be thorough and in order to do this in 5 minutes, the partners have to progress through a synchronized routine.