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Pickleball Skill Level Guidelines

The following are a guide for evaluating your skill level. They were developed to provide greater detail than guidelines listed by the USA Pickleball on their website (www.usapickleball.org). These are used by the Voyager Pickleball Club Rating Committee in their Skill Assessments.

*** Physical restrictions can inhibit one's performance. A Voyager rating will be commensurate with one's ability to meet these guidelines.**

3.0 Skill Level

- Knows basic rules and how to keep score
- Demonstrates control on forehand groundstroke (placement, direction, depth)
- Demonstrates control on backhand groundstroke (placement, direction, depth)
- Placing serves deep into the court
- Getting 70% of serves and return of serves "in"
- Successfully returning 65% of volley shots
- Uses deeper and higher returns of serve to allow time to approach the net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly rather than staying back
- Sustains a short volley session at the net
- Exhibits correct court positioning for doubles and how to "move as a team"
- Using the forehand lob with some success
- Sustains a "dink" exchange at the net
- Hits a soft "drop shot" to approach the net (3rd shot drop, 5th shot drop, etc)
- Adjusts to differing ball speeds (hitting & returning)
- Hits the ball lower over the net
- Has good mobility*
- Has good quickness*
- Has good hand-eye coordination*

3.5 Skill Level – will ALSO possess most of the 3.0 skills

- Knows all the main rules including how to determine the proper server/score
- Demonstrates control on forehand groundstroke (direction, depth and pace)
- Demonstrates control on backhand groundstroke (direction, depth and pace)
- Getting 80% of serves and return of serves
- Successfully returning 75% of volley shots
- Regularly placing serves deep into the court
- Regularly uses deeper & higher returns of serve to allow time to approach net
- Approaches the non-volley line quickly rather than staying back
- Able to play with partners effectively using court strategies such as partner communication and team coverage of court
- Avoids hitting "out" balls
- Hitting the ball lower over the net consistently
- Demonstrates a wide variety of shots with some consistency
- Learning when to use soft shots vs. power shots to their advantage
- Developing consistency on shot placement, including ability to create and hit "gaps"
- Sustains a short volley session at the net with some control and placement
- Initiates and maintains a sustained "dink" exchange at the net
- Utilizing a soft "drop shot" to approach the net (3rd shot drop, 5th, shot drop, etc)
- Able to adjust to differing ball speeds consistently
- Hitting overheads with control
- Using a forehand and backhand lob when appropriate
- Shows patience in rallies

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- Has good mobility*
- Has good quickness*
- Has good hand-eye coordination*

4.0 Skill Level – will ALSO possess ALL of the 3.5 skills

- Controls and places 90% of both serves and returns of serves
- Controls and places 85% of volley shots
- Consistent and dependable forehand and backhand groundstrokes, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Consistent and dependable volleys, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Consistent and dependable overheads, including directional control, depth, placement and pace
- Has good accuracy in placing lobs
- Consistently makes successful "drop shots" from the back court to approach the net (3rd, 5th, etc shot)
- Regularly initiating and sustaining a "dink" exchange at the net until a "put away" shot is received
- Able to change from a soft shot strategy to a hard shot strategy, and vice versa
- Can block and return hard volleys
- Able to return overheads hit at their feet
- Can handle speed on shots without over-hitting or hitting out of bounds
- Moves effectively with partner, easily switching courts and communicating when required
- Can control play at the non-volley zone line, keeping their opponents back, driving them off the line and controlling the speed or placement of the ball
- Consistently uses shots to create and hit "gaps"
- Recognizes and exploits the weaknesses in their opponent's game
- Can poach effectively
- Maintains patience in rallies
- Has good mobility*
- Has good quickness*
- Has good hand-eye coordination*

4.5 Skill Level

The 4.5 player is distinguished from the 4.0 player by increased skills: a higher level of strategy, quickness of hands, judicious use of power, superior placement of shots and consistently fewer unforced errors.