



Winthrop Pickleball League – Player Ranking Guide

Where does your team fit in?

Please review this ranking system carefully. Assign your team an average number (e.g., 2.5, 3.0, 4.0) based on your current level of skill and consistency. This system is used to place teams in the appropriate division for fair and competitive match play. I will use these responses to place you in the correct Division.

Please **do not** “sandbag” your ability.



BEGINNER (1.0 – 2.0)

1.0 – Absolute Beginner

- Has never played or only hit the ball a few times.
- Does not know the rules or scoring.
- Learning how to hold the paddle and make contact with the ball.
- Cannot sustain a rally or serve consistently.

1.5 – Early Learner

- Has played a few times; can hit the ball over the net occasionally.
- Struggles to keep score or rally consistently.
- Often stands in the wrong position or moves late to the ball.
- Developing paddle control and understanding of the game.

2.0 – Learning the Basics

- Can hit forehands and backhands, but lacks control and placement.
- Can keep short rallies going but inconsistent on serves or returns.
- Knows basic court positioning but has trouble moving efficiently.
- Has some grasp of rules like double bounce and non-volley zone.

ADVANCED BEGINNER (2.5)

- Starting to hit with more intent and less luck.
- Can serve and return fairly consistently (not powerful, but in).
- Understands where to stand and moves into position with more purpose.
- Beginning to try soft shots like dinks or lobs, but execution is inconsistent.
- Can keep score correctly and knows the basic flow of the game.
- Still makes frequent unforced errors but is improving quickly.

INTERMEDIATE (3.0)

- Reliable serve and return with direction and medium pace.
- Sustains rallies and understands doubles movement with a partner.
- Uses forehand/backhand intentionally but struggles with placement under pressure.
- Dinks occasionally and attempts drop shots, but may pop them up.
- Communicates with partner and adjusts to basic strategies.
- Makes fewer unforced errors but still struggles with consistency in faster exchanges.

UPPER INTERMEDIATE (3.5)

- Comfortable with all basic shots: serve, return, dink, volley, lob, overhead.
- Uses placement and control more than power; hits with intention.
- Dinks with purpose and can keep a soft game going.
- Executes drops into the kitchen, although not always perfectly.
- Reacts well to faster-paced rallies and defends effectively.
- Can switch strategies mid-match and recognizes opponents' weaknesses.
- Good partner communication and court coverage.

ADVANCED (4.0)

- Excellent shot selection, accuracy, and anticipation.
- Consistently hits serves and returns with depth and pace.
- Reliable third-shot drops and resets in transition zones.
- Controls tempo with strategic use of dinks, drives, and lobs.
- Rarely makes unforced errors; quick to adapt during matches.
- Demonstrates offensive volleys and aggressive net play without sacrificing control.
- Advanced understanding of partner positioning and rotation.

ADVANCED COMPETITIVE (4.5)

- Near-flawless mechanics, footwork, and anticipation.
- Can neutralize stronger opponents using a mix of power and precision.
- Strategic placement of serves, spin, pace, and off-speed shots.
- Routinely turns defense into offense and controls rallies with poise.
- Exceptional teamwork, communication, and poaching ability.
- Very low error rate, even under pressure.
- Likely competes or places well in regional amateur tournaments.

EXPERT (5.0)

- Professional-level execution in every shot type.
- Can adapt game plans based on opponents' tendencies within a match.
- Uses deception, spin, and court vision to dominate.
- Forces errors rather than waiting for them.
- Makes split-second decisions that consistently produce results.
- Unshakable under pressure, with elite stamina and focus.
- Wins high-level amateur tournaments and may have pro aspirations.