

PICKLEBALL



MODIFIED EVENTS

Singles Level 1 and 2
Doubles Level 1 and 2

TRADITIONAL EVENTS

Singles Levels 3 and 4
Doubles Level 3 and 4

UNIFIED EVENTS

Doubles Levels 3 and 4 (*modified*)
Doubles Levels 3 and 4 (*traditional*)

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Pickleball shall govern all Special Olympics Competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon USA Pickleball rules found at <https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/official-rules/> (usapickleball.org). In such cases, the [Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Pickleball](#) and SOI Article I shall apply.

COMPETITION MANAGEMENT

1. All athletes and Unified Partners must have an assessment score as their entry score.
2. Teams or Singles will be placed into divisions by qualified scores of the team.
3. Teams from the same county may be placed into the same division.
4. Teams are not disqualified based on maximum effort for pickleball.

DIVISIONING

1. Athletes or teams will be divisioned based on their level.
 - a. Level 1: Beginner has an assessment score between 0 – 35
 - b. Level 2: Advanced Beginner has an assessment score between 41 – 65
 - c. Level 3: Intermediate has an assessment score between 68 – 87
 - d. Level 4: Advanced has an assessment score between 98 – 154 +
2. Divisions will be comprised of a minimum of 2 athletes or teams and no more than 5 athletes or teams.
3. Teams comprised of athletes and/or unified partners from two different levels must compete at the assessed level of the higher-rated competitor.
 - a. Athletes and/or unified partners from levels 1 and 2 could comprise a mixed level team playing at level 2.
 - b. Athletes and/or unified partners from levels 3 and 4 could comprise a mixed level team playing at level 4.
 - c. At no time can athletes and/or unified partners from levels 1 and 2 comprise a mixed level team with athletes and/or unified partners from levels 3 and 4.
 - d. Athletes and/or unified partners must be from the same program to compete in doubles.

RULES OF COMPETITION

EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORM

1. Competitors are required to wear a uniform that has a county program listed.
2. Competitors must wear appropriate tennis shoes made for court usage and socks.
3. Doubles and Unified doubles teams should wear matching attire.
4. Athletes and Unified Partners are responsible for providing their own paddles.
5. Ball specifications:
 - a. Competitions held indoors should use balls that are designed for indoor play.
 - b. Competitions held outdoors should use balls that are designed for outdoor play.
6. Paddle Specifications
 - a. The combined length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed 24 inches (60.96 cm). The paddle length cannot exceed 17 inches (43.18 cm). There is no restriction on paddle thickness.
 - b. All other paddle specifications can be found in the USA Pickleball rules.



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COURT DIMENSION

1. For Level 1, singles and doubles will be played on a modified court, 28ft x 20ft.
2. For Level 2, singles and doubles will be played on a modified court, 36ft x 20ft.
3. For level 3 and 4, singles and doubles will be played on a standard pickleball court, 44ft x 20ft.

SERVING

1. The server's arm must be moving in an upward arc when the ball is hit
2. Contact with the ball must be made below the waist
3. The head of the paddle cannot be above the highest part of the wrist when the ball is hit
4. When the ball is struck, the server's feet may not touch the court or outside the imaginary extension of the sideline and centerline and at least one foot must be behind the baseline on the playing surface or the ground behind the baseline
5. The serve is hit diagonally crosscourt and must land within the confines of the opposite diagonal court
6. Only 1 serve attempt is allowed per server

SERVING SEQUENCE

1. Both players on the serving doubles team can serve and score points until they commit a fault (except for the first sequence of a game)
2. The first serve of each side is made from the right-hand court
3. If a point is scored by the serving team, the server switches sides and initiates the next sequence from the left-hand court
4. As more points are scored by the serving team, the server switches back and forth from right to left until a fault is committed and the server loses their serve
5. When the first server loses the serve, their partner then serves from their correct side of the court (except for the first sequence of a game)
6. The second server continues serving until the serving team commits a fault, then giving the serve to the opposing team
7. Once the service has changed to the other team, that team serves from the right-hand court and both players have the opportunity to serve until the team commits 2 faults.
8. In singles, the server serves from the right-hand court when their score is even, and the left-hand court when their score is odd

SCORING

1. Points are only scored by the serving team.
2. No rally scoring should be used.
3. For Level 1, One 9 point game, first to reach 9 points and win by a margin of 2 points wins
4. For Level 2, One 9 point game, first to reach 9 points and win by a margin of 2
5. For Level 3 and 4, 11 point game, first to win 11 points by a margin of 2 points

TWO-BOUNCE RULE

1. When the ball is served, the receiving team must allow the ball to bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before returning
2. After the ball has bounced once in each teams court, following the two-bounce rule, both teams may volley the ball before it bounces or continue to play the ball of the bounce (ground stroke)

NON-VOLLEY ZONE

1. The non-volley zone is the court area within 7 feet on both sides of the net
2. Volleying is prohibited within the non-volley zone
3. It is a fault if, when volleying a ball, the player steps on the non-volley zone including the line



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4. It is a fault if, after volleying, a player's momentum carries them into or touches the non-volley zone, even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.
5. A player may legally be in the non-volley zone any time other than when volleying a ball
6. The non-volley zone is often referred to as "the kitchen"

LINE CALLS

1. A serve contacting any line (except the non-volley zone on a serve) is in play
2. A serve contacting the non-volley zone line is short and considered a fault

FAULTS

1. A fault is any action that stops play because of a rule violation
2. A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team
3. A fault by the serving team results in the server's loss of serve or side out
4. A fault occurs when...
 - a. A serve does not land within the confines of the receiving court
 - b. The ball is hit into the net on the serve or return
 - c. The ball is volleyed before a bounce has occurred on each side of the court
 - d. The ball is hit out of bounds
 - e. A ball is volleyed from the non-volley zone
 - f. A ball bounces twice before being struck by the receiver
 - g. A player, player's clothes, or any part of a player's paddle touches the net or the net post when the ball is in play
 - h. There is a violation of a serving rule
 - i. A ball in play strikes a player or anything the player is wearing or carrying
 - j. A ball in play strikes any permanent object before bouncing on the court

LEVEL MODIFICATION

1. Level 1 - Beginner
 - a. 9-point game, win by 2
 - b. Provides meaningful pickleball training and match play competition for beginning athletes, athletes with limited mobility, tracking skills, and control.
 - c. Learning concentrations; Strokes (forehand, backhand, volleys and serves), Movement, Tracking, Rules and Etiquette, and Matchplay
 - d. Levels 1 & 2: A competitor may step into the non-volley zone if their momentum carries them after hitting the ball below the waist behind the line.
 - e. Level 1- May be allowed one service attempt and allowed a "let serve" replay
2. Level 2 – Advanced Beginner
 - a. 9-point game, win by 2
 - b. Provides meaningful pickleball training and match play competition for beginning athletes, athletes with limited mobility, tracking skills, and control.
 - c. Learning concentrations; Strokes (forehand, backhand, volleys and serves), Movement, Tracking, Rules and Etiquette, and Matchplay
 - d. Levels 1 & 2: A competitor may step into the non-volley zone if their momentum carries them after hitting the ball below the waist behind the line.
 - e. Level 1- May be allowed one service attempt and allowed a "let serve" replay
3. Level 3 – Intermediate
 - a. 11-point game, win by 2



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- b. Provides meaningful pickleball training and competition for athletes who have been successful in level 2. Athletes understand rules, and control the serve, return the serve, can sustain medium paced volley and begin to vary in depths of shots. Athlete skills are sufficient for community play.
 - c. Learning concentrations; Recovery, Advanced strokes (dink and overhead), increased Paddle Control with Movement, Doubles Communication, Etiquette and Strategy, Placement.
 - d. Levels 3 & 4: no modifications to the non-volley zone
 - e. Level 3- Allowed one service attempt and will be expected to play a “let serve” if the ball lands beyond the non-volley zone.
4. Level 4 – Advanced
- a. 11-point game, win by 2
 - b. Provides meaningful pickleball training and competition for athletes who have been successful in level 3. Athletes can serve with pace and vary shot speed and depth, can use the dink shot effectively and sustain dink rally, uses strategy to move opponent and move well as a doubles team.
 - c. Learning concentrations; Speed, endurance, and core training, placement with varying pace, develop spins, doubles strategy, and shot selection strategy.
 - d. Levels 3 & 4: Levels 3 & 4: no modifications to the non-volley zone
 - e. Level 4- Allowed one service attempt and will be expected to play a “let serve” if the ball lands beyond the non-volley zone.

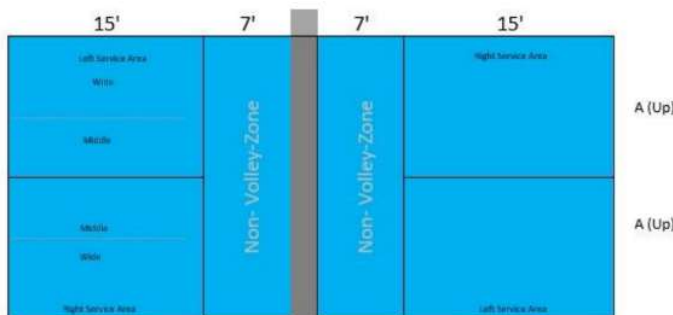
COACHING

1. One designated coach may sit or stand near the court (off the playing surface)
2. Each competitor (athlete or unified partner) or coach may call two timeouts per game, each lasting up to one minute in duration where coaching may be received.
3. A request for a timeout must be made by a competitor or coach to the official or opponent prior to the next serve being played.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Serve (Applicable for both singles and doubles assessments)

- a. The player(s) stands behind the baseline beginning on the Right Side
- b. Each Service Area has two Target Zones: Wide & Middle
- c. First player serves 4 balls from the Right Service Area baseline: 2 Wide & 2 Middle
- d. Second, the player serves 4 balls from the Left Service Area baseline: 2 Wide & 2 Middle
- e. The serve must be diagonal underhand serve with paddle below the waist and no higher than the highest part of the wrist
- f. Serves may be hit out of the server’s opposite hand or dropped (not thrown downward) from any height and hit after the ball bounces; *Accommodations for serving can be made should a competitor be restricted to the use of one hand/arm.
- g. Balls landing in the correct Target area receive 2 points or 1 point for landing in the correct Service Area
- h. If player steps on or over the baseline, it is considered a foot fault and shall receive 0 points



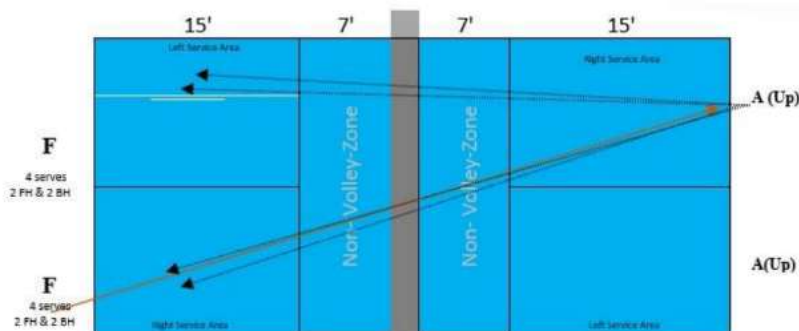


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- i. Balls landing in the Non-Volley Zone shall receive 0 points
 - j. A missed attempt is 0 points and will not be replayed unless it was a let serve
 - k. Served balls landing on a line shall be considered good except Non-Volley Zone line
2. Return of Serve (Applicable for both singles and doubles assessments)

- a. The Feeder/Server, using Competition balls, stand opposite side of the diagonally across from the competitor and shall serve 4 balls to the Right Service box – (2 balls to the Forehand (FH) side and 2 balls to the Backhand (BH) side).



- b. The player stands in the vicinity of the baseline of the Right Service Area to return serve (4 attempts).
- c. The player returns the ball alternately FH Cross Court – FH Down the Line – BH Cross Court – BH Down the Line.
- d. The point is not played out.
- e. The same process is repeated to the Left Service Box.
- f. The player returns the ball alternately FH Court – FH Down the Line – BH Cross Court – BH Down the Line
- g. 2 points are scored if ball lands in directed area or 1 point if the return of serve that lands over the net and within the court boundaries
- h. The server's pace of serve should be appropriate for the players level.



3. Volleys: Hit out of the air no bounce

a. Singles Assessment

- i. The player receives 8 volley attempts
- ii. The player stands 1 meter behind the Non-Volley Line near the center line.
- iii. The feeder stands on opposite side of net, on or near baseline with a basket of Competition balls
- iv. Feeder paddle feeds groundstrokes to athlete and the athlete volleys return toward target area in the following progression
 - 1. 1 forehand cross court
 - 2. 1 backhand cross court
 - 3. 1 forehand down the line
 - 4. 1 backhand down the line
 - 5. 1 forehand cross court
 - 6. 1 backhand down the line
 - 7. 1 forehand down the line
 - 8. 1 backhand cross court
- v. Any ball landing on a line is considered good
- vi. If the feeder makes an error in feeding, the feeder allowed only one volley refeed per athlete.
- vii. A missed attempt (swing and miss, ball out of bounds, stepping on or over the non volley line) shall receive 0 points.



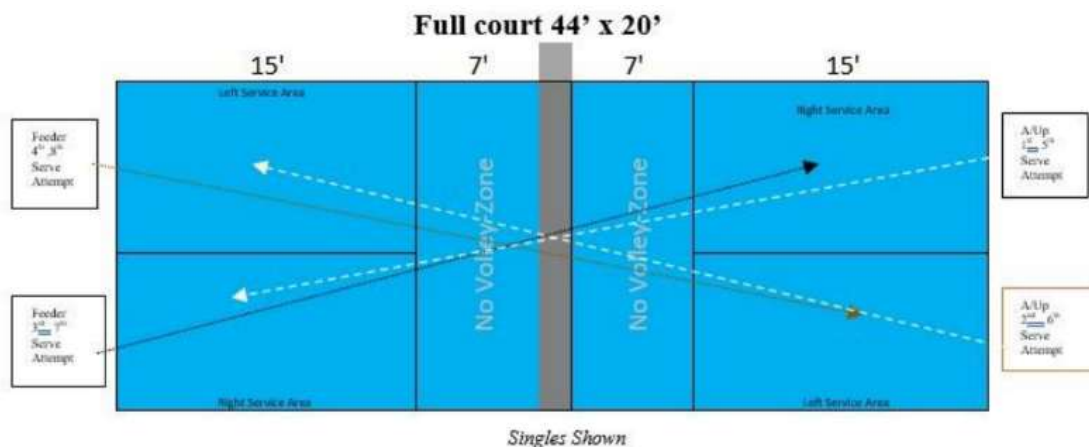
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- viii. Scoring: 2 points if ball lands in target area or 1 point if the ball lands inbounds over the net.
- b. Doubles Assessment
 - i. Each doubles player receives 8 volley attempts each (4 in Right Service Area and 4 in Left Service Area).
 - ii. Double Teams may choose which side they will volley from.
 - iii. The players stand 1 meter behind the No-Volley Line. One in the Left Service Area and one in the Right Service Area.
 - iv. The feeder stands on opposite side of net, on or near baseline with a basket of Competition balls
 - v. Feeder alternates paddle fed groundstrokes to first player in Right Service Area
 - 1. 1 forehand cross court Right Service Area
 - 2. 1 backhand cross court Right Service Area
 - 3. 1 forehand cross court Left Service Area
 - 4. 1 backhand cross court Left Service Area
 - 5. 1 forehand down the line Right Service Area
 - 6. 1 backhand down the line Right Service Area o 1 forehand down the line Left Service Area
 - 7. 1 backhand down the line Left Service Area
 - vi. Player 1 volleys the return toward target area
 - vii. Player 2 repeats above progression.
 - viii. Any ball landing on a line is considered good.
 - ix. If the feeder makes an error in feeding, the feeder is allowed only one volley refeed per athlete.
 - x. A missed attempt (swing and miss, ball out of bounds, stepping on or over the nonvolley line) shall receive 0 points.
 - xi. Scoring: 2 points if ball lands in target area or 1 point if the ball lands inbounds over the net.
- c. Rally: (8 attempts) Singles and Unified Singles Shown



- i. Player serves the 1st and diagonally from behind Right Service Area baseline.
- ii. The two-bounce rule is in effect. (When the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before returning, thus two bounces.)
- iii. If the two-bounce rule is not fulfilled, athlete receives 0 points for that attempt



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- iv. After the two-bounce rule is fulfilled, every hit thereafter counts until an error is made, ending the rally
 1. Player serves, after the ball bounces, the receiver (Feeder) returns the ball.
 2. The player must let the ball bounce before hitting the returned ball
 3. After the player hits the returned ball, rally shall continue, with each hit counting until an error (out of bounds, missed ball, etc.) is made.
 4. Score is recorded (See table below)
- v. The player then serves the 2nd ball from behind the Left Service Area baseline
- vi. Subsequent attempts follow the same rally pattern



Singles Attempt	Server	Serve Side	Receive Side	Doubles Attempt	Server	Serve Side	Receive Side
1 st	A	Right	Right	1 st	A1/Up	Right	Right
2 nd	A	Left	Left	2 nd	A1(Up1)	Left	Left
3 rd	Feeder	Right	Right	3 rd	Feeder1	Right	Right
4 th	Feeder	Left	Left	4 th	Feeder1	Left	Left
5 th	A	Right	Right	5 th	A2(Up2)	Right	Right
6 th	A	Left	Left	6 th	A2(Up2)	Left	Left
7 th	Feeder	Right	Right	7 th	Feeder2	Right	Right
8 th	Feeder	Left	Left	8 th	Feeder2	Left	Left

Scoring

# Hits per attempt (continuous)	Score Recorded
0	0
1	1
2-3	2
4-5	3
6+	4

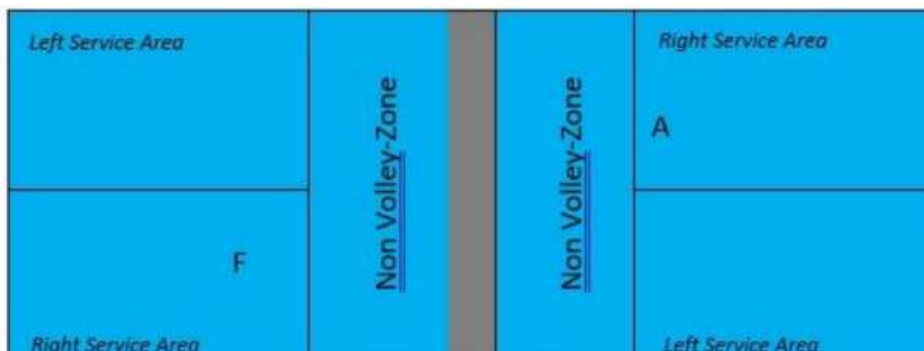
Scoring: See scoresheet for rally details

- o All balls must land inbounds.
- o Stepping on or over the baseline on serve is a fault = 0 pts
- o Stepping on or over the Non-Volley Line before the ball bounce in the NVZ = 0pts

Doubles/Unified

- o Athletes (Up) will switch sides after 4 rallies. See chart above
- o Each rally is considered a team score, so each athlete (Up) will get the same rally assessment score.

- d. Dink Rally (8 attempts)
 - i. Singles



1. Goal: See how many consecutive dink hits are made per attempt
2. All players begin 3' behind the Non-Volley Line on opposite sides of the net first on the
3. Right Service area (A hits to F)
4. Player and feeder will each begin 4 rallies for a total of 8 attempts (See chart below)
5. Player's 1st attempt is from Right Service area and for the 2nd attempt, athlete moves to the Left Service Area (See chart below)



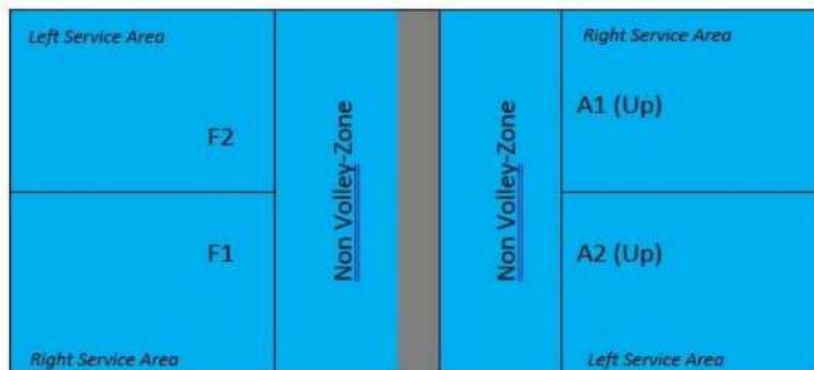
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6. Each ball is started with a drop hit over the net (ball is dropped, the ball bounces and then hit with underhand motion).
7. After the ball is in play, ball may bounce anywhere within the Non-Volley Zone.
8. Errors:
 - a. Ball bounces in NVZ on drop hit 0 pts
 - b. Either person steps on or over the NVL before rally has begun 0 pts
 - c. Ball bounces outside of the Non-Volley Zone Rally ends
 - d. Any player volleys the ball instead of letting the ball bounce. Rally ends
 - e. Any player steps on the NVL, when not hitting the bounced ball. Rally ends



Singles Attempt	Starter	Start Area	Receive Area	Doubles Attempt	Starter	Start Area	Receive Area
1 st	A	Right	Right	1 st	A1(Up)	Right	Right
2 nd	A	Left	Left	2 nd	A2(Up)	Left	Left
3 rd	Feeder	Right	Right	3 rd	Feeder1	Right	Right
4 th	Feeder	Left	Left	4 th	Feeder2	Left	Left
5 th	A	Right	Right	5 th	A2(Up)	Right	Right
6 th	A	Left	Left	6 th	A1(Up)	Left	Left
7 th	Feeder	Right	Right	7 th	Feeder2	Right	Right
8 th	Feeder	Left	Left	8 th	Feeder1	Left	Left



- ii. Doubles
 1. Goal: See how many consecutive dink hits are made per attempt
 2. All players begin 3' behind the Non-Volley Line on opposite sides of the net (see diagram)
 3. Players (A/UP) and feeders will each begin 2 rallies for a total of 8 attempts
 4. After 4 Dink Rallies, players switch Service Areas with their partner
 5. Player 1 starts ball from Right Service Area diagonally toward Feeder 1
 6. Each ball is started with a drop hit over the net (ball is dropped, the ball bounces and then hit with underhand motion).
 7. Rally continues until an error is made



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8. Player 2 (Up) starts 2nd attempt from the Left Service Area
 9. After the ball is in play, the ball may bounce anywhere within the Non-Volley Zone and any player may hit the ball.
 10. Errors:
 - a. Ball bounces in NVZ on drop hit 0 pts
 - b. Any player steps on or over the NVL before rally is begun 0 pts
 - c. Ball bounces outside of the Non-Volley Zone Rally ends
 - d. Any player volleys the ball, instead of letting the ball bounce Rally end
 - e. Any player steps on the NVL, when not hitting the bounced ball Rally ends
- Scoring:
- f. See scoresheet for rally details Record only Score Recorded not # of continuous HITS.

# Hits per attempt (continuous)	Score Recorded
0	0
1	1
2-3	2
4-5	3
6+	4

Doubles/Unified:

- Each rally is considered a team score, so each player will get the same rally assessment score

e. Mobility Assessment

- i. Goal: Test the athletes and Unified Partners mobility in moving around the court
- ii. Equipment: 8 Pickleballs, 2 Hula Hoop, 8 cones
- iii. The athlete and Unified Partner will start in the hula hoop and will be timed together as a team.
- iv. On the demand go, the player will run in order of left, right, front, and back.
- v. The ball will be picked up and placed in the hula hoop after each station, if at any point the ball leaves the hula hoop the ball must be returned before proceeding.
- vi. The clock will stop once the last ball is placed in the hula hoop.
- vii. Score: Total Time it takes to put all 4 balls in the hula hoop



f. Assessment Scoring Scale Table

- i. Total scores chart allows for variance in players skills scoring

Levels	Rally	Volleys	Serves	Return of Serves	Dink Rally	Mobility	Total Score
ISC	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-15
1 <small>Indoor Ball</small>	3-8	3-5	3-5	3-5	3-8	3-4	18-35
2 <small>Indoor Ball</small>	9-16	6-8	6-8	6-8	9-16	5-7	41-65
3 <small>Competition Ball</small>	17-21	9-12	9-12	9-12	17-21	7-9	68-87
4 <small>Competition Ball</small>	25-32	13-16	13-16	13-16	25-32	9-42	98-154+