



## Skills Level Quick Guide (2.0 – 5.0+)

Use this as your fast “anchor” during a live session. Then flip to the detailed sections to confirm.

*Tip: If skills appear only occasionally or primary fault(s) identified, place them in the lower end of the band. If repeatable under pressure, place them in the upper end.*

Skill band	Reliability snapshot	Typical strengths you'll see	Most common limiter to next band
<a href="#">2.0–2.49</a>	Rallies end quickly; many unforced errors.	Knows basic rules; occasional clean contact; serve sometimes in.	Serve/return consistency; ready position + moving forward; basic volley/dink control.
<a href="#">2.5–2.99</a>	Short rallies with peers; basic direction emerging.	Serve starts points; some directional control; begins moving to NVZ.	Return depth; NVZ comfort (popping up dinks); partner spacing & middle awareness.
<a href="#">3.0–3.49</a>	Moderate consistency; fundamentals show under light pressure.	Developing 3rd-shot drop; longer dinks; blocks at medium pace; better transitions.	Drop/reset rushed; poor attack selection; footwork/balance at NVZ.
<a href="#">3.5–3.99</a>	Reliable patterns; can handle pace and sustain exchanges.	Deep returns; purposeful dinks/volleys; resets on demand; basic stacking awareness.	Late/weak counters; predictable patterns; inconsistency in 5th-shot drop/transition area weakness.
<a href="#">4.0–4.49</a>	Lower error rate with structured point building.	Varied serves; reliable 3rd/5th; patient dinking to create pop-ups; stable blocks/counters.	Over-pressing neutral balls; sustaining elite hand battles; team movement timing.
<a href="#">4.5–4.99</a>	High pressure-proof; adapts strategy in real time.	Precision targets; finishes with placement; long volley battles; good coverage/communication.	Tiny speed-exchange misreads; change of pace shots; exploitable preferred patterns vs better players.
<a href="#">5.0+</a>	Showing developed mastery; wins with disguise + decision-making.	Specialty plays used appropriately; tempo control; rare unforced errors; pattern reads.	Differences are tactical/partnership-specific; marginal gains via film + analytics.



## Detailed Skills Level Guide (2.0 – 5.0+ )

*A practical on-court skills rubric for coaches to assess play and assign an estimated skill range.*

### **How to use this guide**

**Watch real points, not isolated drills.** Rate the player based on what shows up under light pressure (games to 11), then confirm under higher pressure (games to 15/21).

- Anchor first: choose the closest whole-number level (2.0 / 2.5 / 3.0 / 3.5 / 4.0 / 4.5 / 5.0).
- Then refine within the half-point band (e.g., 3.0–3.49 vs 3.5–3.99) using consistency, court positioning, and decision-making.
- A player belongs in the lower end of a band if skills appear occasionally or if primary fault(s) are identified; the upper end if skills are reliable and repeatable.
- *Note:* If the player is already DUPR-rated, your coaching assessment should guide training goals – it will not override their established rating.

### **2.0 – 2.49 | Beginner**

**Snapshot:** New to pickleball; can demonstrate basic strokes but has limited control and little tactical intent.

#### **What to look for (in games):**

- Understands basic rules and can keep score most of the time.
- Serve goes in inconsistently; frequent faults under mild pressure.
- Forehand/backhand contact varies; ball often floats high or dies into the net.
- Limited movement to the No-Volley Zone (NVZ); often stays back or drifts.
- Rallies end quickly due to unforced errors rather than forced errors.

#### **Common gaps that keep them from the next band:**

- Serve consistency and ready position after serve/return.
- Basic footwork (split step, small adjustment steps) and paddle-ready habits.
- Difficulty sustaining even short dink/volley exchanges.

#### **Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Make the serve ‘automatic’ (high percentage, simple target).
- Build two-shot patterns: serve → third shot safely in play; return deep → move forward.



## 2.5 – 2.99 | Advancing Beginner

**Snapshot:** Knows rules and score; can direct basic shots and sustain short rallies with similar players.

### What to look for (in games):

- Serve is reliable enough to start points; fewer double-fault style stretches.
- Forehand/backhand show some directional control (crosscourt vs down the line).
- Can sustain short dink rallies with similar players; volleys are controlled at slower speeds.
- Begins moving toward NVZ after the return; understands “moving up” concept in doubles.
- Recognizes obvious attack balls (high floaters) but execution is inconsistent.

### Common gaps that keep them from the next band:

- Return depth and consistency (too many short returns).
- NVZ comfort: dinks pop up, blocks are late, paddle drops below net line.
- Partner spacing (leaves big middle gaps or both chase the same ball).

### Coach focus (1-2 priorities):

- Return deep consistently and move to NVZ with balance.
- Introduce a basic third-shot drop concept (higher arc, land in NVZ) and a simple reset.

## 3.0 – 3.49 | Intermediate

**Snapshot:** Can execute most fundamentals with moderate consistency; starting to apply positioning and patterns.

### What to look for (in games):

- Serves and returns generally in play with direction; return depth improving.
- Third-shot drop exists, but reliability varies under pressure.
- Understands court positioning and transitions; moves to NVZ more consistently.
- Dink exchanges are longer (medium length) with some direction (crosscourt, middle).
- Can block/volley at moderate pace; occasionally resets from mid-court.

### Common gaps that keep them from the next band:

- Drop/reset breaks down when rushed; drives or lobs become the default bailout.
- Attacking selection: speeds up from low balls; misses put-aways.
- Footwork at NVZ (reaching instead of moving; poor balance on wide balls).



### **Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Stabilize third-shot decisions: drop vs drive with clear triggers.
- Build a reliable block/reset to get back to neutral at NVZ.

## **3.5 – 3.99 | Advancing Intermediate**

**Snapshot:** Better control of pace/spin; uses basic strategy (targets, stacking awareness) and transitions quickly to NVZ.

### **What to look for (in games):**

- Return of serve is consistently deep; understands neutral vs attackable balls.
- Dinks and volleys sustain medium-to-long rallies with purposeful placement.
- Can reset points and soften pace on demand; fewer panic speed-ups.
- Moves quickly to NVZ; maintains ready posture and covers middle more intelligently.
- Basic stacking understanding and partner communication improves coverage.

### **Common gaps that keep them from the next band:**

- Countering speed-ups: late paddle position or inconsistent blocks.
- Predictable patterns (always crosscourt dink; always drive third).
- Inconsistent fifth-shot drop/transition when third-shot drive is used.

### **Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Develop consistent block/counter patterns and disciplined speed-up selection.
- Add variation: serve/return targets, dink locations, occasional intentional lobs.

## **4.0 – 4.49 | Advanced**

**Snapshot:** High consistency with fundamentals; can create advantage with placement, spin, and structured patterns.

### **What to look for (in games):**

- Serve has depth/spin/placement variety; uses it strategically.
- Third and fifth shots (drop/drive/hybrid) are reliable in match play.
- Dinking is patient and intentional (changes height, depth, angle) to force pop-ups.
- Can identify weaknesses and run a plan (targeting, isolating a player, exploiting transitions).
- Blocks and counters are stable at higher pace; can defend speed-ups without gifting sitters.



### **Common gaps that keep them from the next band:**

- Margin vs aggression: occasional over-pressing in neutral rallies.
- Handling elite pace/hand battles for long stretches.
- Advanced partnership movement (poaching timing, shifting as a unit) still developing.

### **Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Refine point construction: earn the speed-up; don't force it.
- Upgrade hand speed + counter placement and train coordinated team movement.

## **4.5 – 4.99 | High Advanced**

**Snapshot:** Controls and places serves/returns and third/fifth shots consistently; adapts strategy in real time with low unforced error rate.

### **What to look for (in games):**

- Reliable execution under pressure with varied spin/pace and precise targets.
- Sets up and finishes put-aways with placement (body, hip, paddle face disguise, open court) rather than pure power.
- Sustains long volley battles; resets on demand from awkward positions.
- Instinctive court coverage, gap management, and strong verbal/nonverbal partner communication.
- Uses stacking effectively; reads opponents and adjusts tactics quickly.

### **Common gaps that keep them from the next band:**

- Tiny windows: occasional misread in highest-speed exchanges; change of pace shots.
- One or two patterns may still be “preferred” and exploitable by top players.

### **Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Increase variability and disguise (serve, return, dink patterns, speed-up timing).
- Practice high-speed decision-making: counters, rolls, and hand-fight sequences.

## **5.0+ | Pro-Caliber**

**Snapshot:** Mastery of fundamentals plus specialty shots; wins with shot selection, disguise, and pressure management.

### **What to look for (in games):**



- Executes ATP/Erne and other specialty options when appropriate and more importantly, recognizes when NOT to use them.
- Elite dinking and dropping from anywhere on the court; can change tempo at will.
- Rarely makes unforced errors; excellent mobility/footwork and anticipation.
- Reads opponents' patterns instantly and adjusts strategy mid-game.
- Consistently competes at high-level tournaments against top peers.

**Common gaps that keep them from the next band:**

- At this level, differences are often tactical and partnership-specific rather than simply "stroke-based."
- Being able to evolved with the game and technologies in order to compete at the next level.

**Coach focus (1-2 priorities):**

- Film review for micro-patterns (serve/return target maps, speed-up triggers, counter locations).
- Train/drill with stronger players and log high-quality matches to stabilize rating.

---

*Coach note: ratings are outcome-based vs performance-based*

DUPR is calculated from match results and considers factors like performance vs expected score, match type, match count, and match recency. Video-based tools can complement this by tracking how you played (movement, shot quality, error rate, positioning, etc.) across games. All of these are useful for designing specific and attainable coaching goals.