

# COURT SHARING PROTOCOLS

We strive to create a friendly gathering place for players of all abilities. We recognize that each person plays pickleball for their own reason, and we believe all reasons are equally valid. Our court-sharing protocols are an attempt to meet the needs of players who have diverse playing purposes. As the size of our crowd and the needs of our community change, we expect our court-sharing protocols to evolve.

When there are more people than the courts can hold, the Club promotes the philosophy of roughly equal court time and expects all players (whether Club members or not) to honor that intention.

Mitchell Park has a thriving Open Play community where solo players can readily find pickleball companions. Open Play is unpredictable and can be frustrating for those with a well-defined playing purpose; those who wish to play without risk of interruption or to have more control over who they play with have the opportunity to reserve courts at the Sunnyvale Tennis Center at Las Palmas Park.

Court-sharing protocols can be confusing and tricky, particularly for people new to our courts or new to pickleball. Be generous and patient when somebody is confused or gets something wrong.

## Court-Sharing Protocols When the Courts Are Full

Nine of our courts, **#5 through #13**, are **challenge-courts**. Find a court that has players at your approximate skill-level and place one or two paddles down next to one of the net-support poles. Check both poles to ensure that there is a maximum of two paddles down. At the end of the game the winners stay on and the challengers join. Winners vacate after three games and losers stay on instead.

**Courts #3 and #4** are **4-on/4-off courts**, fed by a single queue next to the picnic tables. Hang 4 paddles in a vertical column on the outside of the fence. The group of four at the front of the queue takes the next available of court #3 or #4. At the end of each game on court #3 or #4 all players on that court vacate if there is a group waiting in the queue.

Singles games are permitted on courts #3 and #4, but not singles drilling; in this case hang two paddles in the queue and notify others that you are queuing for a singles game. These courts may be used by a group of four for warm-up, drilling, or teaching with a 20 minute limit when players are waiting; please self-monitor and don't put other players in the awkward position of needing to tell you to get off.

**Court #14 and #15** are also designated as **4-on/4-off courts**, fed by a separate single queue next to the two white benches adjacent to those courts. Follows the same rules as for courts #3 and #4. (We hope to have a gate at this end of the courts in the first half of 2020!)

Our 4-on/4-off courts operate slightly differently than 4-on/4-off courts at other venues. Previously all of our courts were 2-on/2-off challenge-courts, so it was impossible for a group of four who wanted to play together for a particular reason to get onto a court together. Therefore, we added the 4-on/4-off courts to meet the need of four people who choose to play together for a particular reason. A group gets into the queue only when they have four people ready. At many other venues, a player puts a paddle at the end of the line and joins a random group of 4 players.

## **When the Courts Are NOT Full**

When courts are not full the formal court-sharing protocols described above are not in effect. Usage of courts is dynamic and dependent on the mix of people present.

When there are empty courts, you are free to **do your own thing**. For example, you may wish to practice your serve, work with a ball machine, participate in a structured drilling program, or teach your neighbors how to play. Please use the multipurpose courts when you are doing your own thing, rather than the permanent pickleball courts.

The Club uses to the challenge-court system as a means to enable drop-in players to meet new people and find games. Many people come to Mitchell Park for the camaraderie of mixing with different players, and so even when there are empty courts, most courts are usually functioning as challenge courts. However, when there are still empty courts you should check before putting your paddle down.

If you are doing your own thing and someone asks you to play or wants a challenge match with you, you can explain (politely) that you are doing your own thing, but only if there are empty courts available.

The court-sharing protocols kick into effect as soon as there are no empty courts. At such time, if you are on a designated challenge-court you will need to accept a “challenge” from whomever puts their paddles down next to your court; if you are on a 4-on/4-off court you will need to vacate if there is a group waiting in the queue.