

Avoiding Pop-Ups in Pickleball, Part Two

“Help! I’m still hitting pop-ups!”

Last week we discussed three reasons we pop up the ball, allowing our opponents to put away the ball on their return:

1. Grip strength is too strong
2. Backswing is too big
3. Point of contact is too close or too far out

Here are a few more reasons we pop up and how to fix them:

4. **Moving while hitting the ball.** It’s imperative that you strike the ball in front of you. Avoid moving while hitting the ball to help reduce pop-ups. How? Make sure you preform a split step before your shot. You perform a split step, strike the ball, and then move and react to your next shot. Do not rush your shots on the court! You have more time than you think.
What is a Split Step? Split stepping is being proactive, not reactive, **getting your body in an optimal position to return the ball.** When an opponent is about to return a shot back to your side of the court, get your feet about shoulder-width apart, bend your knees, and almost bounce on your toes. That's a split step.
5. **Flicking wrist or breaking elbow.** These will cause inconsistent hits on the court – including frequent pop-ups. To avoid these pop-ups, keep your wrist stable without any sharp jerk, and use a controlled motion with a lift from your shoulder, therefore having more controlled shots.
6. **Not being ready for the ball.** Because it’s a fast name you must react fast. To do this: bend your knees, stay low, keep your paddle up and remain ready for the ball.
7. **Dinking over the highest part of the net.** The net has different heights... 36 inches at the posts and 34 inches in the middle. To help avoid pop-ups, consider hitting most dinks crosscourt or into the middle of the court. If you go down the line, but conscious of the short space and higher net and adjust accordingly.
8. **Attacking under pressure.** Rather than attacking the ball when you are caught by surprise or under pressure, consider blocking or resetting the ball using soft hands. Only counterattack when you’re ready for it and see the attack coming.

Well, that’s it for pop-ups! Thanks for listening and see you on the courts!