

2025 PADDLE RULES

Professional UPA Events

Effective Date Sept. 1, 2025

PREFACE

UPA-A has established rules and regulations for paddle manufacturing and performance which will be applied to all professional UPA events, including PPA Main Draws and Qualifiers, MLP, and PPA Challenger events.

Standards and Operating Procedures can be found at the following website:

pickleprolabs.com

UPAA Certification Requirements for New Paddles

Effective 9/1/25

Maximum Length + Maximum Width ≤ 24.0 in

Maximum Weight ≤ 10.0 oz

Maximum Thickness \leq 0.945 in (24 mm)

Maximum Paddle Efficiency Factor (PEF) ≤ 0.385*

Maximum Spin Rate ≤ 2100 RPM

***New paddles** must have a PEF of equal to or less than 0.385; however, a temporary allowance for break-in has been established that will allow post break-in performance to reach 0.405 PEF.

For clarity, the temporary allowance means that if a paddle initially meets the 0.385 PEF threshold and then increases to a level not exceeding 0.405 during the lab break-in process, that paddle will be still eligible for certification.

After 3/1/26, in order to be eligible for certification, a paddle's performance must never exceed 0.385 through its entire **useful life**.

Useful life is defined as any paddle that is, per the judgement of a familiar observer, **physically broken** or whose **structural characteristics** have observably changed from their OEM state.

Physically broken refers to observable damage including, but not limited to cracks, loose parts/pieces and dents/deformations.

Structural characteristics refers to observable features such as, but not limited to, face integrity, edge integrity, core integrity and loose parts/pieces

Standards and Operating Procedures can be found at the following website:

pickleprolabs.com

UPAA Certification Logistics

Effective 9/1/25

Every paddle used in UPAA-sanctioned play must be an approved model

Approved models have been tested and comply with UPAA's paddle certification standards.

Each approved model represents a unique paddle structure or specification.

For clarity, approved models can have multiple cosmetic variations but can have no structural variations.

Paddle thickness, paddle shape, edge design, handle length and other physical characteristics are all considered structural variations.

Manufacturers are required to submit an attestation (Paddle Design Registration Form) stating that any cosmetic variation that will fall under another approved model's certification contains no structural variations from the approved model.

Certifications are tied to models. This means if there are 8 color variants of an approved model, all 8 color variants would be decertified if one is decertified.

Approved model certifications, including any cosmetic variants, expire after 24 months.

UPAA Paddle Compliance Testing Program

Effective 9/1/25

Purpose: Rules without consequences are of little use. UPAA's compliance program is designed to ensure that manufacturers produce paddles consistent with their approved performance specifications.

UPAA reserves the right to initiate Compliance Testing on any paddle model at any time and for any reason.

UPAA will regularly purchase paddles which are popular in the market and subject those paddles to compliance testing. For clarity, compliance testing will be conducted within the PPL laboratory and will follow the same testing protocol utilized for the certification process

If a paddle fails Compliance Testing, 5 additional paddles of the same approved model will be purchased and subjected to compliance testing. If 2 or more of the 5 additional paddles fail compliance testing the paddle model in question may be decertified and removed from the approved list.

UPAA On-Site Testing

Effective 1/1/25

Purpose: On-Site testing is intended to ensure a level playing field for all competitors.

On-Site testing IS NOT a confirmation that every paddle tested would pass every aspect of testing performed in the certification laboratory.

On-Site testing IS a very effective method to screen out paddles whose performance is clearly beyond the specified limit.

Player Challenges: When a player challenges a paddle, that paddle will be tested again on-site and sent back to the PPL laboratory where it will undergo further analysis.

2025 UPA-A PADDLE RULES

1. Paddle Size

All pickleball paddles used in official UPA Professional events must conform to the following size restrictions:

- **1.1 Combined Length and Width**: The sum of the paddle's length and width, including any edgeguard and buttcap, shall not exceed a combined **24 inches** (60.96 cm).
- **1.2 Maximum Length**: The paddle length, measured from the tip to the end of the handle, shall not exceed **17 inches (43.18 cm)**, including edgeguard and buttcap.

Paddles that do not meet these size limitations will be considered non-compliant and prohibited in UPA sanctioned tournaments or events.

Measurement Standard: All measurements shall be taken with calibrated equipment designated and approved by the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) to ensure precision, accuracy and uniformity.

2. Paddle Thickness

All pickleball paddles used in official play must adhere to the following thickness standard:

• **2.1 Maximum Thickness**: The total thickness of the paddle, including all layers and surface materials, shall not exceed **24 millimeters (24 mm)** when measured at its thickest point of the face of the paddle.

Paddles exceeding this thickness will be deemed non-compliant and are prohibited for use in sanctioned tournaments or events.

Measurement Standard: Thickness shall be measured using calibrated equipment designated and approved by the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) to ensure accuracy, precision, and consistency.

3. Paddle Weight Limitations

Paddles used in official play must comply with the following weight standards:

- **3.1 Maximum Weight**: The total weight of the paddle, including any modifications, shall not exceed **10 ounces (283.5 grams)**
- **3.2 Weight Adjustments**: Players may add weight to the paddle using flat weighted adhesive applied along the edge of the paddle or weight applied to the handle or butt cap. No other methods of weight modification are permitted. How much weight may be added with tape?

Paddles exceeding the maximum weight or modified using unapproved methods will be deemed non-compliant and are prohibited in sanctioned tournaments or events.

Verification Standard: Paddle weight will be measured using calibrated scales designated and approved by the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) to ensure accuracy, precision and consistency.

4. Face Flatness and Surface Roughness

• 4.1 Flatness Requirement:

The face, or hitting surface, of the paddle must be flat.

Any alteration or design that creates unevenness or irregularity in the paddle face is prohibited.

The flatness requirement applies to the entire hitting surface above the top of the grip.

• 4.2 Surface Roughness Requirement:

The paddle's hitting surface shall not contain holes, indentations, rough texturing, or any objects or features that allow a player to impart excessive spin on the ball.

- No one may apply any spray on grit or other substance to the face of the paddle to increase the grit, dwell time, tact or any other aspect of the paddle that may result in greater spin.
- **NOTE**: Onsite testing in 2025 will no longer measure surface roughness.

Please Note: The edge guard is not considered part of the hitting surface when being measured for flatness.

5. Paddle Model Designation

To ensure transparency and consistency, all paddles used in official play must comply with the following model designation requirements:

- **5.1 Identification**: Each paddle must display the manufacturer's **brand name** and the **model name or number** on at least one face of the paddle. This identification must be clear, legible, and permanent.
- **5.2 Consistency of Construction**: Each certified paddle model must be **identical in construction, materials, and performance** characteristics to the paddles submitted for testing to UPA-A certification and available for purchase in the marketplace. Any deviation may result in the revocation of the paddle's certification for sanctioned play.
 - Paddles that fail to meet these standards will not be approved for use in UPA tournaments or events.
- **5.3 Compliance Standard**: Manufacturers are required to submit their paddles for UPA-A certification to ensure compliance with these guidelines.

2025 RULE ONLY

• **5.4A** In 2025, brands **without** a PPA/MLP Marketing License must produce a 'blackout' version of paddles with Provisional Approval, Interim Certification, or 2025 UPA-A Certification. There should be absolutely no branding visible with only a discrete brand and model written below the traditional placement of the USAP or UPA-A stamp. (see below)



** Only exception will be UPA provided "Blackout Paddles" **

6. Paddle Tracking (Guidance for 2026)

To ensure quality control and accountability, starting in 2026, all paddles used in official play must include:

- ***6.1* Serial Number**: Each paddle must have a **unique serial number** or **NFC chip capability** that is traceable by the manufacturer.
- ***6.2* Placement**: The serial number must be permanently affixed to the paddle in a visible and legible location on the face of the paddle.

This requirement enables manufacturers and the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) to track production batches, identify potential defects, and verify compliance with certification standards.

Paddles without a traceable serial number will be considered non-compliant and prohibited in sanctioned tournaments or events.

7. Paddle Materials

Paddles used in official play are subject to the following material guidelines:

- **7.1 Materials**: There are no restrictions on the materials used in paddle construction, provided the paddle's performance adheres to **UPA-A rules**, **regulations**, **and performance standards**.
- **7.2 Certification Testing**: Paddles must pass the **UPA-A Certification testing** process to ensure compliance with performance measures.
- **7.3 Right to Review**: The United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) reserves the right to deem specific materials ineligible if they are determined to provide an unfair advantage, do not conform to product safety standards, or violate the integrity of the sport.

Paddles constructed with non-compliant materials will not be certified for sanctioned tournaments or events.

8. Paddle Design and Decoration

- **8.1 Paddles** shall not be designed or decorated in a manner likely to impair the vision of opposing players or distract them from tracking the ball. This includes the use of reflective or sparkling materials on the face, edgeguard, or handle.
 - For the purposes of this rule, the paddle is defined as any area of the paddle, including the hitting surface, the edge of the paddle, and the grip.

Colors and Graphics:

- **8.2 Graphic design** within any circular area constituting more than 20% of a paddle face does not consist primarily of a **Regulated Color** (yellow, white, green, gold, or other colors that may hinder distinguishing the paddle from the ball).
- **8.3 Regulated Colors**, if used, must be distributed across the paddle face and not concentrated in the central or "sweet spot" area of the paddle face.

Color Range (Pantone References)	Color References
White/Gray (White/Cool Gray 3)	
Yellow/Gold (102/120)	
Yellow/Green (382/3965)	
Neon Yellow/Neon Green (803/802)	

9. Moveable & Removable Objects

To maintain consistent equipment standards, the following rules apply to moveable and removable objects on paddles:

For 2025, there are no moveable or removable objects allowed.

9.1 Moveable Objects (Potential Rule Change in 2026)

- 9.1.A Paddles may include moveable parts or materials only if:
 - If they are externally exposed, they **lock securely into place** during use.
 - They cannot be removed from the paddle.
- 9.1.B Paddles with any moveable objects, either internally or externally are subject to further UPA-A testing and must pass all UPA-A Certification testing to be approved for play.

9.2 Removable Objects

- **9.2.A** Paddles shall not be constructed with parts or materials that are designed to be **removable**.
- **9.2.B** Paddles with removable pieces, parts, or materials will not pass UPA-A Certification testing.

9.3 Permitted Customizations:

The following player customizations are the only exceptions to this rule:

- Replacement or application of edge guard tape.
- Application of **weighted tape** for balance adjustments.
- Use of **grip wraps** or overgrips.
- Accessories on the **handle/grip** are allowed, but must be secured and covered by overgrip.

Any other modifications or removable parts beyond these exceptions are strictly prohibited.

Permissible Add-Ons

The following modifications are allowed, provided they comply with weight standards:

- Tape
- Edge guards
- Overgrip
- Flat weighted tape with adhesive backing
- Grip inserts
- Butt cap replacement

10. Paddle Sound Parameters (Guidance)

The United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) is currently conducting research regarding the sound produced by paddles when striking the ball. At this time, the following is **guidance** rather than an official rule:

- 10.1 Sound Levels: Paddles should produce an appropriate level of sound upon contact with the ball, consistent with the standard expected for high-quality pickleball play.
- 10.2 Inadequate Sound: Paddles that produce insufficient sound, such as overly muffled or silent contact, may not be acceptable.
- 10.3 Excessive Sound: Paddles that produce excessive sound or frequencies that may be deemed distracting during play could be considered problematic.

UPA-A will continue to monitor this issue and may implement a formal rule regarding sound levels if necessary. Any future changes will be communicated in advance.

This guidance is provided to ensure fair play and consistency while the research on this matter is ongoing.

11. UPA-A Certification Stamp

To ensure compliance and transparency, all paddles used in official play must display the **UPA-A Certification stamp** as follows:

- **11.1 Placement**: The UPA-A Certification stamp must be permanently displayed on at least **one side of the paddle face** in a visible and legible manner.
 - **Purpose**: The certification stamp confirms that the paddle has been tested and approved by the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) for use in sanctioned tournaments and events.
- **11.2 Tampering Prohibited**: Any alteration, removal, or covering of the certification stamp will render the paddle non-compliant and ineligible for sanctioned play.

Until full UPA-A 2025 Certification goes into effect, Provisionally Approved paddles with USAP certification will be listed on the UPA-A website. Paddles must have passed UPA-A testing and be in good standing in order to be eligible for play.

12. Paddle Challenges

Starting in 2025, UPA professional events will implement a paddle challenge system to ensure fair play. The following rules will govern the process:

12.A Player Responsibility

Players are responsible for the condition and performance of their paddles. If a player believes their paddle has changed or is behaving differently than intended, they are required to retire the paddle voluntarily. No penalties will be enforced for taking this precautionary action.

12.B Opponent Challenge

If a player suspects that their opponent's paddle exceeds the legal limits for spin or power:

- The challenging player may request the opponent to switch out the paddle.
- If the opponent agrees to switch paddles, no penalties will be enforced, and play will continue with the replacement paddle.

12.C Official Paddle Challenge

If the opponent refuses to switch the paddle:

- The challenging player may escalate to an official challenge.
- A \$1000 fine will be imposed on the challenging player if the paddle is found to be compliant. (This fine doubles with each failed challenge)

12.C.1 The suspected paddle must be handed over to a UPA official under one of the two following conditions. The player playing with the suspected paddle has the choice:

- Immediate Submission: The paddle is handed over during the match.
- Post-Match Submission: The paddle is played with until the match concludes, after which it is handed to the official.

The paddle will be sent to the PPL lab for testing, and results will be announced publicly within a week.

Outcome of the Challenge

- The results of the match will remain as played, regardless of the paddle's compliance.
- If the paddle is found to exceed legal limits, the offending player and their paddle manufacturer will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by UPA officials.
- Punishments can range from official warnings for low level infractions, fines to players and/or manufacturers depending on where the issue occurs, to suspension from play or delisting of paddles for the most serious violations.

12.D UPA officials have the right to confiscate, retain, and test paddles at any time. Players must hand over paddles upon request.

** 1/13/24 AMENDMENT TO PADDLE CHALLENGE**

- Players may issue a paddle challenge at any time during a match.
- Once a match ends, they are no longer allowed to challenge.
- If the challenge is incorrect, the challenging player will be charged **\$1,000**.
- If the challenge is proven correct and the paddle is out of specification:
 - No fee will be charged to the player making the challenge.
 - The player using the offending paddle will be fined a minimum of **\$2,500**.
 - The offending player (and partner if doubles) will be disqualified, retroactively.
 - The offending player (and partner, if doubles) will lose all points gained in the match where the challenge was issued as well as any subsequence points earned in the bracket. If medals were earned, the medals will be removed from the records.

12.E Severe Infractions

- **12.E.1** If a paddle is found to have been **tampered with** or is out of specification to the extent that it provides a definitive competitive advantage, the penalties may include:
 - Higher fines to the player or manufacturer.
 - Suspension from PPA events.
 - Deduction of ranking points.
 - In extreme cases, expulsion from all UPA-sanctioned events.

Players are strongly encouraged to read and familiarize themselves with all rules on the matter to avoid penalties.

CHALLENGE PROCESS & CHAIN OF CUSTODY PROCEDURE

To ensure fairness, transparency, and integrity, the following steps outline the paddle challenge chain of custody procedure:

Once a challenge has been formally made:

1. Marking the Paddle

- The referee will mark the paddle with a Sharpie to confirm it is the correct paddle under review.
- The mark will be made on the butt end (or other discrete area) of the paddle.

2. Signing the Paddle

- Either at the time of the challenge or upon completion of the match, the challenged paddle will be surrendered to the referee.
- At the end of the match, both players will sign the paddle on the face for tracking purposes:
 - One player's signature will go on one side of the paddle.
 - The referee's signature will go on the opposite side.

4. Sealing and Transporting the Paddle

- The signed paddle will be re-tested at the onsite testing facility.
- The signed paddle will be placed in a secure envelope or tamper-proof bag.
- The sealed paddle will then be sent to the Pro Pickle Labs (PPL) testing facility for analysis.

5. Testing at the PPL Lab

- Upon receipt of the paddle at PPL, the following steps will be performed:
 - Photographic documentation of the paddle before, during, and after the testing process.
 - Comprehensive testing will be conducted to evaluate compliance with UPA-A standards.
 - All testing procedures will be documented, including:
 - Time-stamped images of the paddle during testing.
 - Corresponding data from each test conducted.

6. Issuing the Report

- A formal report will be compiled by PPL, including:
 - Time-stamped images.
 - Testing data and results.
 - Final conclusions regarding the paddle's compliance.
- The report will be submitted to the UPA-A and shared with both players involved in the challenge.

7. Transparency and Follow-Up

- The UPA-A will retain all documentation and reports for records and potential appeals.
- Any penalties or rulings based on the test results will be enforced as per UPA-A guidelines.

13. UPA-A Random Paddle Testing

UPA-A reserves the right to acquire paddles through various means, including retail purchase, direct manufacturer requests, player confiscation, or other methods, for the purpose of testing compliance with UPA-A standards.

Professional-level players competing at UPA events must acknowledge that UPA-A can request their paddle for testing at any time. Upon such a request, the player is required to hand over the paddle immediately.

Failure to comply with this request may result in disciplinary actions, including but not limited to disqualification from the current event, suspension from future events, and additional penalties as deemed appropriate by UPA-A.

This policy ensures that all paddles meet the established standards, maintaining a fair and competitive playing environment.

14. Definition of a Model and a Variant

All paddles, regardless of model or variant, must be certified for play at the professional level at UPA events.

• 14.A Model Definition:

A model is defined by the paddle's **name, construction, and materials** used in its production.

• 14.B Variant Definition:

A **variant** of a model includes any modification that can influence the paddle's performance while maintaining the same construction and materials as the original model. Variants may include changes in:

- Shape
- Weight
- Thickness
- Length
- Handle type
- Other differentiator

• 14.C PADDLE DESIGN REGISTRATION:

If changes are strictly **aesthetic**, such as design patterns or colors, the paddles must still be submitted for approval through the UPA-A website. Brands must apply with the Paddle Design Registration form. No additional fees will be charged for design registration.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

UPA-A reserves the right to test UPA-A Certified paddles that have been submitted for certification, confiscated at pro UPA events, or for sale at retail to ensure compliance and similarity.

15. Changes to Rules and Testing

To maintain the integrity and fairness of the sport, the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) establishes the Standards Committee as well as the following policy regarding rule and testing modifications:

- **15.A Ongoing Evaluation**: The UPA-A along with the Standards Committee will continually evaluate testing procedures, regulations, and equipment standards to adapt to advancements in technology and gameplay.
- **15.B Right to Amend**: The UPA-A reserves the right to modify rules, testing protocols, and certification standards as necessary to uphold the sport's integrity.
- **15.C Advance Notice**: Any impending changes to rules or testing procedures will be announced on the **UPA-A website** at least **30 days prior to implementation**, allowing manufacturers, players, and officials adequate time to comply.

16. Enforcement and Consequences

To uphold compliance and maintain fair play, the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) enforces the following policy on certification and revocation:

- **16.A Revocation of Certification**: UPA-A reserves the right to revoke the certification of any paddle model found to be non-compliant with rules, regulations, or performance standards.
- **16.B Sunset Enforcement**: If a paddle's certification is revoked, the use of that paddle in sanctioned tournaments and events will be prohibited after a **12-month notice period**. This period allows manufacturers, retailers, and players adequate time to transition to compliant equipment.

17. Immediate Termination

The United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) maintains strict standards for certified equipment and enforces the following protocol for violations:

- **17.A Investigation of Alterations**: If UPA-A Certified equipment is found to have been altered in the manufacturing process, or if it materially changes or degrades under ordinary use, an investigation will be conducted to determine compliance with certification standards.
- 17.B Consequences for Non-Compliance:
 - Paddles found to be out of specification are subject to **fines** imposed on the manufacturer.
 - In extreme cases, the paddle's **UPA-A Certification may be immediately terminated**, prohibiting its use in sanctioned events.
- **17.C Forfeiture of Fees**: In cases of immediate termination, all **license fees** associated with the paddle's certification will be forfeited.

18. Blatant Rules Violations

The United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) enforces strict penalties for blatant violations of equipment certification rules:

- **18.A Investigation**: If UPA-A Certified equipment is found to have been altered during the manufacturing process, or if it materially changes or degrades under ordinary use, the UPA-A will conduct a thorough investigation.
 - Clear process for determining and measuring compliance and what determines an infraction.
- **18.B Consequences**: Paddles determined to be out of specification due to construction or manufacturing faults are subject to the following penalties:
 - **18.B.1 Fines** imposed on the manufacturer.
 - 18.B.1.a Minimum fines will start at \$5,000
- **18.C Violations:** Paddles determined to be in violation of similarity or in an attempt to intentionally circumvent the rules are subject to the following penalties:
 - **18.C.1** Minimum fines will start at \$25,000
 - 18.C.2 In extreme cases, the immediate suspension or termination of the paddle's UPA-A Certification, prohibiting its use in sanctioned tournaments or events.
 - **18.C.2.a** Clear penalties and fines
- **18.D Forfeiture of License Fees**: In cases of immediate termination, all license fees associated with the paddle's certification will be forfeited.

18.E Player Manipulation: If the investigation determines that the paddle was manipulated by the **player** rather than the manufacturer, in cases where a signed player is at fault, both the **player and the manufacturer** will be held responsible:

- **18.E.1 Player Accountability**: The player may face penalties, including fines, suspension from sanctioned events, or other disciplinary actions as deemed appropriate by UPA-A.
- **18.E.2 Manufacturer Accountability**: The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring its equipment complies with certification standards and for collaborating with players who adhere to the rules of the sport.

19. Recurring Performance Audit

To maintain consistent standards, the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) requires a performance audit for certified paddle models every **24 months**:

- **19.A Biennial Testing**: All UPA-A Certified paddles will be tested every **24 months** to ensure they continue to meet the performance metrics established at the time of their certification.
- **19.B Consistency Requirement**: Paddle models must maintain similar performance characteristics to those originally approved during the certification process. Any significant deviations may result in further investigation or revocation of certification.

20. Enforcement and Appeals Process

All rules and regulations regarding paddle certification, performance standards, and materials must be strictly adhered to. Failure to comply with these rules will result in the appropriate consequences, as outlined in the regulations.

20.A Right to Appeal: Players or manufacturers who are subject to penalties or actions due to non-compliance with these rules have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal will be heard by the **Rules and Regulations Committee**, which will include representatives from the United Pickleball Association (UPA) and engineering experts.

20.B The **Rules and Regulations Committee** will review the case, hear all relevant arguments, and make a **final and binding decision** on the matter.

Recommended Rules and Regulations Committee Members

<u>UPA</u> Brian Levine Zubin Mehta

<u>Engineering</u> TBD

21. Standards Committee

To oversee the creation, amendment, and implementation of equipment standards, the United Pickleball Association of America (UPA-A) establishes the **Standards Committee**:

- **21.A Committee Composition**: The committee will include representatives from the following groups:
 - UPA-A
 - Manufacturers
 - Engineering experts
- **21.B Responsibilities**: The Standards Committee is tasked with:
 - Developing new standards for equipment.
 - Reviewing and amending existing standards as needed.
 - Overseeing the implementation of changes to ensure compliance and fairness.
- **21.C Meeting Schedule**: The committee will convene **quarterly** throughout the year to address relevant issues and ensure timely updates to standards.

Recommended Standards Committee Members

(One from each category per year)

<u>UPA</u> TBD

<u>Engineering</u> TBD

<u>Manufacturing</u> TBD

Both of these committees will be appointed by the UPA-A President and have staggered terms to ensure consistency of the members.

22. Usage of Logos & Lockups





This full color, logo lockup is only available to the top 3 paddles sponsors of PPA / MLP.



Pro Paddle Stamp

This is the stamp provided to all paddle manufacturers with the PPA/MLP Marketing License.



External Packaging Licensee

This black & white, smaller logo lockup is available to all paddle brands with the PPA/MLP Marketing License.



UPA-A Certification Stamp

This is the stamp provided to all paddles receiving UPA certification. If there is no license obtained for the start of the year, this is the stamp to be used. Notable Updates