



PADDLE RULES

Professional UPA Events

PREFACE

UPA-A has established rules and regulations for paddles and their performance. These rules and regulations will apply to all paddles used in professional UPA events, including but not limited to PPA Main Draws and Qualifiers, MLP, PPA Challenger events, PPA Asia, and PPA Australia.

Standard Operating Procedures for paddle performance and related tests are posted on the Pickle Pro Laboratories' website www.pickleprolabs.com

UPA-A Certification Requirements for New Paddles

Maximum Length + Maximum Width \leq 24.0 in

Maximum Weight \leq 10.0 oz

Maximum Thickness \leq 0.945 in (24 mm)

Maximum Paddle Efficiency Factor (PEF) \leq 0.385*

Maximum Spin Rate \leq 2100 RPM

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

For clarity, the break-in 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.

In order to be eligible for certification, a paddle's performance must never exceed 0.405 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.

UPA-A Certification Logistics

Every paddle used in UPA professional play must be an Approved Model.

For a paddle to be an Approved Model, it must be compliant with UPA-A paddle certification standards and be listed on the [UPA-A approved list](#).

Each Approved Model represents a unique paddle structure or specification with a unique Model Number.

For clarity, Approved Models, identified by their Model Number, 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.

With the Model Number on a paddle, manufacturers are 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 and the Approved Model would be decertified if any one of the variants or the Approved Model is decertified.

Approved Model certifications (including any cosmetic variants) expire 24 months after the Approved Model's initial certification date.

UPA-A Paddle Compliance Testing Program

The UPA-A compliance program is designed to help ensure that the performance and construction of all paddles bearing the UPA-A certification mark are consistent with the performance and construction of those that were submitted for UPA-A certification.

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

UPA-A 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 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.

UPA-A On-Site Testing

On-Site Paddle Testing is intended to help ensure a level playing field for all competitors. On-Site testing consists of measuring a paddle's ADF and various physical characteristics.

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

On-Site Paddle Testing DOES NOT confirm that a paddle would pass (or fail) performance testing conducted in the certification laboratory.

Paddles submitted for On-Site testing can be tested for grit. The grit reading must be no greater than 10% of the reading taken during the certification testing. If the paddle is between 10-25% over the grit limit, the paddle may be returned to the player without further testing. If the paddle is over 25% of the reading taken during certification, the paddle will be confiscated for further review.

UPA-A reserves the right to confiscate paddles that have been submitted for On-Site testing at any time.

UPA-A Deflection (ADF) Measurement & Enforcement Onsite

Current Standard

At UPA-A events, all paddles must meet the minimum onsite Deflection requirement to be eligible for play.

- Current onsite eligibility threshold:
ADF \geq 42

Effective March 9, 2026, UPA-A will implement a correlated Deflection enforcement model tied directly to certification testing outcomes.

Correlated ADF Eligibility

- Paddles that passed UPA-A certification and successfully completed ABI (Accelerated Break-In) with an ADF below 42 will be eligible for play down to their certified post-ABI ADF value with a 5% variance to accommodate atmospheric conditions onsite.
- This correlation applies only to paddles that passed ABI and PEF (\leq 0.405) with a documented post-ABI ADF below 45.

Paddles with Certified ADF \geq 45

For the overwhelming majority of paddles with post-ABI ADF values at or above 45, no change applies. ADF \geq 42 remains the onsite eligibility threshold for all paddles certified at or above this value.

Example: At Certification, we record a paddle with a PEF after ABI of .397. The ADF after ABI is correlated at 40. We will allow this paddle to be tested onsite and pass at an ADF of 38.

40 ADF - 5% (2) = 38 ADF

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. The challenge process is outlined in detail within the UPA-A Paddle Rules.

UPA-A PADDLE RULES

1. Paddle Physical Characteristics

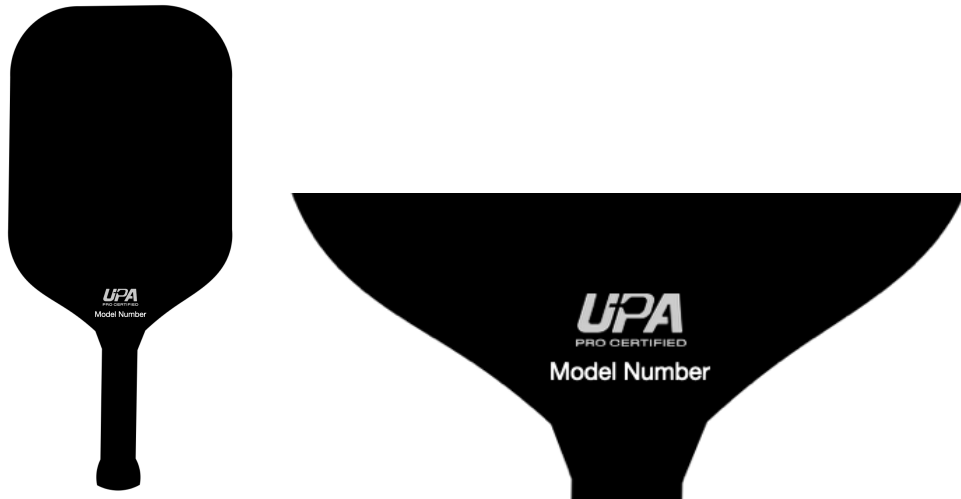
- 1.1. **Combined Length and Width:** The sum of the paddle's length and width, including any edge guard and butt cap, shall not exceed a combined **24.0 inches (61.0 cm)**.
- 1.2. **Maximum Length:** The paddle length, measured from the tip to the end of the handle, shall not exceed **17.0 inches (43.2 cm)**, including edge guard and butt cap.
- 1.3. **Thickness:** The total thickness of the Hitting Area of the paddle shall be greater than **0.236 inches (6 mm)** and less than **0.945 inches (24 mm)**. The variation in the thickness of any paddle face shall not exceed **0.039 inches (1 mm)**. Thickness requirements are applicable to all areas of the paddle Hitting Area except for an area within 0.50 inches of the paddle's perimeter.
- 1.4. **Maximum Weight:** The total weight of the paddle, including grip (and any modifications, if on-site), shall not exceed **10 ounces (283.5 grams)**.
- 1.5. **Weight Modifications:** Players may add weight to the exterior perimeter of the paddle using flat, weighted tape. Weight may also be applied to the handle or butt cap, so long as the added weight is securely fixed in its place. No other methods of weight modification are permitted.
- 1.6. **Surface Finish:** The paddle's faces shall not be modified in any way that may result in an increase the paddle's ability to impart spin or increase contact time with an impacted ball.
 - 1.6.1. Such modifications include, but are not limited to applying grit, adhesive, paint, resins or other substance to the face of the paddle.
- 1.7. **Hitting Surface Features:** The paddle's Hitting Surface shall not contain holes, dimpling, cracks or any other irregularities that can affect the paddle/ball impact.
- 1.8. **Consistency of Construction:** All paddles bearing the markings of an Approved Model must have the same construction and characteristic performance as the samples submitted for certification of that Approved Model. Deviation from the performance and construction of the original Approved Model certification samples may result in penalties for the offending manufacturer.
 - 1.8.1 **Similarity:** To ensure the integrity of the certification process, it is necessary for all paddles produced under the approval of a given certified model to perform similarly. While it is understood that it is not feasible to expect the performance of every paddle within a given model to perform identically, it is the UPA-A's opinion that it is the responsibility of the paddle manufacturer to ensure that all paddles produced under the approval of a given certified model perform in a manner that is consistent with the measured performance of the paddles submitted for certification of that particular model.

More specifically, the key performance metrics of all paddles produced under the approval of a given certified model shall be within ten

percent (10%) of the measured values of the paddles submitted for certification of that model. The key performance metrics include MOI (moment of inertia), ADF, Spin Rate, Surface Roughness, and PEF. If it is found that the key performance metrics of any paddle are not within ten percent (10%) of the measured values of the paddles submitted for certification of that particular model, that paddle will be considered out of compliance and the certified paddle model in question will be confiscated, and subject to further compliance testing and associated penalties. (Appendix C)

2. Paddle Model Designation

- 2.1. **Identification:** Each paddle must be clearly and permanently marked with the manufacturer's **brand name, model name on the face of the paddle.** These markings must be of contrasting color to their surrounding area(s) and appropriately sized for easy legibility. The **model number** must be positioned under the UPA-A Certification Stamp and clearly legible. (see below for reference)



- 2.2. Brands **without** a PPA/MLP Broadcast and Marketing License must produce a 'blackout' version of paddles with UPA-A Certification. There should be absolutely no paddle cosmetics and no markings other than brand name and model name, and model number on the throat area of the paddle, below the relevant certification mark (see below for reference).



3. Paddle Design and Decoration

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 Regulated Colors (as defined below), reflective or otherwise visually distracting materials or features on the paddle face, edge guard, or handle.

Given the inherent subjectivity of a paddle design's potential for visual distraction, the following guidelines are offered





General Guidance:

It is recommended that no reflective materials be incorporated into the paddle design. It is recommended that the graphic design within any circular area that makes up more than 20% of a paddle face not consist primarily of a Regulated Color or Colors. It is further recommended that any Regulated Colors be distributed over the face of paddle and not cover the central, or "sweet spot", area of the paddle face.

3.1. Regulated Colors

Regulated Colors include any colors which have been determined to impair an opponent from visually picking up or tracking a ball hit by players during competition.

The Regulated Color Chart (below) identifies four color ranges which are considered likely to impair an opponent's ability to visually pick up or track hit balls (white/grey, yellow/gold, yellow/green and neon yellow/neon green). Specific Pantone colors are referenced in the chart, but these are not inclusive of all colors which may be Regulated. Rather, the specific Pantone references are intended to be illustrative and informative such that manufacturers can more readily identify color ranges that are likely to be Regulated.

Color Range (Pantone References)	Color References
White/Gray (White/428)	
Yellow/Gold (102/7407)	
Teal/Neon Green (318/802)	
Orange/Mustard (1235/123)	

4. **Paddle Adjustability / Customization**

4.1. **Moveable Objects**

Paddles may not incorporate features that include moveable or adjustable parts.

4.2. **Removable Objects**

Except for the grip, paddles shall not incorporate components or features designed to be removable.

4.3 **Permitted Customizations**

- Edge Guard Tape
- Edge guards
- Overgrips
- Flat weighted tape
- Grip inserts
- Butt cap replacement
- Butt cap weight

5. UPA-A Certification Stamp

- 5.1. **Placement:** The UPA-A Certification mark must be permanently applied on at least one side of the paddle face in a visible and legible manner consistent with the parameters provided in Appendix B - Certification Mark Requirements.
- 5.2. **Tampering Prohibited:** Any alteration to, removal of, or covering of the certification stamp will render the paddle non-compliant and ineligible for sanctioned play.

6. Paddle Challenges

UPA officials have the right to confiscate, retain, and test paddles at any time.

Players must hand over paddles upon request. UPA-A and Pickle Pro Laboratory have the right and authority to dispose of confiscated paddles in any manner they deem appropriate and without giving notice to the paddle's manufacturer or the player.

All UPA professional events will implement the following paddle challenge system to ensure fair play. The following rules will govern the process:

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.

6.1. Challenge Initiation

If a player suspects that their opponent's paddle is non-compliant with UPA-A Standards, the challenging player must 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. If the opponent refuses to switch the paddle, the challenging player may escalate to an official challenge.

Players may not retroactively challenge a paddle. Once a match ends, players lose the ability to challenge a paddle.

6.2. Official Challenge

The paddle being challenged must be handed over to a UPA official under one of the two following conditions (the player playing with the challenged paddle has the choice):

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

After the completion of the event, the paddle will be sent to the Pickle Pro Lab test facility for analysis and results will be completed within one week.

Officially challenged paddles shall be processed and handled per the *Paddle Chain of Custody Procedure* outlined in Appendix A.

6.3. Outcome of the Challenge

- 1) If the paddle is found to be non-compliant, the player whose paddle was challenged (and their partner in doubles) will be disqualified, retroactively, and will forfeit all points gained from the match in which the challenge was initiated as well as any subsequent points earned in the bracket. If medals were earned, the medals will be removed from the records.
- 2) A \$1000 fee will be imposed on the player who initiated the challenge if the paddle is found to be compliant (this fee doubles with each failed challenge).
- 3) If the paddle is found to be non-compliant, the player whose paddle was challenged and the paddle's manufacturer will face consequences on a case-by-case basis, at the sole discretion of UPA-A officials.
 - a) At a minimum, the player whose paddle was challenged will be fined the amount of \$2,500.
 - b) Punishments can range from official warnings to suspensions and the delisting of paddles.

6.4. Severe Infractions

If a paddle is found to have been tampered with or is inconsistent with the construction of the Approved Model's certification samples the penalties may include:

- 1) Higher fines to the player or manufacturer.
- 2) Suspension from UPA events.
- 3) Deduction of ranking points.
- 4) Expulsion from all UPA sanctioned events.

7. Changes to Rules and Testing

- 7.1. **Ongoing Evaluation:** The UPA-A along with the Standards Committee will continually evaluate regulations and equipment standards to adapt to advancements in technology and gameplay.
- 7.2. **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.
- 7.3. **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.

8. Consequences of Non-Compliance for Manufacturers

UPA-A intends to ensure that the consequences of paddles found to be non-compliant are proportional to the offense. In some cases paddles may be immediately delisted and not allowed in play and in other instances paddles may be 'sunset' over a period of time.

- 8.1. **Delisting:** UPA-A reserves the right to revoke the certification of any paddle model found to be non-compliant with rules, regulations, or performance standards.
- 8.2. **Removal from Play:** UPA-A reserves the right to immediately prohibit delisted paddles from being used in sanctioned tournaments and events or to 'sunset' the prohibition by setting a future date for when the paddles will no longer be allowed in play.
- 8.3. **Fines and Forfeiture of Fees:** UPA-A reserves the right to impose fines and/or cause any prepaid fees to be forfeited.

9. Right to Appeal

Players or manufacturers who are subject to penalties or actions due to paddle non-compliance and/or violation of the UPA-A equipment standards have the right to appeal the decision.

Appeals will be heard by the *UPA-A Rules and Regulations Committee*, which will include representatives from UPA and engineering experts. After reviewing the case and hearing all relevant arguments the Rules and Regulations Committee shall issue a final and binding decision on the matter.

10. Standards Committee

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

- 10.1. **Committee Composition:** The committee will include representatives from UPA-A, Equipment Manufacturers, and Engineering Experts.
- 10.2. **Responsibilities:** The Standards Committee is tasked with developing new standards for equipment, reviewing and amending existing standards, and overseeing the implementation of changes to ensure compliance and fairness.
- 10.3. **Meeting Schedule:** The committee will convene quarterly throughout the year to address relevant issues and ensure timely updates to standards.

Appendix A

CHAIN OF CUSTODY PROCEDURE

Once a challenge has been formally initiated:

1. Marking the Paddle

- The referee will permanently mark the paddle under challenge with a permanent marker to confirm the paddle's identity.
- The mark will be made on the butt end (or on another 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 using a permanent marker:
 - The players' signatures will go on one face of the paddle.
 - The referee's signature will go on the opposite face.

4. Sealing and Transporting the Paddle

- The signed paddle shall be re-tested at the onsite testing facility.
- The signed paddle will be placed in a sealed envelope.
- The sealed envelope shall be shipped to the Pickle Pro Lab's testing facility for analysis.

5. Paddle Analysis and Issuance of Report

- All testing and analysis of the paddle shall be clearly documented.
- A formal report shall be compiled. The report shall include a summary of the results and all relevant raw data or background data.
- The report shall be submitted to UPA-A and shared with the players involved in the challenge.
- The UPA-A retains the right to publicly share the results of the challenged paddle.

Appendix B

CERTIFICATION MARK REQUIREMENTS



External Packaging PPA/MLP Sponsor

This full color, large 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 who are top 3 sponsors of PPA / MLP



External Packaging Licensee

This black & white, smaller logo lockup is available to all licensed paddle brands.



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.

Appendix C

UPA-A Fines and Penalty Chart for Onsite Paddle Testing Violations

Violation Criteria

A paddle may be confiscated if it meets any of the following conditions:

- Surface roughness reading exceeds 25% of the reading of the paddle(s) originally submitted for UPA-A Certification on the Starrett SR-160 Meter.
- Paddle surface exhibits a different material composition or finish than what was originally submitted and approved during certification.
- While the Starrett meter is not used for certification, it is used to verify that the paddle's surface specifications are consistent with those of the paddles originally submitted for certification.

Penalty Chart - 2025

Offense Number	Spin Rating (RPM)	Fine Amount (USD)	Penalty Description
1st Offense	Any	Warning Only	Written warning issued to the manufacturer. No fine assessed.
2nd Offense	≤ 2100	\$1,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; notice recorded in compliance log.
	> 2100	\$5,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; notice recorded in compliance log.
3rd Offense	≤ 2100	\$5,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; paddle model placed under review for possible decertification.
	> 2100	\$10,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; paddle model placed under immediate compliance review and subject to suspension pending investigation.

Penalty Chart - 2026 & Beyond

<u>Offense Number</u>	<u>Spin Rating (RPM)</u>	<u>Fine Amount (USD)</u>	<u>Penalty Description</u>
1st Offense	≤ 2100	\$1,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; notice recorded in compliance log.
	> 2100	\$5,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; notice recorded in compliance log.
2nd Offense	≤ 2100	\$5,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; paddle model placed under review for possible decertification.
	> 2100	\$10,000	Fine issued to manufacturer; paddle model placed under immediate compliance review and subject to suspension pending investigation.
3rd Offense	N/A	Up to \$50,000	A third violation will trigger an investigation where consequences could amount to suspensions, removal from certification list, and/or additional fines.

Additional Notes

- Each incident (player/event/model) is considered one violation. (e.g. If 3 of the same paddle model is submitted by a player and all fail, this is one violation. However, if UPA-A believes this rule is being used to gain an advantage, UPA-A reserves the right to rule this as 3 violations.)
- Offenses are tracked per brand and not to the specific paddle model in violation.
- UPA-A reserves the right to escalate disciplinary actions, including temporary suspension or removal from the Approved Paddle List, if violations demonstrate a pattern of non-compliance or intent to deceive.
- All confiscated paddles will be retained by UPA-A for laboratory confirmation testing at Pickle Pro Labs (PPL).
- Once testing has been conducted and verified, results will be communicated to the manufacturer within 5 business days.

Manufacturers have the right to appeal any disciplinary action per Rule 9 in the [UPA-A Paddle Rules](#)