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## You've Decided on Pickleball. What Next?

At this point, pickleball needs no introduction. Here's one thing you might not know, though: The player age is trending downward, and what used to be the up-and-coming sport for people ages 50 and older is now a wildly growing sport at all ages, including a rapidly expanding list of teams on college campuses — and even its own championships at that level.

As the sport continues its growth trajectory, facilities are proliferating, and nowhere is it being requested as much as in the park and recreation arena. Chances are more than good that you've already been approached about it and that you are considering adding pickleball facilities — or perhaps even adding more of them. In fact, you're probably hearing that every. single. day.

But no matter how many calls, emails and texts you're getting about putting in pickleball courts (or expanding what you have), you likely don't want to rush into anything. Instead, take some time to explore the recommendations and resources (many are free!) of the [American Sports Builders Association \(ASBA\)](#). ASBA is a nonprofit trade association of builders, designers and suppliers for sports facilities. The association's mission is to promote the highest standards of design, construction and maintenance.

Here are a few recommendations from ASBA's members when it comes to pickleball:

## The Dos and Don'ts of Pickleball



- **DO:** Talk to your user groups. Find out how many potential players you have and when they're interested in being on the court. Find out if they are interested in league play, drop-in play, lessons, etc. Are they affiliated with any other organization (a school, senior center, etc.) that might bring in even more players once the word gets out? All of this will factor into how many courts you need.
- **DO:** Add parking to accommodate the players. Pickleball is popular and because it is played in doubles, it draws quite a number of people, many of whom will stay after playing to watch other matches.
- **DO:** Add pathways or walkways leading to the courts to save your grass.
- **DO:** Make sure there are adequate restroom facilities that are convenient for players who will be coming to the courts.
- **DO:** Have some benches or tables where people can wait for their court or catch up with friends after the match is over. Pickleball is a very social sport and the more welcoming facilities are, the more popular they become.
- **DON'T:** Overlook the importance of court location. If courts are near the edge of the park where it borders on a residential neighborhood, those living nearby may be bothered if lights are used to facilitate night play. Also, keep in mind the acoustics of the game; while measures are being taken by USA Pickleball to help lower playing noise, it is essential to make sure your courts are good neighbors.
- **DON'T:** Simply line tennis courts for pickleball play too; although this is a quick and inexpensive fix, it is actually not a fix at all, since conflict among user groups is inevitable.
- **DON'T:** Convert tennis courts for pickleball use. Talk with the tennis population to find out about numbers of players, when they use the courts and how. If there are existing leagues, lessons or even regular players, you don't want to alienate them and drive them out of your park. It is far better to build new courts to host pickleball than to set yourself up for problems and conflicts down the line.

- **DON'T:** Skimp on the number of pickleball courts you add to your park. Pickleball, say court builders, is a “try-and-buy” sport, and facility owners usually wish they had doubled (and sometimes even tripled) the number of courts they put in.

If you're ready to make the commitment to pickleball, or even just thinking about it, ASBA recommends the following book:

**Pickleball Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual** – a publication available for purchase through ASBA. This book walks the reader through considerations, including design, budgeting, construction, maintenance and repair, as well as lighting and more. It is available in both hard copy and PDF format.

So, to recap: You've decided to add pickleball courts. The next step you take, however, is the most crucial. How do you find what you need? Where do you go for information? How do you find someone to do the work?

Obviously, you want a finished product you're proud of — and that is a good reason not to trust an internet search. Why? Because it might result in hiring a do-it-yourselfer who does not have the expertise you need, or a shoddy product that does not hold up.

Instead, get the professional results you want by going to the professionals. ASBA's members stand ready to help you find the right professional for the project. Design professionals, contractors and suppliers of equipment are all here. ASBA can help park decision-makers find the information they want, and it supplies many of its services free to the public; they include the following:

**Design Showcase App**: ASBA's free mobile app offers diagrams of various sports facilities, including those mentioned below. It is a great starting point for those who want to find out about the necessary space considerations, markings and more.

**ASBA's Online Directory**: ASBA's website allows the reader to explore its Find a Builder, Designer or Supplier feature free of charge, using location or area of expertise.

**ASBA's Bid Info Request Form**: The form allows you to provide information on upcoming projects and hear from the professionals who are best equipped to help you.

**Information on Certified Builders**: Many of ASBA's Builder members have received voluntary certification in constructing tennis courts, running tracks or sports fields, or have received the association's pickleball court construction certificate.

**ASBA's Library of Publications**: ASBA offers a full complement of books on sports facilities, designed to inform the reader on design, construction, surface selection, budgeting, maintenance and more.

**Technical Articles**: ASBA has authored articles for a wide variety of trade publications; all can be accessed free of charge.

Your park deserves the best — and so do all those who use it.

Need more information? Have questions? Reach out to ASBA:  
[www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org) | [info@sportsbuilders.org](mailto:info@sportsbuilders.org) | 443-640-1042

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