



# How to...



## Have fun with Ping-Pong

The fast-paced sport of table tennis is enjoyable to play and easy to learn.

More than 16 million people ages 6 and up in the US play the sport of table tennis, popularly known as Ping-Pong. The game is played with paddles and a lightweight ball on a large table with a net that is 6 feet long and 6 inches high above the table. (Many local recreation centers have tables, paddles, and balls, or you can buy a set that includes a net that can turn any rectangular table into a Ping-Pong table.) Here are some tips for getting started.

### Begin with a serve

Matches can be played with single players or in pairs. Each point starts with a player making an important shot called a serve. The serving player tosses the ball in the air, waits for it to drop down, and then hits it with a paddle over the net and across the table. During each turn, a player gets to serve twice.

### Score points

After you serve, your opponent will try to hit the ball back. If they miss, or the ball bounces more than once on their side, you get the point. If they return it, you hit the ball back and forth until someone misses. The first player to reach 11 points wins a game, and games must be won by two points. If a score is tied at 10–10, a player needs 12 points to win. Matches are decided by the first player to win three out of five games.

### Practice your shots

When you look at the paddle, you may notice that the rubber on each side is a little different. One side has smooth rubber, and the other has textured rubber. As your playing develops, you can learn how each type of rubber can help you hit the ball in strategic ways. Trying out different ways to hit the ball can help you win more points. The smooth side of a paddle can help a player put spin on the ball, causing the ball to spin in a certain direction when it lands on the opponent's side, making it difficult to return. The textured side of a paddle can help a player hit the ball back at a faster speed.

### Play in a tournament

Once you have the basics of table tennis under your belt, it can be fun to play in a tournament. This is when a group of players compete in a series of games to determine one winner. You could check with your community's recreation center to see whether they have any tournaments scheduled for the summer. Or you could create a tournament with a group of friends on a summer afternoon. Make your own bracket, or ask an adult to help you find a blank one online to print out and use. Fill the bracket in with the players for the first round. The winners will advance to the next round until you end up with a table tennis champion.

**YOUNG STAR**  
Hend Zaza, age 12 from Syria, was the youngest table tennis competitor at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

## 4 table tennis terms to know

As you get into the game, you may hear players using these common words.

### Backspin

Backspin is when a player hits the ball with a downward chopping motion, making the bottom of the ball spin away when it lands. This makes the ball difficult for an opponent to return.

### Dropshot

This is when a player hits the ball in a light way so the ball drops just over the other side of the net. If the opponent is standing farther back from the table, they may have trouble reaching the ball in time to return it.

### Rally

A rally is when a ball is being hit back and forth between two players for a substantial

amount of time before one player wins the point.

Outside of a game, you can rally for fun and count how many times you and another player can keep the Ping-Pong ball going.

### Twiddle

This term refers to the motion a player makes when turning the paddle in their hand to take advantage of the different sides of the paddle when making a shot.

