



Referee Framework

This Framework is made up of 3 sub-documents to be read separately:

1. Referee Certification & Accreditation Regulations
2. Referee Code of Conduct
3. Referee Compliance, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures

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Referee Certification & Accreditation Regulations

1. Purpose

These Regulations establish the framework for the education, assessment, certification, renewal, and withdrawal of European Pickleball Federation (“EPF”) Credentialed Referees.

They define the scope of EPF authority and the obligations of Credentialed Referees.

Cross-Referenced Documents

These Regulations must be read together with:

- the **EPF Referee Code of Conduct**, which defines behavioural and ethical obligations of all Credentialed Referees; and
- the **EPF, Referee Compliance, Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure** which define procedures, sanctions, and appeal rights.

Compliance with both documents is a mandatory condition of being awarded and maintaining EPF referee certification.

2. Definitions

- **Credentialed Referee** – Individual holding current EPF referee certification.
 - **Accreditation** – Official recognition by EPF enabling officiation at EPF-sanctioned events.
 - **Suspension** – Temporary withdrawal of certification.
 - **Revocation** – Permanent withdrawal of certification unless otherwise specified.
 - **CPD** – Continuing Professional Development.
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3. Certification Levels

EPF has and will establish multiple referee courses (L1, L2, Referee Trainer, Certified Referee, Assessor), each with defined training, practical and written assessments, experience requirements, and validity periods.

The requirements for each course are set out in the relevant course description, including requirements to pass from theory (Part 1) to the on-court assessment (Part 2).

Failure to comply with the requirements detailed in these mentioned documents (e.g. late delivery or non-delivery of homework, no Visual acuity form provided, etc.), may lead to the removal by EPF of a non-compliant trainee from the course with no reimbursement for any expenses already incurred. Assessor’s decisions are final.

EPF may request support from suitably officially credentialed referees to mentor trainees during L1 and L2 courses. These Mentors should follow the defined guidance to guarantee a standard approach.

Mentors are selected by the Referee Trainer, based on a combination of measurable criteria and soft skills.

Measurable criteria include a minimum of 6 months of active officiating as L2 Referee, verified officiating experience in tournaments, good disciplinary record and positive feedback from past trainees, demonstration of commitment to continuous professional development (CPD), technical knowledge and availability throughout the entire duration of the course.

Whenever there are insufficient volunteer mentor's or when the available volunteers do not meet the required standards, EPF reserves the right to appoint the most suitable qualified referees as mentor's.

Soft skills include effective communication, empathy, motivating attitude and patience.

The Referee Trainer may choose to remove or replace a given mentor.

4. Eligibility

In order to be admitted to be credentialed, candidates must:

- Be at least 18 years old, or turn 18 within the calendar year in which the assessment is held;
- Be a European citizen or permanent resident of a member country of EPF;
- Complete EPF pre-requirements to access the respective referee course
- Provide accurate information;
- Complete the GDPR consent form;
- Register with EPF and pay applicable course registration/tuition fees.

Required Acceptance of Other EPF Regulations

As part of the certification process, candidates must confirm in writing that they have read, understood, and agree to comply with:

- the EPF Referee Code of Conduct;
- the EPF Compliance Policy & Procedure

Failure to comply with those documents may result in refusal of certification, non-renewal, suspension, or revocation.

5. Validity & Renewal

Certification remains valid for 3 years.

Renewal requires:

- Proof of ongoing officiating activity;
- Completion of Continuing Professional Development (“CPD”) requirements;
- Compliance with technical standards;
- Good standing with EPF;
- EPF annual registration fee up to date.

The requirements for renewal and the validity period of each credential are set out in the relevant “EPF Referee Renewal Requirements” document.

6. EPF Powers

For the purposes of maintaining standards, integrity, and consistency within the EPF refereeing programme, EPF may, at its discretion and in accordance with applicable EPF Regulations:

- Set and amend training standards;
- Conduct observations, assessments and audits;
- Require retraining or additional education;
- Investigate complaints, reports, or alleged misconduct;
- Impose sanctions including warnings, retraining, suspension or revocation of credentials;

Maintain and publish records of active and suspended referees

7. Limits on EPF Control

EPF credentialing does not create an employment or agency relationship between EPF and referees.

- Accordingly:
 - EPF does not employ referees;
 - EPF does not assume direct responsibility for referees’ actions;
 - EPF does not supervise or assume responsibility for referees officiating at non-EPF-sanctioned events;
 - EPF certification does not constitute a guarantee of referee performance.
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8. Trainee [and Referee] Obligations

Trainees must:

- comply with the requirements of the courses, as established by EPF;
 - cooperate in good faith with EPF assessments, observations, and investigations;
 - maintain accurate and up-to-date contact details with EPF;
 - avoid any unauthorised use or misuse of EPF branding, with particular attention to the EPF logo.
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- not distribute, reproduce, translate, adapt, disclose, or publish, in whole or in part, any materials owned by or shared by EPF and/or USA Pickleball, except for the individuals sole personal use or, where expressly authorised in writing by the relevant rights holder.
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9. Suspension & Revocation

The suspension or revocation of EPF credentials may be imposed in cases of misconduct, repeated incompetence, misrepresentation, breaches of integrity, or safety concerns.

All suspension and revocation procedures shall be conducted in accordance with the EPF Compliance Policy & Procedure.

10. Amendments

EPF may revise this document and will notify referees of changes.

EPF reserves the right to pursue alternative solutions to the procedures described due to unforeseen circumstance, technical changes and the evolving state of pickleball in Europe.

11. Linked Documents

- Description of referee courses (L1, L2, etc.),
 - EPF Referee Renewal Requirements,
 - Guidance for mentors,
 - Guidance for the reflective essay,
 - Visual Acuity Form.
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Referee Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This Code defines the ethical, behavioural, and professional standards expected of referees when acting in any capacity when participating in any European Pickleball Federation (EPF) sanctioned tournament.

Referees shall act with integrity, fairness, and respect at all times. Punctuality, preparedness, respectful communication, adherence to established procedures, and cooperation with officials is mandatory.

2. Scope of this code

This Code applies to all credentialed referees officiating in any EPF sanctioned tournaments. Where referees are participating in a non-sanctioned tournament they should at all times be mindful of the Code of Conduct and operate within this spirit.

By accepting and maintaining EPF credentials, referees agree to comply with this Code whenever they officiate at EPF-sanctioned events.

EPF may intervene in the following non-exhaustive situations:

- serious integrity violations (e.g. bribery, match manipulation);
- misuse of EPF identity, credentials, branding, or intellectual property;
- conduct seriously damaging the reputation of EPF or the EPF certification system.
- other situations where the code of conduct has been deemed as not been adhered to.

3. Rule Enforcement

Rules shall be enforced impartially, fairly, and consistently at all times. Personal opinions or external influences must not affect rule enforcement.

4. Decision Making & Judgement

Decisions shall be based on official guidelines to ensure fairness for all participants. When situations are not explicitly addressed in the official Rulebook, Casebook, or Handbook, referees shall apply sound judgment and common sense to reach an appropriate decision and shall consult the Head Referee or Tournament Director, as appropriate.

5. Professional conduct

Referees shall maintain professionalism in all moments by maintaining control and demonstrating confidence. They shall be respectful and courteous toward players, spectators, and colleagues, and shall never act in a dictatorial or aggressive manner. Referees shall not make statements, whether

verbal or written, that undermine or diminish the role, authority, or professionalism of other referees. Referees shall refrain from commenting on play unless requested. Reasonable requests from players may be accommodated, provided impartiality is not compromised.

6. Focus & Attentiveness

Attention and focus are key and shall be kept throughout each match. Personal electronic devices should be silenced or kept away to avoid distractions.

7. Appearance & Equipment

Unless otherwise determined by the Tournament Director, referees shall use the EPF uniform when officiating at all tournaments whether EPF sanctioned or not. When the EPF uniform is worn, the EPF Dress Code shall be respected at all times. The use of the EPF uniform outside of Europe is subject to prior approval by the Board of the EPF or another designated EPF body. Referees shall present a neat and professional appearance; uniforms shall be clean, complete, and well maintained.

Only approved equipment shall be used during matches to ensure consistency and safety.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interests at all times should be avoided. Officiating matches involving relatives, close friends, or when any other conflict of interest exists, should be avoided. Officiating and playing in the same tournament and on the same day is not appropriate and should be avoided or kept to a minimum.

When acting as a player in an officiated match, a referee should avoid disclosing their status as an EPF-credentialed referee to officials or other players.

9. Intervention during Matches

Referees should not intervene in ongoing matches unless requested by the assigned referee, the Head Referee or the Tournament Director. In case any officiating errors are observed, these should be addressed privately, after the match.

10. Comments & Public Communication

Referees shall avoid public commentary – positive or negative - about referees or players, or members of the Board of Directors of EPF and their officials, that brings EPF into disrepute. Please refer to the social media guidelines. This preserves impartiality and prevents misinterpretation.

11. Continuing Profession Development

Referees are expected to remain informed of updates to official EPF and USA Pickleball officiating resources, including the Rulebook and Officiating Handbook, and to maintain their officiating skills through regular practice.

The specific continuing professional development requirements applicable to each credential level (e.g. Level 1, Level 2) are defined in the relevant EPF credential documentation.

12. Private Practice & Training Activities by Referees

Training sessions, workshops or educational forum maybe organised by any EPF credentialed referee in their personal capacity provided such activities are clearly distinguished from any EPF official education or credentialing pathway.

Only a credentialed EPF Referee Trainer may provide formal training to other referees or trainees. Credentialed Referees may practice in their individual capacity with other referees or trainees, provided that such activities are clearly distinguished from EPF official education and credentialing pathways.

In connection with any private practicing activities, Referees shall not claim or imply EPF endorsement or certification, describe such practice as “official” or “EPF-approved”, or use EPF or USAP materials, whether copyrighted or not, including but not limited to manuals, videos, slides, proprietary content, logos, trademarks, badges, or branding.

Important that all participants participating in a privately run activity are aware that it is not an official EPF course and does not lead to EPF credentialing.

EPF does not endorse or assume responsibility for privately run activities conducted independently by a credentialed referee, without prejudice to EPF’s authority to address any misuse of EPF status, materials, or branding under this Code of Conduct.

13. Copyrights

EPF-credentialed Referees shall not distribute, reproduce, translate, adapt, disclose, or publish, in whole or in part, any materials owned by or shared by EPF and/or USA Pickleball, except where expressly authorised in writing by the relevant rights holder.

Such materials may be subject to copyright protection and/or confidentiality obligations arising from agreements between EPF and USA Pickleball. Any unauthorised use or disclosure may constitute a violation of this Code of Conduct, may lead to termination of the USAP/EPF Strategic Alliance, and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with EPF Referee Compliance, Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

14. Fees

EPF has published a reference guide on fair compensation, considering factors such as the type of tournament, the referee's credential level, and other conditions. Such guidance is not a mandatory tariff but should be seen as a basis to find a satisfactory agreement for both parties.

In the event that a referee wishes to donate their services free of charge, they are entitled to do so.

15. Compliance & Reporting Obligations

EPF-credentialed Referees shall comply with EPF Bylaws, this Code of Conduct, and applicable ethical standards, as well as with the rules of the game and officiating rules adopted by EPF.

Referees have a duty to report, through appropriate EPF channels, any serious integrity concerns, significant misconduct, or conflicts of interest relevant to officiating activities. Please refer to EPF Compliance Policy and procedures.

16. Breaches

Any breach of this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, in accordance with EPF Disciplinary Regulations.

Disciplinary measures may include, without limitation, warnings, corrective or mandatory retraining, suspension, or revocation of EPF credentials.

17. Linked Documents

- Social media guidelines,
- Dress code,
- Fees reference doc,
- Definition of official tournament for confirmation of officiating and use for renewal.

Referee Compliance, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures

1. Purpose

Credentialed referees are expected to strictly adhere to the EPF Code of Conduct, applicable professional standards, and the best practices set out in the USAP Pickleball Officiating Handbook as adopted by EPF.

Compliance with these documents is a condition of obtaining and maintaining EPF referee credentials.

This policy establishes the procedure for addressing situations in which referees fail to comply with these standards or engage in conduct inconsistent with the professionalism and integrity expected by EPF.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- conduct of EPF credentialed referees at EPF-sanctioned events;
 - conduct outside of events where such behaviour materially impacts the integrity of the sport or is detrimental to EPF or its refereeing programmes.
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3. Offence Categories

Alleged offences may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Minor: e.g. lateness, attire issues, minor behavioural lapses.
 - Serious: e.g. repeated unprofessional behaviour, abuse of authority, discrimination, insubordination.
 - Integrity Violations: e.g. bribery, corruption, bias, conflicts of interest, copyright violations.
 - Technical Incompetence: persistent and documented incorrect application of the rules.
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4. Submission of Complaints

Complaints may be submitted by officials - including referees, head referees, or tournament directors - but also by players, organizers, sponsors, or observers or officers of EPF.

Complaints must:

- be submitted in writing to the official EPF Disciplinary Committee email address published on the EPF website;

- include sufficient detail (who, when, where, and supporting evidence where available) to enable an initial assessment.
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5. Disciplinary Authority

Complaints concerning referee conduct shall be handled by the Board of EPF or such other committee as the Board shall decide. The review committee will be referred to as the EPF Disciplinary Committee

6. Admissibility & Scope of Review

The EPF Disciplinary Committee shall conduct an initial review to determine whether the complaint:

- falls within the scope of this policy;
- contains sufficient and relevant information;
- is not manifestly unfounded, frivolous, or vexatious.

If admissible, the EPF Disciplinary Committee shall assess whether the alleged behaviour:

- constitutes a breach of the EPF Code of Conduct;
- violates applicable professional or officiating standards;
- fails to adhere to the EPF-adopted Officiating Handbook; or
- interferes with or undermines the duties of officials, players, or other participants.

Complaints deemed inadmissible shall be dismissed with written notification to the complainant.

7. Notification & Right to Respond

- For all admissible complaints, the Referee concerned shall be:
- informed of the allegations;
- provided with the opportunity to submit a written response within 15 days.

8. Investigation Procedure

The EPF Disciplinary Committee may appoint an investigating evaluator responsible for:

- contacting the referee concerned;
- gathering relevant information and evidence;
- documenting findings.

The evaluator shall submit a written report to the EPF Disciplinary Committee within 15 days.

The referee's written response shall be considered as part of the investigation.

9. Technical Opinion from the EPF Referee Committee

For all admissible complaints, the EPF Disciplinary Committee may request a written technical opinion from a technical advisor who could be the EPF Referee Committee or other competent person ("technical advisor").

The case file provided for the technical opinion should be anonymised to prevent conflicts of interest.

The identity of the individual(s) involved should not be disclosed.

The technical advisor may request additional anonymised information where necessary to understand the context.

Scope of Technical Opinion

The technical advisor shall provide a technical assessment based exclusively on official governing documents, including: the Rulebook, the Officiating Handbook, the Casebook and any other relevant EPF-adopted materials.

Where no explicit provision applies, the technical advisor may refer to documented and established officiating best practices.

The technical advisor shall not make any disciplinary determination.

The technical advisor will provide a written opinion within 15 working days from the request or from the receipt of any additional clarifications.

10. Decision

Upon review of:

- the investigating evaluator's report;
- the referee's response;
- the technical advisor/evaluator report;

the EPF Disciplinary Committee shall, by majority decision:

- dismiss the complaint;
- request additional information; or
- impose a disciplinary measure.

11. Sanctions

Sanctions shall be proportionate to the severity of the offence and may include:

- **Verbal Warning**
For minor infractions requiring formal acknowledgement but no further penalty.
 - **Retraining Requirement**
For cases involving technical errors or misapplication of rules.
 - **Written Warning**
Formal documentation of the infraction, including required corrective actions. Failure to comply may lead to escalation.
 - **Suspension**
Temporary removal of officiating privileges. Reinstatement may be conditional upon retraining and/or supervised officiating.
 - **Revocation of Credentials**
Removal from the EPF refereeing programme. The individual may not officiate, train, mentor, or represent themselves as an EPF credentialed referee.
 - Re-application may be permitted after a minimum of 3 years from the date of the final decision, subject to review and approval by the Board.
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12. Communication of Outcome

The EPF Disciplinary Committee shall communicate its decision in writing to:

- the complainant;
- the referee concerned;

including a reasoned explanation of the outcome.

13. Appeals

The referee has the right to appeal on the basis of:

- procedural error;
- unreasonable decision;
- new or previously unavailable evidence.

Appeals must be submitted in writing within 15 days of the decision.

The EPF Disciplinary Committee shall reconvene to review the appeal and refer to the Board of EPF for final review and, decision.

The role of the Board is to assess whether:

- the procedure was correctly followed;
 - the decision was reasonably supported by the evidence.
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The decision of the Board in relation to the appeal process shall be final.

14. Emergency Suspension

The EPF Disciplinary Committee may impose an immediate temporary suspension where necessary to protect safety or the integrity of the sport.

A formal review shall follow within a reasonable timeframe.

15. Conflict of Interest

Any member of the EPF Disciplinary Committee with a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from the process.

16. Confidentiality

All proceedings under this policy shall remain confidential, except where disclosure is necessary for integrity, safeguarding, or enforcement purposes.

17. Record Keeping

EPF shall maintain secure records of all complaints, including:

- inadmissible complaints;
- evidence submitted;
- decisions and sanctions;
- appeal outcomes.

18. Amendments

EPF reserves the right to amend this policy, with appropriate notice.