## National Task Force on Pickleball Noise

*Updated Aug 2026*

# Checklists and Recommendations

## Building New Courts

**Research, open communication with neighbors, and healthy setbacks will be your most useful tools.**

☐ Evaluate distance from nearby homes

☐ Conduct or review a sound study before siting

☐ Review anticipated impact on neighbors

☐ Consider site orientation, hours of play, surrounding buildings and terrain

**Fact based guidance:**

**1. When planning for new locations, setbacks are the most effective way to prevent harm to neighbors, minimize social conflict, and avoid unnecessary use of municipal resources over the long term.**

**2. Within 350 feet of homes, courts are not recommended, unless they are completely enclosed. Rare exceptions may occur with required foam balls, OWL paddles, and strict full-time supervision.**

**3. Between 350-800 feet, a combination of thick vinyl sound barriers, limited hours, AND quiet equipment may provide relief. However, recent research shows this is not always the case and there may still be concerns from neighbors.**

**4. Beyond 800 feet, fewer people seem to be affected. However, more research is needed to understand why some residents living more than 800 feet are deeply impacted.**

**5. Until further research is available, we advise extreme caution when placing courts within 1,000 feet of homes, hospitals, or schools, even with mitigation.**

**6. Even larger setbacks may be needed where terrain carries sound—such as valleys or water—or near multi-story homes. schools, hospitals, or senior housing.**

**7. Ongoing research may help with decisions about how to combine various forms of mitigation. Within 1000 feet, we have very few success stories right now.**

**8. Converting existing tennis courts is appealing because it is less expensive. Conversions are discouraged without sufficient setback; many have failed nationwide, causing added cost and conflict.**

## Addressing Issues at Existing Courts

**A combination of different types of mitigation, along with a reasonable setback might help. Relocation of the courts may be necessary.**

☐ Document community concerns and patterns of use

☐ Measure current setback distance from homes

☐ Evaluate feasability of operational changes (hours, equipment policies, sound barriers)

☐ Assess whether relocation or redesign should be considered

**Fact based guidance:**

1. **A combination of setbacks and mitigation might help, but not always.**

2. **If courts are within 350 feet of homes, long-term resolution of neighbor concerns is unlikely, even with high-quality barriers and limited hours. Requiring and enforcing foam Librarian balls and Owl paddles may help, but without full-time supervision, quiet equipment recommendations rarely work.**

3. **For courts 350–800 feet from homes, we recommend a high-quality sound study and open communication with neighbors. In some cases, using barriers, limited hours, AND quieter equipment together may help, but we have found very few documented successes.**

4. **Existing courts beyond 800 feet of homes may work, especially with acoustic barriers. But, some residents living more than 800 feet are deeply impacted and research is ongoing to better understand why.**

5. **Larger setbacks may be needed where terrain carries sound—such as valleys or water—or near multi-story homes. schools, hospitals, or senior housing.**

# Sound Studies:  What to Know

**A good sound study assesses loudness and other noise characteristics; pair it with research on human response.**

☐ A sound studies should not stand alone. Pair it with assessments of potential health and well-being impacts on nearby residents.

☐ Assess whether a sound study will be helpful

☐ Ensure that your sound study appropriately measures loudness, repetition and time exposed.

**Fact based guidance:**

1. **Sound studies measure noise levels but do not assess the impact of noise on health.**

2. **A sound study may or may not be needed. Recognizing the  impact, some cities have relocated courts that were  too close to homes without even conducting a sound study.**

3. **Sound studies are recommended for locations up to 1000 feet from homes.  For most existing pickleball courts within 350 feet of homes, sound studies and mitigation are unlikely to provide relief; relocation is typically required.**

4. **A good sound study should include an assessment that considers the loudness, the number of pops, and the duration of exposure.  There are two recommended approaches:**

   **The preferred method  uses Adjusted Sound Exposure Level (SEL).**The SEL combines the loudness and the number of pops and rolls them into one decibel reading. It explains the expected impact on a community over a specific period of time. An adjustment penalty of 5-12 dB (per ANSI 12.4) should be added to account for impulsive noise.  A sound professional, using a Type 1 sound meter can help you determine the SEL and the appropriate time period (hours to days) to consider.  **Link to Texas ordinance.**

   **Another option is to gather measurements separately.**
   - **Loudness (decibels). Use a measure that averages the noise over ⅛ of a second or less (e.g. LAFmax)**
   - **The estimated number of noise events/day (900/court/hour).**
   - **Expected duration of exposure (e.g. days/weeks/years).**

5. **LAeq and LAS are not acceptable measures of loudness because they average noise levels over longer time periods.  The pickleball pop is very short.**

6. **A sound study should also discuss:**

- **where the noise can be expected to be heard inside homes**
- **environmental factors that affect sound (e.g. hills, multi-floor homes, bodies of water, and court orientation)**
- **expected impact of noise heard at night or on weekends**

# Noise Mitigation:  What to Know

**Distance is the best mitigation.  Using multiple tools in combination might work.  Just focusing on lower decibels (loudness) may not be enough.**

☐ Consider distance as the primary mitigation tool

☐ Understand limits of barriers, berms, and landscaping

☐ Review evidence on real-life effectiveness

**Fact based guidance:**

**1. Appropriate setback distance is the only mitigation tool shown to effectively reduce the impact of the noise on neighbors.**

**2. Thick vinyl acoustic barriers have not been shown to reduce the impact of pickleball noise, at this time. Reducing decibels (loudness) does not translate to neighbor relief, and the repetitive popping sound remains. Given their documented lack of effectiveness, it is recommended that communities approach investments in thick vinyl barriers with extreme caution.**

**3. Limiting hours of play drastically may work in new installations, but it does not work where court noise has already impacted communities.**

**4. Mandated and supervised use of foam balls and certain quiet paddles may work in limited circumstances. Anecdotally, there are reports of success with the Librarian foam ball and use of the OWL quiet paddle.**

**5. Between 350-800 feet, for existing courts, using high quality barriers and limited hours and requiring quiet racquets and balls might help sometimes. But generally, these tools have not been very successful. Research continues to search for effective combinations.**

**6.  Industry research on barriers and quieter equipment often focuses on reducing decibels. This does not address the repetitive popping and the human response.**

# Communication with neighbors

**Open clear communication can help if started early.  Minimizing or ignoring concerns can lead to larger conflict later.**

☐ Start outreach early with public meetings

☐ Provide clear information about plans and studies

☐ Avoid ignoring or minimizing concerns

☐ Ensure that staff reports evaluate the potential human and community impact

**Fact based guidance:**

**1. Early, frequent communication with neighbors can reduce long-term municipal resource use. Meetings can be challenging; using a skilled facilitator may be helpful.**

**2.When concerns are minimized or ignored, conflicts tend to heat up, using municipal resources and increasing stress responses to the noise.**

**3. Recognize that the potential health impacts from repetitive, impulse noise are real, even at low decibel levels.  They include severe distress, disturbed sleep, mental health concerns including trauma reactions, anxiety, and heart problems.**

**4. Open and frequent communication leads to improved trust and helps somewhat to lower the stress response to pickleball noise. Once that trust in leadership is broken however, it is almost impossible to repair.**

**5.  The social conflict between avid players and concerned neighbors is disruptive and can contribute to the stress response to the noise.**