

PING PONG

HOW TO BEAT YOUR FRIENDS AND
IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH



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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

PING PONG'S EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

HOW THE GAME CAME TO BE!

So, where exactly did the game of ping pong come from?

The sport originated in Victorian England. At that time, they loved playing lawn tennis. However, when the bad weather came, they couldn't play outside. So, they used everyday objects such as cigarette tins as paddles, a ball of string for a ball and a line of books for a net. And so there it was – the first game of ping pong.

RAPID DEVELOPMENT!

The game developed rapidly – what was first known as 'whif whaf' and 'flim flam' became known quickly as 'ping pong'. The name was copyrighted in the early 20th Century by an English manufacturer, and that trademark was sold to the Parker Brothers in the United States.

An English player James Gibbs discovered celluloid balls in the United States around the same time, and along with the first paddles (light wooden blades with pimped rubber) these became new refinements to the growing game.

THE PROFESSIONAL ERA BEGINS!

In the years that followed a number of ping pong associations were created and the game kept growing. Fast forward to 1926 and the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) was created, and in 1927 the first official world championship took place.

The early game was dominated by European players, but in 1953, a Japanese player Horio Satoh introduced a foam rubber paddle. This made the game faster, and Japan along with the other Asian countries became quickly dominant as popularity soared in these regions. China took over the reins around the 1980's and have remained fairly dominant into the modern-day era of the game.

THE COLD WAR AND PING PONG!

One of the most interesting stories about ping pong is how it played a key part in improving relations between some of the countries involved in the Cold War! April 6th, 1971 the US ping pong team was invited to take a trip to play in China. This was due to cooperation by the US ping pong organisation and Chinese equivalent. 4 days later a group of USA players became the first

Americans to step foot in China since the communist takeover in 1949.

An incredible story – we're can't guarantee that your games of ping pong with your family and friends will create as much peace!

RULES

RULES OF PING PONG

Before we start, we should say that you do not HAVE to follow these rules to have fun when playing ping pong! Play whatever way you want, but if you want to play professionally, this is what you need to know!

SCORING

Games are scored to 11 points. If the score reaches 10-10, the winner is whoever wins by two clear points. Matches (collections of games) are normally scored as the 'best' of 3, 5 or 7 games – any odd number really.

SERVICE

To get the game started, the ball must be struck so that it bounces both on the server's side of the table, and the receiver's side. However, there's a little bit more to it. Here are the juicy details.

- Service should begin with the ball sitting freely on the **open palm** of the server's hand (the rules also state that the receiver should be able to see the ball at all times throughout the serve!)
- The ball must then be thrown up (using the flat palm – this takes some practice), ensuring it goes **vertically upwards, without spin** and to a **height of at least 16cm** from where it left the server's hand.

- If you serve, and the ball strikes the net after bouncing on your side, but continues on and bounces on the receiver's side, this is a **LET**. This simply means the point **does not count**. When this happens, the serve is simply retaken.

“HOW MANY TIMES DO I SERVE IN A GAME?”

The rules dictate that service swaps every 2 points. So, you serve twice, then your opponent serves twice. This continues until you have a winner unless you reach a score of 10-10. At this point, it changes to 1 serve each – until someone (the winner!) reaches 2 points clear.

RETURNING THE BALL

This part's pretty simple. When someone serves, or strikes the ball at you, you must return it over the net. The ball must touch their side of the table – it does not matter if it touches the net on its way (a let point for this offence is only on service) or it travels freely over or around the net.

WINNING A POINT

Here's where it can get a little technical. So... we've made it easy for you and displayed all of the rules in the ITTF Handbook for 2018. These are the official rules on how you win or lose a point. We'll delve into how you can win these points more specifically later!

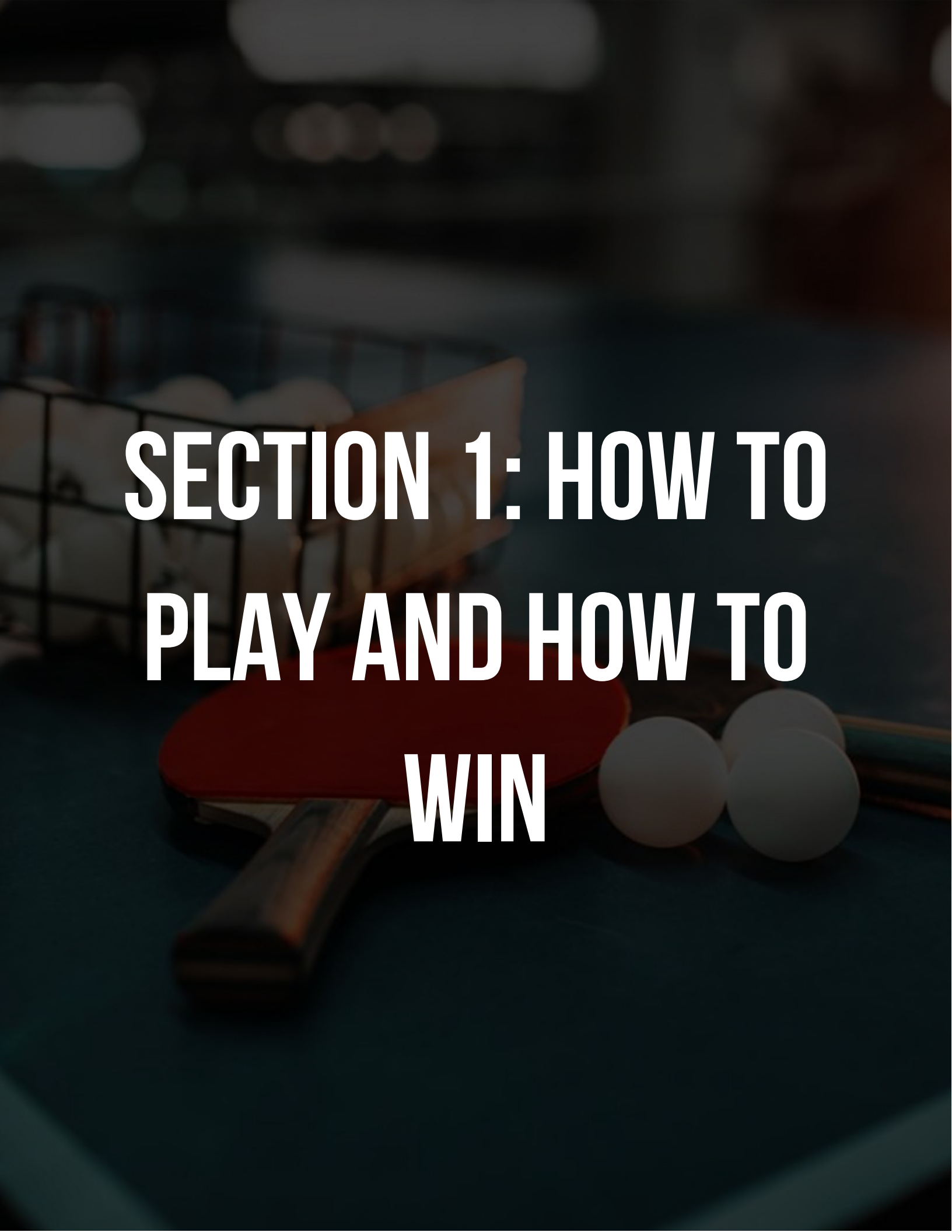
A player scores a point if:

- The opponent fails to make a correct service
- The opponent fails to make a correct return
- If, after making a service or return, the ball makes contact with anything other than the net assembly
- If the opponent strikes the ball and it misses your side of the table completely
- If the ball, after an opponent strikes it goes through the net, under the net, or between the net and net post

- If your opponent obstructs the ball
- If an opponent deliberately strikes the ball twice in succession
- If the opponent uses a side of the paddle which has a surface that does not comply with ITTF regulations
- If an opponent, or anything they are wearing, moves the playing surface
- If an opponent, or anything they are wearing, touches the net assembly
- If an opponent's free hand touches the playing surface

We bet that's a lot more ways to win a point than you thought ping pong could have!

If you want to see the exhaustive list of the rules of ping pong, look up the **ITTF Handbook**.

The background is a dark, blurred photograph of a Go board. A wooden Go stick (tweezer) is visible in the lower left, and several white Go stones are scattered on the right side. The text is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

SECTION 1: HOW TO PLAY AND HOW TO WIN

CHAPTER 1 - GRIP



It's all well and good learning a million different types of shots and skills for playing ping pong. However, one of the fundamentals of the game and something which will impact how you play is **your grip**. Your paddle is your sword going into battle, and you need to know what way to hold it!

Let's start by introducing you to the different types of grips which exist.

SHAKEHAND

This is the most commonly used grip by casual players and is also the most popular grip used by professionals all around the world.

The grip is named 'shakehand' because it's exactly as described – you grasp the paddle as if you were shaking someone's hand. Further than this, there are two varieties of this grip – the **shallow shakehand grip** and the **deep shakehand grip**. The shallow shakehand grip means the thumb is placed on the wooden handle – the deep shakehand grip means the thumb is placed on the rubber. There are some advantages and disadvantages of each of these grips.

The **advantages of the shallow shakehand grip** are as follows:

- ✓ It allows for quicker changing of your paddle angle to play different shots, because your grip is loose
- ✓ You have more freedom to move your wrist, allowing you to generate more power and spin. Moving the paddle freely can allow for more variety in your shots

The **advantages of the deep shakehand grip** are as follows:

- ✓ Opposite to the shallow grip, the paddle does not move freely in the hand. This ensures a firm grasp, allowing for more controlled shots
- ✓ Movement of the wrist is limited by the grip, meaning more precise and balanced shots can be played

The **disadvantages of both shakehand grips** are as follows:

- ✗ When compared to grips that we will discuss next, this grip creates an opening that your opponent can attack. Your paddle is an extension of your arm so to speak, and when waiting to receive a shot you will stand with it held out quite far in front of you. If the opponent attacks close to your body, you will have to take a step to the right or left and quickly decide if you're going to play forehand or backhand. With this grip, neither shot can be played without some form of movement

"IF I WANT TO USE SHAKEHAND GRIP, SHOULD I GO WITH SHALLOW OR DEEP?"

It's a matter of preference. Try out both and see how you feel!

In general, a **shallow shakehand grip** is more favoured by attacking players – this is due to the amount of power that can be generated quickly. If you like playing lots of **topspin**, definitely think about using a shallow shakehand grip.

A **deep shakehand grip** is mostly favoured by defensive minded players. Defensive strokes such as a backspin return require more control of the paddle. The firmer grip you'll have when using a deep shakehand grip will allow you to control your shots more.

PENHOLD

The second most popular grip adopted by professionals is the **penhold** grip. This grip is a little trickier to get used to – as the name suggests, you hold the paddle as if you were holding a pen, with your thumb and index finger on the front, and the other 3 fingers curled slightly around the back for support. A lot of the time, professional players only use one side of the paddle to hit the ball when using this grip (the side opposite to the one with 3 fingers on it). This grip is traditionally favoured by players from the Asian countries of Japan, China, Taiwan and South Korea.

In general, for beginners this grip is not recommended, however it does have number of advantages.

The **advantage of using a penhold grip** are as follows:

- ✓ Massively freer movement of the wrist, allowing for more power generated in serves and general shots
- ✓ Blocking and pushing (we'll discuss these shots later) become easier on the backhand side, due to the ease of movement of the wrist
- ✓ Like we talked about earlier, there is no problem with a crossover point that causes indecision and confusion when shots are hit close to the body. Using a penhold grip, it's easy to adjust to play the right shot

The **disadvantages of using a penhold grip** are as follows:

- ✗ Firstly, it's a lot harder to learn for a beginner – a shakehand grip is the natural way most people will hold a ping pong paddle and there's nothing wrong with this, one of the most impressive players in the world Ma Long, uses a shakehand grip
- ✗ The penhold grip can be limiting when it comes to playing a variety of shots. In particular, hitting backhand topspin is an unnatural movement for the wrist and very hard to learn
- ✗ Most penhold players will play the majority of shots on the forehand side. This means they have to move about a lot to cover the whole table. We'll cover movement in a subsequent chapter, but this can have the effect of draining your stamina

OTHER GRIPS

There are a few other grips which aren't as commonly used but are options nevertheless.

Seemiller grip – This grip is named after a ping pong champion named Danny Seemiller. The grip simply involves placing the thumb and index fingers on either side of the racquet (one on the red, one on the black). This grip is less advantageous than it once was – initially it was used to confuse the opponent as contrasting rubbers could be placed on each side, and this grip distracted the opponent and made it harder for them to gauge which shot would be played.

V-grip – This experimental grip is unusual in form, but can be used to generate a lot of power and spin. The index and middle finger support the paddle, held in a 'v' shape at the back, with the ring and pinkie finger resting on the back of front of the handle. The thumb can rest wherever suits best. This grip makes it even harder to hit shots which are played close to the body, but allows for an extended reach beyond even the reach of the shakehand grip.

“THIS IS A LOT OF INFORMATION...WHICH ONE SHOULD I CHOOSE?”

Playing ping pong is a very individual thing, and often there is no 'best' way to grip the racquet. The main piece of advice is to hold the racquet whichever way feels most comfortable for you.

In general, the **shakehand grip** is most beneficial to beginners, as it is the easiest grip to learn and the one which feels most natural for most players. Whether or not you want to play more attacking and use the shallow grip, or more defensive with the deep grip, is up to you.

For more advanced players, or simply those who want to try something new, we would recommend the Penhold, Seemiller or V-grip. Again, it is important to experiment and see what works best for you. Another option is to get the advice of a professional coach for which grip works best for your personal style of play – everyone is different!

CHAPTER 2 - SERVICE



Service is one of the most important parts of the game – and something you must get absolutely right. When you serve well, you can make your opposition uncomfortable playing their first shot, leaving it open for you to finish them off on just your second touch of the ball!

The serve is important as it is the one time during a game that you have complete control over where the ball goes (if you know how to serve!). The BEST players know how to put the serve anywhere they want – it's crucial you learn this as it will give you a CLEAR ADVANTAGE over whoever you're playing.

HOW TO SERVE – A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

If you're completely new to ping pong and have never served before – here's how you should learn.

- Hold your paddle slightly open (at an angle where the paddle is facing towards the opposition player's face)
- Drop the ball onto your open paddle, so it bounces in the direction of whoever you're playing against
- The ball should bounce once on your side, and once on their side of the table

You can try this firstly standing close to the net at the side of the table, so the distance is shorter, then move gradually backwards as you get into the swing of things.

Congratulations! You've completed your first serve.

REMEMBER: Service in an actual game is a little more complex – we'll talk about that in just a minute.

SERVING IN MATCH PLAY – BUILD UP SOME KNOWLEDGE

Now we get onto the juicy stuff. How can you use your serve to win **EASY** points and have an advantage over your competition?

It all starts with identifying your opposition **WEAKNESSES**. There are a few sneaky ways you can do this – we're going to help you out as much as we can.

1. WATCH THEIR EVERY MOVE

If someone else is playing your opponent first, this is good news. Watch how they return serves that are played to their **backhand** side, and then watch how they return serves played to their **forehand** side. Can they deal with serves played close to their body? How do they do when the ball is played into the corners, played short, played long? The answers to these questions are going to help you identify where you should serve the ball

2. DO SOME TESTING

When you play your opponent for the very first time, you need to establish these things we've already talked about. What serves of yours can they not handle. Play the ball **everywhere** first game around, so you build up a profile of their service return.

Now we're on the money. Let's talk **STRATEGY**. You have identified the weakness. Now you're like a lion going after its prey – you just need to know **when** to strike.

SERVICE STRATEGY – EASY WINS!

Next game around, you know you can win some easy points on their weak return. So, save it for when you need it the most.

- SCENARIO 1: You know your opponent gains more confidence as the game goes on. So why not **build an early lead** – maybe you'll play better if you stretch out in front with 2 early serves that knock your opponent's confidence.
- SCENARIO 2: Let your opponent ease into the game, and then be able to turn it around in the middle of the game if things are going south. If they're playing well and all of a sudden two long serves are played close to the body where you know they can't deal with them – you're going to **swing the momentum in your favour**.
- SCENARIO 3: If the game is extremely tight and you know it's going to go right down to the wire – **keep your cards close to your chest**. You have that one serve in your locker which can be a game winner if you play it right – have the confidence to keep the best for last!

A few more basic tips:

- If your opponent stands **close to the table**, serve long!
- If your opponent stands **far away from the table**, serve short!
- If your opponent uses a **penhold grip**, play to their weaker backhand side
- If your opponent uses a **shakehand grip**, again, go to the backhand but hit it close to the player's body – it'll make it hard for them to make a decision

HOW TO SERVE – PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

When it comes to the actual serve, there are a few basics we think you should keep in mind.

- a) Keep a **loose and relaxed grip**, as this will allow you to generate a lot more spin
- b) **Practice, practice, practice** – serving can be difficult to get used to so keep practising every type of spin serve – you want to have a large arsenal to attack with
- c) Always **keep your eye on the ball** - serving takes coordination and this is something you want to work on – keeping your eye on the ball throughout the serve will help you gain an understanding of how to generate the most spin
- d) **Don't play to your opponent's strengths** – the worst ball you could play is one which lands on the middle of the table and plays into their power shot (this could be their forehand smash or backhand spin)

Here's one serve we think you should have in your arsenal which will trick your opponent.

THE SHORT BACKSPIN SERVE.

If you come up against a semi-decent player there's a chance they'll try to pull this out of the bag. Why not learn it yourself so you can hit them back where it hurts!

- You'll want to stand close to the table and keep your wrist very loose
- Throw the ball upward, meeting the regulations we've talked about already
- Strike the ball while its coming down, only **brushing the underneath of it** BUT with a short, extremely fast wrist motion – this will generate a TONNE of backspin
- Make sure the stroke (the hitting motion) is as short as possible – your body shouldn't move all that much – it's your wrist which is doing all the work

You'll need to practice this one hard, until you've mastered getting it as close to the net on the other side as possible. This means your opponent will have to **reach in far** to hit a return, giving you the opportunity to deal a **killer blow** with a quick smash!

CHAPTER 3 - SHOTS



When it comes to ping pong shots...we could talk all day. The variety of shots which you can play is what makes the game of table tennis so enjoyable. Applying spin in multiple different ways, or simply smashing the ball as hard as you can, makes games interesting and fun!

We're going to discuss 4 important defensive shots and 4 important attacking shots that you absolutely should have in your locker.

Firstly, we should talk about **spin**. One of the most important steps before you attempt any of the shots we will discuss, is to learn how to spin the ball.

BACKSPIN

Do you know what backspin is, and what it does? The ball is struck onto the table, and all of a sudden it spins backwards and comes back to you, just out of reach of your opponent's pointless efforts. Cool, right?

So how do we actually go about **generating backspin**? The goal is to strike the ball in a way that means the bottom half rotates away from you. To create this effect, you must:

- Start with your paddle above where you will strike the ball
- Ensure your paddle is open when striking the ball
- Brush the base of the ball using a strong downward and forward motion

Practice makes perfect – we recommend you ask a friend to play a fast shot at you – backspin can be used defensively to slow the ball down and keep it low to the table. Once you master this, you'll even be able to counteract smashes.

TOPSPIN

When used right, topspin can dazzle your opponent and be a game changer. Topspin means the ball hits the table, and gains speed after its first bounce. The spin causes the ball to jump off the table, giving your opponent less reaction time due to the increased ball speed. AKA: A shot you want to have in your locker!

Sounds good – so how do you **generate topspin**? In effect, it's the complete opposite of backspin. You want the top of the ball to spin away from you. To achieve this, you must:

- Start your shot with your paddle below where you will strike the ball
- Strike the ball with a 'closed' paddle
- Graze the top of the ball at speed, using a strong upward and forward motion

OTHER FORMS OF SPIN

Other more complicated forms of spin include **sidespin** and **corkspin**.

Sidespin can be used in service to confuse your opponent, or else to bend a shot around the net in dramatic style when it's played out wide – it's created by grazing the side of the ball at speed, causing the ball to rotate on a vertical axis instead of going end over end as you'd achieve with topspin or backspin.

Corkspin is mainly used in service also – this effect causes the ball to jump either right or left and back towards where it came from – it's caused by grazing the underside of the ball, but slightly to the right or left (in order to generate a certain spin). This one needs tonnes of practice.

Now, onto the good stuff – the shots that will win or lose you a game!

DEFENCE

'Push' – If you're familiar with tennis, think about a 'slice'. This point is used in scenarios where you are struggling and simply want to **keep the point alive**. When you play a push shot the ball will **float** over to the other side of the table. However, this shot is difficult for your opponent to strike as they have to take into account the backspin. This simple shot involves imparting a lot of backspin on the ball using the method we have talked about, taking the power out of your opponent's shot.

'Block' – One of my favourite shots has to be the block. This shot is simple. Just place your paddle **in front of the ball right after it bounces** and allow it to rebound over the net. What you'll find is that this returns the ball with as much speed as your opponent hit it with! This shot takes a little more practice. You must remember that your block will usually have the **same spin as the shot you are returning**, so take this into account when angling your paddle!

'Chop' – A chop can only be described as the push's aggressive big brother. This shot is used when you **find yourself pinned back** after a violent topspin loop played by your opponent. The idea is to **match the oppositions heavy topspin with equally heavy backspin**. The paddle is held horizontally, and the direction of the stroke is straight downwards. The huge amount of backspin produced can sometimes even cause the ball to rise which both **looks cool** and is **difficult to return**!

'Lob' – This shot is the one you see on YouTube on the highlight reels. The ball is struck a **huge distance into the air**, sometimes more than 6 meters in height. This makes the bounce really **unpredictable** as it is returning to the table at speed. While visually impressive, this shot is only useful when it's your only hope of returning an opponent's smash to the table. But hey, it **looks great**!

ATTACK

'Smash' – We'll start with the one everyone knows, the finisher. Usually, this shot can only be played when your opponent has played a shot which **bounces too high**. When the ball is easy to strike, smashing the ball will involve a large backswing and a speedy movement through the ball. Usually, spin is not required – instead you are relying on **pure speed** with this shot so your opponent does not have time to react.

'Hit' – This shot is used in most rallies and can be relied on to **get the ball back to the table**, out of a tricky situation, while also putting pressure on your opponent. Hold the paddle **perpendicular** to the direction you want the ball to travel and strike the ball flush. This will not put spin on the ball, but when used effectively can **generate enough speed to apply pressure on your opposition**.

'Loop' – The loop shot is an important one to learn, as it will win you a lot of games. The paddle is held **parallel** to the direction the shot is travelling and will graze up over the top of the ball. This will create a tonne of **topspin**, meaning the ball will jump up and gather more **speed** when it strikes your opponent's side of the table. We guarantee the better you get at this shot, the more games you will win.

'Counter-hit' – The counter hit is very **similar to the defensive 'block'** which we've discussed already. As the name suggests, this shot is a **counter-attack** especially for use against aggressive loop shots your opponent might try to play. This shot is produced using a **short, sharp and well-timed wrist action** with a **closed** paddle, just after the ball has bounced. Your opponent will not expect how fast the ball comes back at them!

In the next chapter we're going to discuss shot selection. But for now, get practicing these different shots! Each one has a different effect and is totally different to learn. If you can master every shot, you're going to give your opponents some serious problems ;)

CHAPTER 4: SHOT DECISION MAKING

You've learnt every shot in the book, and you feel confident in your ability to perform. The next logical step is to understand when you should play each type of shot. We've already given you some pointers on how and when you should serve in a certain way, so we'll start with discussing **your decision on how to return an opponent's serve.**

RETURNING SERVE

When it comes to serves, we'll break it down into 2 varieties.

- Your opponent could play a 'chop' serve – one which bounces close to your side of the net with backspin or sidespin (or both!) which moves it back towards your opponent.
- Your opponent could play a longer serve which bounces further down the table, closer to your body.

RETURNING A 'CHOP' SERVE...

- Get underneath the ball enough so that the ball doesn't travel too low and strike the net or even table.
- Understand that your opponent's backspin will force your shot downwards so you need to open your paddle more – if they are using sidespin which causes your return to fly off to the right, you need to angle your paddle to the left. It's all about counteracting the spin they have created.

RETURNING A LONG SERVE...

- When a long serve is played to you, this is a huge opportunity to attack.
- Be ready to play a fast loop shot in return. This will allow you to generate huge amounts of speed and put your opponent on the back foot, hopefully setting you up for a smash on your next shot.

OVERALL...

- Your primary objective when returning serve is to make it as hard as possible for your opponent to play the third shot of the point.
- Target your opponent's weaknesses. If you know they struggle with a defensive push on their backhand, play a loop which attacks that hole in their game.

Returning game-play shots

Moving on to shots in the middle of a game, we'll look firstly at how to deal with topspin, and then move on to backspin. We'll also discuss some important tactics when it comes to dealing with attacking minded players who like to put the pressure on you.

Topspin – when your opponent plays a loop, or some other form of topspin, it's important to understand this is an aggressive move. You have 2 options. You can either match their aggression with an attacking return, or react more defensively, slowing the play down.

- **Attack** – Killer instinct is required here...you should return topspin with topspin, playing an aggressive loop back which helps generate more speed and makes it more difficult for your opponent to return.
- **Defence** – If you want to maintain more control, playing a defensive push or chop will be the best option when your opponent tries to play a topspin shot. It helps to understand that what you are doing is reversing the direction of the spin of the ball – this change in direction is what slows the ball down.
- **Decision?** – Your decision should be influenced by how much topspin your opponent has placed on the ball. If they've managed to generate tonnes of topspin and you're uncomfortable dealing with that pressure, the best option will be to chop the ball to slow the pace down dramatically. If you feel like you can return the spin they've created...go for it – give them back as good as they give you!

Backspin – When your opponent plays backspin, you have a number of options.

- **Topspin return** – Understand that a backspin shot from your opponent is designed to force the ball to go downwards. Therefore, returning with a topspin loop will allow you to force the ball upwards and over the net, while still hitting the table at a low trajectory and with a low bounce.
- **Backspin return** – One option with returning backspin is to play more backspin. A chop can be very effective against a push, as you accelerate the backspin. If you can play a tomahawk shot (backspin with sidespin), execute this properly as it will force your opponent to the side of the table and stop the rally of push shots before it starts.

Playing against attackers – Often you'll play against opponents who only know one thing. Attack. It's important to understand how to attack this type of player.

- **Strike first** – if you get on the attack first, you'll make this type of player flustered. They're not used to having to defend...putting them on the back foot will work.
- **Identify strengths** – understanding where their strongest shots come from will teach you how to avoid getting pushed back.
- **Panic time** – play shots into the crossover point (around the right hip area on a right-handed player) so your attacking-minded opponent will panic as they decide whether to play a forehand or backhand shot.
- **Play a shorter shot** – attackers thrive off shots which they can stand back and react to in their own way. If you play a push which falls beside the net and bounces low, they will have to reach in and play a different shot. This will allow you to strike and switch them to defensive mode.

Every point is different. Decision making generally falls into one of two categories – do you want to attack and try to win the point or push your opponent back, or do you want to defend and bide your time, setting up for an attack later in the point.

CHAPTER 5: TACTICS AND POSITIVE MINDSET

We decided to dedicate a chapter to mindset and mentality, along with some tactics and different styles of play, because of the nature of this game.

You will often come up against players who are much better than you, and this can at first seem impossible. It's important to understand that there is a lot to learn from playing a skillful opponent – and we're going to give you some pointers on how to pose a threat.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF LOSING...

- **Identify and adapt** – Everyone has a weakness...even the strongest of players. It helps even when losing to analyse quickly in your head where they play weaker shots from. If you begin to target this, you can very easily identify holes in their game.
- **Variety is key** – Don't play into their hands. A strong opponent will enjoy you playing shots to their forehand all day. If you change it up with some side, top and backspin, you will force them to make decisions. Move them around the table – fatigue will help you win some points.
- **Take your time** – Never panic under pressure. Take a moment before you serve to calm and compose yourself, so you can have a clearer mind and approach the next rally in a better way.
- **Treat it as a learning experience** – playing stronger players allows you to learn. Ask them questions after the game and take their knowledge with you.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER...

When you've identified a weakness, **apply your strength** to it.

Example: If their backhand at full stretch is weak, and you have a strong sidespin hit, strike the ball out wide on their backhand side and watch them struggle!

ATTACKING VS DEFENSIVE MENTALITY...

- **Attacking** – For some people ping pong is all about getting on the attack. And for good reasons.
 - Being on the front foot gives you opportunities to take control of the point.
 - Applying constant pressure through loops and smashes makes it difficult for your opponent to get in the game.
 - However, you are vulnerable to fatigue as playing in this style is physically demanding.
- **Defensive** – Sometimes being more in control can be the best option.
 - If you're new to the game, playing in this way allows you to learn quickly.
 - You can sit back and gauge the right time to attack, allowing you to develop a strategy.
 - However, your opponent can often take advantage of your defensive style by pinning you back and this can lead to you losing points

It's important to be able to be flexible between different styles of play – you want to be able to surprise your opponent with your variety.

A GOOD MINDSET

We believe it's massively important to have fun while you play! Never take the game too seriously – the more you try new shots, strategies and types of play, the more you will grow as a ping pong player.

Always keep a **positive attitude** – if you are negative and losing points deflates you, you will find it hard to succeed. Embrace every situation and use it to learn and become better!

CHAPTER 6: POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT

Positioning and movement are incredibly important in this sport. Ping pong is not considered the **fastest** sport in the world but instead the **quickest**. While the ball moves faster in other sports such as tennis, the **reaction times** required for ping pong are dramatically shorter as the ball is travelling over such a short distance.

For this reason, it's important that your **positioning is perfect** so you're ready for anything which comes your way. We'll talk about how to be **prepared for an opponent's serve**, and how to move to react to opponent's shots, no matter what form they take.

PREPARING TO RETURN SERVE

The two important things to remember here are **positioning** and **stance**.

Positioning – An important thing to remember is that you can reach much further on your forehand side than your backhand. With that in mind, here are some pointers as to how to position yourself...

1. **Don't stand exactly in the centre of the table.** This will mean you are not ready for shots played wide to your backhand (due to extended reach on forehand side, not backhand).
2. **Instead, stand where your hovering paddle is in the centre of the table.** We guarantee this will help you reach every serve your opponent plays.
3. **Don't stand too close.** An easily made mistake is positioning yourself too close to the table and thus giving yourself less time to react. Take a half step back.

Stance – As important as where to stand, is how to stand. The quickest sport on Earth demands that your stance is a ready one – you need to be able to **react immediately**.

1. **Feet shoulder width apart.** If your feet are too close together, you won't be able to move explosively to react to a quick serve.
2. **Be on the balls of your feet.** This makes quick sudden movements and pivots easier, meaning you can react fluidly to a variety of shots.

3. **Knees and ankles bent.** You want to be slightly crouched, but not squatted – you should be leaning slightly forwards. This is considered a ready stance – you will be off-balance if you stand straight-legged.
4. **Elbows in front.** Your forearms should be parallel to the ground, elbows in front of your body, and the paddle top edge should be pointing toward your opponent. This frees you up to play either a forehand or backhand.

MOVEMENT IN GAME

It's vital you learn to react to a shot by moving in the right way. This is due to the variety of ping pong shots. You may have to move backwards to return a smash, forwards to rescue a drop shot, or sideways for sidespin hits played out wide.

If you follow the steps above regarding **stance**, you will be ready to react to a shot. Let's break it down into types of shots that you may have to react to.

Short shots – These are shots which are played close to the net, requiring you to reach in.

- If you reach in without moving your feet, you will be off balance for the next shot.
- Instead, (for right-handed players) move your **right foot underneath the table** after first adjusting your left foot to be closer to the table/to the right or left, in order to make the shot.
- It will take practice to make this movement fluid, but when mastered it will allow you to react quickly.
- Your feet should return to the original position quickly after you strike the ball

General match play – You need to be able to switch from backhand to forehand, and this requires smooth footwork.

- When moving to the left or right, you should move the foot on the outside first.
- Then move the inside foot, and then the outside, and so on.
- You want to shuffle side to side, always keeping faced forward ready to strike.
- Keep your knees and ankles bent and remain on your toes – this will mean your movements are explosive as required.

Reactions must be made in split seconds. Always **return to the ready position** so you're ready for all shot varieties. **Timing** is important – don't move too early or your opponent will play the shot elsewhere...don't move too late or you won't reach the shot. Keep your **eyes on the ball** and react accordingly. Practice makes perfect!

CHAPTER 7: PLAYING DOUBLES

If you have a set of 4 paddles ([you can buy a great one here](#)), you're more than likely going to get involved in a doubles match. If you get involved in a doubles match, you're more than likely going to get into a heated discussion (argument) about the rules

So, let's clear up how you should play doubles ping pong without making it as complicated as the rulebooks.

SERVING

Let's discuss how service should be decided on and carried out

- 1) Flip a coin to decide which team will serve first.
- 2) Start by serving the ball from your right half of the table, to your opponent's right half of the table (diagonally)
- 3) You can then serve a second point to the same opponent.
- 4) After this point is over, switch sides with your teammate. Your teammate will receive two serves from the opponent you've just served to.
- 5) Next, your teammate will serve twice, against the second opponent.
- 6) You will then switch positions and receive 2 serves from the second opponent.

GAME PLAY

Let's move on to who takes each shot...watch your arguments disappear after you learn!

- 1) REMEMBER: You must not take 2 shots in a row – alternate with your teammate
- 2) After you serve (diagonally from the right), shuffle to the right
- 3) This allows your teammate to move to the centre of the table to take the next shot

- 4) Your teammate will then move left and allow you to move into the centre to take the next shot, and so on

WINNING – HOW DO YOU WIN?

Doubles follows the same rules as singles as regards scoring...

- Continue the game until one team reaches 11 points.
- If the score is 10-10, play until one team (the winner!) has 2 more points than the other

Doubles ping pong is all about **having fun**. Don't take it too seriously. Dispute points, play hard and try and beat your friends! You've got enough tips in this book to beat everyone!

CHAPTER 8: PROTECTING AND TAKING CARE OF EQUIPMENT



Taking care of your equipment is more important than a lot of players realize. We'll talk through some of the reasons why you should both **protect** and regularly **clean** your equipment.

PROTECTION

SO, WHAT EXACTLY IS IT YOU ARE PROTECTING YOUR PADDLES FROM?

- **Dust & Grime** – when you leave your paddles uncovered, dust and grime begins to build up on the rubber.
- **Moisture** – the rubber and sponge on your paddles is massively affected by moisture which ruins its quality.
- **Damage** – when your paddles lie unprotected, the rubber can be scratched. Also, the paddles can be dropped and this can damage the smooth handles, and cause dangerous splinters.

WHAT IMPACT CAN THESE PROBLEMS HAVE ON YOUR PADDLES?

- **Quality reduction** – When dust and grime build up on your paddles, it significantly reduces the rubber quality. The reduced grip means it won't be as easy to **generate spin and control the ball**. This will ultimately make it harder for you to win!
- **Boring play!** – If moisture soaks into your paddles and ruins the rubber and sponge, you won't be able to generate your usual game-winning spin.
- **Uncomfortable grip** – We feel like the better your paddle looks, the better you play. Don't let your paddle handles get chipped or damaged as this will be uncomfortable and won't look good!

WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO STOP THIS DAMAGE OCCURRING?

- **Protection** – Our number one tip is to buy a [single paddle cover](#) (or a [set that includes one](#)) to store your favourite paddle in between games. Benefits include...
 - **Protection from dust** – if your paddle is stored away in a protective cover dust won't be able to reach the important surfaces
 - **Protection from fall damage** – if you drop your paddle from a height, the protective padding will prevent it from cracking or taking damage
- **Proper storage** – Be sure to store your favourite paddle out of reach of children who could drop it, or even chew it!

- **Indoor storage** – Ping pong can be enjoyed outdoors. However, your paddle will not enjoy the moisture they'll soak up from being left outside. Take care of your paddles by leaving them inside overnight.

CLEANING

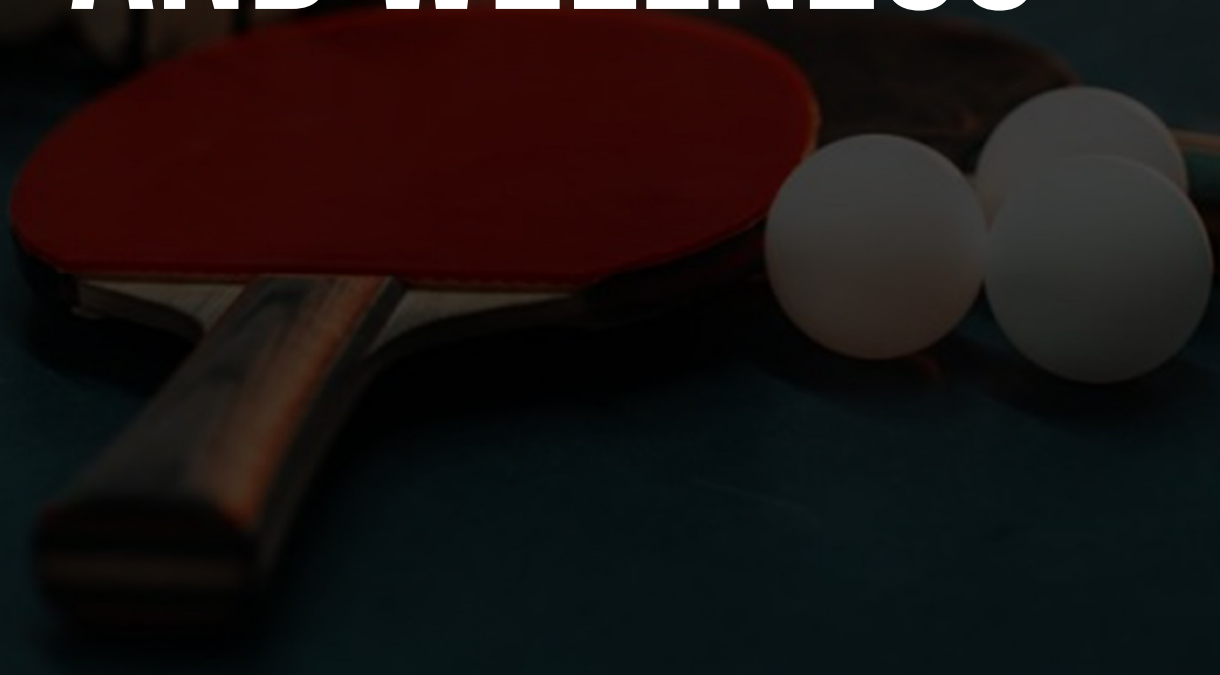
Sometimes, dust and grime building up is unavoidable. So, what's the next step? Cleaning of course. It's important that you follow the right steps and **don't cause too much moisture to soak into your paddles**, while at the same time removing all harmful dust.

How?

1. Gather some lukewarm **water** and a **sponge** (make sure it's not abrasive)
 2. Hold your paddle with the handle facing **upwards** (prevents water seeping into the wooden handle)
 3. Apply water to the sponge, and wipe **downwards** in one **smooth motion**
 4. Allow to **soak for a few seconds** to loosen the dirt and dust
- *KEY TIP 1:* Avoid vigorous scrubbing – this will ruin the quality of the rubber entirely.
 - *KEY TIP 2: **IMPORTANT:*** Use only enough water to dampen the rubber – otherwise you can ruin the quality of the paddle's materials.

You shouldn't need to clean your paddles often and it's better not to have to at all. Use your protective paddle cover, or a [larger set case](#) and make sure your paddles retain their premium quality!

SECTION 2: HEALTH AND WELLNESS



CHAPTER 1: PHYSICAL HEALTH

When you think of losing weight through burning calories, you think of hopping on the treadmill or exercise bike for an hour. Let's change that right away!

Why not experience cardiovascular exercise and huge health benefits while having **fun!** If you're playing ping pong, you can expect to burn between **200-350 calories per hour** – depending on your effort levels!

Here's a few reasons why ping pong should be your go-to when trying to burn off last night's pizza...

- ***Hugely entertaining***
 - **Don't expect to be bored** – one thing we love about ping pong is its variety. Every point is different, so there's no chance you'll get bored. Leave the treadmill behind!
- **Low injury risk**
 - **Stay safe while burning calories** – We never stop hearing about treadmill accidents and random sports injuries. The great thing about ping pong is there's no heavy equipment involved and it's very unlikely that any collisions or falls will occur (unless you get in a fight with your opponent!).
- **Varying intensity**
 - **Take it at your own pace** – One of the greatest things about ping pong is you don't need to be in the prime of your life to play. The sport is for all ages and abilities and can be enjoyed at any speed!

BODY PARTS WHICH ARE POSITIVELY AFFECTED!

Ping pong is great for developing your **muscles**. Let's talk about the muscle groups which you'll find yourself exercising if you play ping pong regularly.

- Your **quads, calves and hip abductors** all work in tandem to allow you to move back and forward fluidly to return shots.
- Your core muscles (**abdominals and obliques**) work hard to allow you to twist and generate power when delivering game-winning shots.
- Your **forearms, biceps and shoulders** are all worked out as you strike the ball.

INJURY RECOVERY

Ping pong can be a great sport for someone who is **recovering from an injury**. If you play any form of sports at all, it's very important your reflexes are sharp. Ping pong can help you to **maintain and grow your super strong reflexes**, while staying in shape.

Also, ping pong is not strenuous on the **joints**. You can play this sport without putting any real strain on your body, which is perfect if you want to stay in shape while in recovery.

HIGH INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)

It's the talk of the fitness industry at the moment. High intensity interval training involves **bursts of high intensity** workouts followed by a break, followed by high intensity work, followed by a break...you get the idea. It **shocks** the body and helps to burn calories **fast** – the rest periods mean you're working as hard as possible when active.

The great thing is, you can train in this way using **ping pong**. Playing a long point can get as intense as it is entertaining, leaving you sweating and breathing hard – which is exactly what you want with this form of training.

A typical HIIT might take this form...

- 60 seconds sprint
- 30 seconds jog
- 10 repetitions

So why not try something similar with ping pong!

- 120 seconds of high intensity rally
- 30 second break
- 10 repetitions

25 minutes of fun ping pong, which will result in hard breathing and many, many calories burnt. Let us know how you get on!

CHAPTER 2: MENTAL HEALTH

Playing ping pong is not only good for your physical health. The proven list of mental health benefits is a long one. With more and more people suffering from depression, anxiety and other mental conditions, it's important we do anything we can to combat these illnesses.

There are other aspects too – hand to eye coordination improvement and general brain training help to slow down the ageing process and keep the mind active. So, don't restrict yourself to sudoku - get your ping pong paddles out!

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

We're so excited about what ping pong can do as regards mental illnesses. Here's just a few of the illness' we believe it can help with...

- **Depression** – People of all ages worldwide suffer from depression. What sport in general produces is a *mood boost*. Anything aerobic helps **boost neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin** – vital chemicals missing in someone suffering from depression. Also – it's a **fun** game guaranteed to put a smile on your face.
- **Social anxiety** – Ping pong is an *incredibly social sport*. There's no way to get to know someone better than to smash a few balls back and forth with them. If you have a friend who suffers from social anxiety, get them playing ping pong.

PING PONG FOR AUTISM

In 2015, Ishana Deb, a wonderful U.S Table Tennis Nation Team member created an organisation called '**Table Tennis for Autism**' (TTFA). She understood the social benefits of ping pong, and the positive effect the game could have on kids who perhaps didn't have much going for them.

Bringing together professional coaches and athletes with organisations dealing with autistic children, she created a positive environment in which children could be **empowered through learning a new sport**.

It goes to show the impact this beautiful game can have – it's totally life changing for some people! Let's hope some of our future Paralympians have been taught by Ishana's people!

HAND TO EYE COORDINATION & REACTION TIME

It's pretty obvious that ping pong can help you become a master of hand to eye coordination. This skill is beneficial for all areas of life – whether this is other sports you might participate in or even playing videogames. Ping pong is an extremely fast sport, which requires quick reaction speeds.

TIP: *A few fun ways you can boost your reaction speed and hand to eye coordination*

- **Exercise 1 – Reaction Time**

1. Have a friend get ready to serve to you
2. Stand with your back to the table (and your friend)
3. Here's the fun part...you can't turn around until you've heard the ball bounce on their side of the table (first bounce of the serve)
4. Try return the ball
5. **ADVANCED:** Take a further step away (or don't!) and only allow yourself to turn around when the ball has bounced twice!

- **Exercise 2 – Hand to eye coordination**

1. Grab a friend, a paddle each, and a ball each!
2. Serve to each other at the same time
3. See how long you can keep both balls on the table!

These fun games are both great for exercising your brain as well as quickening your reaction time and developing your ping pong skills! Give them a try and let us know how you get on!

STRESS REDUCTION AT WORK!

More and more, we see ping pong tables popping up in offices all over the world. CEO's are beginning to recognise that they **can keep their employees focussed if they have time to destress**. And what better way to do so, with a sport which keeps **brains active** and switched on.

If your workplace doesn't already have a ping pong table, why not ask? Ping pong is a great way for employees to socialise and relax away from the pressures of the daily work life. Release those positive chemicals into the brain and make your day that little better!

CHAPTER 3: PING PONG FOR ALL AGES

Another great thing about ping pong is the variety in age groups who can enjoy it. By that we mean, **anyone!** Ping pong has many great benefits for both young, middle-aged and elderly, and is enjoyed by everyone. We're going to discuss why you should get your **kids or your grandparents** involved!

Let's talk about the benefits of getting **the youth** involved in ping pong...

- **The social aspect!**

- Ping pong is a great way for your kids to bond with friends, family or new schoolfriends.
- When kids share the same interest and play the same sport, they become more open to spending time with each other
- Sport can bring children closer to their parents through the bond created when having fun and teaching skills

- **Growing kids!**

- Your kid's little brain and body are *growing fast*.
- There's no better sport to train their brains and aid their physical development with little chance of accidents!

- **Fun and inexpensive!**

- Equipment costs are low and last for a long time
- Your kids will be laughing and bouncing around after playing ping pong – who could resist those smiling faces!

Now let's move on to the great things about getting **the elderly** involved in ping pong...

- **A boredom killer!**

- Elderly folk can often suffer from extreme loneliness, especially if widowed or living on their own
- Getting them out and involved in a sport which doesn't require strength or power will allow them to feel young again!

- **Keeps the brain active**

- A massive amount of studies have been carried out which praise ping pong for its ability to *keep elderly brains active* and prevent horrible diseases such as Alzheimer's or dementia.

- **Keeps the body loose**

- As people get older, they tend to exercise less and become stiff and find it harder to move
- Ping pong keeps the body active but at the same time does not require a huge amount of movement when played at a gentle pace
- It's the perfect game to keep your grandma moving!

WHAT DO THE STUDIES SAY?

A quick Google search displays hundreds of articles on why ping pong is beneficial for the elderly. Many medical associations can be quoted saying ping pong is **proven** to help prevent or reduce the effects of Alzheimer's and dementia.

"PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT EXERCISE HAS ACTUALLY INCREASED THE VOLUME OF AN AREA IN THE BRAIN CALLED THE HIPPOCAMPUS."

"THIS AREA IS VERY IMPORTANT IN DEMENTIA, ESPECIALLY IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. IT IS IMPORTANT IN THE FORMATION OF NEW MEMORIES, AND THIS AREA GETS SMALLER IN PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER'S."

DR MATTHEW KEMPTON FROM THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

TAKING ACTION

In the UK, several organisations have been created solely with the purpose of using ping pong to treat Alzheimer's. One such is named 'batfoundation' (Bounce Alzheimer's Therapy). They've experienced success treating Alzheimer's patients with ping pong, and the results are incredible.

One such patient is called Annie Ingram. She shared positive thoughts on approaching Alzheimer's - "if you start panicking, you're lost, you've gotta just put it out your mind". She also expressed her new-found love for BAT's donated table tennis table - "I'm loving it. I didn't know I was [good], it's just come normally".

We hope that the US can follow the standard set by the UK, and begin to use ping pong in its many useful ways, to help our elderly folk!

CONCLUSION

We really hope you've enjoyed reading *Ping Pong: How to beat your friends and improve your health.*

Our aim was to give you some pointers to help you **increase your skill set** and learn how to **beat your friends** and family – or maybe even your competitors!

We hope you've learned a little too about the **huge health benefits** which can be enjoyed for all ages and abilities.

Now get out there and get playing ping pong! We know you're going to love it!

Stuart Drennan

Kemu Sport

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Ping Pong Paddle Set of 4 – Includes Case & 1 FREE Racket Cover



amazon