



## ABPA MEMBER GRADING POLICY

ABPA uses a bespoke club determined grading system to organise playing events that best meet the skill and playing preferences of our members. This policy should be read in conjunction with the “Club Grading” section on our website.

### ABPA Skill Level Guidelines

[A skills guide for each club grade can be found here.](#)

#### 1. Why Grade our Members?

Pickleball can be social or competitive, or both. Club grading enables members to play with players of a similar standard, facilitating a more competitive match. Grading also helps games to be played safely and with minimal incidents by matching people with similar reflex, fitness and skill levels.

Broad grade grouping sessions covering 3 or more grades (e.g., ‘All Grade’ or ‘Beginner to Intermediate’) tend to be more social; narrow graded sessions covering 1-2 grades tend to be more competitive (e.g., ‘Intermediate’ or ‘Intermediate Plus to Advanced’).

It is the aim of the Club to be as open, transparent and supportive as possible throughout all grading discussions and decisions.

#### 2. Grading at ABPA – How it Works

Grading is not an exact science. Thus, our club has appointed a grading committee of three members to assign a club grade to each of our members.

The ABPA Grading Committee members are:

1. John Fuller - libnjohn@bigpond.net.au
2. Robert Deane - robertdeane211@gmail.com
3. Rona Richmond – rona.richmond@gmail.com

Collectively, the Grading Committee uses their experience gained through observing Pickleball played in a wide variety of settings and venues and under competitive conditions

such as inter-club tournaments and round robins and applies this insight to observing ABPA members “in action”. The Grading Committee’s observations, together with Venue Host feedback and player self-assessment are used to determine a suitable club grade allocation.

### 3. Obtaining an Initial Grade

In the first instance, a club grade will be assigned as a “best guess” using member input at the time of their membership application as to their experience and skill level, together with any available venue host / coach feedback. First-timers will often, by default, receive a “Beginner” grade.

Should the initial grade allocation be obviously inaccurate, the venue host, in agreement with the member, can send an email to the Grading Committee requesting that the grade be adjusted. This usually occurs within 2-4 playing events post membership commencement.

### 4. Re-Grading to a Higher Grade

It is hoped and expected by the Club that as member skills improve, some members may wish to be re-graded to a higher grade. This can happen one of two ways:

- Club Evaluation where the Grading Committee may approach a member to have an up-grading discussion and, with the agreement of that member, may implement the grade change directly, OR
- Member Instigation where a member initiates an up-grading discussion by completing and submitting a skills self-assessment to the Grading Committee for review.

Determination of a player’s grade can be controversial and sensitive as players more often over self-evaluate than under self-evaluate the level of their skills. Hence, this process is designed to be as transparent and supportive as possible regarding grading discussions and decisions.

The Member Instigated process will follow the steps below:

- a) Self-Assessment:** The member completes the self-assessment form, ticking all the skills they believe they can consistently demonstrate, and submits for consideration to the Grading Committee.
- b) Review:** The Grading Committee will review the self-assessment form, seeking feedback from applicable venue hosts as part of their review. Submissions will be reviewed by the Grading Committee as soon as is practicable, but not less than monthly.
- c) Observation:** The Grading Committee may choose to arrange for the member to play with and against other members of the higher grade in order to observe evidence of their skills. *This step is optional and at the discretion of the grading committee.*
- d) Communication:** A member of the Grading Committee will be allocated to be the member’s contact point throughout the process, communicating progress and the reasoning and outcome to the member, including suggestions for how to fill skills gaps, if required. Formal communication of the outcome of the process will be made in writing to the member by the club Secretary.

The decision of the Grading Committee is deemed final. However, members are welcome to initiate the re-grading process once they feel any skills gaps can be consistently demonstrated.

**The self-assessment form [can be found here](#).**

*When you have ticked the skills which you believe you have mastered, please enter your details, and the name of the Grading Committee member endorsing your self-assessment, and click the SUBMIT button.*

## **5. Re-Grading to a Lower Grade**

It is the Club's preference that members are self-aware enough of their own skills level and suitability of their grade allocation to voluntarily initiate a grade reduction if necessary.

A self-initiated grade reduction may either be for an agreed period, or more permanently. Circumstances which could prompt consideration of a grade reduction could include but are not limited to:

- Illness
- Injury
- Reduced fitness or reflex levels
- Pro-longed absence from Pickleball

In addition to referencing the [ABPA Skill Level Guidelines](#), indications to a member that a self-initiated grade reduction may be necessary may include:

- Noticing an increase in unforced errors during games
- Regularly experiencing more and more "great shots" by players of the same grade that you are unable to return
- Being able to participate less in pro-longed rallies
- Rarely winning games unless playing with members at a lower grade
- Generally feeling that you are unable to keep up in games with players of the same grade.

To initiate a grade reduction or discuss any matters concerning your skills level, please contact a member of the Grading Committee, your venue host or any of the Club's committee members.

As a course of last resort, the Grading Committee reserves the right, after consultation with the member and validation by the Club President, and following confirmation of feedback from Venue Hosts, to re-allocate a lower grade to a member if it feels this is necessary to uphold the principles and interests of the club.

## 6. Being at the Right Grade – What's in it for Me?

Knowing and understanding your club grade will allow you to:

- gain awareness of the skills required to improve your game,
- select the right playing events so you can play on your terms whether it be socially and/or competitively,
- speak knowledgeably about your game with others, and
- contribute positively to a safe playing environment for all.