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The Basic Rules of Racquetball

Racquetball can be played three ways. Versions include "Singles Play" between two players, "Doubles Play" between two teams of two players each, and "Cut Throat," which involves three players. Tournament play usually involves either Singles or Doubles play. Regardless of the type of play, there are basic "Rules of the Game" that apply.

The Serve

Play begins with the server standing in the Service Zone and serving the ball to his/her opponent(s). To serve, the server must first bounce the ball and then strike it with the racquet. The ball is put into play after making contact with the Play Wall first and then passing into the rear half of the court. In it's flight, the ball may strike one side wall, but no more. If it hits three surfaces including the ceiling or back wall before bouncing, the serve is not good (called one fault) and the ball is not in play.

Also, a serve that does not carry beyond the Short Line of the Service Zone is also not good (fault). Additionally, the ball cannot hit a side wall, floor or ceiling before the Play Wall when attempting to serve. The server is given two opportunities to put the ball into play. If the server hits two faults in a row, the player returning serve takes over in the service zone and the original server assumes the return of a serve position.

The Return of Serve

To return serve, stand in the middle of the court (equal distance between each side wall) approximately one arm and racquets length away from the backwall. Return serve by striking the ball before the second bounce. The ball must travel to the Play Wall for it to be a good return of serve. The ball may hit ANY surface except the floor on the return as long as it hits the Play Wall before bouncing.

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The Rally

Once the ball is in play, each player alternates hitting the ball until one misses the ball or hits an illegal shot. Players try to earn points or win the serve by putting an end to a rally. Often this is done when a player's shot hits the front wall at its lowest point, causing the ball to roll out, rather than bounce back into the playing area (called a killshot or rollout). Points are also earned when rallies end with an error, or a "Skip Ball," i.e. when the ball makes contact with the floor before reaching the Play Wall.

Once the ball is in play, the walls and ceiling can be used for shot variations. Points are scored when after serving the ball, the server wins the rally. If the player returning serve wins the rally, the result is a sideout, no points are scored for either player and the player who won the rally gets to serve. Whoever wins the rally always serves next. Matches are typically two games to 15 points and a tiebreaker to 11 if needed.

Hinders

Hinders are stoppages of play, and result in the replay of the point. It is your responsibility to give your opponent enough room to hit the shot the way they want to hit. You must give them a straight shot to the front wall as well as the angle, which would result in a crosscourt shot to the opposite back corner. Typical hinders are:

- A ball striking any part of the court, which results in an erratic rebound (fan vents, door knob, lights, etc.)
- Accidentally hitting opponent with the ball as it is heading toward the front wall
- Unintentionally contacting opponent while attempting to make a play on the ball
- Screening opponent's view of the ball or having the ball pass between one's legs.

Basics to remember once you have started playing a game are:

1. Only the server scores points
2. The ball can only bounce once
3. The ball must return to the front wall after being hit

More detailed Rules of the Game are available at www.ektelon.com

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