

# Padel Starter Guide

The fastest-growing racket sport — and how to stop being a beginner at it

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Padel is played on an enclosed court with glass walls and metal fencing — the ball stays in play longer, rallies are more tactical, and the social dynamic is central to the experience. This guide covers the rules, the shots, and the culture.

## The court and rules

- A padel court is 10m x 20m, about 25% smaller than a tennis court, with 3m glass and wire walls.
- The ball can play off the walls after it bounces off the floor — this is what makes padel tactical.
- Serve is underarm, below the waist, bounced before hitting. Service boxes are the same as in tennis.
- Games are played to 6 with a two-game lead, just like tennis. Rallies are typically longer.

## The essential shots

- **Bandeja**: the overhead shot played softly to maintain position in the net zone. Control over power.
- **Vibora**: a topspin overhead hit flat and fast to the back wall — the weapon of advanced players.
- **Lob**: the most important shot in padel. A high ball to the back corners resets the point when under pressure.
- **Bajada**: playing a ball that comes off the back wall — the technique that separates beginners from intermediate players.

## Culture and mindset

- 'Buena!' after any shot — good or bad. Padel culture is supportive and social.
- 'Vamos!' is the battle cry at any score. Embrace the Spanish vocabulary; it sounds good in any language.
- Padel is inherently a social sport. Your partner matters as much as your technique.

## Insider glossary

**Bandeja** — The controlled overhead shot — bread-and-butter of net play.

**Vibora** — Snake shot — a flat aggressive overhead favored by advanced players.

**Lob** — A high defensive ball to the back of the court — the most important shot to master first.

**Pista** — The court. Spanish for 'track' or 'court.'

**Padelero** — A padel player. A term of identity for those who live the sport.

## Starter checklist

- A padel racket (mid-range round shape for beginners)
- Padel balls (lower pressure than tennis)
- Court shoes (non-marking)
- Booked court time (most clubs have rentals)
- A partner — it is always doubles

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