

***Advanced Training Session
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)***

Table of Contents	Page
1. What is the purpose of the Advanced Training Session (ATS)?	3
2. Are there different parts to the ATS?	3
3. Who conducts the two parts of the ATS?	3
4. Can the Referee obtain the ATS outside the referee's normal USAPA Region. i.e., from a Certified Referee in a different region?	3
5. Do the two parts of the ATS have to be done in any particular order?	4
6. Can the CRC waive the on-court session?	4
7. Can the on-court session take place during a live (actual) tournament, sanctioned or otherwise?	4
8. Who arranges the on-court session?	4
9. Who's responsible for putting together the team for the ATS?	4
10. Who's on the ATS Team and what are their responsibilities?	4
11. Where do the players come from for the on-court session?	5
12. What happens during the on-court session?	5
13. What guidance should the Trainer provide the players?	5
14. What kind of faults/violations should be inserted during the ATS?	6
15. How many games are played to optimize the training benefit of the ATS for the Referee?	7
16. Should the Trainer keep score during the ATS?	7
17. Does the Trainer have to keep notes during the on-court session?	7
18. Are the games played with or without interruption if the Referee misses a fault or violation?	7
19. May the on-court session be videotaped?	8

***Advanced Training Session
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)***

20. How does the Trainer determine if the Referee has demonstrated enough proficiency for recommendation to move forward with the second portion of the ATS, the interview with the CRC?	8
21. How should the Trainer conduct the feedback session at the end of the session?	9
22. To become a Level 2 Referee, all marks must be in the Level 2 column. Why doesn't the same requirement hold true for the ATS; i.e., why isn't the Referee required to have all marks in the ATS column?	10
23. After the on-court session is complete, what paperwork is needed to close it out?	10
24. What are the sources of the CRC interview questions?	10
25. How long should the ATS take?	10
26. How long should the CRC interview take?	10
27. What happens following the interview part of the ATS?	10
28. If a Referee fails the interview part of the ATS, what recourse does he/she have to continue toward certification?	11
29. Is there a limit on the number of on-court ATSs a referee can take?	11
30. Is there a required time period between subsequent on-court ATSs?	11

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the purpose of the Advanced Training Session (ATS)?

A: The purpose of the ATS is two-fold. It provides:

- a. the qualified ATS Assessor conducting the on-court session (hereafter called the ATSA) an opportunity to train, coach and give feedback to the Level 2 Trainee (hereafter referred to as Referee) on their strengths and weaknesses.
- b. the Referee an opportunity to receive personalized training and demonstrate on-court skills and knowledge in a training environment. The ATS should be considered a formal training session to refine the Referee's skills and increase the likelihood the Referee will successfully pass a Certification Evaluation. **It is not a training that takes the place of the Certification Evaluation.** The Referee will come away with an indication whether they should move forward with the Evaluation process.

Note: The CRC must decide whether the Referee is qualified and ready to become certified. The result of the ATS plays a key part in the CRC's decision to recommend the Referee apply to be evaluated as a Certified Referee.

2. Are there different parts to the ATS?

A: Yes; there are two parts to the ATS:

- a. an on-court training session to refine skills, knowledge and experience;
- b. an interview, typically by phone, with the Regional CRC to determine the Referee's depth of knowledge of the Rulebook, the best practices according to the Referee Handbook, and various court scenarios.

3. Who conducts the two parts of the ATS?

A: An approved ATSA other than the Referee's Mentor shall normally conduct the on-court portion of the ATS, but there is no restriction preventing the Mentor from conducting the ATS. The reason is that we have already seen examples where the Mentor – Referee relationship has suffered because the Mentor has determined that the Referee was not ready for an evaluation.

The CRC is the only person who can perform the interview.

4. Can the Referee obtain the ATS outside the Referee's normal USA Pickleball Region, i.e., from an ATSA in a different region?

A: Yes, but three conditions must be met:

- a. The Referee must arrange this; it is unreasonable to expect the Referee's Mentor or 'home' CRC to arrange this alternate location ATS. The 'home' CRC is the CRC that assigns a Mentor to the Referee. The home CRC is the only person that can approve an ATS for the Referee.
- b. The ATSA must agree to conduct the ATS.

Advanced Training Session

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- c. The 'home' CRC must be notified by the Referee that the Referee intends to obtain an ATS in a different region.

In these circumstances, however, the 'home' CRC must conduct the interview part of the ATS and retains responsibility for deciding when and if the Referee can apply to be evaluated.

5. Do the two parts of the ATS have to be done in any particular order?

A: Yes, there's a flow to the ATS process that shall be followed.

Note: The ATSA makes a recommendation to the CRC after the on-court session is complete. The CRC is responsible for determining if the Referee's skill and knowledge levels are sufficient for the CRC to recommend the Referee make a formal application to be evaluated.

6. Can the Mentor or CRC waive the need for an on-court session?

A: No. All Referees moving forward to Evaluation shall have successfully completed an ATS. A successful ATS has proven to increase the odds of passing an evaluation on the Referee's first attempt, thereby reducing the amount of time the evaluators are investing. While the Mentor and CRC can not waive the need for an on-court session, the USA Pickleball Managing Director of Officiating may waive this requirement under extraordinary circumstances.

7. Can the on-court session occur during a live (actual) tournament, sanctioned or otherwise?

A: No. A live tournament does not allow the introduction of controlled simulated faults and violations, thereby defeating the purpose of the ATS. See question 12.

8. Who arranges the on-court session?

A: As part of the ATS process, the Referee makes these arrangements, working with the availability of the assigned ATSA and the required team of players (see question 9). The Referee is responsible for paying any court rental fees. Supplies such as scoresheets, clipboards, video camera, balls, first server bands, stopwatches, etc. can be a point of discussion between the Referee and the ATSA. See Question 18 regarding optional video recording.

9. Who's responsible for putting together the team for the ATS?

A: The ATSA is responsible for arranging players and participants.

10. Who's on the ATS Team and what are their responsibilities?

- a. The ATSA is the Leader of the ATS. The ATSA will also be a note-keeper during the on-court exercise.
- b. One monitor that takes notes during the ATS on-court exercise. This person will compare notes with the ATSA and be part of the feedback to the Referee.
- c. 4 players
- d. A minimum of 2 Line Judges, preferably 4 Line Judges
- e. Scorekeeper. This is an optional team member but should be highly considered to ensure that the Referee is keeping the proper score/side-out marks, etc. at the end of each game.

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

11. Where do the players come from for the on-court session?

A: The ATSA has the responsibility of forming a team of players for the ATS. The objective is to find players within the same skill level and preferably players the Referee does not know well. Because there is some improvisation involved, some ATSA's have been successful in developing a small group of individuals who perform the on-court sessions very well and do not need to be taught what to do each time they volunteer to help.

12. What happens during the on-court session?

A: Evenly matched teams play actual games, but players do so with the understanding winning is not the objective. Before the beginning of the ATS, the ATSA provides written and/or verbal descriptions of specific faults/violations for each of the players, line judges, and spectators (should there be any). Scenarios are discussed with the group on how they might subtly insert the assigned faults/violations with the cooperation of one another. The on-court session is designed to be realistic to tournament play, to be professional and respectful of the importance of this as the Referee's training session. It is extremely important that players allow enough time between violations for realistic flow of the game.

13. What guidance should the ATSA provide the players?

A: The ATSA must plan for a successful ATS. A big part of that pre-planning is to control the insertion of the faults carefully to make sure the faults do not occur near each other. The intent is to provide a realistic game, not a series of gotcha's, which may be fun for the players, but which can be not only unrealistic for the Referee, but overwhelming, thereby defeating the objective of the training. The specific faults and violations can be provided to the players on 3x5 cards, small laundry tags, pieces of paper, or other suitable methods. The guidance below is an outline of what should be provided to the players to help provide a measure of consistency among ATSA's and ensure the players do not overwhelm the Referee:

- a. There should be little to NO conversation among the players except normal player communication typical during play.
- b. Longer rallies are preferred. Unplanned errors may occur without even trying.
- c. Cooperative play between teams is necessary to set up scenarios. Both teams should be aware of the errors they are attempting to insert during play.
- d. Each team should take one timeout to lend an opportunity for the Referee to practice and demonstrate the required timeout procedure.
- e. Players should appeal an occasional CLOSE line call.
- f. After a long rally and/or retrieving a ball that is hit far away, the player should ask the Referee if the player is the correct server (regardless of whether the player is or not) to test the Referee's ability to track players.
- g. Be sure to allow enough time between violations so there is flow to the game.
- h. Do not insert an error before the fourth point scored of the first game. This allows the Referee the time to get into a rhythm. Many Referees are extremely nervous at the start of the

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

first game. We want them to be comfortable and inserting an error quickly could throw them off for the rest of the session.

14. What kind of faults/violations should be inserted during the ATS?

A: Here is a list of typical intentional faults that can easily be inserted in the games played. **This list is not all-inclusive and in no way is provided with any suggestion that all of these must be inserted for each ATS.** These are just examples. The ATSA is tasked with the responsibility of picking faults/violations that will test the Referee's ability to handle typical court situations. Realize that some faults may occur naturally, so it is important for the ATSA to manage the number and frequency of faults and violations inserted to make sure the on-court session is realistic. Because there will normally be some unplanned faults or violations that occur, **the total number of planned faults and violations should not exceed 6 during the entire session.**

- a. A non-volley zone foot fault
- b. A server foot fault
- c. The receiver calls time-out after the score is called
- d. A team fails to make a line call on an obvious 'out' ball
- e. A receiver stops play and says the wrong score was called
- f. A player stops to tie a shoe
- g. The incorrect server serves***
- h. The incorrect receiver returns a serve***
- i. The server takes over 10 seconds to serve the ball
- j. A receiver raises a paddle to delay the serve after the Referee begins to call the score
- k. A player appeals an 'out' call
- l. A player passes the plane of the net without legally striking the ball
- m. A player distracts a hitter
- n. An incorrect server tosses the ball to a partner, requiring the receivers to reset
- o. A player who hits a ball claims a line judge's "out" call is incorrect
- p. A receiver calls "short serve" and the receiver catches the ball

*** At least one of each should be inserted.**

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

15. How many games are played to optimize the training benefit of the ATS for the Referee?

A: Nominally, three, all 2 out of 3 to 11, win by 2. Time constraints or weather can cause this to be modified, if deemed appropriate by the ATSA. Before starting the first game of the formal session, however, the Referee should be given an opportunity to get into a rhythm, work on cadence, etc., without the ATSA team taking any notes or the players inserting any planned faults or violations. The players should accommodate this, if requested by the Referee, but it should not take more than four points.

The formal session should start with the normal player briefing. The first game shall be a match with line judges. This will allow the ATSA the opportunity to observe a line judge briefing and an opportunity to observe how the Referee handles the complexities of working with line judges and their calls. Time constraints can force the second game to be truncated to move to game three. The ATSA shall consist of a game three to observe the End Change Time Out procedure. Additional games or points are at the discretion of the ATSA. In some cases, the ATSA will want to see, for example, if additional faults or violations are needed to solidify the training impact of a specific skill, for example, the ability to find an out-of-position player. Additional games should not be the norm.

Note: Most tournaments do not use line judges, so it is not unusual for Referees to get to this point in their development never having refereed a match with line judges. The on-court training session may be where this experience/training occurs for the first time. We would be doing referees a disservice if they were recommended to apply for evaluation without having worked with line judges at least once.

16. Should the ATSA Team keep score during the ATS?

A: It is optional, but highly recommended. Some ATSA's find it helpful to do so in determining if the Referee has the correct score when, for example, an incorrect server or receiver fault is inserted. Some ATSA's also make marks on the scoresheet as a reminder to indicate at what point in the match, they expect the players to insert certain faults or violations.

17. Does the ATSA have to keep notes during the on-court session?

A: Yes, The ATSA is responsible for providing feedback to the Referee. It is essential that notes are part of the feedback process. ATSA's shall use the proper ATS form to make notes.

18. Are the games played with or without interruption if the Referee misses a fault or violation?

A: That depends. Although there are several people involved in the on-court portion of the ATS, it is designed to be a training session and therefore only the ATSA should be communicating with the Referee. The ATSA is the only person allowed to stop play to provide feedback to the Referee during the on-court session. The ATSA has to decide how to best maximize the training benefit of the session.

If there are clear weaknesses in the referee's skill set, the ATSA can step in to reset the play situation or even end the session early if it is clear that no more play is likely to be beneficial to the referee until more classroom training or supervised practice (mentoring) has occurred. More specifically, the ATSA might stop play after a point is over, for example, for a missed out-of-position receiver. The Referee, however, should be given time to catch the mistake before the next serve occurs. Another example might be if the Referee errantly answers a player's question such as "Am I the correct server?"

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

There is little value, however, in stopping play if the Referee calls the incorrect score or forgets to make a side-out mark. The Trainer should make a note of those and critique them afterward. Key mistakes, however, should be critiqued when they happen to make sure the Referee can acknowledge what the Referee missed in real-time.

19. May the on-court session be videotaped?

A: It is not required, but some ATSA's have found it beneficial should the Referee have questions about items that took place during the ATS but were not critiqued immediately at the time they happened. Video can be a useful tool for both the ATSA and the Referee. It can be reviewed and used for learning purposes and can also serve to resolve differences should there be a disagreement as to what took place during the ATS. All ATS Team members and the Referee should know and agree with the video use in advance of the ATS start. There is no requirement or suggestion of a requirement intended; it is entirely up to the ATSA (or the Referee) if either wants to avail themselves of videotaping. Videotaping should be more strongly considered for the benefit of the 'home' CRC, however, if the situation described in Question 4 occurs.

20. How does the ATSA determine if the Referee has demonstrated enough proficiency for recommendation to move forward with the second portion of the ATS, the interview with the CRC?

A: The ATS is intended to ensure that the Referee understands their strengths and weaknesses after the session is completed. The ATS process is not intended to test every aspect of what the Referee should know to pass a Certification Evaluation. The on-court session of the ATS is designed to replicate game-like situations for the training benefit of the Referee. The feedback to the Referee will give them a reasonable understanding of their observed strengths and weaknesses. All results will be forwarded via the ATS form to their home CRC, home RTC, Mentor, with a copy to the NRD administrator. The completed ATS form shall be the tool the CRC will use to help determine if the CRC should move forward with the CRC interview (part 2 of the ATS).

Do the Referees have to be perfect? No. What if they miss one out-of-position player? In an evaluation, this would be a failure. In an ATS, however, that is not an automatic reason to keep the ATSA from recommending the Referee move forward to the CRC interview, especially if the Referee catches two or three other players out of position. If Referees leave the ATS knowing they have a weakness of concentration and that is contributing to not finding an out of position player, then that is something they can work on in the interim between the ATS, a second ATS or the evaluation. **That is the true benefit of the ATS; to find those weaknesses so they can be corrected.** If, however, they leave the ATS without fully understanding the odd/even convention, then that is a fundamental weakness that needs more work. ATSA's probably should not, in that case, recommend that person move to the CRC interview until the Referee can demonstrate that the referee has corrected that weakness. Fundamental rule knowledge weaknesses are another area that can hold back otherwise competent Referees. There is, however, a guideline the ATSA's have been provided in helping determine whether or not to recommend a Referee move to the CRC interview. An ATS grade of 91 or better is just that; a guideline.

The ATS process is an excellent tool that tests several required skills the Referee should demonstrate during the ATS. The Referee does not need to be perfect, but the ATSA should keep in mind two things:

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- a. If the Referee is recommended for certification evaluation and is not successful, it is a tremendous disappointment to the Referee. It does little good to recommend someone be evaluated if the ATSA and/or the CRC are not confident in the Referee's abilities.
- b. Evaluators often travel long distances and can incur personal out-of-pocket expenses to conduct evaluations for USA Pickleball, so the ATSA and CRC should be respectful of the evaluator's time by only recommending those who have demonstrated an acceptable degree of skill mastery.

21. How should the ATSA conduct the feedback session at the end of the on-court session?

A: *Conducting a critical conversation can be difficult and should be taken very seriously. Critical conversation skills are learned. Please do not become an ATSA if you do not want to have critical conversations.*

How the feedback is provided is oftentimes more important than the feedback itself. Many people are not accustomed to hearing someone else critique their performance. With that in mind, it's important for the ATSA to provide the performance feedback in a manner that will be appreciated and delivered in a thoughtful and helpful way.

Here is a simple model ATSA's can use to provide the feedback in a non-critical manner. It's not a requirement to use this, but it has proven to be a simple four-step method to help give constructive feedback.

Use the mnemonic **D I N K** to guide the feedback session:

D: The D stands for Differently. Ask the Referee, "If you had to do the ATS all over again, what would you do DIFFERENTLY? Why ask this? It allows the Referee to self-critique, so it is non-threatening. If the Referee already knows what mistakes the Referee made or what improvements are needed, then there is no reason for the ATSA to say much more.

I: The I stands for Ideal. Say to the Referee, "Here's what I think you did that was IDEAL; and should continue doing." Then list all the things the Referee did that were performed particularly well. Why do we do this? Again, this is non-threatening and it's important for Referees to know what you think they did well so they will continue to do it. So, the first two parts of the D I N K mnemonic reminder are non-judgmental.

N: The N stands for Never, as in 'Never do these things again'. That is too strong of a statement, so don't actually say that, but the N here is a reminder to the ATSA that Now is the time for the Trainer to provide the items that the Referees should improve upon, what they Need to do better. It's as simple as saying something similar to, "here are the items from the ATS that Need your attention to make you an even more effective referee." Then go through your list.

K: The K stands for Key take-a-ways or Key Knowledge. This is where and when the ATSA turns the discussion back over to the Referee and asks the Referee, "Based on what we have talked about here, what is your Key Knowledge, or take-a-ways you want to work on?" Then listen carefully to make sure

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

the Referee's list of improvement items matches yours. Following the above, the ATSA should tell the Referee if they are recommended to move on to the CRC for the interview part of the ATS.

22.To become a Level 2 Referee, all marks must be in the Level 2 column. Why doesn't the same requirement hold true for the ATS, i.e., why isn't the Referee required to have all marks in the ATS column?

A: While a Level 2 assessment normally takes place in one setting, it can take place over several rating sessions to ensure as many of the criteria are met as possible. So, the Referee can miss criteria one time but show success in a later assessment, eventually satisfying all criteria in the Level 2 column of the TRR form. The ATS process is a snapshot in time. It is also normally a more stressful environment on purpose, designed to identify potential weak spots, so there is some accommodation for not being perfect. It isn't a case of the Referee not showing proficiency in all the criteria; the Referee has, otherwise the Referee would not have been awarded a Level 2. We don't expect perfection during the ATS. It isn't unusual (and expected) for a Referee to have opportunities for improvement after the ATS. If the Referee is recommended to move to the CRC interview, any marks become remedial actions for the Referee to work on until the Referee gets to the certification evaluation. Any significant deficiencies, however, need to be corrected before the Referee goes forward to the CRC interview. Those deficiencies may require the Referee to gain more refereeing experience and take another on-court ATS.

23. After the on-court session is complete, what actions are needed to close it out?

A: A successful ATS form will indicate "Recommend moving forward" and copies sent to the home CRC, home RTC, Mentor, and NRD administrator. If videotape exists (see question 19), it should be sent to the home CRC. At this point, the home CRC conducts the interview and may approve the referee to apply for certification.

24. What are the sources of the CRC interview questions?

A: The questions come from two primary sources: The Rulebook and the Referee Handbook. CRCs develop their own questions to determine the Referee's depth of knowledge with the Rulebook and the Referee Handbook. Having CRCs develop their own questions prevents the sharing of questions among Referees. The questions should center on the subjects the referee had difficulty with on-court or were not exposed to during the on-court part of the ATS.

25. How long should the ATS take?

A: The Referee should plan for at least 2 hours to complete the ATS.

26.How long should the CRC interview take?

A: Normally no longer than an hour.

27.What happens following the interview part of the ATS?

A: Once the Referee passes the CRC interview and is recommended to apply for certification evaluation, the CRC notes that under 'Recommendations' on the bottom of the ATS form and forwards copies to the

Advanced Training Session Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ATSA, Mentor RTC, and the NRD administrator. They also notify the USA Pickleball Referee Certification Administrator, and has the Referee fill out the on-line application.

If the Referee fails the interview, the CRC notifies the ATSA and Mentor and instructs the Referee to further study the rules and best practices contained in the Referee Handbook.

28. If a Referee fails the interview portion of the ATS, what recourse does he/she have to continue toward certification?

A: The CRC will schedule a second interview when, in the opinion of the CRC, sufficient time has passed. The time interval is dependent on what and how many questions the Referee could not answer satisfactorily.

29. Is there a limit on the number of on-court ATSs a referee may take?

A: No. The ATS is intended to prepare the Referee for Certification Evaluation, therefore the Referee should have the option to continue to be trained. However, the Referee will have to gain the approval of the CRC before moving towards further ATS's.

30. Is there a required time period between subsequent on-court ATSs?

A: The time interval is determined by the CRC and based on three primary factors: 1) how many other Referees are in the queue to get an ATS, 2) availability of an ATSA and players; and 3) when the CRC is satisfied the Referee is ready based on the Referee's demonstrated commitment to address the previously identified weaknesses.