

Tiered Referee Rating (TRR) Assessments
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Tiered Referee Rating (TRR) Assessments Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Introduction

The questions and answers that follow are designed to describe the development of a referee after the referee has completed initial training. In some cases the training is self-administered or in others an instructor provides it. All referees are strongly advised to obtain their initial training from a USAPA registered trainer. The Regional Referee Training Coordinator (RTC) can help find a registered trainer.

Following initial training, the referee does some extensive follow-on training, including refereeing at local tournaments or during recreational play. These refereeing opportunities may or may not include having a more senior referee observe and provide coaching afterwards. These sessions satisfy the contact training hour requirements of attribute #33 on the TRR form mentioned below.

Following the training phase, referees are encouraged to enter the development phase, especially if they have interest in becoming certified. The questions and answers below are provided to guide referees through the stages of their development that can result in becoming a certified referee. Those stages are referred to as Levels; Level 1 and Level 2. The attainment of the Levels is accomplished through assessments, a process commonly referred to as Tiered Referee Rating (TRR) assessments.

Extensive reference is made below to the TRR/ATS form, which is used to document rating assessments and ATS results. The questions that follow address TRR assessments. There is a separate list of FAQs for the Advanced Training Session (ATS).

In the following, the person conducting the assessment is referred to as the Rater. The Rater may be any Certified Referee, a non-certified Referee Training Coordinator (RTC) or a USAPA Registered Trainer. The person being assessed is the Referee.

1. What is the *purpose* of the Trained Referee Rating program?

A: The Tiered Referee Rating (TRR) system provides a means to identify the skill level of non-certified referees. The foundation of the TRR system is an assessment process that can be administered by any Rater (Certified Referee or Registered Referee Trainer) using the TRR/ATS Form.

Referee assessments (these should not be referred to as ‘evaluations’) are sessions where either Certified Referees or Registered USAPA trainers can assess relatively new referees while they are refereeing a match. The assessments may result in the referees being awarded a Level 1 or Level 2 credential.

2. Who is eligible for a TRR assessment?

A: Any USA Pickleball member who is a current Level 1 Referee or a non-credentialed Referee may request an assessment. Raters are not, however, obligated to perform the assessments if they think the Referee’s experience does not warrant it. For example, if the Referee, upon questioning, demonstrates a lack of knowledge about side out marks or which direction the slash goes, then it isn’t appropriate to spend the time to do an assessment. That time might be better spent if the Rater observed the Referee and provided coaching and feedback afterwards.

3. When are TRR assessments performed?

A: A TRR assessment can be conducted during a recreational game, practice session, or during a match at a USAPA-sanctioned or other tournament that fully complies with the current USAPA/IFP Rulebook.

4. Can a referee be rated as a Level 2 referee without first becoming a Level 1 referee?

A: Yes, it is possible. While most referees start as a Level 1, some with extensive experience as a referee have demonstrated the advanced skill levels to jump directly to Level 2.

5. Who can perform the assessments?

A: Normally Referees work through their Regional Referee Training Coordinator (RTC) or the person who trained them to arrange the TRR assessment. But in other cases, the Referee can ask any Certified Referee at a tournament to perform a TRR assessment. Any prepared Certified Referee or Registered Referee Trainer can administer a TRR assessment by using the TRR/ATS form and observing a person referee at least one full complete game to 11.

6. Who can award the Level 1 or 2 designations and credentials?

A: Certified Referees and non-certified RTCs may award Level 1 and Level 2 credentials. Registered Trainers who are not Certified Referees may only award Level 1 credentials.

7. Are Certified Referees required to perform assessments at tournaments?

A: No. But many are prepared to do so if asked and the tournament Referee Coordinator (the person assigning referees to matches) doesn’t need the Certified Referee to referee matches. It’s for this reason the best time for a Referee to request an assessment during a tournament is later in the day, when

the need for referees begins to wane and before the medal matches begin in earnest.

8. Can a Rater from one region conduct assessments in a different region?

A: Yes. It is customary, however, for the Rater from that different region to notify the RTC. The reason is because if the Rater awards any credentials to a Referee from that region, the results will need to be sent to that RTC. Correspondingly, if a Rater assesses a Referee from a different region then the applicable RTC will need the results. So, it's conceivable that a Rater from region A could assess a Referee from Region B during a tournament in Region C. In that example, the Rater would notify the RTC of Region C that the Rater intends to perform assessments and sends the results to the RTC in Region B.

9. Can a Referee be rated Level 1 in one region (or Country) and request an assessment for Level 2 in a different region?

A: Yes. The Referee just needs to make sure that the Referee's Regional RTC gets a copy of the TRR form that was completed by the Rater.

10. How long after being rated (by one Rater) does the Referee have to wait before being rated again by the same or a different Rater?

A: Inasmuch as there is no effective way to control this, we have purposely not provided guidance on this. This is better left to the Rater who is asked to perform the next assessment by asking the Referee to see the original TRR form, which should be in the Referee's possession. That form will indicate when the last assessment was conducted. A quick interview of the Referee by the Rater will indicate whether or not the Referee has put forth the effort necessary to correct the weaknesses identified by the previous Rater on the TRR form. If the Rater is convinced the Referee has put forth the effort, there is no reason to prevent the Rater from conducting the assessment.

11. How and to whom does the Rater report the result of the assessment?

A: The answer to this question is provided on the bottom of the TRR form. It says simply, "Send a scan or photo of this completed form to the appropriate RTC(s) and CRC(s)". The Rater should be the person sending the scan or picture to the RTC. A cell phone photo is sufficient. The original TRR form should remain in the possession of the Referee.

12. Who keeps the original TRR/ATS form?

A: The Referee.

13. How does the Rater verify the Referee's test scores?

A: In most cases there is no need to verify the test scores. If, for some reason the Rater questions the veracity of the scores provided by the Referee, the Rater can ask the Referee to show them copies of the acknowledgement email received after they complete the test(s).

14. How does the Rater obtain USA Pickleball Credentials and/or who provides the Level 1 or 2 Credential to the Referee?

A: There is no standard answer to this question. Each Regional RTC should have a supply to share with the Raters who conduct assessments in their Region. There are some Raters, however, who train and assess a high volume of Referees. Those Raters have been provided their own supply. Further questions of this nature should be referred to the respective RTC.

15. Where is the most effective place for the Rater to be positioned when performing an assessment?

A: If the assessment is taking place during a tournament, the preferred location is off the court but close enough to see where the Referee's eyes are focused and hear the Referee call the score and any discussion that takes place between the players and the Referee. The objective here is to minimize disruption to the players on the court and adjacent courts during a tournament. If the assessment takes place in a non-tournament setting then the Rater can stand where it's most convenient.

16. Should the Rater review the referee's scoresheet following the match?

A: Yes. At a minimum, reviewing the scoresheet following the match is required to assess attributes #14 and #19 on the TRR form.

17. Can the assessment to become a Level 2 occur at different times? In other words, if a Rater does not observe all the required skills, should the assessment continue at another venue and time? Or, does the assessment need to be performed at just one location and/or at one time?

A: Yes, the assessment can continue at a different time and a different venue. It's unrealistic to assume that the Rater will be able to observe the first 28 items on the TRR form during one game. It may take several games and perhaps different locations to observe each attribute to be able to award a Level 2. The subsequent assessments don't, however, have to be conducted by the same Rater. This is the reason the Referee should maintain possession of the original TRR form. One important note, however, is if the Referee asks a different Rater for an observation and assessment at a different location, the new Rater is not bound by the previous Rater's assessment for any of the attributes. For example, let's say Rater 1 assesses the Referee in the Level 2 column for attribute #25. Then two weeks later at a different location, Rater 2 may assess attribute #25 in the Level 1 column.

18. What is the optimum game format for performing an assessment? 1 to 15? 1 to 11? 2 of 3? Bronze medal match? Gold medal match with line judges?

A: There is no optimum game format. Each of the above formats will suffice for assessing (or verbally discussing) the attributes on the TRR form. A minimum of one game to 11, however, is required to assess most of the attributes.

19. Once a Referee is awarded either a Level 1 or Level 2 credential, can the rating be revoked? If so, what would warrant revoking a level rating?

A: Yes, in rare circumstances this can occur. In fact, it has happened at least once. This can happen when a Rater notices the Referee's skills are not consistent with the required proficiency of their rating. These circumstances should be brought to the attention of the appropriate RTC for the appropriate remedial action. Such remedial action may require the RTC to personally observe the Referee to determine if the Referee's skills have been maintained to warrant retention of the Referee's credential.

20. If someone was a Certified Referee but decides not to renew his/her certification, is the Certified Referee automatically issued a Level 2 credential? Or, do they need to be assessed and mentored just like anyone else?

A: They would need to be assessed, but having a mentor assigned is not normally required.

21. Is it OK if a Level 2 Referee has no interest in becoming certified and chooses not to continue in the mentoring program?

A: Yes.

22. When can a Level 2 Referee request a mentor from the CRC?

A: As soon as they obtain the Level 2. The request, however, should be done with the concurrence of the RTC. There is no obligation or requirement that the CRC assigns a mentor when requested. There are any number of reasons why the CRC may not be able to grant the request, the most obvious being the availability of a mentor.

23. Can a Level 2 Referee pick a different mentor than the one originally assigned by the CRC?

A: Referees do not pick their mentor. If the Referee or mentor thinks a change in mentor is warranted, the CRC should be consulted. The CRC must approve any change in mentor.

24. How does the Rater factor in on-court situations that aren't listed on the TRR/ATS form, such as profanity, medical and equipment timeouts?

A: The TRR/ATS form is designed as a reminder for what the Rater should look for during an assessment, with a focus on the best practices of the Referee Handbook. It isn't meant to cover every on-court situation that can happen. Profanity can be discussed as part of attribute #28. Medical and equipment timeouts can be discussed as part of attribute #21.

25. Is it necessary for the Referee to complete a self-assessment prior to assessment by a Rater?

A: No, it is optional.

26. What differentiates a “Trained Referee” from a “Level 1” and what differentiates a “Level 1” from a “Level 2?”

A: Level 2 referees are considered to possess the basic skills and rules knowledge to competently referee most matches at any skill level. There isn't really a litmus test for someone to be rated Level 2, but all Level 2 referees should be able to perform the timeout procedure close to flawlessly. At this point in their development there should be no reason why they should struggle or need to reference a written list of steps. By now, it should be something they have mastered.

Level 1 referees are considered to possess sufficient refereeing skills and rules knowledge to independently referee straightforward matches (can keep accurate score and watch for out of position players and foot faults) but require additional training to be considered fully competent.

Those who do not meet Level 1 standards are considered trainees who need additional training. While they may be assigned to independently referee matches, the Tournament Director and Referee Coordinator do so with the understanding the referee has either not met minimum standards of a Level 1 referee or has not been formally assessed.

27. What do the credentials consist of and how, when and by whom are they presented?

A: The credential consists of a plastic card with the USA Pickleball logo and rating attained (Level 1 or Level 2), along with a red neck wallet and lanyard to display the credential. The Rater should request credentials from his/her respective RTC after assessing a referee as Level 1 or Level 2 rating. RTCs may request a bulk quantity (i.e., 6 to 12) of credentials from the Certified Referee Program Administrator at refcertadmin@usapa.org.) It is preferred that the Rater arrange to present the credential to the Referee personally, however, it may be mailed directly to the Referee if logistics for in-person presentation are not convenient or if the Referee has not taken and achieved the minimum scores required for Level 1 or Level 2 on the Referee Test, the Line Judge Test, and the Player Test. The RTC or Rater will write or label the Referee's name on the credential.

28. Must the three online tests be completed and passed before the assessment takes place?

A: It is preferred that the tests be completed before the assessment takes place, but it is not mandatory. If the 3 tests are not completed before the observation and assessment, no credentials will be issued until the Referee completes the tests and achieves the minimum scores required for Level 1 or Level 2 credentials.

29. Can credentials be awarded if the TRR/ATS form is missing the test scores?

A: No.

30. When a Referee is rated Level 1, what is the next step? How can he/she improve in preparation for reassessment?

A: A Level 1 referee should continue to work with a USAPA registered trainer or certified referee to improve his/her skills in preparation for the next assessment.

31. What is the process for a Level 2 rated Referee to progress into the mentoring phase?

A: A Level 2 referee must request a mentor through his/her CRC. The CRC will assign a certified referee to serve as the referee's mentor.

32. How long does the mentoring process take? Is it a standard timeline or different for different referees?

A: There is not a standard amount of time required for a Level 2 referee to receive mentoring. The timeline will vary based on the needs and availability of each Referee and mentor.

33. What qualifies one to be a mentor? Are there documented procedures for mentoring?

A: Any willing certified referee is qualified to mentor a Level 2 referee. Certified referees who desire to be mentors should contact their Regional CRC.

34. Can a Referee apply for evaluation for certification without first having been rated and completing the mentoring program?

A: All referees entering the certified referee program must receive a recommendation from their CRC and must have achieved a Level 2. At least one assessment rating will be made to determine whether further training and/or mentoring is needed before the referee is ready to enter the program.

35. When a referee temporarily relocates from the region in which he/she was trained and rated to an alternate region (e.g., snowbird), does the RTC in that region need to be notified so he/she can be included in the alternate region's Assessed Referee database? If so, who is responsible for that notification?

A: Yes, the referee should notify the RTC in the alternate region of his/her referee status.

36. How does a Referee who wants to be assessed find a Rater? That is, who administers the Tiered Referee Rating program? How does a Referee find out who that person is?

A: The TRR program is administered by the RTC in each region. It is best for the referee to contact his/her RTC to be paired with a rater. The RTCs can be found using the search tool on the Referee Training Tools page on the USAPA website.

37. Once the courtside assessment is finished, how long should the Rater spend providing feedback/issuing credentials? 15 minutes? 30 minutes? 45 minutes? 1 hour or more?

A: A rater should normally be able to provide feedback and issue the credential in about 30 minutes. Of course, depending on the amount of information that must be discussed, the session may take more or less time.

38. What is the optimum player skill level for performing an assessment? 3.0? 3.5? 4.0? 4.5? 5.0? Pro?

A: A player's skill level is independent of his/her qualification for performing an assessment.

39. Is the assessment a training session? If the Referee has significant shortcomings (e.g., referee doesn't use *sideout marks* on scoresheet), should the Rater spend time addressing each skill deficiency or simply rate the Referee *trained* and refer him/her to the *Referee Handbook*?

A: An assessment is not a training session per se. However, the Rater should spend time addressing each skill deficiency to ensure the referee understands the shortcomings and to encourage him/her to continue training.

40. Does the Referee have any recourse if he/she feels that the rating was incorrect/unfair?

A: The referee can discuss the situation with the RTC to determine whether the correct procedures were used.

41. Does a Level 2 Referee receive higher per-match compensation than a Level 1 or *trained* referee?

A: USA Pickleball recommends that tournament directors compensate Level 2 referees at a higher rate than Level 1 referees and, ideally, Level 1 referees should be compensated at a higher rate than trained (unrated) referees. This system of hierarchy matches the level of rewards with the competencies demonstrated by each level of referee.

42. To be assessed, does a Referee have to complete a USA Pickleball training course presented by a registered trainer?

A: No, experienced referees who have not previously attended a USA Pickleball training course can be assessed. However, each referee assessed must be a current USA Pickleball member. Attribute #33 on the TRR form identifies a minimum number of training contact hours for Level 1 and Level 2 referees. If the referee has not attended formal classroom training, the contact hour requirement must be obtained by observation on court by a registered trainer or certified referee.

43. What happens if a referee's USA Pickleball membership expires or they decide to 'retire' as a Level 1 or Level 2 referee?

A: Neither RTCs (nor CRCs) are expected to 'chase' expired credentials from previous Level 1 and 2 referees. We can ask them to return them to the RTC or any other Certified Referee if they are no longer being used, but that's about it. They didn't pay for them, so it's appropriate for them to return them so they can be re-cycled. But, if they do not return them, we will not 'chase' them. The RTC can and should remove their name and Level designation from the Pickleball Desk application. .

RTCs are also not expected to 'police' USA Pickleball membership information. Before a sanctioned tournament, the Referee Coordinator should ensure Level 1 and Level 2 referees are members as part of their vetting process. That vetting is nothing more than making the expectation for USA Pickleball membership known as a precondition to signing up. We are not going to ask Referee Coordinators to check membership status.