

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

Introduction

The following questions and answers are designed to describe a referee's development after completing initial training. Sometimes, the training is self-administered, and in others, an instructor provides it. All referees are strongly advised to obtain initial training from a USA Pickleball-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 afterward.

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

Below, the TRR form is extensively referenced and used to document rating assessments. 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 called the Assessor. The Assessor may be any Certified Referee, a non-certified Referee Training Coordinator (RTC) or a USA Pickleball Registered Trainer. The person being assessed is the Referee.

1. What is the *purpose* of the Tiered 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 qualified Assessor using the TRR Form.

Referee assessments (these should not be referred to as 'evaluations') are sessions where a qualified Assessor assesses 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 current Level 1 and non-credentialed Referee is eligible for an assessment. Assessors are not, however, obligated to perform the assessments if they think the Referee's experience does not warrant it or the Referee's trainer does not feel the Referee is ready for an assessment. 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 Assessor observed the Referee and provided coaching and feedback afterwards.

3. Are there any prerequisite requirements before being assessed?

A: Yes: The Referee desiring an assessment needs an email from their trainer indicating they are approved for an assessment. If self-trained, this requirement is waived.

The Referee needs a successful visual acuity exam within 12 months of the assessment.

The Referee needs written confirmation from USA Pickleball that they have taken all four online examination tests and scored greater than 90% (player test, line judge test, referee test, and officiating procedures test).

The Referee fills out the top part of the TRR form.

The Referee provides the documentation above to the Lead Assessor prior to the assessment.

4. Are there any uniform requirements for the assessment?

A: Yes. Any photos taken during or after the assessment must show the following:

Referees: White shirt (USA Pickleball logo preferred but not required)

Black or dark pants, shorts, or skirt.

Black or mostly black shoes.

White USA Pickleball or generic white hat.

Any current credentials

Assessors:

USA Pickleball logo white shirt, black pants, shorts, or skirt, black shoes

White USA Pickleball hat

Current credentials

5. When are TRR assessments performed?

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

6. 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 at Level 1, some with extensive experience have demonstrated the advanced skill levels to jump directly to Level 2.

7. Who can perform the assessments?

A: Only qualified Assessors can perform assessments. Normally, Referees work through their Regional Referee Training Coordinator (RTC) or the person who trained them to arrange the assessment.

8. Who can award the Level 1 or 2 credentials?

A: Level 2 Referees serving as an RTC and qualified as an Assessor may award Level 1 credentials. Certified Referees who are qualified as an Assessor may award Level 1 and Level 2 credentials.

9. How does one become qualified as an Assessor?

A: RTC's nominate assessors in their Regions. Once nominated, the referee must attend training in order to become approved and qualified as an assessor.

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

A: No. But many are prepared to do so if asked, and a request is made in advance to the tournament Referee Coordinator (the person assigning referees to matches). The Referee should expect a tournament-conducted assessment to be later in the day when the need for referees begins to wane and before the medal matches begin in earnest.

11. Can an Assessor from one region conduct assessments in a different region?

A: Yes. It is customary, however, for the Assessor from that different region to notify the Referee's RTC. The reason is that assessment results must be forwarded to the Referee's RTC. Notifying the RTC of the Region being visited has the added benefit of making the Assessor available to conduct assessments for referees in the Region that the Assessor is visiting.

12. 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 needs to ensure that the Referee's Regional RTC gets a copy of the TRR form completed by the Assessor.

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

A: Since there is no effective way to control this, we have purposely not provided guidance on this. This is better left to the Assessor 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 Assessor will indicate whether or not the Referee has put forth the effort necessary to correct the weaknesses identified by the previous Assessor on the TRR form. If the Assessor is convinced the Referee has put forth the effort, there is no reason to prevent the Assessor from conducting the assessment.

14. How and to whom does the Assessor report the result of the assessment?

A: Qualified Assessors can access the online template used to report the results. The online form will guide the Assessor in what information to input.

15. Who keeps the original TRR form?

A: The Referee.

16. How does the Assessor 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 Assessors who conduct assessments in their Region. Some Assessors, however, train and assess a high volume of Referees. Those Assessors have been provided their own supply. Further questions of this nature should be referred to the respective RTC.

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

A: The preferred location is at the opposite net post. If space considerations make this impractical, the Assessor may stand beside the Referee. This is important because any mistakes made by the Referee that could affect the outcome of the game are to be immediately corrected by the Assessor.

18. Should the Assessor review the referee's scoresheet following the match?

A: Yes. At a minimum, reviewing the scoresheet following the match is required to assess attributes #5, #6, #11, #19, #22, #23, and #25 on the TRR form.

19. Can the assessment to become a Level 2 occur at different times? In other words, if an Assessor only observes some of 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: The assessment can continue at a different time and venue. It's unrealistic to assume that the Assessor can observe the 35 items on the TRR form during one game. However, the subsequent assessments should not be conducted by the same Assessor (see question #19 below). This is why the Referee should maintain possession of the original TRR form. One important

note, however, is if a second Assessor is used to help complete the assessment, the two Assessors must agree on the rating for any of the attributes assessed at the Level 2 level. This does not mean that the second assessor reassesses every attribute that has been rated, but if the second assessor observes that a referee is not being consistent in an attribute that the first assessor rated as Level 2, then the two assessors must reach a consensus on the rating. Each Assessor will use the TRR form as a guide. Only one TRR form may be submitted to the RTC for approval.

20. 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: All Level 1 assessments will include two doubles games. These can be 2/3 or a 1/15. The goal is to assess the pre-match briefing, the start of the match, clip movement, scorekeeping, fault recognition, player positions, head movement, time-outs, end changes, and end of the game.

Referees attempting to obtain Level 2 credentials should be assessed by two TRR-trained certified referees or TRR-trained RTCs (or combination). If two CRs or RTCs are not available, one CR or RTC may conduct the assessment. The Level 2 assessment is conducted over two doubles matches. Any combination of 2/3 or 1/15 is acceptable. One match must have at least one team that is stacking.

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

A: Yes, in rare circumstances, this can occur. This can happen when an Assessor notices that 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 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 the retention of the Referee's credential.

22. 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 usually required.

23. 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.

24. 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. The CRC is not obligated or required to assign a mentor when requested. There are several reasons why the CRC may not be able to grant the request, the most obvious being the availability of a mentor.

25. Can a Level 2 Referee pick a mentor different from the one initially 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.

26. How does the Assessor factor in on-court situations not listed on the TRR form, such as profanity and medical and equipment timeouts?

A: The TRR form is designed as a reminder of what the Assessor should look for during an assessment, with a focus on the best practices of the Officiating Handbook. It isn't meant to cover every on-court situation that can happen. Profanity can be discussed as part of attributes #29-31. Medical and equipment timeouts can be addressed as part of attribute #26.

27. Is it necessary for the Referee to complete a self-assessment before assessment by an Assessor?

A: No, it is optional.

28. Besides the criteria on the TRR form, in general, what differentiates a "Trained Referee" from a "Level 1" and what distinguishes a "Level 1" from a "Level 2?"

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

Level 1 referees possess sufficient refereeing skills and rule knowledge to referee straightforward matches independently (they can keep accurate scores and watch for out-of-position players and foot faults), but they 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 referee matches independently, the Tournament Director and Referee Coordinator do so with the understanding the referee still needs to meet the minimum standards of a Level 1 referee or has yet to be formally assessed.

29. Must the four online tests be completed and passed before the assessment?

A: Yes. All four must be passed at 90%. The test result dates should not be older than thirty (30) days from the scheduled assessment date and in the current year.

30. Can credentials be awarded if the TRR form lacks the test scores?

A: No.

31. 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 USA Pickleball registered trainer or certified referee to improve his/her skills in preparation for the next assessment.

32. 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.

33. How long does the mentoring process take? Is it a standard timeline or one that is different for different referees?

A: No standard time is required for a Level 2 referee to receive mentoring. The timeline will vary based on the needs and availability of each Referee and mentor.

34. 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 and be familiar with the Mentor Roles and Responsibilities document provided on the USA Pickleball website under Referee Resources.

35. Can a Referee apply for an On-court Evaluation (OCE) for certification without first being rated and completing the mentoring program?

A: All referees who apply for an OCE must receive a recommendation from their CRC and must have achieved a Level 2.

36. When a referee temporarily relocates from the region he/she was trained and rated to an alternate region (e.g., snowbird), does the RTC in that region need to be notified?

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

37. How does a Referee who wants to be assessed find an Assessor? 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. The referee should contact his/her RTC to be paired with an Assessor. The RTCs can be found using the search tool on the Referee Training Tools page on the USA Pickleball website.

38. 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 yet to attend a USA Pickleball training course can be assessed. However, each referee assessed must be a current USA Pickleball member.

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

A: Any skill level will suffice other than the pro level.

40. Is the assessment a training session? If the Referee has significant shortcomings (e.g., the referee doesn't use side-out marks on the scoresheet), should the Assessor address each skill deficiency or rate the Referee *trained* and refer him/her to the Officiating Handbook?

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

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

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

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

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

43. 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 hierarchy system matches the level of rewards with the competencies demonstrated by each level of referee.

44. 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 and remove them from the National Referee Database (NRD).

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.