**Table Tennis Study Guide**

Table tennis (commonly known as “ping pong”, a trademark in the U.S. of Parker Brothers) is a sport where 2 or 4 players hit a ball back and forth to each other with paddles. The game takes place on a table divided by a net. Players must allow a ball played towards them only one bounce on their side of the table and must return it so that it bounces on the opponent’s side. Play is fast and demands quick reactions. A skilled player can impart spin to the ball, which makes its bounce and its reaction on the opponent's paddle difficult to predict or return with confidence.

History – Table tennis was first played in Salem, Massachusetts during the 1890’s. It was played on a miniature tennis court on the floor, but eventually the game moved to the dining room table. England changed the composition of the ball from web-covered to celluloid and named the game Ping-Pong (a name derived from the sound of the ball striking the paddle and table). Parker Brothers, manufacturers of indoor play equipment in the United States, sold the game equipment under this trade name to fans in this country and England and patented the name of “ping-pong”.

 Scoring – The first player/team to score 11 points, with a 2 point advantage, wins the game If the score is tied at 10 (deuce), each player/team alternates serving, 1 point each. The first player/team to score 2 points in a row wins.

 Point – A player/team will not earn a point if:

• They fail to make a good serve.

• They fail to make a good return.

• A player’s paddle moves the playing surface while the ball is in play

• Anything the player is wearing moves the playing surface while the ball is in play.

• The ball contacts the player before it passes over the net or before it contacts the table.

• The ball contacts anything that the player is wearing before it passes over the net or before it contacts the table.

• The player’s free hand touches the playing surface while the ball is in play.

• The player volleys the ball.

 Choice of Serve and End of Table – Choice of serve is determined by chance (coin toss, rally). Winner chooses which end of the table they want OR whether they want to serve or receive. The players/teams shall switch sides for the start of the next game.

 Serve – The hand must toss up the ball. In doing this, the serving hand must be flat with the fingers straight and together, thumb free and the ball resting on the palm of the hand. The player cannot pinch or cup the ball or put spin on it in any way. If there is doubt, a let shall be called and the point shall be replayed. If this happens again, a point shall be awarded to the receiver. At the moment of impact on the serve, the paddle and ball must be behind the server’s end line. The hand, ball, and paddle may never be in simultaneous contact. On the serve, after the ball has been hit, the ball must touch the server’s side of the table first, pass over or around the net and then touch the receiver’s side of the table. Receivers may not play the ball in the air. This is called a volley, which is illegal. Players will alternate serving after every 2 points, unless the game becomes 10 – 10 (deuce). If the score is tied at 10, each player/team alternates serving, 1 point each, until the first player/team scores 2 points in a row.

Doubles Serve – Doubles play makes use of the line running down the middle of the table. This line runs parallel to the sidelines. When serving, the ball must touch the server’s right, half court, pass over or around the net, and then touch the receiver’s right, half court. All serving in doubles comes from the right half of the court – never the left half.

Order of Serve – Doubles – As in singles, the service alternates after every 2 points. After every 2 points, the receiver becomes the server and the partner of the first server becomes the new receiver. Before the new server from the other team serves the ball, the team that just served must switch positions. If the score is tied at 10, the service order shall remain the same, however, the server will change after each point.

Order of Play/Receiving – Doubles – The same partner cannot keep returning the ball. Receiving alternates after each hit as follows: Server to Receiver, Receiver to Partner of Server, Partner of Server to Partner of Receiver, Partner of Receiver to Server

 If a player receives out of turn, and is discovered by the other team, a point is scored.

 Let – The ball is declared out of play and no player/team is awarded a point. A let is declared when: The serve touches the net or supports and is otherwise good. The receiver is not ready. (The receiver is considered ready if he strikes at the ball). The ball splits or is imperfect. An accident occurs which is not under the player’s control.

 Playing Strategy – Strategic movements in table tennis are similar to those of tennis. A common strategy is to change the pace of the game, shifting from the long to the short game. One must learn to impart spin on the ball in order to take advantage of an opponent’s position. A player’s best assets are accuracy and control.

Terminology and Skills Ace – a serve, which completely eludes the receiver.

 Advantage – the next point made after a deuce score.

 Backhand – a stroke frequently used by right-handed players when returning a ball hit to their left. The paddle is held so that the back of the hand faces the ball.

 Backspin – the ball is hit so that the top of the ball rotates toward the person who hit the ball, with the bottom of the ball moving away.

 Chop – a stroke in which the lower part of the ball is hit with a downward stroke of the paddle, imparting backspin on the ball. The ball is hit at the top of the bounce.

 Drop Shot – a shot played so softly that it dies before an opponent can reach it or places them at a disadvantage if they play it. This is best used when you have driven your opponent back from the table.

 Drive – a forward and upward shot resulting in a fast return with topspin.

 Forehand – a stroke used with the palm as the leading part of the movement.

 Grip – Most players use the tennis grip, called the “handshake” grip. Grasp the handle of the paddle up near the flat blade with the forefinger and thumb actually on the two playing surfaces of the paddle.

 Push Shot – the easiest method of returning the ball. The ball is struck with a pushing motion of the paddle immediately after the ball begins to rise from its bounce, so that no spin is placed on the ball. This is a defensive stroke.

 Serve – Method of putting the ball in play. A good serve is delivered from as low as possible, barely above table height.

 Smash – a fast, hard return of a high bouncing ball.

 Topspin – when the ball is hit so that the top spins forward in the direction of flight. This is the opposite of backspin.

 Volley – illegal play of the ball while it is in the air and before it has touched the table.