



How to Start a State High School Pickleball Association

Prepared by the U.S. High School Pickleball Association, Inc.

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Overview

Starting a pickleball organization for high school pickleball at the state level is relatively **easy and inexpensive**.

As your organization becomes more ambitious (annual awards banquet, hall of fame, etc.), you'll need more volunteers, more hours and more money, but launching a basic organization doesn't require many people, hours or dollars.

The basic steps to start a state high school pickleball association include:

- Picking a board of directors
- Writing a mission statement
- Incorporating in your state (very easy and inexpensive to do online)
- Getting an IRS Employer Identification Number (free)
- Opening a bank account
- Building a website
- Announcing your organization

Once you start your organization, you can use feedback from your members to set your priorities. These might include:

- Annual conference or clinic
- Online coaches directory
- Find-a-match system
- Rules committee
- Grievance committee
- State tournament
- Annual awards
- Job board
- Newsletter
- Summer camp/clinic for players
- Summer coaches clinic
- UTR play days
- Hall of fame
- Sponsors

This document will show you how to start your organization, step-by-step.

Step #1 Pick Your Board of Directors

Before you begin filling out any paperwork for a corporation (an often, an informal pickleball organization), you'll need a board of directors. Depending on your state, you can start with as few as three board members. You might wish to start with five to fill certain required positions. Stagger your terms so everyone doesn't go off the board the same year and five newbies are left to run the organization. Pick an odd number of board members so you don't have tie votes, or give your president two votes to break ties.

A common first board of directors might include:

- President
- First Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Board member at large

Your **president** will most likely lead the work the first year, which might not be that much if you're simply forming the organization, setting up a website and alerting coaches in your state that you've launched. The president will preside over board meetings. You might start with four quarterly board meetings, which you can hold over the phone to discuss the status of your projects.

The **first vice president** will usually handle special projects that need doing and otherwise assist the president. The first vice president is often the president-elect and runs board meetings when the president is absent. He or she will watch the president work and prepare to be the next president.

Your **secretary** will take notes during your board meetings, then type them up as official minutes of the organization. The minutes will include the date of the board meeting, who attended, the time the meeting started, the treasurer's report, what was discussed, and if any votes were taken. The secretary will send each board member a copy of the minutes prior to the next board meeting, where they will be approved by the board near the start of the meeting.

The **treasurer** will open a bank account for the association once you're incorporated and have your IRS EIN number. The treasurer will keep one or two simple financial documents that tracks how much money you have, the money you take in and the money you spend. The treasurer will make a simple report to the board of directors at each board meeting and submit your financials to whoever does your taxes at the end of the year. The treasurer will pay bills using your checks or online payment account.

For safety reasons, you might want to limit who can sign checks and require two signatures for checks over a certain amount. Don't require two signatures for all checks, or you'll be creating a hassle every time you need to pay someone \$30 or \$40.

Your **board member at large** will fill gaps when you need help with projects. He or she might be a short-term board member while you launch the association, or stay on long-term and eventually serve as secretary, treasurer, first vice president and then president.

You've probably heard the saying that a camel is a horse designed by a committee. Keep this in mind when you decide how many people you want on your board of directors. For example, if you want every district or conference in your state represented in your new association, consider making these committee positions, rather than full voting board positions.

If you want a large board, you can create an executive committee to help things running smoothly. This could consist of the five board members described above, who have authority to meet and make decisions (vote) on behalf of the board between board meetings.

Step #2 Write a Mission Statement

A mission statement is a short, broad-based document that lays out the primary goals of the organization. Unlike detailed bylaws, which explain how the organization will operate, a mission statement is something that lets people know why you were founded, why you exist and what you do. A mission statement often appears on the About page of an organization's website.

A word to the wise: the more detailed your mission statement, the more you will be constrained by it. Be careful how much detail you want in your mission statement. Here's a sample mission statement for a state high school pickleball coaches association:

"The mission of the XX High School Pickleball Coaches Association is to foster communication among XX's high school pickleball coaches to improve the quality of coaching, improve the level of pickleball competition and improve the enjoyment of junior, middle and high school pickleball by the student-athletes who participate in the sport."

You do not have to get into how you will achieve your goals in your mission statement. Leave that for your bylaws, which is a document that explains in more detail how you will operate your association.

Writing Bylaws

Your bylaws are the rules by which you will operate your organization. This includes instructions for nominating and electing board members, accepting members, running board meetings and other guidelines.

The United States Tennis Association offers a bylaws sample you can use for your pickleball organization (starting on page 70 of this document or page 77 of the PDF file):

http://s3.amazonaws.com/ustaassets/assets/576/15/cta_guide_-_complete_final_version_9.18.12.pdf

Pickleball Association or Pickleball Coaches Association?

Before you start formalizing your association, you will need to decide whether you want to be more of a general high school pickleball association in your state, or a more narrowly focused high school pickleball coaches association.

If you just want to focus on activities that foster communication among your coaches and provide education and resource to coaches, then you might form as a high school pickleball coaches association.

If a significant amount of your time and money will be spent promoting high school pickleball and running player camps, clinics and tournaments, you might organize as a high school pickleball association. A high school pickleball coaches association can promote high school pickleball and run player events, but these activities can't take up the majority of your time and resources.

Coaches Association – Some state organizations form as pickleball coaches associations, but not as high school pickleball coaches associations. These organizations include high school, junior high school, middle school and college coaches, as well as commercial teaching pros. This broadens the membership base, but can dilute the purpose and activities of the organization.

If you form as a high school pickleball coaches association, you can include different subcategories of memberships (and include all pickleball coaches and teachers), but you make it clear that the organization was founded and will operate primarily to promote the interests of high school pickleball coaches.

Pickleball Association – If you decide to form as a more generic high school pickleball association, you can spend more (and most) of your activities promoting high school pickleball in general, including competitions.

If you look at the Links section of USHSTA.org and view the different state associations listed, you will see that some are coaches associations (e.g., Indiana and Michigan) and some are pickleball associations (e.g., Arizona and Ohio).

Step #3 Incorporate in your State

NOTE: You don't have to form a corporation or become a nonprofit. You can choose to set up as an LLC or other entity. Talk to a tax professional about which business entity is right for your pickleball club, league or association.

Incorporating is a simple process.

First, visit your secretary of state's website. Look for the corporations section and follow the instructions for registering a corporation in your state. The cost is often around \$100.

Filling out an application form is easy, and you might be able to fill out the form, apply, pay your fee and submit everything online. If not, you'll be able to download the form(s), print it, fill it out and mail it in with your application fee.

During this process, you will need to provide articles of incorporation. This is a simple document that generally includes the following information:

- Name of the organization
- Street address of the organization or main contact person
- Key contact (often called the agent of record or registered agent)
- Short description of your purpose
- List of the board members and their addresses
- Dissolution clause (a sentence naming the organization(s) to receive your assets if you dissolve).

Your state might refer to this document as "articles of association," "corporate charter" or "certificate of incorporation."

You can use the sample articles of incorporation provided by the U.S. Tennis Association for its community tennis associations. The sample Articles of Incorporation template is on page 68 of this document (page 75 of the PDF file):

http://s3.amazonaws.com/ustaassets/assets/576/15/cta_guide_-_complete_final_version_9.18.12.pdf

Once you're approved, you will pay an annual renewal fee, which might be \$30 to \$100.

Be aware that even if you not take in much money or make a "profit," you will still need to file state and federal tax returns each year.

Step #4 Get an IRS Employer Identification Number

Once you have received your corporate status, contact the IRS to get an Employer Identification Number (EIN). This will be your number for tax purposes, and you will need this even if you don't plan on becoming a federally tax-exempt 501(c) organization. For example, you'll need an EIN to open a bank account.

You can get an EIN in a matter of minutes by applying online at the IRS website.

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number>

Nonprofit only or federally tax-exempt (501(c)?

The following information can make things sound like forming a high school pickleball coaches association is more work than it really needs to be. If you don't plan on asking for a 501(c)(3) designation by the IRS, you can skip this section, and setting up your association will be a breeze.

Seeking 501(c)(3) status is more work and something you can do after you are up and running. In fact, you don't need to incorporate at all if you're just putting up a website, providing information to your state's coaches and holding an annual clinic or conference.

If you spend the \$100 or so to incorporate at the state level, that's enough for most state high school pickleball associations. If you are more ambitious and are curious about getting IRS recognition, read on. Remember – the basics steps to form a state high school pickleball coaches are very simple.

Getting 501(c) status

Depending on your mission and size, you can operate as a nonprofit corporation, or as a nonprofit corporation that is also recognized by the IRS as a federally tax-exempt organization under IRS 501(c) Code.

State high school pickleball coaches associations don't need to be federally tax-exempt. Some are, some aren't. The USHSTA, for example, has operated as a nonprofit corporation—but not a 501(c)—for 20 years.

You can start your organization as a nonprofit the first year, then upgrade to a 501(c) as you determine your needs. Many state high school pickleball associations choose to operate as 501(c)(3) organizations. This not only lets them avoid paying taxes on some purchases and some or most of their income, but it also allows them to accept donations that qualify as tax write-offs for the donor.

Businesses that sponsor your organization do not need you to be a 501(c) to get take a tax deduction. Their sponsorship is considered a tax-deductible marketing expense.

It shouldn't be too hard to find a pickleball parent or local pickleball enthusiast who is an attorney who specializes in nonprofit work and ask him or her for advice and/or free or low-cost 501(c) application help.

Step #5 Create a logo

You'll probably want a logo for your new organization for use on your website, flyers, registration forms, business cards, social media accounts, etc. Ask any parents or students if they will donate their services.

You can use a program like Canva or Grok Imagine to create your logo.

Be careful that you don't hurt anyone's feelings by holding a contest for a logo (because everybody but one person loses), and make sure you have some logo guidelines for whoever you ask. For example, you might simply want the initials of your organization superimposed over an outline of your state. You might want a pickleball racquet and/or book in your logo.

Make sure your logo will look good when you blow it up for banners or shrink it on business cards.

Step #6 Build a website

Most high school kids today know how to build a simple website. You should have no problem finding volunteers. Ask your school's IT teachers for help.

Write a list of the information you'll want on your website. This might include:

- About the XYZ Association
- Member benefits
- Join
- Dates (e.g. fall and spring season dates, state tournament, etc.)
- Job board
- Coaches directory
- Links to helpful sites (e.g., state scholastic athletic association)
- Blog or newsletter
- Donate
- Annual conference
- Rules committee
- Grievance committee
- State tournament
- Annual awards
- Newsletter
- Summer player camp/coaches clinic
- Find-a-match system
- Hall of fame
- Sponsors

Before you go public with your association, you might want to set up social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook) and populate them with some posts, tweets, pictures and videos.

Step #7 Purchase liability insurance

When you incorporate, you help protect your board members from personal lawsuits. You can still be sued, however, if someone is injured at one of your events and for who-knows-what other reasons, so it's a good idea to buy a director's and officer's liability insurance policy and a general liability insurance policy.

Step #8 Announce your organization

If you mail brochures to schools, many coaches will not receive them in a timely fashion. This is because many high school pickleball coaches don't teach or work at the schools where they coach and don't come in and pick up their notes, mail, etc. until a week or so before the season starts.

If you send blast emails, make sure you are CAN-SPAM Act compliant. Use a free service like MailChimp to conduct your first one or two blast emails. MailChimp, Constant Contact and other platforms will help guide you through the process of sending legal blast emails. This includes doing things such as including your physical address in the emails and an opt-out or unsubscribe option. Another popular marketing tool is ConstantContact.

How to run your board meetings

Here are links to helpful articles with tips for running board meetings written by USHSTA executive director, Steve Milano.

Why you need to understand Robert's Rules of Order

<https://robertsrules.com/>

What Needs to Be Included in the Minutes of Board Meetings?

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/needs-included-minutes-board-meetings-74878.html>

How to Approve Board Meeting Minutes

<https://careertrend.com/run-nonprofit-board-meeting-6949.html>