

FREE GUIDE

The Complete Beginner's Guide to Padel in the UK

Courts, kit, rules and why this is the fastest-growing sport for the over-40s.

#1

Fastest-growing sport in Europe

25M+

Players worldwide across 90+ countries

40+

The ideal age to start

Updated March 2026 • Est. reading time: 12 minutes • Perfect for the 40+ beginner

WHAT IS PADEL?

Padel (pronounced PAH-del, not PAY-del) is a racket sport invented in Mexico in 1969 that has grown to become one of the fastest-growing sports in the world, with over 25 million players across more than 90 countries.

The short definition: padel is mainly a doubles racket sport played on an enclosed court roughly a third of the size of a tennis court. The court is surrounded by glass and metal mesh walls, which are very much in play, meaning the ball can bounce off them, just like in squash. Unlike tennis, you use a solid, stringless padel racket and the ball bounces once off the ground before you can use the walls.

The wall element is what makes padel so addictive and so enjoyable. Shots you'd consider completely lost in tennis, when they get by you, can suddenly be retrieved from the back wall, creating long, spectacular rallies that even complete beginners enjoy within their first session.

"You've probably heard the noise. Maybe a friend came back from a weekend break in Spain raving about it. Padel is arguably the most accessible, sociable and genuinely fun sport to pick up as an adult, at any age."

Padel vs Tennis: Key Differences

	PADEL	TENNIS
Court size	10m x 20m (enclosed)	23.77m x 10.97m (open)
Racket	Solid paddle, no strings	Strung racket
Walls	In play (glass & mesh)	Out of bounds
Format	Mainly doubles (4 players)	Singles or doubles
Scoring	Identical to tennis	Standard tennis scoring
Serving	Underarm only	Overhead serve
Learning curve	Beginner-friendly	Steeper to start
Joint impact	Low to moderate	Moderate to high

THE RULES IN PLAIN ENGLISH

One of padel's greatest gifts is that the rules are genuinely simple. If you've played any racket sport before, you'll pick them up within the first 15 minutes on court. If you haven't, don't worry — you'll still be holding your own in your very first session.

The Basics

- Padel is mainly played as doubles - four players, two per team, but don't be surprised if you see your local club with the odd singles court
- The court is 10 metres wide and 20 metres long, enclosed by glass and metal mesh
- Scoring is identical to tennis: 15, 30, 40, deuce, advantage, game, set, match
- Matches are typically the best of three sets
- The ball is similar to a tennis ball, but slightly softer with lower internal pressure

Serving

- The serve must be underarm, no overhead serves
- The server bounces the ball and strikes it at or below hip height
- The ball must land in the diagonally opposite service box (same as tennis)
- You get two attempts at the serve, just like tennis
- The receiver must let the ball bounce before returning it

The Walls: The Fun Part

This is what makes padel 'padel'. After the ball bounces once on the floor on your side, it can hit the back wall or side walls and still be in play. You can let the ball come off the wall and play it before it hits the floor a second time. You can even hit the ball into the back wall of your own half, as long as it then lands on the other side of the net.

When is the Ball Out?

- If the ball hits the wire mesh at the top of the walls before bouncing on the floor, it is out
- If the ball goes over the walls without bouncing, it is out
- If the ball bounces twice on your side before you return it, you lose the point

BEGINNER'S TIP

Don't overthink the walls. In your first session, just focus on getting the ball back over the net. The wall play will start to feel natural surprisingly quickly and when you pull off your first back-wall retrieval, that's it. You'll be hooked for life.

FINDING PADEL COURTS IN THE UK

The UK padel boom is real. In 2022, there were fewer than 300 padel courts in the entire country. By early 2026, that figure has grown dramatically, with new venues opening monthly across England, Scotland and Wales.

Where to Look

- Dedicated padel clubs and multi-sport centres
- Tennis clubs, many LTA-affiliated clubs have added padel courts
- Leisure centres and local authority sports facilities
- Health clubs and gym chains
- Holiday parks and hotels

How to Book

The easiest way to find courts is via the [LTA's court finder tool](#), [Padel England club finder](#), [Padel Mates](#) or [Matchi](#). These databases are updated regularly and list both indoor and outdoor facilities. Most courts are bookable via apps like PlayByPoint or Playtomic, download one before you go to make booking seamless.

The links to these websites and apps can be found in our guide to Padel in the UK blog.

What to Expect at Your First Visit

- Court hire typically costs £10–£30 per person per 90-minute session
- Most clubs offer racket and ball hire/loan if you don't yet own kit
- Beginner coaching sessions are usually available for £15–£25 per person
- Social padel sessions let you simply turn up and play
- Arrive 10 minutes early, meet your playing partners and get your bearings
- Do not worry about your level, beginners are genuinely welcome at almost every club

“For your first game, try an indoor court if you can. The consistent conditions make it easier to learn the basics and the club environment usually means better access to borrowed kit and helpful advice.”

WHAT KIT DO YOU NEED?

One of the most appealing things about padel is that the kit investment is modest and you certainly don't need to buy everything at once. Most clubs hire or loan rackets, so you can play your first few sessions without having to shell out before you decide you like it – but we know you will.....

ITEM	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	APPROX. COST
Padel Racket	Round head, soft foam core, 360–375g. Forgiving sweet spot for beginners	£60–£120
Padel Shoes	Herringbone or omni grip sole. Side-to-side lateral support. Not running shoes	£60–£120
Padel Balls	Slightly lower pressure than tennis balls. Any standard brand works fine	£5–£10 (tube of 3)
Sports Kit	Any breathable sportswear. No dress code at most clubs	You probably already own this

EDITOR NOTE: LINK THE ITEM NAME ABOVE TO THE RELEVANT BLOG ON WEBSITE

STARTER KIT TOTAL

You can be fully kitted out for under £200: a beginner racket (£80), padel shoes (£80), and a tube of balls (£6). Most clubs offer racket hire or loan for your first sessions while you decide if you want to invest.

EDITOR NOTE LINK THE ITEM NAME BELOW TO THE RELEVANT BLOG ON WEBSITE

Choosing Your First Racket

Don't overthink your first racket. The three things that matter for a beginner are: a round head shape (the sweet spot is larger and more forgiving than diamond or teardrop shapes); medium to soft flex (harder rackets require technique you haven't developed yet); and a price under £120 (you'll want to upgrade once you've played regularly for a few months and rackets don't last forever).

Padel Shoes: Don't Skip This

These are genuinely important, **please don't play padel in running shoes**. The court surface requires shoes with the right grip pattern and lateral support. Running shoes are built for forward motion and can lead to ankle rolls on a padel court. Padel or tennis shoes with herringbone or omni grip soles are ideal. Expect to pay £60–£120 for a good pair.

WHY PADEL IS PERFECT FOR THE OVER-40S

This is where we get genuinely evangelical – sorry! The Longer Game is built around the belief that active life doesn't have to end at 39 and padel might be the best single piece of evidence for that argument.

Lower Impact, Higher Enjoyment

Padel is a low-to-medium impact sport. The enclosed court means far less running than tennis, positioning and anticipation matter more than pure speed. The underarm serve eliminates the shoulder strain that many tennis players struggle with once they hit their 40s. The smaller court means you're rarely asked to sprint more than a few metres.

If your knees, hips or lower back have been the reason you've falling out of love with racket sports, padel is worth trying before you take all your rackets to the charity shop.

The Social Factor

Padel is mainly four people on court. Every session becomes part of your social life. You'll find padel clubs have a noticeably warm, inclusive atmosphere, partly because everyone remembers being a beginner and the format naturally creates conversation, laughter and post-match drinks.

Fast to Learn, Always Room to Improve

We defy you to not have a genuinely enjoyable session on your very first visit. That's not true of many sports. The learning curve is shallow enough that absolute beginners can rally with, yet the skill ceiling is high enough that experienced players are always finding new dimensions to their game.

Mixed-Gender by Default

Padel is one of the few sports where mixed doubles is the norm. Mixed social sessions are standard at most clubs, making it ideal for couples, friends or colleagues who want to play together regardless of perceived skill gaps.

"Padel is having its moment and it deserves it. We genuinely believe it's one of the best sporting decisions any 40-something can make right now: affordable, accessible, super social and something you'll still be playing in your 70s if you start today."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is padel easy to learn as a beginner?

Yes, padel is widely considered one of the easiest racket sports to pick up as an adult beginner. The underarm serve, smaller court and wall-retrieval element all lower the barriers significantly. Most beginners are having enjoyable rallies within their very first session.

How many padel courts are there in the UK?

The UK padel scene has grown dramatically. As of 2026, there are hundreds of venues across the country with new courts being added regularly. The LTA court finder at lta.padel.org.uk is the most up-to-date resource for locating facilities near you.

How much does it cost to play padel in the UK?

Court hire typically costs £10–£30 per person per 90-minute game, comparable to a gym session. Beginner coaching sessions usually cost £15–£25 per person. Some clubs offer membership packages if you plan to play regularly.

Do I need my own racket to start?

No, most clubs offer racket hire or loan for your first sessions. When you're ready to buy, a good beginner racket costs £60–£120. Wait until you've played a few times before investing.

Is padel suitable for older adults or people new to sport?

Absolutely, that is why we're here. Padel is particularly well-suited to adults in their 40s, 50s and beyond. The lower-impact nature, social format, manageable court size and gentle learning curve all make it an ideal entry point for people returning to sport or trying something new in midlife.

What's the difference between indoor and outdoor padel?

Indoor courts offer consistent year-round conditions (£15–£25/hour per court). Outdoor courts are cheaper (£8–£15/hour) and growing fast. For your first game, an indoor court is recommended (if possible) consistent conditions make learning the basics easier.

Ready to Play?

The best time to start was last year. The second-best time is right now.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

- 1** Find your nearest court. Use the [LTA's court finder tool](#), [Padel England club finder](#), [Padel Mates](#) or [Matchi](#).
- 2** Book a beginner's taster session or social session. Most clubs run these specifically for newcomers
- 3** Hire or borrow a racket on the day. Wear comfortable trainers (proper padel shoes come after session one)
- 4** Don't worry about technique. Just try to get the ball back and enjoy the game
- 5** Book your follow-up session. You'll want to!

More from The Longer Game

Equipment guides that don't assume you have a limitless budget • Honest court and club reviews from 40+ players • Technique tips, tactical advice and everything else for the over-40 padel beginner.

thelongergame.co.uk

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"Play Smart. Live Better. Go Further."