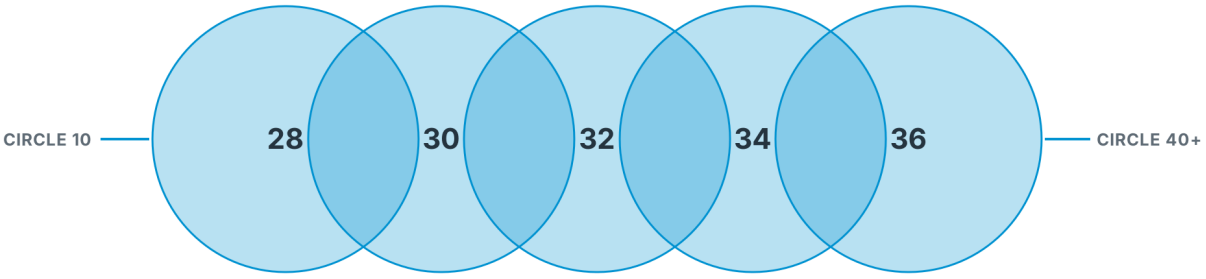
UK PADEL
COMMUNITY CIRCLES

HOW WE GROUP OUR PLAYERS, AND WHY

Every Circle overlaps with the one below it and the one above it, the whole way up the club, from the day you arrive to Circle 40 and above.



THE OVERLAP IS WHAT CREATES THE COMMUNITY

Circle 32 plays with Circle 30 and Circle 34. It works the same way the whole way up.

Nobody sits inside a box with hard walls. You are welcome in the overlap, and players move through at their own pace. Some settle for a season, some move on quickly, and neither is a problem.

The Circles

CIRCLES	GROUP	IN SHORT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Circle 10	**New To The Club**	New, or not yet seen	You have arrived. You stay here only until one of our team, or another member, has seen you play. Book a Beginners session, a club night or an Open Match and that is it.

CIRCLES	GROUP	IN SHORT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Circle 12 to 16	**Beginners** THREE CIRCLES	Brand new to padel	Connecting with the ball and getting it over the net. Learning where to stand when your partner serves and returns. Having a go at the back glass and seeing what happens. No shot choice to worry about, no defence to worry about, and no pressure beyond making contact.
Circle 18 to 26	**Improvers** FIVE CIRCLES	Learning the Four Pillars	Working towards the right positions, one step off the back glass and the second post at the net. Moving alongside your partner. Starting to learn that the glass gives you time, nowhere near the double glass yet. Patience instead of half volleying from the service line. Consciously reducing unforced errors. Not comfortable at the net yet, and not expected to be.
Circle 28	**Improvers Plus**	The Launchpad	A good understanding of the game, and very near to cracking the Four Pillars of Padel. Working hard at consistency, which is the thing that carries you up. Comfortable filling in a game with Circle 30 players and enjoying it.
Circle 30 to 38	**Intermediate** FIVE CIRCLES	Consistent tactical player	The Four Pillars are understood and mostly embraced. Switching between defending and attacking, developing the point rather than trying to end it. Defending deep against volleys with lots of spin, and starting to slow the ball down. Competent off the back glass, learning the side glass and the double glass. Starting to learn the range of shots available to you.
Circle 40 and above	**Advanced**	Controlled, varied, consistent	Controlling and varying the tempo, manoeuvring opponents with soft controlled shots rather than smashing everything. Patience and control to win the net back. Using the glass and recovering from the corners. The full range of shots, bandeja, vibora, chiquita, rulo, gancho, bajada and the smash. Very few unforced errors, and the ability to turn defence into attack quickly.

There is no checklist. Each group is shown as one block, and we deliberately do not set out what separates one Circle from the next, because nothing specific moves you. It is fluid. What matters is that the people you play with enjoy their game, and the more you can do that with the better players, the higher you go.

The overlap is what creates the community. The marginally stronger players pull the marginally weaker players up, and the marginally weaker players get the experience of playing with stronger players. Then they do the same for the players just below them. It works all the way up the club.

Community Circles Explained

Everything above is the short version. What follows is the full thinking: why we moved away from ratings, what actually decides your Circle, and how Open Matches work.

What A Community Circle Is

A Community Circle is a group of players who will enjoy playing padel together. That is the whole purpose of it. It is not a score, it is not a ranking, and it is not a judgement on how good you are. It is a home base inside the club.

Each Circle has a number: 10, 12, 14, 16 and upwards. When you join UK PADEL you start in Circle 10, New To The Club, and you stay there only until one of our team, or another member, has seen you play. That might be at a Beginners session, an Open Match, a club night or a coaching session. As soon as we have seen you, you are placed in the Circle that suits you.

Once you are in a Circle, the club opens up. Open Matches at your level start appearing on your app, you are added to the right groups and communications, and you become part of the community rather than a name on a booking sheet.

> **The language matters to us.** You are not a 32. You are in Circle 32. One is an identity. The other is a home base.

Why We Do Not Use Ratings

Most padel apps give you a rating, usually a number like 3.2, worked out by an algorithm from who wins and who loses. We have chosen not to do that, for two reasons.

A rating stops being a description and starts being an identity. Players begin to see themselves as the number. They become reluctant to play up or down, and some avoid Open Matches altogether because being seen at a certain level feels like a risk. The number ends up doing far more social damage than the job it was there to do.

An algorithm only measures winning. Two strong, physical players can overpower a technically better pair, win the match and gain points, while nobody on court enjoyed a single rally. The smart, patient, tactical padel we teach from the very first Beginners session is not rewarded by any algorithm we have seen.

So there is no score submission at UK PADEL, and there never will be. Movement between Community Circles is decided by people, not software.

How The Circles Overlap

The Circles are not boxes with hard walls. Think of them as a Venn diagram, where every Circle overlaps with the one below it and the one above it. Circle 32 overlaps with Circle 30 and Circle 34. Circle 34 overlaps with Circle 32 and Circle 36. It works the same way the whole way up the club.

> That overlap is the single most important part of the system, because **the overlap is what creates the community.** The marginally stronger players pull the marginally weaker players up, and the marginally weaker players get the experience of playing with stronger players. Then they do exactly the same for the players just below them. That is how a club gets better together, and it happens at every level, from Circle 12 to Circle 40 and above.

It also means you are never barred from a game because of a number. You are welcome in the overlap, because you are in Circle 32, not because you are a 32.

What Actually Decides Your Circle

Your Circle is not a measure of your technique, and it is not a measure of how often you win. Ability on a padel court is a factor, of course. But the most important question we ask when we place or move somebody is this: **do people enjoy playing with you?**

You might have the best vibora in your Circle. You might pull off shots that make people stop and watch. But if most of those shots end up in the back glass, and the players around you come off court frustrated rather than energised, that is not the kind of padel our clubs are built on.

Now think about the player who keeps the ball in, plays the percentages, gives their partner rallies to work with and makes their opponents graft for every point. Everybody who shares a court with them has a good time. That is a high quality player by our definition, whatever their shots look like and whatever they played before padel.

Peer feedback is our main tool here. Not algorithms, not win rates. What do people say about the experience of playing with you?

There is no checklist attached to any of this, and no specific thing you have to go away and do. It is fluid. Ensure the people you play with enjoy their game, and the more you can do that with the better players, the higher you go.

How You Move Up

Moving from one Circle to the next is a human decision, made by our coaches, hosts and Community Leads, with input from the players you share a court with. Every regular player is reviewed at least once a month.

When we think about moving you from Circle 32 to Circle 34, the question is not whether you are the best player in Circle 32, or even whether you can live with Circle 34 players. It is whether the Circle 36 players you will now get access to are going to enjoy playing with you. If the answer is no, moving you up does not help you and it does not help them.

> **Community Circles only ever move forwards.** We do not move players down. There is no anxiety attached to a bad night, a tough match or a run of losses, because none of it can cost you anything. Go and enjoy your padel.

The Four Pillars Of Padel

Everything we teach, from the very first Beginners session upwards, comes back to the Four Pillars of Padel. They run through every Community Circle, and they are the quickest route to moving up.

THE FOUR PILLARS

1. One step off the back glass in defence
2. Standing at the second post when you are at the net
3. Always alongside your partner, moving backwards and forwards together
4. Patience at the net, rather than going for the winner straight away

Watch them explained: **youtube.com/watch?v=nZpBGZCyo8g**

Posting An Open Match

When you post an Open Match, you set the floor yourself. If you are in Circle 32, you can post at Circle 32 and above, or higher if you want a tougher game. The match is yours.

After 24 hours, whether the match has filled or not, the floor drops automatically by one Circle. A Circle 32 match posted at Circle 34 and above becomes visible to Circle 32 players. If somebody then drops out of a match that had already filled, the vacancy opens to the Circle below, so those players get a fair chance at the game.

That 24 hour drop only applies to matches posted at the same Circle as the person who booked it. If you post below your own Circle, nothing drops.

The thinking behind it is simple. You give back to the players slightly below you, and the players slightly above you give back to you in exactly the same way. Everybody gets to play up a little and down a little. You just get a full day to fill your match on your own terms first.

Common Questions

I am brand new. Which Circle am I in?

Circle 10, New To The Club. Book a Beginners session, a club night or an Open Match and somebody will see you play. You will be placed properly straight afterwards.

I have a Playtomic rating. Does it carry across?

It gives us a starting point, but it does not decide anything. We would rather see you play.

Can I be moved down a Circle?

No. Community Circles only move forwards.

Can I play with friends in a different Circle?

Yes. Private bookings are completely open, play with whoever you like. Circles only apply to Open Matches, where we are matching you with people you have not met yet.

How often am I reviewed?

Every regular player is looked at least once a month.

Who do I speak to about my Circle?

Any coach, host or Community Lead at your club. We would always rather have the conversation than have you wondering.

Notes For The Website And App

For whoever is building the page, so the website and the app say exactly the same thing.

1. This page replaces the old Ratings page. The words rating, level and levelling should not appear anywhere on it. Players are placed in Community Circles, never rated.
2. Always write Community Circles in full, with a capital C and a capital C. The only exception is a player's own number, written as Circle 32 or Circle 40.
3. The Four Pillars video link goes on the page, and ideally inside each group.
4. The overlapping circles graphic belongs near the top of the page, above the groups. Its caption must say the overlap is what creates the community, not that it is where the best games happen.
5. Brand palette: UK PADEL navy and blue, Montserrat type, in line with the rest of the site.
6. On a narrow screen the groups should stack as cards rather than scroll sideways, and the circles graphic should stay full width.
7. Nothing on the page should suggest results, scores or win rates feed into a Circle.