



A table-top bat and ball game that provides a real alternative to table tennis for young people who have higher support needs.

What you need

- Polybat bats and balls or alternatives (see 'Equipment').
- Table tennis table or any large table or flat surface.

How to play

- The aim of the game is to hit the ball over the opponent's end of the table, or cause them to play a fault by lifting the ball off the table surface. Polybat can be played as singles or doubles.
- Each player has two serves. The serve then goes to the other player (or rotates alternately for doubles). First to eleven points wins.
- Play begins with the server playing the ball off any side. Strokes can then be played directly or off the side.
- Players can touch the ball more than once with the bat before returning it to their opponent's end.
- The ball must stay on the table surface at all times.
- Polybat is suitable for players who have arm, balance, or coordination impairments and for whom table tennis may not be appropriate or possible.
- Polybat can also be used as a means of introducing table tennis to younger children.



Think about

- Watching the speed and direction of the ball – try to move into position before the ball reaches your end of the table. This can be practised by rolling the ball from different angles.
- Using a pushing or sweeping action rather than hitting or striking the ball.

Use the STEP model to modify this game

Space

- Reduce the width of the end line by adding shorter rebound sides to the end of the table. This creates a smaller 'goal' to defend and can balance play between players of different abilities, or if two players play against one.
- The sides can be attached to a table tennis table which provides a standard size for play. However, any large table can be used, or a number of smaller tables can be pushed together. Tape can be used to smooth the joins.

Task

- Allow some players to serve direct to their opponent.
- Encourage the players to keep the bat steady and in front of the body; they can rest the bat on the table surface if necessary to provide more stability.

Equipment

- If polybats are not available, then any small flat-edged play bat can be used. Even plastic or wooden rulers can be used.
- Use slow moving airflow balls; start with larger airflow balls before progressing to the standard polybat ball (about the size of a golf practice ball).

People

- As players' skills improve, the 'multiple-touch' rule can be removed and they must play the ball with a single contact only.
- Players who have impaired or absent grip can use a glove-bat or some improvised way of attaching the bat to their hand or arm.

Extension game 'Polyskill'

- Play as for Polybat, but place two skittles on either side of the centre line halfway down the table.
- Players score a point as normal for getting the ball over their opponent's end of the table, but also if they can play the ball in such a way that it causes their opponent to knock over one of the skittles.
- Polyskill slows play down and makes players develop strategies to win points, such as using angles off the rebound boards.

Safety

- Ensure that the lower limbs of wheelchair users do not rub against the table / table legs.
- The game can be very dynamic and absorbing. Check for signs of fatigue with beginners.
- Avoid striking the rebound sides with the bat. Ensure that they are properly clipped or taped onto the table.

How to improve

- Angle the bat downwards in order to keep the ball on the table surface.

Integrity

- Whatever modifications are used, maintain the integrity of the game. Avoid modifying a game to the point where it no longer resembles the original.

Links

- For information on the England Hockey Quicksticks Key Stage 2 programme, see www.ntu.ac.uk/adapted_sports/games_development/games/polybat