

Pickleball Paddle FTO + USAP/UPA-A Compliance Checklist

A practical launch-gate worksheet for Gen 3, Gen 4-style, propulsion-core, foam-enhanced, and other high-performance paddle programs.

Use this checklist before tooling approval, certification submission, purchase-order release, or importation into the United States.

Brand _____	Project / Model _____
Owner _____	Target Launch _____
Factory _____	Document Revision _____

Important: This is a sourcing and product-development aid, not legal advice, a patent clearance opinion, or certification. Qualified U.S. counsel must review the final product. Official governing bodies make certification and listing decisions.

Launch Decision Map

A paddle should pass three independent gates. A green result in one column does not cure a red result in another.

1. Patent / FTO	2. Tournament	3. Production
Can the exact structure be made, imported, and sold in the target territory with acceptable IP risk?	Does the exact model meet the rules for its intended USAP or UPA-A competition?	Can every batch reproduce the reviewed and certified construction through useful life?
Owner: Patent counsel + brand	Owner: Brand + test body	Owner: Factory + brand QA

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Commercial Scope

Define the market before selecting the construction

Target market and claims

- ☐ Target countries and sales channels are listed.
- ☐ Recreational, USAP amateur, UPA professional, or multi-track use is selected.
- ☐ Required launch date includes FTO, prototype, submission, and re-test contingency.
- ☐ All proposed claims - power, spin, approved, patented, licensed, or Made in USA - have evidence owners.
- ☐ The brand has identified who controls product design: brand, supplier, or joint development.

Stop-spend trigger

- ☐ No tooling deposit or bulk PO until architecture disclosure is complete.
- ☐ No certification mark appears on samples, packaging, or ads before authorization.
- ☐ No U.S. launch if FTO status is unresolved or designated high risk.

Decision owner _____

Open issue _____

Next gate date _____

Architecture evidence

- ☐ Dimensioned cross-sections show front face, back face, core, gaps, fillers, frame, edge guard, throat, and handle.
- ☐ The core boundary is mapped around the full paddle head.
- ☐ Every removed, recessed, or absent core region is identified.
- ☐ Every filler material is identified by composition, hardness or density, location, and function.
- ☐ The frame cross-section and any hollow interior are documented.
- ☐ The manufacturing sequence shows when gaps, fillers, frame, faces, and edge components are added.
- ☐ Sectioned production-equivalent samples and dated photographs are retained.

Search and claim chart

- ☐ U.S. Patent Nos. 12,465,826 and 12,357,891 are reviewed.
- ☐ Related continuations, family members, pending applications, assignments, and legal status are checked.
- ☐ Other relevant paddle patents are searched - not only JOOLA patents.
- ☐ Independent claims are charted limitation by limitation against the final construction.
- ☐ Relevant dependent claims and doctrine-of-equivalents risk are discussed with counsel.
- ☐ Counsel states the reviewed product revision, territory, assumptions, and exclusions.

FTO outcome	Required action
Acceptable / documented	Proceed subject to stated assumptions and change control.
Design-around required	Revise architecture, update drawings, and repeat claim mapping.
License path	Confirm territory, products, marking, royalties, audit rights, and duration.
Unresolved / high risk	Do not release U.S. tooling, PO, import, or sales.

Counsel / firm _____

Opinion date and product revision _____

Approved territory _____

Contract review

- ☐ The agreement identifies who designed each core, gap, filler, frame, surface, and process feature.
- ☐ Supplier IP warranty states the exact products, territories, and duration covered.
- ☐ Supplier must disclose third-party designs, licenses, known claims, and prior disputes.
- ☐ Indemnity scope addresses defense costs, settlements, recall, rework, inventory loss, and import holds.
- ☐ Defense control, counsel selection, settlement consent, and notification timing are defined.
- ☐ Available remedies include redesign, replacement, refund, license procurement, and cancellation.
- ☐ IP claims are reviewed against liability caps, exclusions, insurance, and supplier financial capacity.
- ☐ No material, core, filler, frame, or process change is allowed without written approval.
- ☐ The parties must retain drawings, BOM revisions, test reports, lot records, and samples.

Reality check: A broad indemnity from a supplier with limited assets is not equivalent to patent clearance. If the brand specifies the accused structure, its own exposure may remain.

Deliverable	Factory	Brand	Counsel
Dimensioned architecture	Prepare	Approve	Review
Territory and claims	Support	Define	Advise
Patent search / claim chart	Provide evidence	Commission	Own conclusion
Certification submission	Build samples	Submit / authorize	As needed
Production control	Execute / record	Audit / release	Review changes

Contract counsel _____

Agreement / amendment date _____

Unresolved allocation issue _____

USA Pickleball Gate

For USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournament eligibility

USAP design and submission

- ☐ Latest Equipment Standards Manual and notices are checked immediately before design freeze.
- ☐ PBCoR target includes an internal guard band below the published threshold.
- ☐ Surface roughness, coefficient of friction, gloss, dimensions, and prohibited features are reviewed.
- ☐ New and broken-in performance is measured on multiple production-equivalent samples.
- ☐ Final graphics, brand, model identification, surface process, and licensed mark treatment are frozen.
- ☐ Current sample count, shipping destinations, fees, and test timing are confirmed in the submission portal.
- ☐ The exact model appears on the current official list before eligibility claims are published.

UPA-A Gate

For professional PPA and MLP competition

UPA-A design and submission

- ☐ Latest UPA-A Paddle Rules and certification checklist are checked.
- ☐ Initial PEF, post-break-in PEF, spin, weight, thickness, and dimensions meet current limits.
- ☐ Accelerated break-in is included in development validation.
- ☐ Model number, stamp placement, graphics, and any blackout requirements are reviewed.
- ☐ All structural variants - shape, thickness, edge, handle, face, or other physical differences - are identified.
- ☐ Current annual brand fee, per-paddle fee, sample count, timing, and certification term are budgeted.
- ☐ Production metrics can be held within the current similarity and compliance requirements.

Track	Status	Listing / ID	Expiry / Review
USAP	_____	_____	_____
UPA-A	_____	_____	_____

Pilot Production and Lifecycle Control

Prove that the process - not one golden sample - is compliant

Pilot-lot evidence

- ☐ Pilot units represent different mold positions, shifts, material lots, and production dates.
- ☐ Incoming core, foam, adhesive, face, and frame materials match the frozen BOM.
- ☐ Process recipes control temperature, pressure, dwell time, layup, filler quantity, and curing.
- ☐ Finished weight, balance, thickness map, bond integrity, edge integrity, and surface are recorded.
- ☐ Power, spin, deflection, or validated correlated metrics are sampled across the lot.
- ☐ Retained units complete documented impact or accelerated break-in testing.
- ☐ Destructive sections verify internal architecture and reveal crush, voids, separation, or migration.
- ☐ Lot coding links finished paddles to materials, process records, test data, and operators.

Post-launch controls

- ☐ Retained samples are tested on a defined schedule.
- ☐ Market complaints and field-test results trigger engineering review.
- ☐ The brand monitors approved-list status and standards changes.
- ☐ Any material or structural change triggers both certification and FTO review.
- ☐ Counterfeit controls distinguish authorized units from copied or diverted products.
- ☐ Recall, exchange, relabeling, and customer-communication plans are documented.

Pilot lot / quantity _____

Pilot approval date _____

Retained sample IDs _____

Deviation / corrective action _____

Territory and Channel Control

Prevent a non-U.S. structure from being diverted into the United States

Territory-specific SKU controls

- ☐ Patent counsel reviews each destination country; U.S. clearance is not assumed to apply elsewhere.
- ☐ Related European, Chinese, Korean, and other family patents or applications are checked.
- ☐ U.S. and non-U.S. structures have separate model numbers, BOMs, artwork, and packaging.
- ☐ ERP, distributor, marketplace, and fulfillment rules block unauthorized U.S. sales.
- ☐ Contracts prohibit diversion, transshipment, relabeling, and online sales into restricted territories.
- ☐ Marketing avoids implying U.S. availability or U.S. tournament eligibility for restricted SKUs.

Final Release

Require written sign-off before bulk production and launch

Gate	Owner	Status	Date / Signature
Architecture frozen	Engineering	Go / Hold	_____
FTO reviewed	Patent counsel	Go / Hold	_____
OEM contract executed	Legal / sourcing	Go / Hold	_____
Certification confirmed	Compliance	Go / Hold	_____
Pilot lot approved	Quality	Go / Hold	_____
Territory controls live	Sales / operations	Go / Hold	_____

FINAL RULE: Do not release the bulk PO or U.S. launch until every required gate is marked GO for the same product revision.

Official Reference Set

Verify the latest versions immediately before submission, importation, or publication of a clearance claim.

U.S. Patent No. 12,465,826 https://patentsgazette.uspto.gov/week45/OG/html/1540-2/US12465826-20251111.html
U.S. Patent No. 12,357,891 https://patents.google.com/patent/US12357891B2/en
USITC Investigation 337-TA-1503 https://www.usitc.gov/secretary/fed_reg_notices/337/337_1503_notice06042026sgl.pdf
USA Pickleball Equipment Standards Manual https://equipment.usapickleball.org/docs/Equipment-Standards-Manual.pdf
USA Pickleball Equipment Submission FAQ https://equipment.usapickleball.org/equipment-submission-faq/
UPA-A Paddle Rules https://upaa.unitedpickleball.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/UPA-A-Paddle-Rules-26.4.pdf
UPA-A 2026 Certification https://upaa.unitedpickleball.com/paddle-testing/2026-upa-a-certification/

Project Notes

NexaPaddle
OEM/ODM product development, production-representative sampling, technical documentation, factory quality planning, and certification-preparation support.

Revision date: July 26, 2026. This checklist is not legal advice, a patent opinion, or certification.