Case Study: The Pickleball Handbook

Overview

We partnered with the client to transform an initial **concept into a fully realized product**—a comprehensive 192-page beginner's handbook on pickleball. The project began with only a barebones template and a high-level outline of the book's scope, with no detailed inputs or pre-developed content.

From this minimal starting point, we were responsible for **end-to-end development**, including content creation, visual planning, and instructional design. The goal was to produce a highly accessible, visually engaging guide that introduces new players to the fundamentals of the game—covering rules, techniques, gameplay strategies, and essential warm-up routines—while maintaining accuracy, clarity, and usability throughout.

The Challenge

This project required **building a complete instructional resource from the ground up** while managing both editorial and visual complexity at scale. Key challenges included:

- Converting a loosely defined concept into a structured, cohesive, and publish-ready book
- Ensuring factual accuracy across all aspects of the sport, including rules, terminology, and gameplay techniques
- Writing content that is clear and beginner-friendly, without oversimplifying key concepts
- Managing a high volume of visuals, including:
    - Step-by-step movement and positioning references
    - Stroke techniques and gameplay scenarios
    - Rule explanations supported by visual aids
    - Historical references and contextual imagery
    - Warm-up and training illustrations
- Sourcing a wide range of relevant, high-quality images from stock platforms, often with limited availability for sport-specific scenarios
- Developing custom illustrations to accurately represent movements, positioning, and gameplay situations where stock images were insufficient
- Ensuring tight alignment between text and visuals, so each concept is clearly reinforced

Our Approach

To successfully deliver both content and visuals at scale, we followed a structured, collaborative workflow driven by our in-house content development team, including writers, editors, image researchers, and illustrators.

Content Development

We established a clear editorial workflow to ensure accuracy, clarity, and consistency across the book:

- **Content writing** focused on building a logical progression from basic concepts to more advanced techniques, using simple language and step-by-step explanations tailored for first-time players
- **Fact-checking** ensured all rules, terminology, and gameplay instructions were accurate, up to date, and aligned with standard pickleball guidelines
- **Editing** refined structure, tone, and instructional clarity, ensuring consistency across all chapters
- **Proofreading** provided a final layer of quality control, eliminating errors and ensuring a polished, publication-ready manuscript

This structured flow allowed us to maintain high editorial standards while developing content at scale.

Image Strategy & Execution

Given the visual nature of the sport, a strong and diverse image program was critical:

- Extensively **sourced images from multiple stock platforms** to cover a wide range of gameplay scenarios, player positions, and techniques
- Addressed gaps in available imagery by creating **custom illustrations, infographics, and cut-out images** in-house, ensuring accurate representation of:
    - Player movements and positioning
    - Stroke techniques and execution
    - Gameplay scenarios and court dynamics
- Developed visual aids to simplify complex rules and concepts, improving ease of understanding
- Included warm-up and exercise illustrations to support player readiness and safety
- Incorporated **historical and contextual visuals** to provide additional depth and engagement

Content–Visual Integration

A key focus throughout the project was ensuring seamless coordination between editorial and visual elements:

- Aligned every visual with corresponding text to support and reinforce learning
- Reviewed layouts to confirm that visuals enhanced clarity without duplicating or confusing the written content
- Maintained **consistency in visual style, labeling, and instructional cues** across the book
- Ensured that each spread functioned as a cohesive learning unit

Layout Design & Typesetting

With no detailed design template provided at the outset, layout development became a critical component of the project. The challenge was to translate raw content and visuals into engaging, well-structured pages while maintaining consistency, readability, and visual appeal across a 192-page book.

Our approach included:

- Developing **flexible layout frameworks** that could adapt to different types of content, including instructional steps, rules, techniques, and visual breakdowns
- Ensuring variety in **page compositions** to avoid repetitive layouts, while maintaining an underlying consistency that supports navigation and usability
- Incorporating a range of **design elements**—such as callouts, step sequences, labeled diagrams, and highlight boxes—to make each spread visually engaging without appearing cluttered or overly stylized
- Maintaining a careful balance between visual richness and simplicity, ensuring that design elements enhanced comprehension rather than distracting from the content
- Establishing clear **typographic hierarchy** to guide readers through headings, subheadings, instructions, and captions, improving readability for beginners
- Aligning text blocks, images, and illustrations precisely to create a smooth visual flow and reinforce instructional clarity
- **Iteratively refined layouts** to ensure that each page functioned as a cohesive learning unit, with all elements working together to support understanding

This approach allowed us to create a visually dynamic yet structured book, where each page feels distinct and engaging while still contributing to a consistent overall reading experience.

Results

A complete set of thoughtfully designed page layouts across 192 pages

- Visually varied spreads that avoid repetition while maintaining overall consistency
- Clear typographic structure supporting readability and navigation
- Effective integration of design elements such as callouts, diagrams, and step-based visuals

Outcome

The final layouts achieved a balance between variety and consistency, resulting in pages that feel visually engaging without overwhelming the reader. The structured yet flexible design system enhanced readability, supported learning, and ensured that both content and visuals worked together effectively across the entire book.

eBook Development & Accessibility

In addition to the print edition, we developed a fully functional eBook version of the pickleball handbook, ensuring a seamless reading experience across devices and platforms.

Our approach included:

- Converting the print layout into a **reflowable ePub format** optimized for multiple screen sizes, including tablets, smartphones, and e-readers
- Ensuring that all content elements—text, images, captions, and instructional sequences—adapted effectively to different display environments
- Implementing **accessibility compliance** features in line with the **European Accessibility Act**

Results

- A fully responsive and device-compatible eBook version of the handbook
- Consistent reading experience across smartphones, tablets, and e-readers

Outcome

The eBook successfully extended the reach of the pickleball handbook into the digital space, making it accessible to a wider audience across platforms and devices. By combining responsive design with accessibility compliance, the digital version ensures an inclusive and user-friendly reading experience without compromising the instructional value of the original content.