



The Complete Guide to Choosing a Table Tennis Rubber

8 Comments / Table Tennis / By Álvaro Munno

Featured Image – [TTD](#)

Like in most other sports, the equipment you use to play Table Tennis has a noticeable impact on the outcome of games and, most importantly, your progress as a player.

Most beginners will **feel totally overwhelmed** by the **huge variety of rubbers** available when buying their first custom racket, often [upgrading from a premade racket](#). Heck, even I struggle to keep up to date with all the different brands, types and options.

Some players even become Equipment Junkies (EJ's). These players like to change their playing racket all the time in search of the perfect setup.

These players often fail to get better because they're playing with different rackets all the time, and when they get used to them, they change again.

We recommend using the same racket for as long as you can. You can maximize your rubbers' service life as much as possible by [cleaning them properly](#). You should also store your racket in a [good quality case](#) when you're done playing to protect your rubbers.

You should be looking to [replace your rubbers](#) as many times each year, as you play in a week. So, most players should be reviewing their equipment a few times a year.

In this extensive guide, we will explain how every type of rubber works and the thought process behind how to choose the **perfect rubbers for you**.

We have studied (and played with) every type of Table Tennis rubbers exhaustively, and we'll help you **make the best possible decision** for your **particular style** and level of play.

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Summary

There are 4 primary types of rubbers you'll see people playing with. These are:

- Inverted
- Short Pimples (Pips)
- Long Pimples (Pips)
- Antispin

Each of these rubber types has really different characteristics, so we've constructed a comparison chart to help you quickly understand the different kinds of Table Tennis rubbers you can choose from.

Rubbers	Inverted	Short Pips	Long Pips	Antispin
Speed	8	8	5	4
Grip	9	6	2	3
Attack	9	8	4	1
Defence	7	7	9	9
Versatility	10	7	4	4
Popularity	10	7	7	3

To assess the popularity of the different types of table tennis rubbers, we also [conducted a poll with users of r/tabletennis](#).

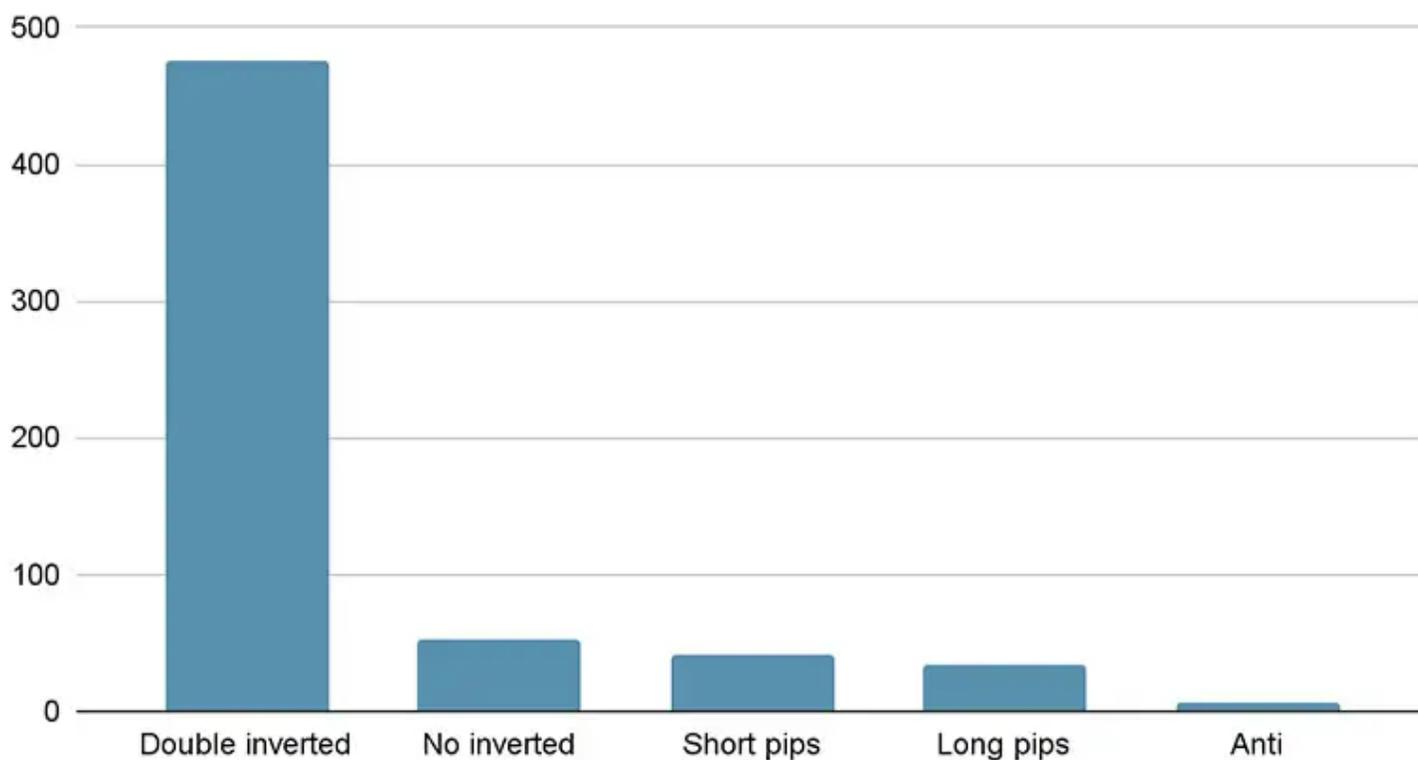
Out of the 611 players that answered, 476 play with inverted on both sides (77.9%).

Of the 135 remaining players:

- 52 play without any inverted rubbers on their rackets (8.5%),
- 41 with short pips on at least one side (6.7%)
- 35 with long pips on at least one side (5.7%)

- and just 7 with antispin (1.1%)

Rubbers distribution



These results are consistent with the fact that the vast majority of players have an offensive style.

If you're looking for **offensive** capabilities, look no further than **inverted and short pips** rubbers.

Inverted rubbers are the grippiest rubbers so you can attack with dangerous, spinny shots. These rubbers are also the most versatile because of their spin capabilities.

If you like to **smash** the ball rather than spin it, however, **short pips** are your best bet.

We have scored them with an 8 for attack because they aren't as spinny as inverted rubbers, but their flat trajectory, high speed, and spin insensitivity make them very dangerous on the right hands. More on that later!

If you like to **defend** rather than attack, take a look at **antispin and long pimples**. These rubbers are similar in the sense that they have very little grip, even less than short pips, so much so that when you hit the ball, they reverse the spin.

In practice, if your opponent puts topspin on the ball and you hit it with these rubbers, they'll return a backspin ball. Spins in Table Tennis are truly surprising. We'll explain this effect later!

Up next, we'll go into the specifics of each type of table tennis rubber, starting with the most

popular type, inverted!

Inverted table tennis rubbers



Photo: Tabletennis11.com

The vast majority of Table Tennis players use **inverted (also known as smooth) rubbers**. These rubbers are called inverted because of their “pips-in” structure. They’re “inverted” in relation to pips-out rubbers.

These rubbers are the most versatile. There are inverted rubbers for virtually every level and playing style.

The main advantage of inverted rubbers lies in their **high grip**. This means inverted rubbers can impart high levels of spin to the ball.

Inverted rubbers are the most intuitive to use, and you can perform every stroke there is with inverted rubbers.

If you’re a beginner, we recommend you **start off using this type of rubber** so that your game isn’t limited by your rubber choice. By starting off with controllable inverted rubbers, you can try out every playing style and figure out which one you have the most fun playing.

Two important factors determine how your rubber will play. These are the **sponge thickness**

and the **sponge hardness**.

Sponge Thickness

The sponge thickness will determine how much speed the rubber will have. If the sponge is thicker, then the rebound effect of your rubber will be greater.

Think of it like a spring effect where the more compression the ball makes on the rubber, the faster it will be pushed out by the "spring" (sponge).

However, thicker sponges weigh more so if you want a light racket we recommend not getting maximum thickness (at least not on both sides).

- 2.0mm and up if you want fast speeds.
- 1.6-1.9mm if you're looking for added control but still have enough power to attack
- 1.5mm or less for mostly defensive play.

Sponge Hardness

In contrast, sponge hardness determines how the rubber feels, how it reacts to incoming balls and how easy it is to impart spin.

The **harder** the rubber is, the **more difficult** it is to make high-quality shots with it, since the ball doesn't get into the sponge that easily.

But if you have sufficient power, these are the most stable rubbers and the ones that can produce the best top speed and spin. This is why every professional player uses super hard rubbers.

Hard rubbers require you to have great footwork and a lot of acceleration. They aren't good for slow strokes and they aren't easy to use

In contrast, it's quite **simple to use softer rubbers**. It's very easy to engage the sponge on most of your shots and the rubber tends to spin the ball almost by itself.

They are great for players that don't have as much acceleration or proper footwork since these rubbers can help them spin the ball more easily, be more consistent, and consequently, make them feel more confident when playing.

Confidence is paramount in Table Tennis. You are required to react in splits of a second. There is no time to doubt.

It's best to "play it safe" regarding equipment. You want rubbers that you can rely on, and know that when you hit the ball correctly, it is going to land on the other side 10 times out of 10.

If you have rubbers that are too fast or hard for you, you'll notice that you'll start attacking less or even stop attacking altogether because you'll be unsure if the ball will land on the other side of the table. You'll resort to blocking and playing more passively.

You want to use table tennis rubbers you can master.

If you're an advanced player, however, you can go for faster, harder rubbers since the playing tempo will eventually require you to move up in speed.

If you're a beginner or intermediate player, you can use anywhere from soft to medium-hard rubbers, depending on what strokes you're better at.

Taking myself as an example, I prefer to use medium-hard or hard rubbers on my forehand because I can hit quite hard, but soft or medium-soft rubbers on my backhand because it's my weak side and I need easy spin and consistency.

The 3 Types of Inverted Rubbers

Inverted rubbers can be of 3 different types:

- European/Japanese rubbers
- Chinese rubbers
- Hybrid rubbers

Below, we'll detail the differences between these types of rubbers.

European/Japanese rubbers

These kinds of rubbers are the most popular. They are the fastest rubbers you can find.

European and Japanese rubbers are **extremely grippy** and have **high-tension sponges**. They generate spin because of how the topsheet "bites" the ball.

They tend to be quite **dynamic** and are great for both topspins and blocking since they have a high "base" speed. You can just block the ball and the ball will rebound off your rubber, sending your opponent quite a fast shot.

You can also find European rubbers in every hardness range. You can get soft or hard European rubbers.

The main disadvantage of these rubbers is the short game. As these rubbers are quite fast, it can be difficult to receive the ball properly or to touch short since the ball rebounds off the rubber quite easily.

Very fast European rubbers can also be quite difficult to control for most players.

Most rubbers from Andro, Butterfly, Donic, Joola, Nittaku, Stiga, Tibhar, Victas, Xiom, and Yasaka fall into this category.

Chinese rubbers

Chinese rubbers are probably the **spinniest rubbers** currently in the market. This is because they are sticky instead of relying on grip, like European rubbers. Most of these rubbers can pick up a ball from the table using their tackiness!

Chinese rubbers are usually **very hard**. This means that Chinese rubbers are mainly used on the forehand side.

Most Chinese rubbers have slower, harder sponges than European rubbers, so beginners can use them, though it could be difficult for them to produce high-quality shots because of the hard sponge.

The main disadvantage of Chinese rubbers, as we said before, is that they aren't bouncy at all, thus they're **harder to use than most European rubbers**.

You can't just block the ball since it will return a slow ball, and you have to attack with force because if you don't you'll risk sending a harmless attack to your opponent.

To be able to use Chinese rubbers at a high level, you must have **very strong strokes** and **great footwork**.

Chinese rubbers have many advantages over European rubbers. The service and short game are easier due to their stickiness and slow base speed, and they're generally cheaper than European rubbers.

They are also very hard to "bottom out" because of their hard sponges and sticky topsheets. The spin these rubbers have can make even the fastest of shots land on the other side of the table, and the hard sponges keep on giving speed, provided your strokes are fast enough.

This is why all the Chinese National Team plays with Chinese rubbers!

DHS, 729, and Yinhe are the main Chinese Rubber makers.

Hybrid rubbers

Hybrids are a **new category** of rubbers. These rubbers have sticky topsheets like the ones found in Chinese rubbers paired with tensioned sponges, like the ones found in European rubbers.

These rubbers were created to **merge the best of both worlds**, and some rubbers achieved just that. However, there are players who think that these rubbers aren't anything special, since some models aren't as fast as European rubbers nor as spinny as Chinese rubbers.

Hybrid rubbers are generally balanced and have few weaknesses, which depend on the particular model.

The most popular hybrid rubbers are Butterfly Dignics 09c (used by Timo Boll, Tomokazu

Harimoto, and more!), [Yasaka Rakza Z](#), the Donic Bluegrip series, and the Tibhar Hybrid series.

Our Recommendations

If you don't have a defined style just yet, or for allround players who mix attack with defense.

We recommend **controllable European rubbers** such as Yasaka Rakza 7 soft, Donic Baracuda, Tibhar Vari Spin, Victas VJ > 07 Regular, and most rubbers that are branded as "allround" or "controllable".

For beginners who want to develop an offensive style.

We recommend **offensively capable yet controllable rubbers** such as Yasaka Rakza 7, Rakza 7 soft, Donic Baracuda, Donic Bluefire M2 or M3, or Andro Hexer Grip.

We advise you use softer rubbers on the backhand side.

You can also choose DHS Hurricane 3 neo if you want to go the Chinese rubbers route. Just be warned that you'll need great footwork and technique to make good use of them.

For players who want to be defenders.

If you want to play as a defender, you'll most likely use **long pips on your backhand side**, so you'll only have 1 inverted rubber, the one on your forehand.

Most modern defenders will need to attack on their forehand side so that their opponents have to be wary and are under some urgency to attack the defender because if they don't, they will be attacked at some point.

If you want to attack on your forehand side, just go with a regular offensive rubber like Rakza 7, Donic Bluefire, or even Tenergy if you're advanced.

We recommend using Rakza 7, Tibhar Vari Spin, or Victas VJ > 07 Regular if you want to be able to attack and also chop on your forehand side.

If you just want to chop, push, and block, you can go with purely defensive rubbers such as Nittaku Moristo DF, Butterfly Tackiness Chop, or any slow rubber 1.5mm thick or less.

For intermediate offensive players.

For intermediate level offensive players, we recommend [Yasaka Rakza 7](#), Rakza 7 soft, the Nittaku Fastarc line, the [Xiom Vega](#) line, Donic Bluefire M2, Andro Rasanter R42, R47, and Victas V > 15 Extra.

These are all **medium-soft through medium-hard high tension rubbers** that are plenty fast and spinny but retain sufficient control. We recommend softer rubbers on the backhand side.

For advanced players, we recommend both Butterfly Tenergy and Dignics ranges, [Tibhar Evolution MX-P](#),

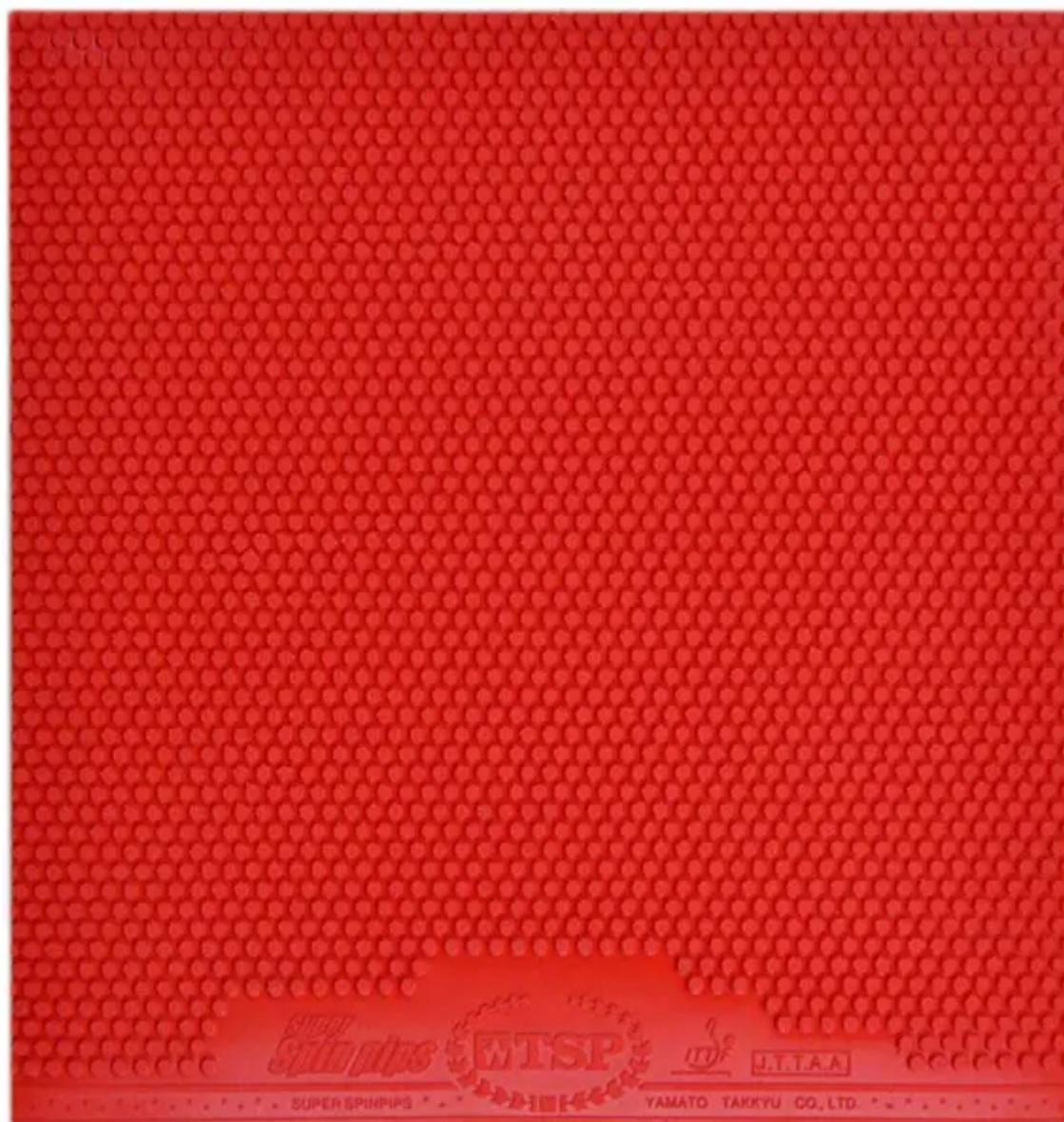
For advanced players

[Fastarc G-1](#), and Donic Bluestorm. These rubbers are often used by professional players all over the world.

Note that some advanced players and most professional players [boost](#) their rubbers with special chemicals such as Falco Tempo Long booster and Haifu Seamoon booster.

Short pips table tennis rubbers

The opposite of inverted rubbers is short pips. They look like this:



Essentially, they are **inverted rubbers turned upside down**. The main advantage of short pimples is that they don't have as much grip as inverted rubbers.

You might ask yourself, why is having less grip an advantage? While these rubbers can't produce as much spin as inverted rubbers, they also **absorb much less spin**.

This makes it a lot easier to deal with any kind of incoming spin. The rubber isn't affected nearly as much by the spin your opponent imparts on the ball. You can just hit through it and block spinny shots almost effortlessly.

Receiving serves, counter hitting, driving, blocking, all of those strokes are more effective with short pips.

If you're a player who doesn't need the extra grip inverted rubbers provide, we strongly recommend trying out short pimples.

If you like to **hit the ball rather than spin it**, give them a try! Short pips can be used either on the forehand or the backhand.

Using short pips on one side and inverted on the other is a great combination because you'll spin the ball on the inverted side and smash it with the short pips.

This creates a devastating effect. Your opponents will be confused because when you hit with the inverted rubber they'll have to block a heavy topspin ball and when you hit with short pips they'll have to manage against rapid, flat, no-spin shots.

It's very difficult to deal with proficient players who use this style.

The main disadvantage is that short pips are quite **limited** in their capabilities when compared with inverted rubbers. You can't attack low balls since short pips don't grip the ball, and they're a lot **less forgiving than inverted**.

Oftentimes, inverted players slightly mishit and the ball will still go in, due to the rubber's inherent spin. These kinds of shots almost always go out if you're playing with short pips since the **trajectory is much flatter**.

The ball doesn't drop on its own. The trajectory is almost completely flat, so you have to hit when the ball is rising or at the top of the bounce, or else the ball will fly out.

2021 Doubles World Table Tennis champion [Mattias Falck](#) is known for his relentless short pips forehand attacking style. Another very well known short pips attacker is penholder He Zhi Wen



There are also some **world-class defenders** such as [Hou Yingchao](#) and [Yuto Muramatsu](#) who prefer to chop with short pips because they don't absorb as much spin as inverted rubbers but can impart more spin on their own than long pips.

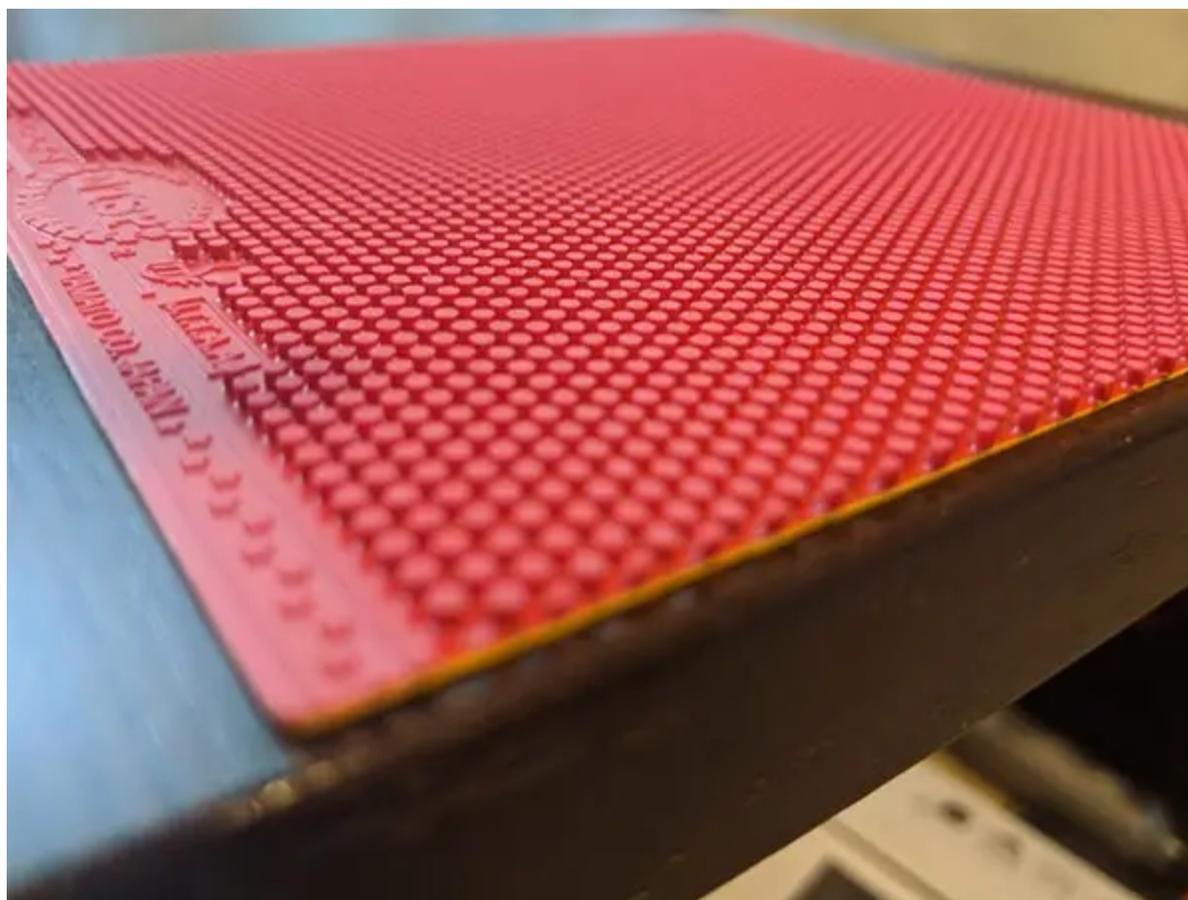
Some short pips are known as spinny short pips, such as Nittaku Moristo or Yasaka Rakza PO. These pips are good for everything. You can hit better than inverted and you can still loop, albeit with less spin.

Others are more "traditional" short pips, such as Butterfly Speedy P.O. and 729 563. These pips are not as grippy, so the effect of hitting through spin is even more pronounced, though you can't loop with them at all.

Long pips table tennis rubbers

Long pips are nothing like the rubbers we mentioned before. If you've played against them, you'll know what I'm talking about!

They are similar to short pips, but the pimples are taller. They look like this:



Have you ever hit a Table Tennis ball so that it bounces first on the floor, then hits a wall? If you have never done it, try it now!

When you initially hit it, the ball will bounce on the floor and it will have topspin. But when it comes back to you after hitting the wall, it'll carry backspin!

The wall has very little grip, so the ball maintains that topspin it initially had. The spin is unaltered, but the ball is now coming back to you.

The **rotational axis of the ball is unchanged**, but the **direction in which it's traveling is the opposite**. That's the difference between topspin and backspin.

The videos Greg Letts has in [his article about long pips](#) are of great help to understand this concept

Long pips work exactly like the wall. They **reverse the spin on the ball**, and they add some of their own, because of the bending effect of the pimples.

If you hit topspin against long pips, the ball will come back as backspin. If you hit backspin, it will come back as topspin. The same concept applies to both sidespins.

So who should use long pips?

Long pips are mainly used by 2 types of players: Defenders, and Pushblockers.

Defenders use long pips because they're **easier to chop with** than inverted. If the opponent topspins against long pips, the spin will be automatically transformed to backspin, due to the LP's nature.

They chop the ball to add some spin of their own, creating incredibly difficult balls for their opponents, since the more spin attackers put on the ball, the more backspin they'll receive from the defender.



The main disadvantage of these rubbers is that they're **dependant on the spin** that the ball is already carrying.

This allows the opponent to push the backspin ball to get an easy topspin ball back that they can attack, then push back the backspin return, so on and so forth.

This is why it's recommended for defenders to **twiddle their rackets** (change the hitting side) so that when the attacker pushes the ball to the pips, they can change to inverted and push it back with even more backspin, instead of returning an easy topspin ball with long pips.

The other players that make good use of long pips are Pushblockers.

These players tend to **block the ball back** to their opponents and benefit from the passive backspin the ball gets when blocking.

If you're "a wall", and you prefer to confuse your opponents with tricky spins while moving them around rather than moving too much yourself, we recommend trying this style out.

Lots of older players adopt this style because it allows them to stay competitive, even if they can't move as well. This style relies on great touch, superb placement, and smart tactics.

Antispin table tennis rubbers



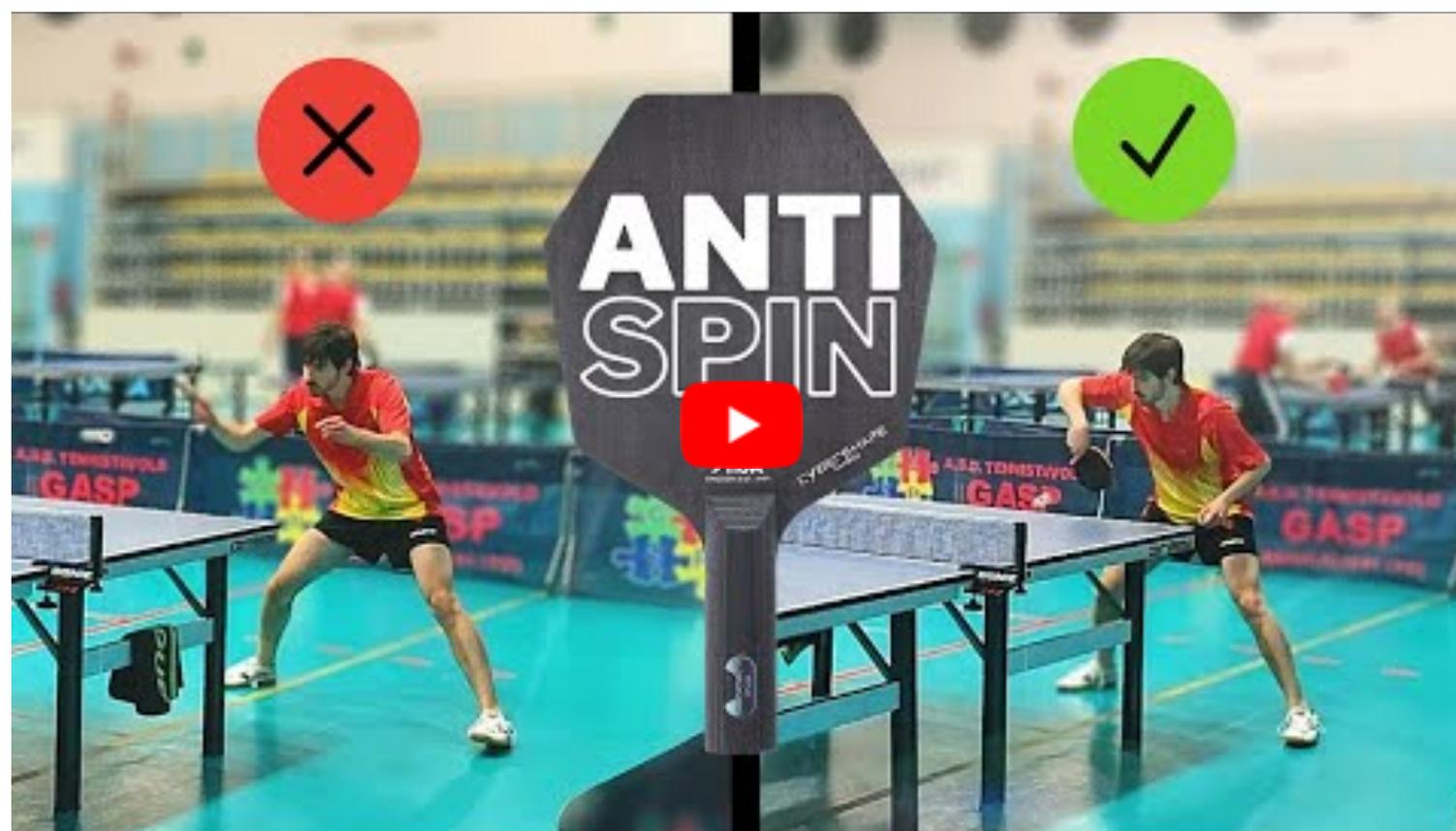
Photo: [Butterfly Super Anti](#)

Antispin rubbers are essentially inverted rubbers that have little to no grip. Because of this, they work quite similarly to long pips.

Most antispin players play close to the table and use their antispin to **set up opportunities to attack** with their forehand.

Andrea Aschi is a great example of this style. He uses his anti to force mistakes and weak returns, which he attacks with his forehand. He forces a lot of mistakes by blocking the ball

short and low over the net with his antispin rubber.



The problem with antispin is that it's not very effective to use it 2 times in a row. They have the same flaw as long pips (if the opponent pushes to the anti, they return an easy, slow topspin ball that their opponent can attack).

This negative effect is even worse with antispin rubbers because they are smooth rubbers. They don't have the unpredictability that long pips have when they bend.

The main advantage of antispin is the control that they have, and most antispin rubbers reverse more spin passively than long pips, but it isn't as easy to add more spin as with long pips.

We recommend antispin for players that aren't comfortable or don't like attacking with their backhand and have good forehand topspin strokes, especially good open-ups, since they'll need to be lifting backspin almost every point.

They're a great tool to break up your opponent's tempo, force some easy mistakes, simplify serve receive, and create opportunities to attack.

Summary: Which table tennis rubbers should I choose?

In conclusion, we recommend inverted table tennis rubbers for most players, however, short pips, long pips, and antispin are very effective for certain scenarios.

To sum up, we recommend:

For **beginners who don't have a defined style** and **allround players**: Controllable, moderately spinny inverted rubbers. Thickness between 1.6 and 2.0mm

For **beginners** who want to develop an **offensive style**: Controllable attacking inverted rubbers. Thickness between 1.8 and 2.0mm

For **intermediate offensive** players: Attacking inverted rubbers, but not excessively fast so that you don't lose out on control. Thickness between 2.0mm and MAX.

For **advanced offensive** players: It's up to personal preference, but most players use fast, hard inverted rubbers. Recommended thickness: MAX

For players who **prefer hitting rather than spinning**: Short pips. Thickness depends on player level and personal preference.

For **defenders**: Spinny inverted rubber on the forehand side, long pips with sponge on the backhand side. You can also try chopping with short pips.

For **pushblockers**: Control rubber on the forehand side, long pips on the backhand side, without sponge.

For players with a **strong forehand** but **weak backhand**: Offensively capable inverted rubber on the forehand side, and a controllable, soft inverted rubber on the backhand side. It might be worthwhile trying short pips, long pips, or antispin on the backhand, depending on which strokes suit the player more.

For players with a **weak forehand** but **strong backhand**: Controllable spinny inverted rubber on the forehand side, offensively capable inverted rubber on the backhand side. It might be worthwhile trying short pips on the forehand side if they are good at hitting the ball.

We hope we could help with your decision! Table tennis rubbers are quite a complex topic, so make sure to ask any questions you might have in the comments below and we'll try to answer them!



Álvaro Munno

Alvaro's been playing Table Tennis since he was 15 and is now ranked within the top 200 in his native Argentina. He loves to compete in provincial tournaments and is always looking for ways to improve. Alvaro made his favourite memories with a racket in hand, and he joined the RacketInsight team to share his passion with other players!

Blade: Tibhar Stratus Power Wood | **Forehand:** Nittaku Fastarc G-1 |
Backhand: Rasanter R42
Playstyle: Forehand Looper



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TONI

MARCH 27, 2022 AT 7:44 PM

So great lesson about table tennis rubbers! Thank you for sharing.

[Reply](#)

**RAY**

JUNE 24, 2022 AT 11:30 AM

This really is a great write up. Great detail to work with. Thank you so much for the contribution.

[Reply](#)**GURUMURTHY KARGAL**

JUNE 24, 2022 AT 11:57 PM

Article covers all the aspects of the game. It is so useful. Thank you.

[Reply](#)**TAHER**

JUNE 30, 2022 AT 6:37 PM

..good reading with lot of clarity..

[Reply](#)**ANTHONY ROCHEFORT**

JULY 22, 2022 AT 12:01 AM

That was great, can you advise for jpen players.

[Reply](#)**ÁLVARO MUNNO**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2022 AT 5:32 AM

Hello Anthony,

The J-pen grip works a bit different given that you need to use the same rubber to hit on both sides. This means you can't choose a rubber that's too soft or you'll lose power on your forehand.

J-pen players are usually either blockers, hitters, loopers, or a mix of those three. You can't go wrong with versatile, balanced rubbers such as the Rakza 7. If you're an advanced player, then you can choose a faster rubber such as the Rasanter R47, the Fastarc G-1, the Evolution MX-P, or even one of the Tenergies.

[Reply](#)

EQUAAZ

SEPTEMBER 5, 2022 AT 10:27 AM

Nice recommendation !

You just forgot to include rubber hybrids in your different player categories. We do not know if it can be suitable for a beginner for example.

[Reply](#)

DAVID BRUCE

SEPTEMBER 7, 2022 AT 3:57 PM

Hey Equaaz! Glad you appreciated the article.

Hybrids can be suitable for beginners, but it depends on the characteristics of the rubber. Hence, we were aiming at recommending characteristics rather than a specific type of rubber. We're currently working on updating all the recommendations based on player style, so stay tuned and that will hopefully cover your scenario as well.

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