



*Police Officer
Hiring Process:
Procedures,
Standards and
Lateral Hires*

Version 10202023

**PICKERINGTON
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Pickerington Police Department

Hiring Process & Standards:

Police Officer Candidates and Lateral Hire Candidates

The Pickerington Police Department serves a population of over 23,000 city residents. We are proud to provide our residents with a highly professional, highly capable law enforcement agency. As a result, the Pickerington Police Department strives to hire the very best police officer candidates. This manual was created to describe how our hiring process works, and the standards and requirements that must be met to become a Pickerington Police Officer.

The Pickerington Police Department hires police officer candidates in one of two ways. One way is through our Police Patrol Officer Candidate hiring process and the other is through our Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate hiring process. Both processes and their requirements will be described later in this manual.

Policy Statement

The Pickerington Police Department prohibits all forms of discrimination, including any employment related action by a member that adversely affects an applicant or member based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, disability, military or veteran status, pregnancy, sexual orientation or identity, transgender status, or any other status protected by federal, state, local law, or regulation.

Nature of Work – General Description

Under the general supervision of the Police Sergeant, the officer is responsible for patrolling a designated area, enforcing state and local laws, and maintaining order. Answers calls when a crime is suspected or an emergency exists and takes actions as necessary to prevent crime, to apprehend criminals, to maintain safety, and to assist citizens in a wide range of emergency and non-emergency situations. Performs general police work for the protection of life and property through the effective enforcement of laws and ordinances.

Minimum Requirements For All Police Officer Candidates

All candidates applying for a police officer position with the Pickerington Police Department must:

- Have a High School Diploma, G.E.D. or equivalent certificate.
- Be 21 years of age on or before the date of appointment.
- Be a citizen of the United States with the ability to read, write and speak the English language.
- Be a resident of the State of Ohio at the time of appointment.
- Possess a valid Ohio Driver's License at the time of appointment.
- Must have successfully completed an Ohio basic peace officer training academy and have a current, valid certification with the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) at the time of appointment.
- Have correctable vision in both eyes to 20/20 and not be color blind.

- Can acquire and maintain certifications, pursuant to state standards, for the operation of on-duty firearms (i.e. shotgun, patrol rifle, handgun and less lethal).
- Successfully pass a background check, a psychological evaluation, a medical examination, and a drug screen.
- Successfully pass a physical abilities test.
- Meet all other qualifications as specified in the City of Pickerington position description for a Police Officer.

[Police Patrol Officer Candidates](#)

As stated earlier, the first way the Pickerington Police Department hires candidates is through our Police Patrol Officer Candidate Hiring Process. This process is intended for someone who may be starting out in law enforcement for the very first time or may have little to no full-time law enforcement experience. These candidates enter our hiring process by taking the National Testing Network (NTN) exam (at www.nationaltestingnetwork.com). This process will be explained later in this manual.

[Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidates & Requirements](#)

The second way the Pickerington Police Department hires officers is through our Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate Hiring Process. This process is intended for candidates with previous full-time law enforcement experience at the state, county, or local level. Eligible lateral hire police patrol officer candidates are designated as either Level I or Level II candidates. Eligible candidate placement at either level will be determined by police department command staff and the city human resources director.

Level I Lateral Hire Police Officer Candidates are applicants who have full-time experience in various law enforcement assignments such as a deputy/officer employed in a jail/prison setting, a court security setting, a subpoena server, etc. Additionally, it includes a patrol officer with more than one (1) year, but less than two (2) years of full-time law enforcement patrol experience. Level I lateral hire candidates must:

- Have a minimum of *one (1) year of full-time* law enforcement officer experience with a *single* agency.
- Be currently employed as a *full-time* law enforcement officer, as defined in Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 2901.01(11), or were laid off from such a position within the year prior to application.

Level II Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidates are applicants who have more law enforcement patrol experience. Level II lateral hire candidates must:

- Have a minimum of two (2) consecutive years of *full-time* law enforcement *patrol officer* experience with a single agency.
- Be currently employed as a full-time law enforcement officer, as defined in Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 2901.01(11), or were laid off from such a position within the year prior to application.

The above time requirements for one (1) and two (2) years of experience are *not* cumulative. Candidates must have worked *consecutively* for at least a full year or for two full years on the above assignments for a single agency.

Additionally, please note that “Laid off from such a position” *does not* include resignation from a position, resignation in lieu of termination, or termination from a position.

Candidates unable to meet all the requirements to be considered for a lateral hire candidacy will be directed to take the National Testing Network (NTN) exam and select the Pickerington Police Department as a designated agency to receive their score.

If hired, a *Level I* lateral hire candidate will start at the first step of the police department's pay scale as determined by the AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF PICKERINGTON AND THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE, CAPITAL CITY LODGE NO. 9. If hired, a *Level II* lateral hire candidate may be eligible to start at a higher level on the pay scale as determined by their experience, training, etc.

Time Not Considered As Full-Time Law Enforcement or Patrol Experience

The time requirements for being a Level I or Level II lateral hire candidate are specific and cannot be waved. It is vital for candidates to be accurate and honest about their experience in law enforcement and the amount of time they spent in a specific assignment (e.g. patrol officer, jailer, etc.). The following cannot be used as time for law enforcement experience or patrol experience for a lateral candidate:

- A volunteer reserve/auxiliary police officer or special deputy.
- A part-time paid police officer/deputy.
- Any military police officer experience.
- A district attorney investigator.
- Any time spent in a police academy.

Any candidate providing false information or omitting information to improperly obtain a lateral hire candidacy, or a higher level of lateral candidacy will be immediately removed from consideration, or terminated upon discovery after appointment, and may face criminal prosecution.

Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate Application Required Supporting Documentation

In addition to their application, candidates are required to submit a scanned/electronic copy of the following documents:

- A copy of your state driver's license
- A copy of your high school diploma (or G.E.D).
- A copy of your college diploma (if applicable)
- A copy of your Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) certification
- A resume

A lateral hire candidacy application will not be accepted unless these required documents are sent in. There is additional information concerning this matter later in this manual.

CAUSES FOR WHICH A CANDIDATE MAY BE REMOVED FROM CONSIDERATION

The Pickerington Police Department expects its employees to be people of integrity, good character, and high moral standards. Therefore, we are very selective with our police officer candidates. The following is a non-exhaustive list of past conduct that may eliminate any candidate from consideration:

- Failure to appear for any required step in the selection process or any acts of non-compliance.
- Failure to pass a required examination or test including any psychological or physical fitness test administered by the City of Pickerington.

- Prior disqualification for any material reason from a Pickerington Police Department hiring process within the past 2 years.
- Falsification or intentional omission of any material fact(s) during the application process.
- Any deliberate deception during any part of the hiring process.
- Any attempt to manipulate the results of a truth verification examination.
- Any use or purchase of any illegal substance of abuse (except marijuana) within three (3) years of application or at any time while previously employed by a law enforcement agency.
- Any use, purchase, or cultivation of marijuana within the previous six months, or at any time while previously employed by a law enforcement agency.
- The current use of alcohol at a level that would indicate abuse, dependency, or a level of inability to function without the use of alcohol for any period of time.
- Illegal sale of or conviction for sales of, distribution, or manufacture of any controlled substance or contraband.
- Conviction of any non-violent felony offense committed within the last 6 years or at any time while previously employed by a law enforcement agency.
- Any conviction of a criminal misdemeanor level 1 or 2, as defined by federal, state, or local law of the jurisdiction where the offense occurred, in the past two years or at any time while employed by a law enforcement agency.
- Any pattern of theft offenses from an employer as an adult.
- Having two (2) or more moving violations within the preceding twelve months prior to time of application.
- Having six (6) points or more on your driving record within the past two (2) year period prior to time of application.
- Having a conviction for OVI within the past six (6) years prior to application, or at any time while employed by a law enforcement agency or having been convicted of multiple OVI violations.
- Having been placed under a 12-point suspension within the past three (3) year period prior to time of application.
- Any conviction for vehicular homicide.
- Having received a Dishonorable or Bad Conduct Discharge from military service.
- Filing fraudulent claims for insurance, welfare, unemployment compensation or other public assistance programs.
- Having a continuing history of financial or credit problems to include garnishments and bankruptcy.
- An employment history which includes a pattern of termination, resignation in lieu of termination, excessive absence/tardiness, inability to have a good relationship with others, or any adverse disciplinary actions.
- Any conviction for a violation of a protection order or restraining order.
- Any instances where the candidate would be legally prohibited from possessing a firearm.
- Verified or admitted physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of one's spouse, ex-spouse, child, stepchild, and parent or any other relative or person with whom the applicant had lived with or has had a relationship with.

- Any conviction for the crime of domestic violence, domestic violence threats or the use of or threatened use of a deadly weapon.
- Non-compliance with a court order or legal contract to provide for family/dependents, child support, alimony or other financial responsibility determined by finding of any court of law.
- A history of association or involvement with any organized criminal organization or any documented or admitted history of racial, ethnic, or social intolerance.

* Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of all the instances that could disqualify a potential police officer candidate.

City of Pickerington Police Officer Candidate and Lateral Hire Officer Hiring Process

Step 1

Announcement & Creation of a Police Officer Candidate and Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate List - The City of Pickerington will announce and advertise when it is actively creating a Police Officer Candidate and a Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate eligibility list.

Step 2

Police Officer Candidate Testing Phase - Even when the City of Pickerington is not actively recruiting police officers to fill vacancies, pre-requisite police officer testing is continuously offered through the National Testing Network (NTN). Successful completion of these entry level ergo-metrics tests is the mandatory first step in the Pickerington recruitment process. The eligibility test is good for one year from the date of the test. For details on these tests, please go to the website www.ergometrics.org. For information on on-line testing and registration details, go to www.nationaltestingnetwork.com.

Additional Ergo-metrics Testing Requirements

- Your Ergo-metrics law enforcement exam must be completed through the National Testing Network (NTN). Virtual testing is available on NTN's virtual proctor platform.
- You must designate the City of Pickerington as a reporting agency for test scores.
- You must have successfully completed Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy certification by the time of hire.
- You must have correctable vision in both eyes to 20/20 and not be color blind.
- Candidates who do not meet these minimum requirements will not be considered.

Lateral Hire Patrol Officer Candidate Initial Application Process – Candidates who believe they qualify as either a Level I or Level II lateral hire candidate will be directed to contact one of the following police department employees at (614) 575-6911:

- The Candidate Liaison Detective (primary)
- The Operations Division Commander
- The Patrol Division Commander

The personnel listed above will have a conversation with the individual to ensure they do qualify as a lateral hire candidate. If the candidate qualifies, arrangements will be made for them to receive the Lateral Hire Police Officer Candidate Application, the Personal History Questionnaire, and their Pre-Computer

Voice Stress Analysis Questionnaire and will be given a deadline for their return. Additionally, lateral hire candidates will be scheduled for the next physical abilities test. Candidates who do not qualify for a lateral hire application will be directed to follow the Police Officer Candidate route and take the National Testing Network (NTN) exam.

[Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate Electronic Application Submission Instructions](#) - The lateral hire candidate application will be e-mailed to the eligible candidate along with additional information. The application is in a fillable pdf. document format. After completing the application, the candidate will be instructed to save it to their computer as: “[Candidate Name] Lateral Hire Application” (Example: Joe Public Lateral Hire Application).

All lateral hire candidates are required to provide our agency with the following supporting documentation for their lateral hire application to be accepted. Applications without the following scanned/electronic documents attached will not be accepted:

- A copy of the candidate’s state driver’s license
- A copy of the candidate’s high school diploma (or G.E.D).
- A copy of the candidate’s college diploma (if applicable)
- The candidate’s resume.
- A copy of the candidate’s Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) certification

[*If a candidate’s social security number appears on any one of these documents, the number should be redacted prior to sending in their application.](#)

The candidate should save their scanned/electronic copies of the supporting documents in a comparable manner to their application on their personal computer. For example, the documents will be saved as “[Candidate Name] Driver’s License,” “[Candidate Name] High School Diploma (or GED if applicable),” “[Candidate Name] College Diploma,” and “[Candidate Name] OPOTA Certification,” “[Candidate Name] Resume” (Example: Joe Public Driver’s License, etc.).

When candidates return their lateral hire application and supporting documents, they will attach them to an e-mail sent to ppdhiring@pickerington.net. Additionally, the candidate should CC the e-mail address of the officer who sent them this application. In the “subject” line of this e-mail, the candidate will type [Candidate Name] and “Lateral Hire Application Materials” (Example: Joe Public Lateral Hire Application Materials). On this e-mail, that the application and documents are attached to, the candidate will type their name and phone number so they can be contacted for confirmation that their materials were received. If the file is too large for the candidate to send in a single e-mail, they will send additional e-mails with attachments using the same format as described.

This application will be kept on file for one year after it is received and will be eligible for consideration if another position becomes available within the year. Applications received after the current application deadline is closed for a vacant position will not be considered in that hiring process.

The City of Pickerington assumes no responsibility for not receiving an electronically submitted Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Patrol Candidate Application.

The initial applications received within the year, prior to the application deadline, will be reviewed to insure the applicant meets the minimum qualifications set forth by the department.

Step 3

Applicants will be e-mailed a fillable pdf. format Personal History Questionnaire and a Computer Voice Stress Analysis Questionnaire and instruction sheet prior to the Physical Abilities Test (PAT). These questionnaires will be completed and electronically returned to the police department by the assigned deadline. Any incomplete questionnaires will be grounds for the applicant to be removed from the process.

After completing each questionnaire, the candidate will be instructed to save a copy of each to their computer as: “[Your Name] Personal History” (Example: Joe Public Personal History), and “[Your Name] CVSA” (Example: Joe Public CVSA).

These two documents will be attached to an e-mail to be sent to ppdhiring@pickerington.net. Additionally, candidates will be instructed to CC the e-mail address of the officer who sent them the two questionnaires. In the “subject” line of this e-mail, candidates will type “[Your Name] Questionnaires” (Example: Joe Public Questionnaires). On the main e-mail that the two questionnaires are attached to, the candidates will type their name and phone number so they can be contacted for confirmation that their materials were received. If the file is too large for them to send on a single e-mail, they are instructed to send additional e-mails with attachments using the same format as described as above.

The Pickerington Police Department reserves the right to limit the number of applicants who take the Physical Abilities Test to thirty, should there be a large number of applicants. Should it become necessary to limit the number of applicants, the top twenty ranked candidates from the NTN testing pool will be invited to continue in the recruitment process along with the first ten (10) lateral candidates.

Step 4

Physical Abilities Testing (PAT) - The Physical Abilities Test will be administered by the Pickerington Police Department. The criteria for passing the physical abilities test are the same as the standards set forth by the collective bargaining agreement for all officers and sergeants in the Pickerington Police Department. Candidates must meet the department’s minimum standards for physical fitness, for strength, flexibility, and endurance to move on in the process. There is additional information concerning the physical abilities test towards the end of this manual.

Step 5

Administrative Review – The Personal History and CVSA Questionnaires submitted by the applicants will be reviewed by the police department command staff and a human resources representative to insure there are no disqualifying factors as outlined in the Pickerington Police Department Hiring Process and Standards Manual.

Applicants who have any disqualifying factors may be removed from further consideration and will not progress any further in the hiring process.

The top ten candidates who pass the administrative review shall proceed to the next step. The rest of the applicants shall be held in abeyance.

Step 6

Truth Verification Test – All candidates will be given a truth verification test to validate the information provided in the CVSA Questionnaire and the Personal History Questionnaire. Truth verification testing results will be combined with a thorough background investigation, which occurs later in the process.

Candidates who fail to show up at the appointed date and time will be removed from the process.

Step 7

Oral Review Board – Candidates who pass the CVSA portion of the hiring process will be invited to an Oral Review Board. This will be held in front of a panel made up of three to four professionals from the Pickerington Police Department and the Human Resources Department.

Oral Review Board members will question the candidate on practical knowledge and scenario situations. The board may also ask the candidate questions pertaining to any information developed during the CVSA truth verification test.

After each interview, the oral review board will decide if the candidate:

- Will proceed in the hiring process and advance to the next step.
- Be held in abeyance for a later opening.
- Be removed from any further consideration in this process.

The remaining candidates will then be ranked based on their scores.

Candidates who are chosen to proceed in the process will advance to the background investigation stage. Candidates held in abeyance will be in a “hold” status for a period up to one year and may proceed to the background investigation stage should anyone be removed from the background phase, or another position becomes available. A candidate may be removed from the process due to performance in the oral interview board phase that does not merit any further consideration.

Step 8

Background Investigation - A thorough investigation of the candidate’s background and personal history will be conducted to determine their suitability for employment. The investigation will include criminal history, civil complaints, credit checks, etc. Investigators will conduct interviews with, but will not be limited to, family members, friends, neighbors, present and past employers, school officials, and other law enforcement agencies.

Step 9

Chief of Police Interview - The Chief of Police will interview the top three (3) highest-ranking candidates on both the Police Officer Candidate List and the Lateral Hire Police Patrol Officer Candidate List of those who have successfully completed all phases of the hiring process. If multiple vacancies exist, the Chief of Police will interview the required number of candidates necessary to fill those vacancies.

The Chief reserves the right to remove a candidate from the hiring process at any time. Should such a removal occur, the next applicant that was set in abeyance shall be moved into the hiring process.

Step 10

Conditional Offer of Employment - Candidates selected for available vacancies in accordance with the procedures identified in this manual, will be extended a conditional offer of employment based on the condition that they pass a psychological evaluation, a medical examination, and a drug test.

Step 11

Psychological Examination - All candidates who receive a conditional offer of employment will be required to take a battery of psychological tests. These tests will be administered and evaluated by a licensed psychologist of the City of Pickerington's choice.

Medical Examination & Drug Screen - A licensed physician will conduct a complete medical examination and drug screen to determine the candidate's ability to perform the essential job functions for the position.

Step 12

Final Appointment - Candidates who successfully complete all phases of the hiring process may be appointed as a Pickerington Police Officer. Candidates who fail to successfully complete all phases of the pre-employment screening process will be notified by mail of their disqualification. After appointment, the officer will be assigned to an extensive field training period, which will last 8-12 weeks.

Personal Appearance Standards

Police department employees shall maintain their personal hygiene and appearance to project a professional image appropriate for this organization. Employees shall be clean and well-groomed while on duty. Hairstyles of all members shall be neat in appearance. For male officers, hair must not extend below the top edge of the uniform collar while assuming a normal stance. For female officers, hair must be no longer than the horizontal level of the bottom of the uniform patch when the employee is assuming a normal stance, and worn up or in a tightly wrapped bun, braid, or ponytail.

Officers may have mustaches which do not extend below the upper lip line. Goatees and full beards are permitted to be worn but must be well kept and maintained to ½ inch hair length. The Chief of Police shall have the final decisions on all facial hair growth appearances.

Tattoos or visible body art, while permissible, shall be in good taste. The Chief or his designee reserves the right to order any employee to cover any tattoo or body art determined to be offensive. Tattoos or body art considered offensive would include, but are not limited to, those depicting nudity, are sexual in nature, contain profanity, depict bias, or hate towards any race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or any other depiction that would shock the conscience of an ordinary person. Tattoos on the head, face and neck are *strictly prohibited*. If deemed offensive, the tattoo or body art shall be covered with a black, navy blue or flesh colored sleeve designed for such purposes and purchased at the employee's expense.

Body piercing, or alteration to any area of the body that is visible in any authorized uniform or attire and is a deviation from normal anatomical features and that is not medically required is prohibited. Such body alteration includes, but is not limited to ear spacers, pierced lips or nose, tongue splitting or piercing, the complete or transdermal implantation of any material other than hair replacement or breast augmentation, abnormal shaping of the ears, eyes, nose or teeth or any visible branding or scarification.

Pickerington Police Department Officer Candidate Physical Abilities Test Standards

All officer candidates will be required to successfully pass the Pickerington Police Department's Physical Abilities Test (PAT). The PAT will be based on three physical fitness components: upper body strength, flexibility, and agility/endurance. Police department staff members will administer the Physical Abilities Test. Candidates unable to pass the PAT will be removed from any further hiring consideration.

The three physical abilities components will be scored as unsatisfactory (minimum standards not achieved), minimum (basic standards met), recommended (satisfactory standards met) and excellent (standards surpassed). Candidates must meet minimum standards for upper body strength and for agility/endurance to continue in the hiring process.

Upper Body Strength – A Smith Machine bench press is used to evaluate upper body muscular strength. The following is the proper technique for the Smith Machine bench press:

- Your bottom must stay in contact with the bench (no bouncing).
- Elbows must travel past the parallel point of the body.
- No bouncing the bar off the chest.
- Candidates must lock out the barbell at the top for a good lift.
- Your feet must stay in contact with the floor.
- The applicant has their choice of hand positioning, feet positioning, and body position on the bench. A spotter may lift the bar off the upper machine if requested by the applicant.



A candidate's score for upper body strength testing will be determined by their current weight and age group. For example, using the table at the top of the next page, a 180-pound male candidate, who is between the age of 30 and 39, will need to press 88% (or 0.88) of their body weight to meet the minimum standard: $180 \text{ lbs.} \times (0.88) = 158 \text{ pounds}$. To score excellent, they need to press 108% (1.08) of their body weight: $180 \text{ lbs.} \times (1.08) = 194 \text{ pounds}$.

Upper Body Strength: Smith Machine Bench Press – Male Standards

20 – 29 Years Old	30 – 39 Years Old	40 – 49 Years Old	50 – 59 Years Old	Level and Percentile Group
.99	.88	.80	.71	Minimum
1.1	.96	.86	.77	Recommended
1.26	1.08	.96	.87	Excellent

Upper Body Strength: Smith Machine Bench Press – Female Standards

20 – 29 Years Old	30 – 39 Years Old	40 – 49 Years Old	50 – 59 Years Old	Level and Percentile Group
.59	.53	.50	.44	Minimum
.68	.58	.53	.47	Recommended
.74	.63	.57	.52	Excellent

Flexibility Testing – Flexibility will be evaluated by using a sit-and-reach box. The goal of the sit-and-reach test is to measure the flexibility of the lower back and hamstring muscles.

Candidates may remove their shoes for the test. They will sit upright on the floor with their back straight and their legs fully extended in front of them and the bottom of their feet against the sit-and-reach box. While keeping the backs of the knees flat against the floor and their feet against the box, candidates will place their hands on top of one another and slide them forward as far as they can pushing the shuttle. The candidate’s score will be based on the distance between the starting point and the reached point.



Flexibility - Men

20 – 29 Years Old	30 – 39 Years Old	40 – 49 Years Old	50 – 59 Years Old	Level and Percentile Group
15.5"	14.5"	13.3"	12.0"	Minimum
17.5"	16.5"	15.3"	14.5"	Recommended
18.5"	17.5"	16.3"	15.5"	Excellent

Flexibility - Women

20 – 29 Years Old	30 – 39 Years Old	40 – 49 Years Old	50 – 59 Years Old	Level and Percentile Group
18.3"	17.3"	16.5"	15.5"	Minimum
20.0"	19.0"	18.0"	17.9"	Recommended
20.5"	20.0"	19.0"	18.5"	Excellent

Agility and Endurance – This physical ability component will be evaluated via a timed run and obstacle course that all candidates must complete in less than three (3) minutes. In this event candidates will:

- Run 440 yards.
- Traverse over a four-foot-high fence.
- Push a patrol vehicle thirty (30) feet.
- Carry two 75 lb. gas cans thirty (30) feet and
- Complete a shuttle run by negotiating a series of four (4) cones a total distance of (60) feet.

Agility and Endurance Standards - Men & Women

2:25 to 3:00 minutes	Minimum
2:00 to 2:24 minutes	Recommended
Less than 2:00 minutes	Excellent

Questions?

If you have any questions concerning the City of Pickerington’s police candidate hiring process, please feel free to contact either of the following people:

City of Pickerington Human Resources Director Stephanie Cheney
Office: (614) 837-3974
E-mail: scheney@pickerington.net

Or

City of Pickerington Police Department Commander Greg Annis
Office: (614) 575-6911
E-mail: gannis@pickerington.net