

Tennis is a racket sport that is played either individually against a single opponent (singles) or between two teams of two players each (doubles). Each player uses a tennis racket that is strung with cord to strike a hollow rubber ball covered with felt over or around a net and into the opponent's court. The object of the game is to maneuver the ball in such a way that the opponent is not able to play a valid return. The player who is unable to return the ball validly will not gain a point, while the opposite player will.

Tennis is an Olympic sport and is played at all levels of society and at all ages. The sport can be played by anyone who can hold a racket, including wheelchair users. The original forms of tennis developed in France during the late Middle Ages. The modern form of tennis originated in Birmingham, England, in the late 19th century as lawn tennis. It had close connections both to various field (lawn) games such as croquet and bowls as well as to the older racket sport today called real tennis.

The rules of modern tennis have changed little since the 1890s. Two exceptions are that until 1961 the server had to keep one foot on the ground at all times, and the adoption of the tiebreak in the 1970s. A recent addition to professional tennis has been the adoption of electronic review technology coupled with a point-challenge system, which allows a player to contest the line call of a point, a system known as Hawk-Eye.

Tennis is played by millions of recreational players and is a popular worldwide spectator sport. The four Grand Slam tournaments (also referred to as the majors) are especially popular: the Australian Open, played on hardcourts; the French Open, played on red clay courts; Wimbledon, played on grass courts; and the US Open, also played on hardcourts.

The components of a tennis racket include a handle, known as the grip, connected to a neck which joins a roughly elliptical frame that holds a matrix of tightly pulled strings. For the first 100 years of the modern game, rackets were made of wood and of standard size, and strings were of [animal gut](#). Laminated wood construction yielded more strength in rackets used through most of the 20th century until first metal and then composites of carbon graphite, ceramics, and lighter metals such as titanium were introduced. These stronger materials enabled the production of oversized rackets that yielded yet more power. Meanwhile, technology led to the use of synthetic strings that match the feel of gut yet with added durability.

Under modern rules of tennis, the rackets must adhere to the following guidelines,^[55]

- The hitting area, composed of the strings, must be flat and generally uniform.
- The frame of the hitting area may not be more than 29 inches (74 cm) in length and 12.5 inches (32 cm) in width.
- The entire racket must be of a fixed shape, size, weight, and weight distribution. There may not be any energy source built into the rackets.
- The rackets must not provide any kind of communication, instruction or advice to the player during the match.

The rules regarding rackets have changed over time, as material and engineering advances have been made. For example, the maximum length of the frame had been 32 inches (81 cm) until 1997, when it was shortened to 29 inches (74 cm).

Many companies manufacture and distribute tennis rackets. Wilson, Head and Babolat are three of the most commonly used brands; however, many more companies exist. The same companies sponsor players to use these rackets in the hopes that the company name will become better known by the public.

Tennis is played on a rectangular, flat surface. The court is 78 feet (23.77 m) long, and 27 feet (8.2 m) wide for singles matches and 36 ft (11 m) for doubles matches.[67] Additional clear space around the court is required in order for players to reach overrun balls. A net is stretched across the full width of the court, parallel with the baselines, dividing it into two equal ends. It is held up by either a cord or metal cable of diameter no greater than 0.8 cm (1/3 in).[66] The net is 3 feet 6 inches (1.07 m) high at the posts and 3 feet (0.91 m) high in the centre.[67] The net posts are 3 feet (0.91 m) outside the doubles court on each side or, for a singles net, 3 feet (0.91 m) outside the singles court on each side.

The modern tennis court owes its design to Major Walter Clopton Wingfield. In 1873, Wingfield patented a court much the same as the current one for his stické tennis (sphairistike). This template was modified in 1875 to the court design that exists today, with markings similar to Wingfield's version, but with the hourglass shape of his court changed to a rectangle.[68]

Tennis is unusual in that it is played on a variety of surfaces.[69] Grass, clay, and hard courts of concrete or asphalt topped with acrylic are the most common. Occasionally carpet is used for indoor play, with hardwood flooring having been historically used. Artificial turf courts can also be found.

Lines

The lines that delineate the width of the court are called the baseline (farthest back) and the service line (middle of the court). The short mark in the centre of each baseline is referred to as either the hash mark or the centre mark. The outermost lines that make up the length are called the doubles sidelines; they are the boundaries for doubles matches. The lines to the inside of the doubles sidelines are the singles sidelines, and are the boundaries in singles play. The area between a doubles sideline and the nearest singles sideline is called the doubles alley, playable in doubles play. The line that runs across the centre of a player's side of the court is called the service line because the serve must be delivered into the area between the service line and the net on the receiving side. Despite its name, this is not where a player legally stands when making a serve.[70]

The line dividing the service line in two is called the centre line or centre service line. The boxes this centre line creates are called the service boxes; depending on a player's position, they have to hit the ball into one of these when serving.[71] A ball is out only if none of it has hit the area inside the lines, or the line, upon its first bounce. All lines are required to be between 1 and 2

inches (25 and 51 mm) in width, with the exception of the baseline which can be up to 4 inches (100 mm) wide, although in practice it is often the same width as the others.[70]

The players or teams start on opposite sides of the net. One player is designated the *server*, and the opposing player is the *receiver*. The choice to be server or receiver in the first game and the choice of ends is decided by a coin toss before the warm-up starts. Service alternates game by game between the two players or teams. For each point, the server starts behind the baseline, between the centre mark and the sideline. The receiver may start anywhere on their side of the net. When the receiver is ready, the server will *serve*, although the receiver must play to the pace of the server.

For a service to be legal, the ball must travel over the net without touching it into the diagonally opposite service box. If the ball hits the net but lands in the service box, this is a *let* or *net service*, which is void, and the server retakes that serve. The player can serve any number of let services in a point and they are always treated as voids and not as faults. A fault is a serve that falls long or wide of the service box, or does not clear the net. There is also a "foot fault" when a player's foot touches the baseline or an extension of the centre mark before the ball is hit. If the second service, after a fault, is also a fault, the server *double faults*, and the receiver wins the point. However, if the serve is in, it is considered a legal service.

A legal service starts a *rally*, in which the players alternate hitting the ball across the net. A legal return consists of a player hitting the ball so that it falls in the server's court, before it has bounced twice or hit any fixtures except the net. A player or team cannot hit the ball twice in a row. The ball must travel over or round the net into the other players' court. A ball that hits the net during a rally is considered a legal return as long as it crosses into the opposite side of the court. The first player or team to fail to make a legal return loses the point. The server then moves to the other side of the service line at the start of a new point.[72]

Game

A game consists of a sequence of points played with the same player serving. A game is won by the first player to have won at least four points in total and at least two points more than the opponent. The running score of each game is described in a manner peculiar to tennis: scores from zero to three points are described as "love", "15", "30", and "40", respectively. If at least three points have been scored by each player, making the player's scores equal at 40 apiece, the score is not called out as "40–40", but rather as "deuce". If at least three points have been scored by each side and a player has one more point than his opponent, the score of the game is "advantage" for the player in the lead. During informal games, advantage can also be called "ad in" or "van in" when the serving player is ahead, and "ad out" or "van out" when the receiving player is ahead; alternatively, either player may simply call out "my ad" or "your ad".

The score of a tennis game during play is always read with the serving player's score first. In tournament play, the chair umpire calls the point count (e.g., "15–love") after each point. At the end of a game, the chair umpire also announces the winner of the game and the overall score.[73]

Set

A set consists of a sequence of games played with service alternating between games, ending when the count of games won meets certain criteria. Typically, a player wins a set by winning at least six games and at least two games more than the opponent. If one player has won six games and the opponent five, an additional game is played. If the leading player wins that game, the player wins the set 7–5. If the trailing player wins the game (tying the set 6–6) a tiebreak is played. A tiebreak, played under a separate set of rules, allows one player to win one more game and thus the set, to give a final set score of 7–6. A tiebreak game can be won by scoring at least seven points and at least two points more than the opponent. In a tiebreak, two players serve by 'ABBA' system which has been proven to be fair.[74] If a tiebreak is not played, the set is referred to as an advantage set, where the set continues without limit until one player leads by a two-game margin. A "love set" means that the loser of the set won zero games, colloquially termed a "jam donut" in the US.[75] In tournament play, the chair umpire announces the winner of the set and the overall score. The final score in sets is always read with the winning player's score first, e.g. "6–2, 4–6, 6–0, 7–5".

Match

A match consists of a sequence of sets. The outcome is determined through a best of three or five sets system. On the professional circuit, men play best-of-five-set matches at all four Grand Slam tournaments, Davis Cup, and the final of the Olympic Games and best-of-three-set matches at all other tournaments, while women play best-of-three-set matches at all tournaments. The first player to win two sets in a best-of-three, or three sets in a best-of-five, wins the match.[76] Only in the final sets of matches at the Olympic Games and Fed Cup are tiebreaks not played. In these cases, sets are played indefinitely until one player has a two-game lead, occasionally leading to some remarkably long matches.

In tournament play, the chair umpire announces the end of the match with the well-known phrase "Game, set, match" followed by the winning person's or team's name.

Special point terms

Game point

A game point occurs in tennis whenever the player who is in the lead in the game needs only one more point to win the game. The terminology is extended to sets (set point), matches (match point), and even championships (championship point). For example, if the player who is serving has a score of 40–love, the player has a triple game point (triple set point, etc.) as the player has three consecutive chances to win the game. Game points, set points, and match points are not part of official scoring and are not announced by the chair umpire in tournament play.

Break point

A break point occurs if the receiver, not the server, has a chance to win the game with the next point. Break points are of particular importance because serving is generally considered advantageous, with servers being expected to win games in which they are serving. A receiver who has one (score of 30–40 or advantage), two (score of 15–40) or three (score of love–40) consecutive chances to win the game has break point, double break point or triple break point,

respectively. If the receiver does, in fact, win their break point, the game is awarded to the receiver, and the receiver is said to have converted their break point. If the receiver fails to win their break point it is called a failure to convert. Winning break points, and thus the game, is also referred to as breaking serve, as the receiver has disrupted, or broken the natural advantage of the server. If in the following game the previous server also wins a break point it is referred to as breaking back. Except where tiebreaks apply, at least one break of serve is required to win a set (otherwise a two-game lead would never occur).

Rule variations

See also: Types of tennis match

No ad

From 'No advantage'. Scoring method created by Jimmy Van Alen. The first player or doubles team to win four points wins the game, regardless of whether the player or team is ahead by two points. When the game score reaches three points each, the receiver chooses which side of the court (advantage court or deuce court) the service is to be delivered on the seventh and game-deciding point. Utilized by World Team Tennis professional competition, ATP tours, WTA tours, ITF Pro Doubles and ITF Junior Doubles.[77][78]

Pro set

Instead of playing multiple sets, players may play one pro set. A pro set is first to 8 (or 10) games by a margin of two games, instead of first to 6 games. A 12-point tiebreak is usually played when the score is 8–8 (or 10–10). These are often played with no-ad scoring.

Match tiebreak

This is sometimes played instead of a third set. A match tiebreak (also called super tiebreak) is played like a regular tiebreak, but the winner must win ten points instead of seven. Match tiebreaks are used in the Hopman Cup, Grand Slams (excluding Wimbledon) and the Olympic Games for mixed doubles; on the ATP (since 2006), WTA (since 2007) and ITF (excluding four Grand Slam tournaments and the Davis Cup) tours for doubles and as a player's choice in USTA league play.

Fast4

Fast4 is a shortened format that offers a "fast" alternative, with four points, four games and four rules: there are no advantage scores, lets are played, tiebreakers apply at three games all, with it being first to five points with a "sudden death" point at four points all, and the first to four games wins the set. In the event of a no advantage deuce, the receiver gets to choose the service side. If a let occurs, the point continues as normal, and the non-receiver (in a doubles game) is permitted to return the serve. When players swap sides, they are not permitted to sit down and must be ready to play within sixty seconds. Between sets, players are permitted to sit down, and must be ready to play within ninety seconds.[79][80]

Another, however informal, tennis format is called Canadian doubles. This involves three players, with one person playing against a doubles team. The single player gets to utilize the alleys normally reserved only for a doubles team. Conversely, the doubles team does not use the alleys when executing a shot. The scoring is the same as for a regular game. This format is not sanctioned by any official body.

"Australian doubles", another informal and unsanctioned form of tennis, is played with similar rules to the Canadian doubles style, only in this version, players rotate court position after each game, each player taking a turn at playing alone against the other two. As such, each player plays doubles and singles over the course of a match, with the singles player always serving. Scoring styles vary, but one popular method is to assign a value of 2 points to each game, with the server taking both points if he or she holds serve and the doubles team each taking one if they break serve.

Wheelchair tennis can be played by able-bodied players as well as people who require a wheelchair for mobility. An extra bounce is permitted. This rule makes it possible to have mixed wheelchair and able-bodied matches. It is possible for a doubles team to consist of a wheelchair player and an able-bodied player (referred to as "one-up, one-down"), or for a wheelchair player to play against an able-bodied player. In such cases, the extra bounce is permitted for the wheelchair users only.

Continuity

A tennis match is intended to be continuous.[81] Because stamina is a relevant factor, arbitrary delays are not permitted. In most cases, service is required to occur no more than 20 seconds after the end of the previous point.[81] This is increased to 90 seconds when the players change ends (after every odd-numbered game), and a 2-minute break is permitted between sets.[81] Other than this, breaks are permitted only when forced by events beyond the players' control, such as rain, damaged footwear, damaged racket, or the need to retrieve an errant ball. Should a player be deemed to be stalling repeatedly, the chair umpire may initially give a warning followed by subsequent penalties of "point", "game", and default of the match for the player who is consistently taking longer than the allowed time limit.[82]

In the event of a rain delay, darkness or other external conditions halting play, the match is resumed at a later time, with the same score as at the time of the delay, and each player at the same end of the court as when rain halted play, or as close to the same relative compass point if play is resumed on a different court.

Ball changes

Balls wear out quickly in serious play and, therefore, in ATP and WTA tournaments, they are changed after every nine games with the first change occurring after only seven games, because the first set of balls is also used for the pre-match warm-up.[64] In ITF tournaments like Fed Cup, the balls are changed after every eleven games (rather than nine) with the first change occurring after only nine games (instead of seven). An exception is that a ball change may not take place at the beginning of a tiebreaker, in which case the ball change is delayed until the beginning of the second game of the next set.[66] As a courtesy to the receiver, the server will often signal to the receiver before the first serve of the game in which new balls are used as a reminder that they are using new balls. Continuity of the balls' condition is considered part of the game, so if a re-warm-up is required after an extended break in play (usually due to rain), then the re-warm-up is done using a separate set of balls, and use of the match balls is resumed only when play resumes.

On-court coaching

A recent rule change is to allow coaching on court on a limited basis during a match.[83][84][85][86] This has been introduced in women's tennis for WTA Tour events in 2009 and allows the player to request her coach once per set.[87]

Stance

Stance refers to the way a player prepares themselves in order to best be able to return a shot. Essentially, it enables them to move quickly in order to achieve a particular stroke. There are four main stances in modern tennis: open, semi-open, closed, and neutral. All four stances involve the player crouching in some manner: as well as being a more efficient striking posture, it allows them to isometrically preload their muscles in order to play the stroke more dynamically. What stance is selected is strongly influenced by shot selection. A player may quickly alter their stance depending on the circumstances and the type of shot they intend to play. Any given stance also alters dramatically based upon the actual playing of the shot with dynamic movements and shifts of body weight occurring.[88][89]

Open stance

This is the most common stance in tennis. The player's feet are placed parallel to the net. They may be pointing sideways, directly at the net or diagonally towards it. This stance allows for a high degree of torso rotation which can add significant power to the stroke. This process is sometimes likened to the coiling and uncoiling of a spring. i.e. the torso is rotated as a means of preloading the muscular system in preparation for playing the stroke: this is the coiling phase. When the stroke is played the torso rotates to face forwards again, called uncoiling, and adds significant power to the stroke. A disadvantage of this stance is that it does not always allow 'for proper weight transfer and maintenance of balance'[88] when making powerful strokes. It is commonly used for forehand strokes; double-handed backhands can also be made effectively from it.

Semi-open stance

This stance is somewhere between open and closed and is a very flexible stance. The feet are aligned diagonally towards the net. It allows for a lot of shoulder rotation and the torso can be coiled, before being uncoiled into the shot in order to increase the power of the shot. It is commonly used in modern tennis especially by 'top professional players on the forehand'.[90] Two-handed backhands can also be employed from this stance.

Closed stance

The closed stance is the least commonly used of the three main stances. One foot is placed further towards the net with the other foot further from it; there is a diagonal alignment between the feet. It allows for effective torso rotation in order to increase the power of the shot. It is usually used to play backhand shots and it is rare to see forehand shots played from it. A stroke from this stance may entail the rear foot coming completely off the floor with bodyweight being transferred entirely to the front foot.[88] [89]

Neutral stance

This is sometimes also referred to as the square stance. One foot is positioned closer to the net and ahead of the other which is behind and in line with it. Both feet are aligned at a 90 degree angle to the net. The neutral stance is often taught early because 'It allows beginners to learn about shifting weight and rotation of the body.'^[89] Forehands and backhands may be made from it.^[91]

Shots

Main article: Tennis shots

A competent tennis player has eight basic shots in his or her repertoire: the serve, forehand, backhand, volley, half-volley, overhead smash, drop shot, and lob.

Grip

Main article: Grip (Tennis)

A grip is a way of holding the racket in order to hit shots during a match. The grip affects the angle of the racket face when it hits the ball and influences the pace, spin, and placement of the shot. Players use various grips during play, including the Continental (The "Handshake Grip"), Eastern (Can be either semi-eastern or full eastern. Usually used for backhands.), and Western (semi-western or full western, usually for forehand grips) grips. Most players change grips during a match depending on what shot they are hitting; for example, slice shots and serves call for a Continental grip.^[92]

A serve (or, more formally, a "service") in tennis is a shot to start a point. The serve is initiated by tossing the ball into the air and hitting it (usually near the apex of its trajectory) into the diagonally opposite service box without touching the net. The serve may be hit under- or overhand although underhand serving remains a rarity.^[93] If the ball hits the net on the first serve and bounces over into the correct diagonal box then it is called a "let" and the server gets two more additional serves to get it in. There can also be a let if the server serves the ball and the receiver isn't prepared.^[66] If the server misses his or her first serve and gets a let on the second serve, then they get one more try to get the serve in the box.

Experienced players strive to master the conventional overhand serve to maximize its power and placement. The server may employ different types of serve including flat serve, topspin serve, slice serve, and kick (American twist) serve. A reverse type of spin serve is hit in a manner that spins the ball opposite the natural spin of the server, the spin direction depending upon right- or left-handedness. If the ball is spinning counterclockwise, it will curve right from the hitter's point of view and curve left if spinning clockwise.^[94]

Some servers are content to use the serve simply to initiate the point; however, advanced players often try to hit a winning shot with their serve. A winning serve that is not touched by the opponent is called an "ace".

For a right-handed player, the forehand is a stroke that begins on the right side of the body, continues across the body as contact is made with the ball, and ends on the left side of the

body. There are various grips for executing the forehand, and their popularity has fluctuated over the years. The most important ones are the continental, the eastern, the semi-western, and the western. For a number of years, the small, frail 1920s player Bill Johnston was considered by many to have had the best forehand of all time, a stroke that he hit shoulder-high using a western grip. Few top players used the western grip after the 1920s, but in the latter part of the 20th century, as shot-making techniques and equipment changed radically, the western forehand made a strong comeback and is now used by many modern players. No matter which grip is used, most forehands are generally executed with one hand holding the racket, but there have been fine players with two-handed forehands. In the 1940s and 50s, the Ecuadorian/American player Pancho Segura used a two-handed forehand to achieve a devastating effect against larger, more powerful players. Players such as Monica Seles or France's Fabrice Santoro and Marion Bartoli are also notable players known for their two-handed forehands.[95]

For right-handed players, the backhand is a stroke that begins on the left side of their body, continues across their body as contact is made with the ball, and ends on the right side of their body. It can be executed with either one hand or with both and is generally considered more difficult to master than the forehand. For most of the 20th century, the backhand was performed with one hand, using either an eastern or a continental grip. The first notable players to use two hands were the 1930s Australians Vivian McGrath and John Bromwich, but they were lone exceptions. The two-handed grip gained popularity in the 1970s as Björn Borg, Chris Evert, Jimmy Connors, and later Mats Wilander and Marat Safin used it to great effect, and it is now used by a large number of the world's best players, including Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams.[96]

Two hands give the player more control, while one hand can generate a slice shot, applying backspin on the ball to produce a low trajectory bounce. Reach is also limited with the two-handed shot. The player long considered to have had the best backhand of all time, Don Budge, had a powerful one-handed stroke in the 1930s and 1940s that imparted topspin onto the ball. Ken Rosewall, another player noted for his one-handed backhand, used a very accurate slice backhand through the 1950s and 1960s. A small number of players, notably Monica Seles, use two hands on both the backhand and forehand sides.

Other shots

A volley is a shot returned to the opponent in mid-air before the ball bounces, generally performed near the net, and is usually made with a stiff-wristed punching motion to hit the ball into an open area of the opponent's court. The half volley is made by hitting the ball on the rise just after it has bounced, also generally in the vicinity of the net, and played with the racket close to the ground.[97] The swinging volley is hit out of the air as the player approaches the net. It is an offensive shot used to take preparation time away from the opponent, as it returns the ball into the opponent's court much faster than a standard volley.

From a poor defensive position on the baseline, the lob can be used as either an offensive or defensive weapon, hitting the ball high and deep into the opponent's court to either enable the

lobber to get into better defensive position or to win the point outright by hitting it over the opponent's head. If the lob is not hit deeply enough into the other court, however, an opponent near the net may then hit an overhead smash, a hard, serve-like shot, to try to end the point.

A difficult shot in tennis is the return of an attempted lob over the backhand side of a player. When the contact point is higher than the reach of a two-handed backhand, most players will try to execute a high slice (under the ball or sideways). Fewer players attempt the backhand sky-hook or smash. Rarely, a player will go for a high topspin backhand, while themselves in the air. A successful execution of any of these alternatives requires balance and timing, with less margin of error than the lower contact point backhands, since this shot is a break in the regular pattern of play.

If their opponent is deep in their court, a player may suddenly employ an unexpected drop shot, by softly tapping the ball just over the net so that the opponent is unable to run in fast enough to retrieve it. Advanced players will often apply back spin to a drop shot, causing the ball to "skid" upon landing and bounce sideways, with less forward momentum toward their opponent, or even backwards towards the net, thus making it even more difficult to return.

Tournaments are often organized by gender and number of players. Common tournament configurations include men's singles, women's singles, and doubles, where two players play on each side of the net. Tournaments may be organized for specific age groups, with upper age limits for youth and lower age limits for senior players. Examples of this include the Orange Bowl and Les Petits As junior tournaments. There are also tournaments for players with disabilities, such as wheelchair tennis and deaf tennis.[98] In the four Grand Slam tournaments, the singles draws are limited to 128 players for each gender.

Most large tournaments seed players, but players may also be matched by their skill level. According to how well a person does in sanctioned play, a player is given a rating that is adjusted periodically to maintain competitive matches. For example, the United States Tennis Association administers the National Tennis Rating Program (NTRP), which rates players between 1.0 and 7.0 in 1/2 point increments. Average club players under this system would rate 3.0–4.5 while world class players would be 7.0 on this scale.

The four Grand Slam tournaments are considered to be the most prestigious tennis events in the world. They are held annually and comprise, in chronological order, the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open. Apart from the Olympic Games, Davis Cup, Fed Cup, and Hopman Cup, they are the only tournaments regulated by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).[99] The ITF's national associations, Tennis Australia (Australian Open), the Fédération Française de Tennis (French Open), the Lawn Tennis Association (Wimbledon) and the United States Tennis Association (US Open) are delegated the responsibility to organize these events.[99]

Aside from the historical significance of these events, they also carry larger prize funds than any other tour event and are worth double the number of ranking points to the champion than in the

next echelon of tournaments, the ATP Masters 1000 (men) and Premier events (women).[100][101] Another distinguishing feature is the number of players in the singles draw. There are 128, more than any other professional tennis tournament. This draw is composed of 32 seeded players, other players ranked in the world's top 100, qualifiers, and players who receive invitations through wild cards. Grand Slam men's tournaments have best-of-five set matches while the women play best-of-three. Grand Slam tournaments are among the small number of events that last two weeks, the others being the Indian Wells Masters and the Miami Masters.

Currently, the Grand Slam tournaments are the only tour events that have mixed doubles contests. Grand Slam tournaments are held in conjunction with wheelchair tennis tournaments and junior tennis competitions. These tournaments also contain their own idiosyncrasies. For example, players at Wimbledon are required to wear predominantly white. Andre Agassi chose to skip Wimbledon from 1988 through 1990 citing the event's traditionalism, particularly its "predominantly white" dress code.[102] Wimbledon has its own particular methods for disseminating tickets, often leading tennis fans to follow complex procedures to obtain tickets.[103]

1. Early preparation

You can never prepare yourself soon enough. Turn your hips and shoulders before the oncoming ball bounces on your side.

2. Exaggerate your follow through

Follow all the way through your shot after your hit. Hit the ball, follow through, and move your feet.

3. Hit-recover

Instead of focusing on your shot after you've made it, focus on the recover. Hit, finish and get back into position.

4. Keep your head still

If you find yourself mis-hitting shots, be sure that you aren't moving your head as you swing. Follow the ball onto the racquet and keep your head still until the shot has been played.

5. Get your back leg behind the ball

Getting your back leg and weight behind the ball allows for easier weight transfer and a more consistent shot.

6. Pull back on your serve speed

The serve is the most important shot in tennis, but that doesn't mean you should wail on the ball. Focus on accuracy versus force.

7. Prepare early for groundstrokes

Once you know where the ball is going to bounce, move yourself into a position where you feel comfortable playing the shot. The higher you make your backswing, the more power you will likely generate. Finding the right balance between the swing and the force is key.

8. Get the right forehand grip

How you grip a tennis racquet is one of the most important aspects of the game. A common serving grip of the pros is the continental grip. Watch this video to learn how to perfect the grip: [//youtu.be/WtzWazMGcTY](https://youtu.be/WtzWazMGcTY)

The semi-western grip is a good grip for groundstrokes. Here's a quick video with tips on how to master it: [//youtu.be/_2ln06DTI9U](https://youtu.be/_2ln06DTI9U)

9. Practice your tennis ball toss

When serving, your ball toss should go straight up and come straight down about 18 inches in front of your leading foot. Grab a bucket of balls and practice your toss, without actually hitting the ball.

10. Don't be too hard on yourself during matches

It's easy to be overcritical of yourself, especially if you miss an otherwise easy shot in a competitive environment. If you miss a shot just move forward in the match and keep playing to the best of your ability. Practice your stroke afterward to improve and perfect your skills.

Tennis ball: According to the International Tennis Federation (ITF), a typical tennis ball should weigh between 56-59.4 grams with a diameter of 6.54-6.86 centimeters. They should be yellow or white in colour, though most balls are yellow.

Tennis racket: A tennis racket cannot exceed 73.7 cm in length and 31.7 cm in width. The racket shall have a frame enclosing sturdy strings, usually made of nylon, interwoven in crossed and bonded pattern, and a handle.

The player is required to hit the ball with the middle of the racket - the part with strings which is also known as hitting surface.

How to play tennis

Tennis serve and rules

A tennis match begins with the umpire doing a coin toss. The player who wins the toss can choose to serve, receive or pick the side from which they want to start the match.

The serving player has to stand behind the baseline of his side of the tennis court and within the bounds of the centre mark and the sideline.

For a successful serve, the server has to toss the ball up with his non-playing hand and hit it with the racket before it bounces. The ball needs to cross the net and land within the serving area which is marked on the diagonally opposite side of the court for it to be deemed a legal serve.

Each player is allowed two serves per point. If a player hits the net, or the ball's first bounce occurs outside the serving area, it's called a service fault and the server has a second serve to initiate the point.

If the server's foot touches the baseline or goes out of bounds of the sideline, it is known as a foot fault and the server will have a second serve.

If a player commits a fault on his second serve also, it is called a double fault and the receiving player gets that point.

However, if a player's serve hits the net and lands within the serving area, then the server will still have two serves to initiate the point. This situation is known as let.

The server has to alternate between the vertical halves of the tennis court for each point.

If the server manages to land a legal serve and the receiver is unable to return the ball, it is known as an ace and the server gets the point.

How points are scored in tennis

Any point is initiated by the server and it is the job of the receiver to return it successfully.

Once the serve is returned, the two players engage in a rally, i.e trading shots back-and-forth over the net and within the sidelines and baseline.

To win a point, a player must hit a shot either before the ball has bounced or after the first bounce. If the ball bounces twice, then the player with the last shot wins the point.

A player must also wait for the ball to pass the net and come over to his side of the court and cannot step over the net to hit the ball.

The server becomes the receiver and the receiver becomes the server once a game is completed.

In a doubles match, the receiving team gets to choose the first receiver and then the two players in the team alternate to receive every subsequent point.

Tennis shots

Tennis players use a variety of angles, speed and technique to hit the ball in a certain direction or to deceive their opponents to win a point. Some common tennis strokes are as follows:

Forehand and backhand

The two most common shots in tennis are the forehand and backhand. If a right-handed player extends his right hand to hit the ball from the right side of his body, it is called a forehand.

If the right-handed player brings his right hand across his body to hit a shot from the left side of his body, it is called a backhand.

The inverse applies for left-handed players.

Drop shot

When a player reduces the speed of his shot to land the ball just above the net and onto the opposite side, it is called a drop shot.

A drop shot is generally used when the opposing player is standing at the baseline and it becomes difficult for them to recover a drop shot as they have to cover quite a distance.

Smash

When a player hits a shot with all their power, generally from over their heads, such that the opposing player is unable to reach the ball, it is known as a smash.

Slice

A player hits a slice when they cut the ball with the racket facing the court at a cross angle. The slice is generally used to slow down the pace of a rally.

Tennis scoring system

A player or team has to win four points to win a game. Any game starts at 0-0 and the zero point in tennis is called love. The progression of points occurs as follows:

First point - 15

Second point - 30

Third point - 40

Fourth point - Game

However, if both players win three points each in a game (i.e score is 40-40), then it's called a deuce.

After deuce, the player who wins the next point has advantage. If the player/team who has advantage wins the next point, then they win the game.

However, if the opposing player wins the next point after advantage, then the score moves back to deuce. A player/team needs to win two consecutive points after deuce to win a game.

How to win a tennis match

A player has to typically win four points to win a game and a minimum of six games, with a two-game difference, to claim a set. A player/team has to win three sets (in a best-of-five sets match) or two sets (in a best-of-three sets) to win the match.

Players are required to change ends after the end of the first, third and every subsequent odd game in a set. The players also exchange ends after a set is completed.

If both players win six games each in a set (6-6), then the set moves to a tiebreaker.

The progression of points in a tiebreaker is 1, 2, 3 and so on. To win a tiebreaker (and consequently, the set), a player/team must win a minimum of seven points, with a two-point difference.

If the score in a tiebreaker is 6-6, a player/team has to win two consecutive points to win the tiebreaker and the set.

In a tiebreaker, the serve changes hands after the first point is played. Thereafter, the serve changes after every two points played. The players change ends in a tiebreaker after playing the first six points.

In a Grand Slam match, a tiebreaker can only be played in the first, second, third and fourth sets (in a men's singles match) and in the first and second sets (in a women's singles or doubles match).

If each player has won six games each in the last set of a Grand Slam match, the match shall continue to be played without a tiebreaker until any one player has a two-game lead.

Only in the US Open, a tiebreaker is permitted in the last set. In the Wimbledon, the match moves to a tiebreaker if each player has won 12 games in the last set (12-12).

In the last set of a doubles match, the match moves to a super tiebreaker. In a super tiebreaker, the rules are similar to a tiebreaker with the only difference being that the first team to win 10 points, with a two-point difference, is deemed the winner.

How many sets in tennis

In men's singles events at Grand Slams, the matches are a best-of-five sets but in all other ATP Tour events, a men's singles match is a best-of-three sets affair.

Men's doubles matches, in the ATP Tour and Grand Slams, are best-of-three sets except the Wimbledon, where they are best-of-five set matches.

All women's singles and doubles events - in Grand Slams and on the WTA Tour - are best-of-three sets matches.

Why Play Tennis?

Playing tennis provides many benefits to both your mind and body. It improves your hand-eye coordination, balance, and agility. Like most rigorous physical activity, the footwork and upper body movement involved in tennis can help keep you healthy and in shape and reduce stress. Tennis techniques require quick thinking and strategizing, improving your problem-solving skills and critical thinking—like when to time your split-step from the ready position, how to shift your body weight, when to hit cross-court or down the line, or when to go for an overhead smash.

Along with these benefits, tennis requires at least two players for a match, which means it also trains your social skills, and if you're playing doubles, your teamwork skills.

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What Equipment Do You Need to Play Tennis?

The only equipment you need to play a tennis match is a tennis racket, tennis shoes, a tennis ball, and a tennis court with a regulation net. Your racket head and grip should be the right size and weight for your skill level so you can wield it easily. Your shoes should provide enough lateral support to prevent rolling your ankles during side-to-side movements (running shoes are not recommended). For some tennis clubs, a specific dress code might be required. You may also elect to wear fabric wristbands and headbands to keep the sweat out of your eyes and off of your overgrip.

What Are the Basic Rules of Tennis?

Even if you've both geared up and warmed up, you still need to know all the tennis basics before you step onto the court and play. You can use any combination of tennis grips (like the Semi-Western or Continental grip) and moves like drop shots, lobs, backhand volleys, or

forehand strokes to try and win each point. However, learning all the fundamentals of tennis is imperative to play your best tennis:

Keep it inside the lines. For singles tennis, the serve must always land over the net, and within the opponent's opposite service box (the box on either side of the center mark at the service line, also known as the "T"). If the ball hits the net and still lands in the proper service box, it's called a "let," and the server gets to start over from the first serve again. Even if the ball technically lands outside the box, as long as any part of it still touches the line, it is still in-play. During a rally, the ball must stay within the singles court boundaries, which are the inner sidelines. For doubles tennis, the outer alleys are in-play. However, most beginner players won't have a line judge present, so they must call the ball out or raise their finger if the ball lands outside the lines.

Keep score. Tennis has a unique scoring system, and it's important to keep track of your points to determine who will win (and which side you should be serving from). The server always says their score first, even if it is lower than their opponent's. For example, if the server loses the first three points in a row, the score is love-40.

Avoid touching the net. You can rush the net and perform any volleying maneuver you like. However, if any part of you or your racket physically touches the net at any time during a point, you automatically lose. The net is the equal divider between both sides, and any alteration to its positioning, even accidental, is not allowed.

Hold onto your racket. Your racket must stay in your hands at all times. If you drop or throw the racket at the ball, you will lose the point. You can only return the ball with your racket and no other part of your body. However, the ball doesn't necessarily have to touch the racket face—it's still in-play even if it hits the handle or triangle as well.

Hit the ball after one bounce. Once the ball bounces twice, the point is over. Similarly, you can only hit the ball once as well. Even if you clip the ball and it lands in front of you again, the point is over if the ball doesn't reach your opponent's side.

A ball in the air is a ball in play. Even if your opponent is well behind the baseline in "out" territory, if they make contact with the ball or it hits a part of their body before the bounce, it's still in-play. A ball can't be called until it bounces.

Win by two. Both games and points must be won by two in a tennis match. In the event of a tie, where both players each win six games in a set resulting in a score of 6-6, a tiebreak is introduced. This is where players must face off in a seven-point mini-match. The players switch sides after each serve point, and the end of the court when the sum of the points equals six or multiples thereof. The first player to reach seven points (leading by two) wins. If the tiebreaker occurs in the last set, the points are instead played first to 10, and the winning player must still win by two points.

How Does Scoring Work in Tennis?

Part of learning the basics of tennis involves knowing how to keep score. Tennis scoring seems confusing at first but is relatively simple once you get the hang of it. There are six games in a set, and most sets are played best out of three (unless it is men's professional tennis, in which case the sets are best out of five). Players must win each set by two games. Here's how the tennis scoring system works:

The game starts at love. Each game starts out at 0-0, or “love,” increasing to 15, then 30, then 40 for each point scored. For example, if both players each win one point in the game, it is 15-15, or 15-all.

The server’s score is announced first. Only one player serves per game, and always starts on the right side of the court, alternating sides each point. At the end of the game, the players switch turns serving, and on every odd game, they’ll switch the end of the court they play on. The server’s score is always announced first (so if the server wins the first point of the game and the following point, the score is 30-love).

Enter the ad-phase. If each player wins enough points to get the score to 40-40 (also known as a deuce or 40-all), they enter the “ad phase.” Since every game must be won by two points, one player must score two points in a row. If the server wins the first point after the deuce, the score becomes advantage-in (ad-in).

Win or go back to deuce. Winning the next point wins the game for the server, but losing the point will return the game score back to deuce, in which case the server must try to win two consecutive points again.

Ad-out triggers a must-win situation. If the server loses the first point after deuce, the score becomes advantage-out (ad-out), and they must then win the next three points in succession—the first point returns the score to deuce, and then two more points to win the game.

No-ad scoring speeds up the pace. According to the official tennis rules, if you prefer to play a quicker game, “no-ad scoring” is also acceptable. If you and the opposing player elect to play that way, 40-40/deuce becomes the game point, so the first person to win the next point wins the game.

How to Play Tennis

If you’ve been practicing with a friend or tennis coach, and think your tennis skills are ready to play a real match, check out the steps below:

1. Decide who serves first. A coin toss or racket spin is a good way to decide who should serve first. Since the tennis serve is an inherent advantage to the player serving, it is only fair to let chance determine who will get to. Once you determine who serves, the server only has two opportunities to get the ball in. Should they hit it out, into the net, or step on the line while serving, it is considered a fault. Failing to land your second serve will result in a double fault, and the loss of the point.
2. Alternate serving sides. The first serve of each game starts on the right side of the court, also known as the “deuce side” of the court. The next point comes from the left side, also known as the “ad court” (short for “advantage”). Serve sides are always alternated, and unless you’re doing a second serve, you should never serve from the same side twice in a row.
3. Use your arsenal. Whether you use your left hand or right hand, your forehand and backhand groundstrokes will be instrumental in winning points, along with your serve. Be sure to play to your strengths (for example, if you’re a player whose backhand is stronger than their forehand, try to maneuver your footwork around down the middle balls so you can hit more of them).
4. Use your mind. You’ll have to make quick decisions as to which tennis strokes you’re going to use—like whether to stay at the baseline with your basic strokes or serve and volley, how much

topspin to use, or whether you attempt a winner or try to keep the ball in play longer to push the opposing player to make an unforced error.

5. Change playing sides on the odd games. Having equal conditions for each player contributes to a fair game; this is especially true for outdoor courts. The sun and the wind can be major factors when playing tennis, and certain sides of the court may be more affected than others. When the sum of the games is an odd number, the players switch sides (for example, 1-0, 3-2, 5-0, etc.). This means that the players will always switch after the first game, and then after every two games after that.

6. Be prepared for a tiebreak. Sometimes, each player wins an equal amount of games, bringing the score to 6-6. In that case, the players enter a tiebreak, which is played out of seven points, and must also be won by two. An example of a game score with a tiebreak would be 7-6 (to represent the games) and 7-5 (to represent the tiebreak points).

Tennis is a terrific and enjoyable sport to learn to play, but it can be challenging or intimidating because of the sport's seemingly complex rules. Today, we will dive into the details of the sport including rules, scoring and other basics.

Most people learn how to play tennis mechanically first - in other words, how to hold a racquet, how to swing a racquet and how to hit the ball - without knowing things like the format of play, what the lines on the court mean, how to keep score and more. Here we will answer some of the questions that beginner players have:

What Equipment Do I Need?

A tennis racquet (with strings) - various brands and sizes of racquets are available depending on your age, level and physical size.

Tennis sneakers - footwear that is designed specifically for tennis is recommended in order to prevent injuries. Flat-soled sneakers are also sometimes required in order to protect the court surface.

Tennis balls - for adults, yellow tennis balls that come in cans of 3 are widely available. For juniors, transition tennis balls like red, orange and green balls may be used depending on age and level.

A tennis court - note that this isn't a requirement! Often, one can "play" tennis against a backboard or wall, or even on a makeshift court like a driveway.

How Many Players Do I Need?

1, 2 or 4. You can easily practice tennis by yourself with the help of a backboard, wall or other training aids. To play against someone, you just need one other person positioned on the

opposite side of the net. This is called singles. Get 3 other people, and you have yourself a doubles game with two players on each side of the net.

What Are the Types of Court Surfaces?

The most well-known court surfaces to play on are grass, clay and hard surfaces. Within these broad categories, there are several types of surfaces. On grass, there are natural grass and artificial grass surfaces. On clay, there are red clay and green clay, or Har-tru, surfaces. On hard, there are cement surfaces, surfaces like decoturf which appear to be cement-like but have a cushion to them, and other harder surfaces (including a firm carpet surface!).

What do the lines and boxes on the court mean?

The tennis court is rectangular-shaped with two sides separated by the net. Players face the net during play. On each side, there is a baseline (the line parallel to the net and furthest away from it). The line parallel to the net between the net and the baseline is the service line. The center line, perpendicular to the net dividing the middle/front portion of the court, creates the two service boxes (where a successful serve must land).

You'll note that there are four lines perpendicular to the net that run the length of the court. These lines create the narrow "doubles alley" with the two inside lines outlining the singles court (the playable area during a singles match) and the two outside lines outlining the doubles court (the playable area during a doubles match).

How do you keep score?

It's possible that the scoring system of our beloved sport is unnecessarily complicated since it isn't numerical in the standard 1, 2, 3, 4 kind of way. Instead, the word "Love" means zero points. So at the very start of a service game, the score is essentially "Love-Love". When a player wins one point, they have "15". Two points is "30". Three points is "40". The fourth point won is "Game".

The exception to this is when each player wins three points in a game - instead of calling it "40-40", it is known as "Deuce". From that time on, a player must win two consecutive points to win "Game". After each Deuce point is won, the score is announced "Ad In" (the server has the advantage) or "Ad Out" (the returner has the advantage). After every "Ad" point, the score will either return to Deuce or go to Game.

When keeping score, it is the server's responsibility to announce the score prior to each point being played. The server's score is always announced first, and then the returner's.

For example, I am serving and have won 2 points. My opponent, the returner, has won 1. Prior to me serving the 4th point of the game, I would call out "30-15".

The standard tennis set is the first to win 6 games. The exception to this is when both players win 5 games each. Then, each player has a chance to win two consecutive games to close out the set 7-5. If the score is tied at 6 games each, then the set is usually (not always) decided by a "tiebreaker".

The tiebreaker usually (not always) is played with the first player to win 7 points as the winner of the tiebreaker, and therefore the set. For more information about the various tiebreaker formats, [click here](#).

Usually (not always), a match is determined by the winner of two out of three sets. There are exceptions to this format, like Grand Slam professional tournaments where the men play the best three out of five sets.

What else about the format of play is important to know?

It is customary to spin a racquet or flip a coin to determine who serves first. The person winning the coin toss or racquet flip has the choice to serve first or receive serve. The person losing the coin toss can choose which side they would like to begin play on.

The person who serves first begins the game. Once the first game is won by the server or returner, the players switch sides of the court. The players continue switching sides every two games until the set is over.

The ball has to land within the boundaries of the court in order for the point to continue.

Note: if a ball lands ON a boundary (line), it is still considered "good" and in play. In fact, if any portion of the ball touches the line, it is considered good.

Players are not allowed to touch the net or net posts, or cross over to an opponents side of the court.

No hitting the ball twice in a row.

If the ball hits or touches a player, that player loses the point.

The ball is not allowed to bounce twice. If a ball bounces twice on your side of the court, you lose the point.

All strokes in tennis are a sequence of motions referred to as a "kinetic chain". It begins at a player's feet, extending through the legs, hips, chest, shoulders, arm, and wrist to the racquet as it impacts the tennis ball. This kinetic chain or kinetic linkage as it's often called allows the build up, storage, and transfer of energy to generate power for your shot.

Biomechanically sound tennis technique comes from your kinetic chain working in concert. Bad technique and injuries are the result of dysfunctional movements within your body's kinetic chain.

What does all this mean?

Essentially it means you want all parts of your body to work together and in harmony. In other words the correct amount of rotation, up/down movement, side-to-side movement, and forward/backward momentum will result in the best possible tennis technique.

So now that you understand the basic technical principles let's move on to the six core strokes starting with the most important shot in tennis:

So what is a serve? A serve in tennis is the stroke used to start every point in a match. It is the only stroke in tennis that a player has complete control over and is therefore one of the most important shots in the game. A good serve allows the player serving to assert some control over how the point unfolds. This is because the server gets the first strike and based on the power, spin and shot placement can limit what the returning player can do.

The first point of any game or tiebreak the serving player (server) must stand behind the baseline to the right side of the centre mark when facing the net (deuce/first court). For the second point of a game or tiebreak the server stands to the left of the centre mark (ad/second court). Subsequently, for each point of the same game the serving positioning is the opposite of the previous point.

For both deuce and ad court start positions the server has two chances to hit the ball over the net and into the diagonally opposite service box. If a player misses their first serve they have another opportunity with a second serve. If a player misses their second serve it's a fault and they lose the point.

If a serve touches the net but still lands in the correct service box it is considered a let and the server gets another try. If the serve touches the net and does not land in the service box it's out and the server loses the point or proceeds with their second serve.

Before starting, make sure you're standing behind the baseline. Next place your feet in a side on stance where if you drew an arrow between the tips of your feet it'd point towards your opponent (this may feel a little strange at first but will help with power). Finally, grip the racket in your dominant hand using a continental grip (like you'd hold a hammer) and hold the tennis ball in your non-dominant hand. Now you're ready to start serving.

Below are eight simple step-by-step beginner tennis tips for developing a consistent serve capable of generating power and spin. For the purpose of this instruction I'll assume you're right handed. Without further ado here is how to serve in eight steps:

Begin your service motion by holding your racket and ball in front of you.

Start your momentum forwards by leaning towards the opponent, toss the ball in the air with your non-dominant arm while dropping your racket arm straight back. The ball toss and backswing happen simultaneously.

Now your body should be in a ready position, fully coiled and ready to unload.

As the ball moves into striking position above your head start uncoiling by driving up through your legs, rotating your body, and pulling your non-dominant arm down.

Continue extending and uncoiling as your racket arm whips up and around following the rest of your body.

At this stage your body and head position should be facing or almost facing the net as you pull down and make contact with the tennis ball.

As you continue the follow through your body should be falling forward and to the left as your racket arm whips through the ball and slightly to the right.

Finally, as you finish your serve motion you'll land on your left foot in the court while your dominant arm finishes its swing on the left side of your body (if you're right handed).

The serve is one of the most technically complex strokes in tennis which is why many players struggle with it. A few more general pointers to help you on your way is to A) stay relaxed, B) keep your technique simple, and C) don't worry too much about how to move your arm as this'll take care of itself if the fundamental serve technique is good.

What is groundstroke in tennis? A groundstroke is a forehand or backhand stroke that is hit after the ball has bounced once on the court. It is one of the core fundamental shots in tennis and is normally played from the back of the court during a baseline rally. However, groundstrokes can be played from anywhere on the court so long as the tennis ball has bounced. So an approach shot hit from the middle of the court (around the service line) or even closer to the net is still considered a groundstroke. If the ball is hit in the air before bouncing it's a volley, drive volley or smash.

Unless you're watching footage from the 80's, 70's or earlier, groundstrokes are the most common type of stroke you see in tennis today. The modern game is dominated by "baseliners" like Nadal, Federer, Djokovic and Murray who battle it out from the back of the court with powerful forehands and backhands.

Generally, the forehand is the biggest weapon a player has during a rally from the baseline as it's usually capable of generating the most power. Compared to the forehand, the backhand groundstroke tends to be less powerful but is often the more consistent shot.

While there are some key differences between the two types of groundstrokes the fundamental mechanics stay the same. Power is generated and control maintained by balancing the right amount of rotation, up/down, forward/back and side-to-side movement during the stroke.

Like all strokes in tennis the forehand and backhand groundstrokes can be hit with a variety of different spins. These include, topspin, backspin or slice, flat and sidespin. What spin is used depends on the strategic situation but most commonly groundstrokes are hit with topspin.

A tennis forehand is one of the two types of groundstrokes. It refers to a shot performed from the baseline with the racket held in your dominant hand. For a right-handed player the forehand swing starts on the right side of your body, continues forward and across your body as you contact the ball (at this point the palm of your hand is turned away from your body), and finishes on the left side of your body.

Here is how to hit a forehand groundstroke in six steps:

Preparation. When your opponent makes contact with the tennis ball take light split step opening up your legs.

As the ball approaches stay in that open stance position as you rotate your hips, shoulders and arms as part of the take back.

Now start unwinding your body with your dominant arm dropping down (to help generate topspin) as it trails the rest of your body forward towards the ball.

Continue rotating and swing your racket up, over and through the ball as you make contact. At this stage the front of your body and head should be facing the net.

Follow through by continuing your arms extension forward then across your body towards your non-dominant side.

Finally, complete your stroke with your weight shifted to your left leg (if right handed) and your racket head hovering around your left shoulder.

While practicing your forehand always try to maintain a “handshake” arm position with your right arm swing. That means not too cramped or too far away in relation to your body. This will help generate power while maintaining control. Also, remember that your wrist, hand and racket should be the last things to rotate through at contact point. In many ways the forehand is like a low serve as there are many similarities in body movement.

A backhand in tennis is the other of the two types of groundstroke. It can be a one-handed and/or two-handed stroke. Like the forehand, the basic swing pattern starts on one side of your body, moves forward and across, and ends on the other side of your body. But unlike the forehand, the backhand is hit with the back of your dominant hand facing the direction of the stroke.

A one-handed backhand is performed with only your dominant hand holding the racquet grip as you make contact with the tennis ball. For the novice player, compared to the two-handed backhand the one-hander generally sacrifices some power and stability for greater reach. Look at this image sequence of Stan Wawrinka and follow along step-by step below.

How to hit a one-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Take a light split step to get balanced and prepare.

Move into position while at the same time begin rotating your upper body for the take back. It is generally easier to move your feet to a closed or side-on position to help with rotation and strength

Once in position your take back should be done and your right shoulder pointing at the ball (if you're right handed).

Just like the forehand, your arm will drop down as you start rotating and swinging towards the ball.

As you continue to rotate back around (unwinding) your arm will whip forward and up making contact with the ball.

Lastly, finish your backhand follow through by completing the motion and extending your arm to the right as you land with your weight primarily on your dominant side.

In the images sequence above Wawrinka has a relatively straight arm at contact point. You can however maintain a slight bend in your arm as this helps prevent injury. Remember, strive for simplicity, balance and a relaxed swing. Getting the basics right will lead to rapid improvements.

A two-handed backhand is performed with your dominant hand holding the bottom of the racquet grip and your non-dominant hand placed above as you make contact with the ball. The addition of the second arm and hand gives the two-handed backhand greater control and power at the cost of reach. Study the image sequence of Andre Agassi and follow along step-by step below.

How to hit a two-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Split step as your opponent strikes the ball to get ready.

Move into position while simultaneously taking the racket back.

When in position your take back should be complete with your racket on your non-dominant side, shoulder angled towards the ball.

Uncoil your body rotating your hips and shoulders to contact the ball. Here your body should be facing the net with approximately equal racket control given to both arms.

As you follow through your left arm takes over driving through the ball.

End your stroke by swinging your racket all the way to your non-dominant side with your bodyweight on your dominant side.

For a novice it can be helpful to think of the two-handed backhand as a left handed forehand but with an added arm for stability. While you grip the racket with both hands, how much control each arm has over the swing changes during the take back, contact point, and follow through from right arm, to equal control, and then left arm (if you're right handed). Keep this in mind when training.

THE JOURNEY

THE PLAYER

STRAIGHT TALKING

MIND & BODY

CHARITY

GALLERY

ACADEMY

MEMBERS

CONTACT

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Tennis 101: The 6 Basic Strokes Explained Step-by-Step

the six basic shots in tennis explained - roger federer

Photo: ©jfawcette

If you're new to tennis you'll probably agree that:

Tennis terminology and the various strokes can get confusing for a beginner. There are so many terms, definitions, rules, and shots that if you haven't grown up playing or watching the sport it can all feel a little overwhelming.

Since I began sharing tennis tips and instructions on my YouTube channel, Coaching App and newsletter I've received a lot of elementary questions from people who have just picked up a racquet for the first time.

Realising that not everyone knows the basics of how to hit a tennis ball or even what a "groundstroke" is I've decided to write this introductory guide on the basic tennis strokes, terms and definitions. For each stroke I have also included a simple breakdown on how to perform it.

If you're a long time fan or player much of this article will seem painfully obvious to you. But this blog post is for total beginners who want to learn the fundamentals of the sport, understand basic terms, and become familiar with the six core strokes in tennis.

Here is what I'll be covering in this introductory guide. Each section contains an overview and step-by-step instructions:

6 basic tennis strokes

The basic mechanics of tennis

The serve

Ground strokes: forehand and backhand

Volleys: Forehand volley & backhand volley

Overhead smash

Next steps

Alright, let's dive into it starting with a brief overview of the core mechanics and fundamental technical principles that apply to all strokes in tennis:

6 Basic Tennis Strokes.

All games of tennis consist of six basic strokes: the serve, forehand groundstroke, backhand groundstroke, forehand volley, backhand volley, and the overhead smash.

The 6 basic "strokes" are the fundamental movements a player performs to hit a tennis ball. A "shot" on the other hand is what happens as a result of a stroke. For example:

Forehand groundstroke = stroke

Inside out topspin forehand winner = shot

The difference is subtle but important. Especially if you're a beginner looking to learn and understand the game. But all you really need to know is that every single shot like a lob or drop shot, regardless of the spin used, comes from one of the six fundamental strokes.

The basic mechanics of tennis.

All strokes in tennis are a sequence of motions referred to as a "kinetic chain". It begins at a player's feet, extending through the legs, hips, chest, shoulders, arm, and wrist to the racquet as it impacts the tennis ball. This kinetic chain or kinetic linkage as it's often called allows the build up, storage, and transfer of energy to generate power for your shot.

Biomechanically sound tennis technique comes from your kinetic chain working in concert. Bad technique and injuries are the result of dysfunctional movements within your body's kinetic chain.

What does all this mean?

Essentially it means you want all parts of your body to work together and in harmony. In other words the correct amount of rotation, up/down movement, side-to-side movement, and forward/backward momentum will result in the best possible tennis technique.

So now that you understand the basic technical principles let's move on to the six core strokes starting with the most important shot in tennis:

Tennis serve definition, overview and rules.

Tennis serve definition overview and rules

So what is a serve? A serve in tennis is the stroke used to start every point in a match. It is the only stroke in tennis that a player has complete control over and is therefore one of the most important shots in the game. A good serve allows the player serving to assert some control over how the point unfolds. This is because the server gets the first strike and based on the power, spin and shot placement can limit what the returning player can do.

The first point of any game or tiebreak the serving player (server) must stand behind the baseline to the right side of the centre mark when facing the net (deuce/first court). For the second point of a game or tiebreak the server stands to the left of the centre mark (ad/second court). Subsequently, for each point of the same game the serving positioning is the opposite of the previous point.

For both deuce and ad court start positions the server has two chances to hit the ball over the net and into the diagonally opposite service box. If a player misses their first serve they have another opportunity with a second serve. If a player misses their second serve it's a fault and they lose the point.

If a serve touches the net but still lands in the correct service box it is considered a let and the server gets another try. If the serve touches the net and does not land in the service box it's out and the server loses the point or proceeds with their second serve.

Beginner tips: How to serve step-by-step.

Before starting, make sure you're standing behind the baseline. Next place your feet in a side on stance where if you drew an arrow between the tips of your feet it'd point towards your opponent (this may feel a little strange at first but will help with power). Finally, grip the racket in your dominant hand using a continental grip (like you'd hold a hammer) and hold the tennis ball in your non-dominant hand. Now you're ready to start serving.

Beginner tips How to serve step by step

Below are eight simple step-by-step beginner tennis tips for developing a consistent serve capable of generating power and spin. For the purpose of this instruction I'll assume you're right handed. Without further ado here is how to serve in eight steps:

Begin your service motion by holding your racket and ball in front of you.

Start your momentum forwards by leaning towards the opponent, toss the ball in the air with your non-dominant arm while dropping your racket arm straight back. The ball toss and backswing happen simultaneously.

Now your body should be in a ready position, fully coiled and ready to unload.

As the ball moves into striking position above your head start uncoiling by driving up through your legs, rotating your body, and pulling your non-dominant arm down.

Continue extending and uncoiling as your racket arm whips up and around following the rest of your body.

At this stage your body and head position should be facing or almost facing the net as you pull down and make contact with the tennis ball.

As you continue the follow through your body should be falling forward and to the left as your racket arm whips through the ball and slightly to the right.

Finally, as you finish your serve motion you'll land on your left foot in the court while your dominant arm finishes its swing on the left side of your body (if you're right handed).

The serve is one of the most technically complex strokes in tennis which is why many players struggle with it. A few more general pointers to help you on your way is to A) stay relaxed, B) keep your technique simple, and C) don't worry too much about how to move your arm as this'll take care of itself if the fundamental serve technique is good.

Tennis groundstroke overview.

Tennis groundstroke overview

What is groundstroke in tennis? A groundstroke is a forehand or backhand stroke that is hit after the ball has bounced once on the court. It is one of the core fundamental shots in tennis and is normally played from the back of the court during a baseline rally. However, groundstrokes can be played from anywhere on the court so long as the tennis ball has bounced. So an approach shot hit from the middle of the court (around the service line) or even closer to the net is still considered a groundstroke. If the ball is hit in the air before bouncing it's a volley, drive volley or smash.

Unless you're watching footage from the 80's, 70's or earlier, groundstrokes are the most common type of stroke you see in tennis today. The modern game is dominated by "baseliners"

like Nadal, Federer, Djokovic and Murray who battle it out from the back of the court with powerful forehands and backhands.

Generally, the forehand is the biggest weapon a player has during a rally from the baseline as it's usually capable of generating the most power. Compared to the forehand, the backhand groundstroke tends to be less powerful but is often the more consistent shot.

While there are some key differences between the two types of groundstrokes the fundamental mechanics stay the same. Power is generated and control maintained by balancing the right amount of rotation, up/down, forward/back and side-to-side movement during the stroke.

Like all strokes in tennis the forehand and backhand groundstrokes can be hit with a variety of different spins. These include, topspin, backspin or slice, flat and sidespin. What spin is used depends on the strategic situation but most commonly groundstrokes are hit with topspin.

Definition: What is a forehand groundstroke?

A tennis forehand is one of the two types of groundstrokes. It refers to a shot performed from the baseline with the racket held in your dominant hand. For a right-handed player the forehand swing starts on the right side of your body, continues forward and across your body as you contact the ball (at this point the palm of your hand is turned away from your body), and finishes on the left side of your body.

Beginner tips: How to hit a forehand step-by-step.

As with most strokes in tennis the forehand is hit on the move using a variety of different spins. For the purpose of this beginner guide I'm going to show you how to perform a topspin forehand from the baseline.

Beginner tips How to hit a forehand step by step

Here is how to hit a forehand groundstroke in six steps:

Preparation. When your opponent makes contact with the tennis ball take light split step opening up your legs.

As the ball approaches stay in that open stance position as you rotate your hips, shoulders and arms as part of the take back.

Now start unwinding your body with your dominant arm dropping down (to help generate topspin) as it trails the rest of your body forward towards the ball.

Continue rotating and swing your racket up, over and through the ball as you make contact. At this stage the front of your body and head should be facing the net.

Follow through by continuing your arms extension forward then across your body towards your non-dominant side.

Finally, complete your stroke with your weight shifted to your left leg (if right handed) and your racket head hovering around your left shoulder.

While practicing your forehand always try to maintain a “handshake” arm position with your right arm swing. That means not too cramped or too far away in relation to your body. This will help generate power while maintaining control. Also, remember that your wrist, hand and racket should be the last things to rotate through at contact point. In many ways the forehand is like a low serve as there are many similarities in body movement.

Definition: What is a backhand groundstroke?

A backhand in tennis is the other of the two types of groundstroke. It can be a one-handed and/or two-handed stroke. Like the forehand, the basic swing pattern starts on one side of your body, moves forward and across, and ends on the other side of your body. But unlike the forehand, the backhand is hit with the back of your dominant hand facing the direction of the stroke.

Beginner tips: How to hit a one-handed backhand step-by-step.

A one-handed backhand is performed with only your dominant hand holding the racquet grip as you make contact with the tennis ball. For the novice player, compared to the two-handed backhand the one-hander generally sacrifices some power and stability for greater reach. Look at this image sequence of Stan Wawrinka and follow along step-by step below.

Beginner tips How to hit a one-handed backhand step by step

How to hit a one-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Take a light split step to get balanced and prepare.

Move into position while at the same time begin rotating your upper body for the take back. It is generally easier to move your feet to a closed or side-on position to help with rotation and strength

Once in position your take back should be done and your right shoulder pointing at the ball (if you're right handed).

Just like the forehand, your arm will drop down as your start rotating and swinging towards the ball.

As you continue to rotate back around (unwinding) your arm will whip forward and up making contact with the ball.

Lastly, finish your backhand follow through by completing the motion and extending your arm to the right as you land with your weight primarily on your dominant side.

In the images sequence above Wawrinka has a relatively straight arm at contact point. You can however maintain a slight bend in your arm as this helps prevent injury. Remember, strive for simplicity, balance and a relaxed swing. Getting the basics right will lead to rapid improvements.

Beginner tips: How to hit a two-handed backhand step-by-step.

A two-handed backhand is performed with your dominant hand holding the bottom of the racquet grip and your non-dominant hand placed above as you make contact with the ball. The addition of the second arm and hand gives the two-handed backhand greater control and power at the cost of reach. Study the image sequence of Andre Agassi and follow along step-by step below.

Beginner tips How to hit a one-handed backhand step by step

How to hit a two-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Split step as your opponent strikes the ball to get ready.

Move into position while simultaneously taking the racket back.

When in position your take back should be complete with your racket on your non-dominant side, shoulder angled towards the ball.

Uncoil your body rotating your hips and shoulders to contact the ball. Here your body should be facing the net with approximately equal racket control given to both arms.

As you follow through your left arm takes over driving through the ball.

End your stroke by swinging your racket all the way to your non-dominant side with your bodyweight on your dominant side.

For a novice it can be helpful to think of the two-handed backhand as a left handed forehand but with an added arm for stability. While you grip the racket with both hands, how much control each arm has over the swing changes during the take back, contact point, and follow through from right arm, to equal control, and then left arm (if you're right handed). Keep this in mind when training. Also, note that in the image above Andre's feet are in an open stance as he's hitting the ball but a closed stance will also work fine in most occasions.

So what is a volley in tennis? A volley stroke is where the ball is hit out of the air before it bounces on the court. The term "volley" encompasses both the forehand volley stroke and backhand volley stroke. Technically a volley can be played from just about any position but usually it's hit when a player is closer to the net. If the ball bounces before a player makes contact the shot is considered a groundstroke or half volley.

Volleying is an inherently offensive style of play as you're looking to aggressively shorten and win the point quickly by reducing the time your opponent has to react, move and recover from his/her previous position. Speed, reflexes, touch and good footwork are all required to become a

great volleyer. This is because you have less time when you're close to the net so it's critical to shorten the backswing and follow through.

The forehand volley is one of the two types of volleys. It is generally played closer to the net than other strokes. Like the forehand groundstroke, a forehand volley is hit with the racket in your dominant hand palm facing away from your body. Again, similar to forehand groundstrokes, forehand volleys are hit with your dominant hand to the right side of your body if you're right handed, and to the left side of your body if you're left handed.

The key to a great forehand volley is explosive movement, simplified technique and good reaction. Remember the ball is coming at you fast and you don't have time for a big elaborate stroke.

How to hit a forehand volley in four easy steps:

When you approach the net keep your racket out in front and take a light split step to ready yourself as you move forward.

As the ball approaches turn your upper body slightly to your right side taking the racket back. Continuing your forward momentum bring the racket forward maintaining a strong wrist and handshake arm position as you contact the ball.

Keep moving your feet and body weight forward through the ball as you finish your follow through by swinging the racket back in front of your body.

When practicing either of your volleys think simple and minimal swing. Also, keeping your footwork and swing smooth is very important. Practice flowing through the ball using your bodyweight and forward momentum at and after contact point.

The backhand volley is the other type of volley. Just like the forehand volley it's usually hit quite close to the net. And similar to a single-handed backhand (aka one-handed backhand) groundstroke the backhand volley is hit using your dominant arm with the back of the hand facing away from your body as you grip the racket and make contact.

Just like the forehand volley, developing a solid backhand volley is as much about your footwork, momentum and body weight as it is about your swing. Explosive yet smooth movement to and through the ball is key.

How to hit a backhand volley in four easy steps:

Approach the net quickly with your racket ready and out in front of you.

As the ball comes towards you keep your technique simple with a short take back rotating your upper body to the left.

Continue your forward momentum using your feet to move to the ball as you make contact with a short swing.

Keep transferring your body weight forward through the ball and rotate your upper body slightly bringing the racket forward and to the right ending back in front of you.

Notice how short Tim Henman's actual swing is in the above image. Most of the work is being done by his legs. This is how you maintain control while generating power when attacking the net.

THE JOURNEY

THE PLAYER

STRAIGHT TALKING

MIND & BODY

CHARITY

GALLERY

ACADEMY

MEMBERS

CONTACT

THE JOURNEY

THE PLAYER

STRAIGHT TALKING

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Tennis 101: The 6 Basic Strokes Explained Step-by-Step

the six basic shots in tennis explained - roger federer

Photo: @jfawcette

If you're new to tennis you'll probably agree that:

Tennis terminology and the various strokes can get confusing for a beginner. There are so many terms, definitions, rules, and shots that if you haven't grown up playing or watching the sport it can all feel a little overwhelming.

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Alright, let's dive into it starting with a brief overview of the core mechanics and fundamental technical principles that apply to all strokes in tennis:

6 Basic Tennis Strokes.

All games of tennis consist of six basic strokes: the serve, forehand groundstroke, backhand groundstroke, forehand volley, backhand volley, and the overhead smash.

The 6 basic "strokes" are the fundamental movements a player performs to hit a tennis ball. A "shot" on the other hand is what happens as a result of a stroke. For example:

Forehand groundstroke = stroke

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The difference is subtle but important. Especially if you're a beginner looking to learn and understand the game. But all you really need to know is that every single shot like a lob or drop shot, regardless of the spin used, comes from one of the six fundamental strokes.

The basic mechanics of tennis.

All strokes in tennis are a sequence of motions referred to as a “kinetic chain”. It begins at a player’s feet, extending through the legs, hips, chest, shoulders, arm, and wrist to the racquet as it impacts the tennis ball. This kinetic chain or kinetic linkage as it’s often called allows the build up, storage, and transfer of energy to generate power for your shot.

Biomechanically sound tennis technique comes from your kinetic chain working in concert. Bad technique and injuries are the result of dysfunctional movements within your body’s kinetic chain.

What does all this mean?

Essentially it means you want all parts of your body to work together and in harmony. In other words the correct amount of rotation, up/down movement, side-to-side movement, and forward/backward momentum will result in the best possible tennis technique.

So now that you understand the basic technical principles let’s move on to the six core strokes starting with the most important shot in tennis:

Tennis serve definition, overview and rules.

Tennis serve definition overview and rules

So what is a serve? A serve in tennis is the stroke used to start every point in a match. It is the only stroke in tennis that a player has complete control over and is therefore one of the most important shots in the game. A good serve allows the player serving to assert some control over how the point unfolds. This is because the server gets the first strike and based on the power, spin and shot placement can limit what the returning player can do.

The first point of any game or tiebreak the serving player (server) must stand behind the baseline to the right side of the centre mark when facing the net (deuce/first court). For the second point of a game or tiebreak the server stands to the left of the centre mark (ad/second court). Subsequently, for each point of the same game the serving positioning is the opposite of the previous point.

For both deuce and ad court start positions the server has two chances to hit the ball over the net and into the diagonally opposite service box. If a player misses their first serve they have another opportunity with a second serve. If a player misses their second serve it’s a fault and they lose the point.

If a serve touches the net but still lands in the correct service box it is considered a let and the server gets another try. If the serve touches the net and does not land in the service box it's out and the server loses the point or proceeds with their second serve.

Beginner tips: How to serve step-by-step.

Before starting, make sure you're standing behind the baseline. Next place your feet in a side on stance where if you drew an arrow between the tips of your feet it'd point towards your opponent (this may feel a little strange at first but will help with power). Finally, grip the racket in your dominant hand using a continental grip (like you'd hold a hammer) and hold the tennis ball in your non-dominant hand. Now you're ready to start serving.

Beginner tips How to serve step by step

Below are eight simple step-by-step beginner tennis tips for developing a consistent serve capable of generating power and spin. For the purpose of this instruction I'll assume you're right handed. Without further ado here is how to serve in eight steps:

Begin your service motion by holding your racket and ball in front of you.

Start your momentum forwards by leaning towards the opponent, toss the ball in the air with your non-dominant arm while dropping your racket arm straight back. The ball toss and backswing happen simultaneously.

Now your body should be in a ready position, fully coiled and ready to unload.

As the ball moves into striking position above your head start uncoiling by driving up through your legs, rotating your body, and pulling your non-dominant arm down.

Continue extending and uncoiling as your racket arm whips up and around following the rest of your body.

At this stage your body and head position should be facing or almost facing the net as you pull down and make contact with the tennis ball.

As you continue the follow through your body should be falling forward and to the left as your racket arm whips through the ball and slightly to the right.

Finally, as you finish your serve motion you'll land on your left foot in in the court while your dominant arm finishes it's swing on the left side of your body (if you're right handed).

The serve is one of the most technically complex strokes in tennis which is why many players struggle with it. A few more general pointers to help you on your way is to A) stay relaxed, B) keep your technique simple, and C) don't worry too much about how to move your arm as this'll take care of itself if the fundamental serve technique is good.

Tennis groundstroke overview.

Tennis groundstroke overview

What is groundstroke in tennis? A groundstroke is a forehand or backhand stroke that is hit after the ball has bounced once on the court. It is one of the core fundamental shots in tennis and is normally played from the back of the court during a baseline rally. However, groundstrokes can be played from anywhere on the court so long as the tennis ball has bounced. So an approach shot hit from the middle of the court (around the service line) or even closer to the net is still considered a groundstroke. If the ball is hit in the air before bouncing it's a volley, drive volley or smash.

Unless you're watching footage from the 80's, 70's or earlier, groundstrokes are the most common type of stroke you see in tennis today. The modern game is dominated by "baseliners" like Nadal, Federer, Djokovic and Murray who battle it out from the back of the court with powerful forehands and backhands.

Generally, the forehand is the biggest weapon a player has during a rally from the baseline as it's usually capable of generating the most power. Compared to the forehand, the backhand groundstroke tends to be less powerful but is often the more consistent shot.

While there are some key differences between the two types of groundstrokes the fundamental mechanics stay the same. Power is generated and control maintained by balancing the right amount of rotation, up/down, forward/back and side-to-side movement during the stroke.

Like all strokes in tennis the forehand and backhand groundstrokes can be hit with a variety of different spins. These include, topspin, backspin or slice, flat and sidespin. What spin is used depends on the strategic situation but most commonly groundstrokes are hit with topspin.

Definition: What is a forehand groundstroke?

A tennis forehand is one of the two types of groundstrokes. It refers to a shot performed from the baseline with the racket held in your dominant hand. For a right-handed player the forehand swing starts on the right side of your body, continues forward and across your body as you contact the ball (at this point the palm of your hand is turned away from your body), and finishes on the left side of your body.

Beginner tips: How to hit a forehand step-by-step.

As with most strokes in tennis the forehand is hit on the move using a variety of different spins. For the purpose of this beginner guide I'm going to show you how to perform a topspin forehand from the baseline.

Beginner tips How to hit a forehand step by step

Here is how to hit a forehand groundstroke in six steps:

Preparation. When your opponent makes contact with the tennis ball take light split step opening up your legs.

As the ball approaches stay in that open stance position as you rotate your hips, shoulders and arms as part of the take back.

Now start unwinding your body with your dominant arm dropping down (to help generate topspin) as it trails the rest of your body forward towards the ball.

Continue rotating and swing your racket up, over and through the ball as you make contact. At this stage the front of your body and head should be facing the net.

Follow through by continuing your arms extension forward then across your body towards your non-dominant side.

Finally, complete your stroke with your weight shifted to your left leg (if right handed) and your racket head hovering around your left shoulder.

While practicing your forehand always try to maintain a “handshake” arm position with your right arm swing. That means not too cramped or too far away in relation to your body. This will help generate power while maintaining control. Also, remember that your wrist, hand and racket should be the last things to rotate through at contact point. In many ways the forehand is like a low serve as there are many similarities in body movement.

Definition: What is a backhand groundstroke?

A backhand in tennis is the other of the two types of groundstroke. It can be a one-handed and/or two-handed stroke. Like the forehand, the basic swing pattern starts on one side of your body, moves forward and across, and ends on the other side of your body. But unlike the forehand, the backhand is hit with the back of your dominant hand facing the direction of the stroke.

Beginner tips: How to hit a one-handed backhand step-by-step.

A one-handed backhand is performed with only your dominant hand holding the racquet grip as you make contact with the tennis ball. For the novice player, compared to the two-handed backhand the one-hander generally sacrifices some power and stability for greater reach. Look at this image sequence of Stan Wawrinka and follow along step-by step below.

Beginner tips How to hit a one-handed backhand step by step

How to hit a one-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Take a light split step to get balanced and prepare.

Move into position while at the same time begin rotating your upper body for the take back. It is generally easier to move your feet to a closed or side-on position to help with rotation and strength

Once in position your take back should be done and your right shoulder pointing at the ball (if you're right handed).

Just like the forehand, your arm will drop down as you start rotating and swinging towards the ball.

As you continue to rotate back around (unwinding) your arm will whip forward and up making contact with the ball.

Lastly, finish your backhand follow through by completing the motion and extending your arm to the right as you land with your weight primarily on your dominant side.

In the images sequence above Wawrinka has a relatively straight arm at contact point. You can however maintain a slight bend in your arm as this helps prevent injury. Remember, strive for simplicity, balance and a relaxed swing. Getting the basics right will lead to rapid improvements.

Beginner tips: How to hit a two-handed backhand step-by-step.

A two-handed backhand is performed with your dominant hand holding the bottom of the racquet grip and your non-dominant hand placed above as you make contact with the ball. The addition of the second arm and hand gives the two-handed backhand greater control and power at the cost of reach. Study the image sequence of Andre Agassi and follow along step-by step below.

Beginner tips How to hit a one-handed backhand step by step

How to hit a two-handed backhand groundstroke in six steps:

Split step as your opponent strikes the ball to get ready.

Move into position while simultaneously taking the racket back.

When in position your take back should be complete with your racket on your non-dominant side, shoulder angled towards the ball.

Uncoil your body rotating your hips and shoulders to contact the ball. Here your body should be facing the net with approximately equal racket control given to both arms.

As you follow through your left arm takes over driving through the ball.

End your stroke by swinging your racket all the way to your non-dominant side with your bodyweight on your dominant side.

For a novice it can be helpful to think of the two-handed backhand as a left handed forehand but with an added arm for stability. While you grip the racket with both hands, how much control each arm has over the swing changes during the take back, contact point, and follow through from right arm, to equal control, and then left arm (if you're right handed). Keep this in mind

when training. Also, note that in the image above Andre's feet are in an open stance as he's hitting the ball but a closed stance will also work fine in most occasions.

Tennis volley overview.

Tennis volley overview

So what is a volley in tennis? A volley stroke is where the ball is hit out of the air before it bounces on the court. The term "volley" encompasses both the forehand volley stroke and backhand volley stroke. Technically a volley can be played from just about any position but usually it's hit when a player is closer to the net. If the ball bounces before a player makes contact the shot is considered a groundstroke or half volley.

Volleying is an inherently offensive style of play as you're looking to aggressively shorten and win the point quickly by reducing the time your opponent has to react, move and recover from his/her previous position. Speed, reflexes, touch and good footwork are all required to become a great volleyer. This is because you have less time when you're close to the net so it's critical to shorten the backswing and follow through.

Definition: What is a forehand volley?

The forehand volley is one of the two types of volleys. It is generally played closer to the net than other strokes. Like the forehand groundstroke, a forehand volley is hit with the racket in your dominant hand palm facing away from your body. Again, similar to forehand groundstrokes, forehand volleys are hit with your dominant hand to the right side of your body if you're right handed, and to the left side of your body if you're left handed.

Beginner tips: How to hit a forehand volley step-by-step.

The key to a great forehand volley is explosive movement, simplified technique and good reaction. Remember the ball is coming at you fast and you don't have time for a big elaborate stroke. Look at the image below and notice how short Pete Sampras keeps his swing.

Beginner tips How to hit a forehand volley step by step

How to hit a forehand volley in four easy steps:

When you approach the net keep your racket out in front and take a light split step to ready yourself as you move forward.

As the ball approaches turn your upper body slightly to your right side taking the racket back. Continuing your forward momentum bring the racket forward maintaining a strong wrist and handshake arm position as you contact the ball.

Keep moving your feet and body weight forward through the ball as you finish your follow through by swinging the racket back in front of your body.

When practicing either of your volleys think simple and minimal swing. Also, keeping your footwork and swing smooth is very important. Practice flowing through the ball using your bodyweight and forward momentum at and after contact point.

Definition: What is a backhand volley?

The backhand volley is the other type of volley. Just like the forehand volley it's usually hit quite close to the net. And similar to a single-handed backhand (aka one-handed backhand) groundstroke the backhand volley is hit using your dominant arm with the back of the hand facing away from your body as you grip the racket and make contact.

Beginner tips: How to hit a backhand volley step-by-step.

Just like the forehand volley, developing a solid backhand volley is as much about your footwork, momentum and body weight as it is about your swing. Explosive yet smooth movement to and through the ball is key.

Beginner tips How to hit a forehand volley step by step

How to hit a backhand volley in four easy steps:

Approach the net quickly with your racket ready and out in front of you.

As the ball comes towards you keep your technique simple with a short take back rotating your upper body to the left.

Continue your forward momentum using your feet to move to the ball as you make contact with a short swing.

Keep transferring your body weight forward through the ball and rotate your upper body slightly bringing the racket forward and to the right ending back in front of you.

Notice how short Tim Henman's actual swing is in the above image. Most of the work is being done by his legs. This is how you maintain control while generating power when attacking the net.

What is an overhead smash? In tennis an overhead smash is a stroke where the player contacts the ball with the racquet above his or her head using a serve-like motion. This shot is

commonly referred to as simply a smash or overhead and the two terms are interchangeable. The term smash or overhead usually refers to the “forehand smash” or “forehand overhead” as this is the most common form of the shot. The backhand smash is only used when a player is unable maneuver into a position to hit the more powerful forehand smash.

An overhead smash is normally hit when a player is close to the net or around the middle of the court (around the service line) before the ball bounces. However, a player can elect to perform a smash “on the bounce”. This is usually done because the opponent has thrown up a very high defensive lob. Letting the ball bounce once in this situation makes timing your smash correctly much easier.

You can think of the smash as portable serve. But unlike the serve, a smash is hit during the point while you are on the move. This means there are some very important differences. As you’re running and moving during the rally, simplifying your technique and focusing on your footwork becomes incredibly important.

Here are five basic tennis tips for improving your overhead smash technique:

Hold the racket using a continental grip.

When you see the ball rising up through the air focus on your positioning keeping the ball in front of you at all times by using good quick footwork. While moving back, rotate your body bringing the racket straight back to a ready position with your non-dominant hand angled up towards the ball.

As the ball drops into striking position uncoil and rotate your body swinging the racket up towards the tennis ball.

Similar to the serve, at this point your body should have rotated to face your opponent as you snap your arm around making contact with the tennis ball.

After contact continue with a short follow through bringing the racket down then across your body.

The basic overhead smash technique is similar in many ways to the serve but because you and the ball are moving around the court simultaneously your movement, simplicity and timing become extra important. A few additional tips are to A) practice shuffle steps, backpedaling, and crossover steps to move backwards with speed and balance, B) keep things simple by shortening your swing, and C) stay calm and relaxed as the ball drops down into your contact point zone.