

Tennis *for* Beginners

Getting Ready to Hit the Court



Midwest Sports

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Tennis: An Introduction



Have you been struck with a love or curiosity of tennis? Thinking about trying your hand at this beloved sport? Maybe you caught a glimpse of [Roger Federer](#)'s awe-inspiring shot between the legs... or you stumbled on a lively match at your neighborhood court... or you simply want to have some fun and get fit. Whatever brings you to

the court, there's quite a bit of information and skills to learn as you begin your tennis journey.

Before you shell out for expensive tennis lessons, let's go over some basics of the game, including important terms, scoring, rules, equipment, and [basic apparel](#). We'll provide you with the ins and outs of tennis racquets, tennis balls, tennis strings, tennis shoes, and more. Then we'll introduce you to the essential elements of how to play tennis, from serves on the baseline to volleys at the net.

By the end, you'll have a foundational understanding of the game and be ready to find your way forward. Like with most sports, learning how to play tennis is all about practice, practice, and more practice. We can't promise you'll be the next [Nadal](#) or [Sharapova](#), but remember us if you happen to make it to the top!

Section 1:

The Basics

“The primary conception of tennis is to get the ball over the net and at the same time to keep it within bounds of the court; failing this, within the borders of the neighborhood.” – Elliot Chaze

Beginner tennis players may be a bit flustered when confronted with the rules and terms of tennis, but it's not as complicated as it looks! It's a logical and sensible system that starts small with **points** and progresses to **games**, **sets**, and finally the **match**. The scoring and rules ingeniously ensure a victor for every match – there are no ties in tennis. You can't split a point, a game, or a set. This is the ultimate sport for competitors who strive to be the best, and there's always a clear and decisive winner. Before we get into the details of scoring, let's go over some basic terms you'll need to know.

———— Chapter 1 ————

Tennis Terms to Know

The language of tennis is often befuddling. While there are many theories exploring the emergence of confusing terms like “love” and a scoring system that inexplicably jumps from zero to 15 to 30 to 40, at the end of the day one simply has to shrug the shoulders and play. On the plus side, many tennis terms are easier to remember due to their uniqueness! As you continue reading, feel free to return to this chapter if you stumble across an unfamiliar term.

Ace: a point won on a legal serve that is not touched by the opponent.

Advantage or *ad*: when a player scores a point after deuce (a score of 40-40), he or she is said to have the “advantage.” If this player earns a point while holding the advantage, he or she wins the game. If he or she does not earn a point, the score returns to deuce.

Alley: area of the court between the singles and doubles sidelines. In singles play, the alley is out of bounds; in doubles play, it is in bounds.

Backhand: a basic tennis shot that is swung around the body with the back of the hand facing forward.

Baseline: the boundary line at the farthest back end of each side of the court.

Crosscourt: hitting the tennis ball diagonally across the court to the opponent.

Drop shot: a shot hit lightly (usually with backspin) to just go over the net, catching opponents off guard.

Doubles: tennis played with a team of two players on each side of the court.

Double fault: when a server hits two faults in a row and loses a point

Deuce: a 40-40 game score. Once the score reaches deuce, a player must earn two consecutive points to win the game.

Fault: a serve that falls out of the proper area of play.

Foot fault: a fault during the serve resulting from a player stepping on or over the baseline or across the center mark before striking the tennis ball.

Forehand: a basic tennis shot that is swung with the front of the hand facing forward toward the ball.

Grand Slam: A player wins the Grand Slam when he or she wins all four major tournaments in a calendar year.

Grip: how a player holds the racquet. There are several different grips, and players often change grips during a game depending on the type of shot played.

Groundstroke: a shot – either backhand or forehand – that is hit after the ball bounces once off the ground.

Head: the main stringed face of a tennis racquet.

Lob: a tennis shot that is hit high in the air with the intention of either winning a point over an opponent who is up close to the net or providing time to move into a better position.

Love: a score of zero. For example, a game score of 30-0 would be called “thirty-love.”

Match point: when a player is one point away from winning the match.

Overhead: a stroke that is hit when the ball is over one’s head. An overhead shot is often strongly hit and is also known as a “smash.”

Passing shot: a tennis shot that is hit past an opponent who is at the net, as opposed to a lob which is hit high in the air over the opponent.

Point: a point is won when you or your opponent cannot return the ball before it bounces twice. Other ways to earn a point:

- You or your opponent hit the tennis ball into the net
- You or your opponent serve two faults in a row (a double fault)
- You or your opponent hit the ball out of bounds

Rally: a sequence of back-and-forth shots between opponents.

Serve: the starting point shot of a game that is hit to the opponent diagonally across the court into the “service box,” a square part of the court marked by service lines and sidelines.

Spin: the way in which a ball rotates through the air. Spin can be applied to a shot so that the ball’s bounce and trajectory are affected.

Sweet spot: the center spot on the head of the racquet that makes the best contact with the ball.

Volley: a tennis shot that is hit before the ball bounces on the player’s side of the court.

Chapter 2

The Ins and Outs of Tennis Scoring



Maybe you've stumbled across a tennis match while channel surfing and been enamored with the competitive back-and-forth action. But to truly appreciate the game

and all its drama, you need to understand how to keep score. The tennis scoring system is designed to ensure a winner at the end of each game, set, and match. If you win enough games, you'll win sets, and if you win enough sets, you win the match.

That easy! Let's get more specific:

Game-Set-Match

- A player must achieve at least 4 points to win a game
- A player must win at least 6 games to win a set
- A player must win no less than 2 sets (sometimes 3) to win a match

What's the point?

In tennis, it's just too easy to just call one point "one" or three points "three." Instead points are called out as zero or "love", fifteen, thirty, and forty, plus the game point and advantage. This chart below gives us the simple rundown:

Points Won	Game Points
Zero	0 or "love"
One	15
Two	30
Three	40
Four	Game, but must win by 2 points

Deuces Wild

"Deuce" is a tied score of 40-40. To win in this situation, a player must score two consecutive points. When a player scores, he or she is said to have the "advantage," which is often shortened to "ad" for scoring. If this player earns a second consecutive point while holding the advantage, he or she wins the game. If the player does not earn a point, the score returns to deuce, 40-40.

Game Point

Game point is called out when one player is a single point away from winning the game (either a 40-30 or an Ad-40 score). A double game point means the player has two chances to win the game (40-15 score). And a triple game point means the player has three chances (40-0 score).

Winning a Set

The scoring in sets functions much like the scoring in games, but on a larger scale. A set is won when a player has won at least six games and has a two-game advantage (just like a game requires a two-point advantage). You can win a set with a score of 6-0, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, or 6-4. If a set is tied 5-5 and a player wins a game, the set will continue until one player achieves a two-game advantage (such as 7-5, 9-7, etc.). In many playing formats though, if the set score reaches 6-6 a tiebreak will be played.

Tiebreak

In order to keep a match within reasonable time constraints a tiebreak game is played once the game score reaches 6-6. In a tiebreak, players play single points alternating serves 2 points at a time. The first player to 7 points (winning by 2) wins the tiebreak game and hence the set.

Winning a Match

Last but certainly not least we come to the match. Match scoring is set up with odd numbers to ensure a winner. Most competitive matches are won by winning two sets out of three. In the men's Grand Slam tournaments, players must win three out of five sets to claim match victory. At its simplest: whichever player wins the majority of sets in a match is the ultimate victor.

Chapter 3

Finding the Perfect Beginners' Racquet and Equipment



Wondering how to choose a [tennis racquet](#)? Your tennis racquet should reflect your personality, your style, and ultimately your skill level. One of the most common mistakes for

beginners is choosing a racquet that is designed for more experienced players. To the untrained eye, most racquets look the same, but there are many subtleties in weight, balance, and size that can make dramatic differences on the court.

In the most general sense, a beginner tennis player will want a lightweight racquet with a large head and a medium-stiff flex. While there are many caveats, depending on your athletic ability and experience, this combination in general will give new tennis players the control, power, speed, and consistency they need on the court.

If you're just starting out, don't break the bank on a racquet. Find an affordable but well-built model that will serve you well as you learn

the basic movements of the game. A more expensive racquet won't make you any better a player if you've failed to master the fundamentals.

But just because you won't be dropping half of your next paycheck on the latest racquet technology, doesn't mean you can't find the perfect, well-designed starter racquet. Let's discuss how to choose a tennis racquet, starting with the different types of racquet materials on the market today.

Racquet Materials

Aluminum

An aluminum tennis racquet is a great affordable option for beginners who are simply looking to get on the court and hit the ball around. Aluminum racquets aren't particularly lightweight or durable, but will serve new players well without requiring big dollars. A fair amount of feel allows players to get a sense of where the ball is moving off the racquet. Many junior racquets are made from aluminum for cost purposes.

Graphite

If you're planning to invest a bit in the game, take lessons, or join a team, you'll want to choose graphite, which is less affordable but lighter, longer lasting, and a higher quality than aluminum.

Titanium

Beginners tread with caution! Titanium is a space-age fiber that is extremely light and stiff. When used in conjunction with graphite, a lightweight, powerful combination can be achieved. This stiffness can wreak havoc on your arm and shoulder if proper technique is not

employed. Players who are prone to injury should avoid titanium racquets.

Weight & Balance

Beginners should look for a medium-weight racquet between 9 and 10 ounces. Lighter racquets provide more maneuverability but cause more shock to transfer to your arm and shoulder. If you choose a racquet that is too heavy you'll have trouble with control and feel. It's best to start with a medium weight until you have more experience and a better sense of your game.

You should also be mindful of balance, which refers to the distribution of weight throughout the racquet. Racquets with greater weight toward the handle end are referred to as "head light" while those with more weight toward the head are referred to as – you guessed it: "head heavy." You'll also find racquets that are evenly balanced.

Head

The head size is an important element for beginners. The smaller the head, the more control you will have, but beginners will appreciate the margin for error and bigger sweet spot provided by a larger head; around 100-115 square inches would be your best bet. This larger surface area allows for greater power and fewer missed hits. Professionals tend to use mid-sized heads ranging from 85 to 100 square inches.

Grip size

When we refer to grip size, we mean the circumference of the handle. For women, you'll be anywhere between 4 1/8" and 4 3/8" – men between 4 3/8" and 4 5/8". It's really all about comfort when it

comes to the grip. It's always better to err on the smaller side as can always add more diameter later on with grip tape. A simple way to find your grip size involves just a ruler and your playing hand:

- Hold your playing hand out flat and look at the three main creases in your palm.
- Locate the middle crease and use a ruler to measure from this crease up the line between your middle finger and ring finger to the point equal to the top of your ring finger.

Length

More racquet length can give you more power, but this comes at the expense of control. If you're just starting out, go for a standard length of 27 inches.

Junior Racquets

There are plenty of [smaller racquet options](#) for young beginners. Babolat, Head, Wilson, and many other top manufacturers offer shorter-length racquets ranging from 19 to 26 inches, allowing kids between the ages of 4 and 12 to take to the court with the same quality enjoyed by adults. These racquets also feature smaller grip sizes 4 inches and under to accommodate smaller hands. Below is a helpful chart to help determine the correct racquet length for a younger player.

Age	Height	Racquet Length
Up to 5 years old	35-44 inches	19 inches
5 to 7 years old	40-48 inches	21 inches
7 to 9 years old	44-50 inches	23 inches
9 to 10 years old	50-60 inches	25 inches
10 to 12 years old	55+ inches	26+ inches



Tennis Balls

Beginning players may be caught off guard by the variety of [tennis balls](#) on the market. If you're still coming to grips with the basics of tennis, or you just want to have some volleys with your kids,

there are a variety of beginner tennis balls that are specially created for slower play. Child-friendly foam tennis balls are great for training and practice, or you could try out one of three stages of beginner balls:

Stage 3 (Red): These balls are designed for young kids (up to 10 years old) to help improve basic skills, promote proper movement, fine-tune coordination, and build self-confidence. Stage 3 tennis balls are approved for play on a 36-foot court.

Stage 2 (Orange): These are reduced-flight balls that are perfect for use on 60-foot reduced-length courts. While more advanced than Stage 3, these will still slow down the game, making it ideal for training and beginning play.

Stage 1 (Green): The final stage before a regular tournament tennis ball, Stage 1 features a lower bounce and helps new players develop a more advanced technique. These are typically played on a full-size 78-foot court.

As if it could get any more complicated, you'll also want to pay attention to whether you're purchasing *pressureless* or *pressurized*

tennis balls. *Pressureless balls* are often used by beginners for practice or recreational play. Their bounce is produced from a rubber shell rather than from inside air. As a result, pressureless tennis balls don't lose bounce like standard pressurized balls – bounce actually *increases* over time as the ball's felt wears down.

On the other side of the court you have *pressurized balls*, which are more common and used for tournament tennis. Internal air pressure is used to give greater bounce, spin, and speed right out of the can. Unfortunately this fresh feel fades over time. One study found that most pressurized tour tennis balls have a lifespan of just two weeks, and many are used for only a single match.

If you're just getting started, pressureless balls are perfectly fine, and even ideal for practice. But if you're looking for the feel and playability of a true tennis ball, be sure to try out pressurized balls as well.

Regular Duty vs. Extra Duty

One other bit of information before we move on: when it comes to choosing the right tennis ball, the type of court you play on matters. If you happen to play on clay or indoor courts, [regular duty](#) tennis balls are ideal. These have a thinner layer of outer felt that is designed to reduce the absorption of clay on impact. If instead you practice or play on hard courts, you'll want [extra duty](#) balls. Extra duty felt will last longer on demanding hard courts and grass surfaces.

———— Chapter 4 ————

Outfitting Yourself for the Court

As a beginner, don't feel the need to don an entire new wardrobe of [tennis apparel](#). It may be fun to look the part, but hitting the court in an expensive tennis outfit won't help you master the fundamentals. Only practice, practice, and more practice will have you looking like a pro.

Despite this truth, a racquet isn't the only thing you need to prepare yourself for success on the court. A solid pair of [tennis shoes](#) will go a long way toward helping improve your footwork and coordination. And while not a necessity, lightweight, high-quality apparel is a great way to stay cool and nimble through hours of practice and play. In this chapter, we'll go over everything you need to know about tennis shoes, apparel, and accessories.

Tennis Shoes

Maybe you're thinking, "Why would I need special shoes for tennis?" But you'll want to think twice before throwing on your old beat up pair of running shoes before you hit the court. Tennis is a physical game, and your feet tend to bear the brunt of the abuse.

The problem with other athletic shoes is that they are not designed to handle the type of movements players tend to make on the court. A good pair of tennis shoes, on the other hand, will provide optimal support for rigorous lateral movements, allowing you to comfortably move side to side on the baseline. Pair that with a lightweight design and you'll be moving freely and quickly.

When shopping for the perfect pair of tennis shoes, your local court should play a big role in the decision. Just like with tennis balls, there are shoes that are specifically designed to handle each court surface: hard, clay, and grass. Let's go over the differences:

Hard Courts

Known to be tough on your feet, hard courts require shoes that are constructed to absorb shock and provide superior cushioning and comfort. Hard court tennis shoes are also designed to be non-marking so as to avoid scuffing the court surface.

Clay Courts

Clay-court tennis shoes are typically composed of synthetic uppers, a herringbone tread pattern that won't clog with clay, a grip that's ideal for sliding, and a lighter weight that allows for improved maneuverability and quickness.

Grass Courts

Grass-court tennis shoes are designed to prevent damage to the court and feature a nub-patterned sole to give you improved traction on slippery grass. The uppers are usually made from mesh and synthetic combinations.

All Courts

Most [major brands](#) now offer all-court tennis shoes that are able to handle the subtleties of all three courts. As a beginning player, all-court shoes are probably your best bet.

Learning about the shape of your feet will help you find shoes that will perform best and help you avoid injuries. There are three main foot shapes, and several ways to determine yours:

Pronated: Those with pronated feet will notice shoe wear on the inside area at the balls of the feet. If you place your bare feet in water and then leave a footmark on dry ground, you'll see that the entire impression of your foot appears with little or no visible space. If you – like over half of the population – have pronated feet, it's important to find tennis shoes with extra lateral support to help decrease the risk of injury to your ankles and knees.

Supinated: Players with supinated feet will see excessive wear on the outside of the heel and forefoot of the shoe. A wet footmark test should show a large dry space in the central arch area. You will want to look for shoes that provide superior shock absorption, flexibility, and extra space for the heel.

Ideal: Players with normal shoe wear and a balanced wet footmark in the test have what is called an “ideal” foot type. If you fall into this category, you'll find most tennis shoes suitable for the court.

Tennis Apparel

Apparel will help you look and feel the part of a true pro. And while it won't help you develop your backhand, the right outfit can keep you dry, cool, and nimble while you practice and play. Invest in high-

quality shirts, shorts, dresses, hats, and headbands that are comfortable, practical, and stylish.

Shirts and shorts made with 100% cotton should be avoided, as they tend to retain sweat and slow you down. Many brands, like [Nike](#) and [adidas](#), utilize special lightweight fabrics and materials that are designed to keep the sweat away from your body and out of your eyes – and don't doubt it, there will be sweat! Stocking up on a few of these specialty shirts, dresses, or headbands is just one more advantage you can take to the court.

In the end you'll want to try and find the best combination of comfort, performance, and style – and there's plenty out there to choose from. Every season you'll find [new collections](#) from top brands featuring the latest fashions and high-tech designs.

Section 2:

The Essential Elements of Play

“The depressing thing about tennis is that no matter how good I get, I’ll never be as good as a wall.” – Mitch Hedberg

Now that you’ve got your racquet, equipment, and apparel, you’re ready to try your hand at the basic elements of play. In this section, we’ll cover some [tennis essentials](#) that will help get you started.

Chapter 5

The Grip

There is no shortage of various ways to hold the racquet, but for beginners we will cover just a few of the basic grips. All racquet handles feature 8 sides, known as bevels. The two images below are from the perspective of looking up at the bottom of the racquet handle. The bevel numbers – shown for left-handed players in Figure 1 and right-handed players in Figure 2 – are helpful for explaining where to place the knuckle of your index finger for basic grips.

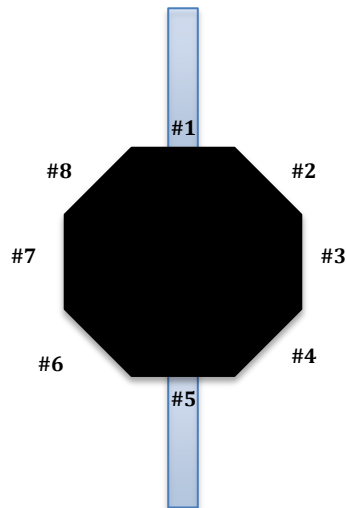
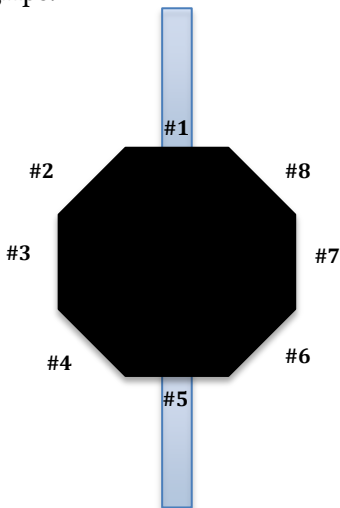


Figure 1: Left-Handed Bevel Numbers

Figure 2: Right-Handed Bevel Numbers

Continental

Also known as the Hammer or Chopper grip. This important basic grip is perfect for many types of shots, and is a good starting point for beginners. Simply place the big knuckle of your index finger over **bevel #2**, which should feel like you're holding a hammer or axe.

Make sure your hand is spread out across the grip with your knuckles at about a 45-degree angle to the handle. This is an easy, natural grip that can be used while beginners learn the fundamentals of tennis. And while it may not give you pro-level topspin, the Continental Grip is still utilized by professionals for serving, volleying, overhead shots, and slicing. Its versatility makes it a great place to start.

Eastern Forehand

One of the more basic forehand grips, the Eastern Forehand is achieved by placing the index finger's base knuckle on **bevel #3**. It's referred to as the "hand shake" grip, as you are essentially shaking hands with the racquet. Players also appreciate how the Eastern Forehand grip can easily be slid up to the Continental grip for volleys and serves, and most players – including Roger Federer – utilize the Eastern Forehand grip for their forehand groundstroke.

Semi-Western Forehand

One of the most popular grips on the tour, the Semi-Western Forehand grip is accomplished by placing the base knuckle of your index finger on **bevel #4**. This grip is used to add topspin and power, as your hand more or less rests under the racquet, encouraging upward movement on the swing. This one might prove difficult for players just starting out.

Eastern Backhand

This popular backhand grip is achieved by placing the index finger base knuckle directly on top of **bevel #1**. Players should have their knuckles straight the handle, as if showing a fist toward the oncoming ball.

Double-Handed Backhand

The basic two-handed backhand grip starts with holding the racquet in a Continental grip (**bevel #2**), and then placing your left hand (or right, if you're left handed) on top in an Eastern Forehand grip (**bevel #6**).

When you're just starting out learning the basics, don't worry too much about switching between grips. Stick with the basic Continental Grip until you feel more comfortable with the basic movements of the game – the rest will come later!

Chapter 6

The Serve

The serve is, of course, what starts it all off. It's the first shot in a point, and is hit with control and precision by pro players at mind-boggling speeds. It is one of the most difficult shots to learn, and requires hours and hours of practice. Here we'll briefly cover the rules of a serve, outline the basic form, and lay the groundwork for future skill building.



The Rules

A player will serve to the alternate side of the baseline into the cross-court service box. At no point can the server's foot move in front of the baseline on the court prior to touching the ball with the racquet. If you fail to land the ball in play the first time, you can try again. But if you fail two times in a row, it is considered a double fault and the point is lost. A "let" is called when the ball touches the net and lands in play.

Play is stopped right away, and you're allowed another try.

The Form

Ensure you are standing behind the baseline, close to the center mark, on the opposite side to which you are serving. Stand sideways, pointing your left foot toward the opposite post and your right foot straight ahead, parallel with the baseline.

As mentioned earlier, players most commonly use The Continental grip when serving. Be sure to not grip too tightly either, as a looser grip will actually provide more power and allow for a smoother form. Similarly, be sure to keep a light grip on the tennis ball at your fingertips. The actual movement of the serve has several steps:

1. Toss the ball high up into the air slightly in front of you.

“Toss” may be a bit misleading, as you should really be letting go of the ball at the top of your reach. The higher you can reach before letting go, the less time the ball is left alone in the air at the mercy of wind and gravity. Release the ball at the very least over your head, and even higher if possible.



2. Hold your racquet like an axe and drop the head behind your head while bending your elbow, as if attempting to touch the head to your back.

3. Bring the racquet up to hit the ball at its highest point against the sweet spot of the head. Straighten your legs as you make contact with the ball.

4. After hitting the ball, follow through the swing by bringing the racquet down toward your opposite foot.
5. Fall forward into the court after you've swung, but don't cross the baseline with your feet before making contact with the ball.

Some more tennis serve tips:

- *Keep your eyes on the ball.* After you've served you'll need to get yourself into an ideal position to play your opponent's return. The best way to do this is to watch how the ball moves coming off the head of your racquet and landing on the opposite side of the court.
- *Transfer your weight from your back leg to your front leg.* A powerful serve is not all about arm strength. It's important to load weight on your back leg as you toss the ball in the air so as to spring forward, transferring it to the front leg on the follow through.
- *Having trouble with the Continental? Use an Eastern Forehand Grip.* Some beginners may find it easier to try the Eastern Forehand grip while serving. This usually results in a flatter serve (no topspin), but as a novice, spin is not a huge priority before learning the fundamentals.
- *Don't snap your wrist.* A common mistake for beginners, snapping your wrist will throw off your serve and could lead to arm injury.

Chapter 7

The Forehand

The forehand is typically one of the first shots learned in tennis, as it is executed on a natural, comfortable side of the body and is relatively simple (for tennis, anyway). You'll want to start with an Eastern or Semi-Western grip and be standing in an ideal position.



1. Position before the shot

As you are preparing to execute a forehand shot, it's important to position yourself to respond to all types of shots coming your way.

- Keep your knees slightly bent and your feet apart at shoulder width
- Hold the racquet in front of your body with two hands – one lower on the handle holding the grip (right hand for righties, left hand for lefties) and the other placed on top for balance

- Pivot with your outside foot and turn shoulders parallel to the net
- Lean forward slightly on the pads of your feet

2. Prepare to strike the ball

- Move into position, preparing to hit the ball when it's a comfortable reach away. You don't want to fully extend your arm, but hit the ball when it is near your front hip
- Shift your weight to the back leg
- Extend your racquet arm back while keeping your non-hitting hand parallel to the ground for improved balance

3. Strike the ball

- Avoid rotating the racquet and be sure to keep a secure grip on the handle
- Ensure the racquet is straight and the face open
- Angle your swing from low to high, and facilitate this movement through bending your knees, shoulder, and elbows
- Push off the ground
- Rotate your upper body as you swing
- Stretch your non-racquet arm across the body to the sideline

4. Follow Through

- Extend your follow through, moving the racquet smoothly across your body toward the direction the ball is traveling
- Helps maintain your balance and produce spin

As you'll hear us say again and again, learning even the most basic shots in tennis comes down to practice. It's nearly impossible to think about every step in the swing process as you are playing, but if

you isolate each mechanism during practice and drill it into muscle memory, you'll find it becoming quite fluid and natural over time.

Chapter 8

The Backhand



There are several ways to execute a backhand shot, but here we will focus on just the two-handed backhand, which is most popular with professional players, and the one-handed backhand, which has lessened in popularity over the years but is still a useful shot to add to your arsenal.

1. Position before the shot

Just like with the forehand, you'll want to get yourself into the ready position that will aid your movement toward either a forehand or backhand shot. A huge amount of your success or failure on the court is determined before you even swing – proper positioning allows you to quickly and flexibly adjust to the game. Don't forget to practice your positioning and footwork!

- Keep your knees slightly bent and feet shoulder-width apart, positioned toward the net
- Hold the racquet out in front of your body with both hands

- **Two-handed backhand:** players should utilize a Continental grip with their dominant hand (right for righties, left for lefties) and a Semi-Western or Eastern Forehand grip for the non-dominant hand on top.
- **One-handed backhand:** players should utilize the Eastern Backhand grip
- Step forward with your right foot (opposite for left-handers) and pivot on your left, turning your shoulders parallel to the net

2. Prepare to strike the ball

- Shift your weight to your back foot
- Keep your arms in front of your chest until it's time to swing
- Your pivot and shoulder turn started your backswing, but now you should continue rotating your shoulders, bringing the racquet back and your shoulders completely perpendicular to the net
- Keep your eye on the ball over your shoulder



3. Strike the ball

- **Two-handed backhand:** push off your back foot, shifting your weight to your front leg, and rotate your upper body

toward the ball, dropping the racquet down through the swing zone about a foot below the ball

- **One-handed backhand:** step forward with your front foot and drop your racquet while straightening your swinging racquet arm. Keep your non-hitting hand on the racquet handle until your hitting arm is straightened just before contact
- Make contact with the ball waist high just out in front of your body

4. Follow Through

- **Two-handed backhand:** Extend a relaxed follow through in the direction you are hitting the ball and continue rotating your upper body. Bend your elbows and bring the racquet across your body and over your shoulders
- **One-handed backhand:** follow through and straighten your non-hitting arm behind you for improved balance and positioning

These backhands are not easy shots, and will require hours and hours of practice. Just like the forehand, you may have trouble remembering all the steps when you're out playing. Remember to slow the game down and isolate each step, developing muscle memory with repetition. Over time (and lots of practice!) your backhand will transform into one effortlessly correct fluid motion!

Chapter 9

Volleys

A volley is a shot executed before the ball bounces off the ground on your side of the court. It is typically performed up close to the net and requires extremely quick reflexes and reaction time. As you begin to learn the basic movements of the volley, think of the swing as catching the ball and pushing it forward over the net. There's no need to punch or snap at the ball – keep it graceful and fluid.



1. Position before the shot

- Volleys happen quick and close to the net, leaving players less time to position themselves compared to shots on the baseline. It's important to put yourself in an ideal position to react to your opponents shot
- Be sure to stand in the middle of the service box, about halfway up to the net
- Don't grip the racquet too tightly – you want to have a good sense of feel

- Like we mentioned earlier, most professional players utilize the *Continental* grip for both forehand and backhand volleys

2. Prepare to strike the ball

- There's no need for a backswing on a volley shot. Keep your swing compact and don't bring your racquet arm back past your shoulder point
- If you're executing a backhand volley, be sure to keep your not-hitting arm extended out behind you for improved balance

3. Strike the ball

- With a volley, players should keep the racquet face open at the point of contact, swinging with a slight upward motion. Remember: it's as if you are catching the tennis ball and pushing it over the net
- Be sure to direct the ball in such a way that your opponent is has trouble keeping up
- After you've made contact, quickly return to the ready position so you are in an ideal spot to respond to your opponent's next shot

Coming up on the net is designed to put pressure on your opponent, and can often lead to winning shots. There are risks, however, as you lessened your ability to cover the entire court. Be sure to practice volleying in all directions, both with a forehand and a backhand.

Conclusion

Tennis isn't easy! It's a game that demands extreme physicality and energy alongside pinpoint control and precision. And in many ways, this is what makes it so attractive to millions of players around the globe. It's a game that presents new challenges and subtleties at every level.

As you begin your journey, remember to slow down your game and master the fundamentals before moving on to more complex movements and shots. Maybe more than any other sport, tennis is won and lost on the basics. If you build a solid foundation of skills, you'll be well on your way to success.



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Tennis *for* Beginners

Midwest Sports is one of the top online tennis stores in the world, with a huge in-stock inventory and more than 20 years of industry experience. In this introduction to the game of tennis, we take a look at the equipment, apparel, and basic techniques that will ensure you're prepared to take your first steps onto the court.

From choosing the right tennis racquet to perfecting the grip and backhand shot, this guide dives into the fundamentals of tennis for those who have little or no experience with the sport. We detail basic terms, rules, and strategies to get you started — plus you'll find several tips for choosing the right tennis gear. If you're excited but a bit overwhelmed by the game of tennis, this is the perfect place to start your journey.

