

HOW PLAYERS LEARN - FEEDBACK MODES

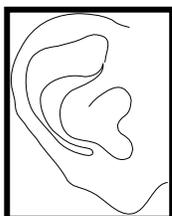
Students receive and remember information in different ways. If a coach can give feedback in the preferred mode of the student, the message will be accepted and remembered easier. There are three basic Feedback Modes: **Visual**, **Auditory** and **Kinesthetic**. Everyone uses all three modes but most people will have one as their 'dominant mode'.



VISUAL: It has been estimated that up to 80% of any skill we learn is through what we see. "A picture is worth a thousand words" when it comes to learning tennis.

Practical Application: Correct visual demonstrations are crucial. The following strategies can make a visual demonstration even more memorable:

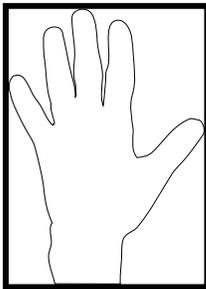
- **Stop Action:** "Freeze" at specific points in the demo to highlight specific elements
- **Slow-Motion:** Perform the demonstration at slow speed so the student's can catch it all. This is especially good when demonstrating tactics.
- **Mirror-Image:** Usually, the coach faces the same way as the student's so they can copy the action, but the coach can also face the students to provide a 'mirror-image'.
- **Video:** Video is an excellent coaching tool to see motivating examples of skills (what child doesn't try to copy Pete Sampras' serve?), and also give students a view of themselves. Many cameras can replay images on small screens right on the court.
- **View Position:** How the students are placed can improve the view of the demonstration. Group them in a good position to see the action.



AUDITORY: People tend to remember only 7% of what is said. Even so, clear words help a player remember *concepts*. For example, a concept like positioning to cover the opponent's angles after a shot can be packed into one key word, "Recovery". Sounds associated with a skill can be an important tool as well. The key is to use the auditory mode sparingly. Avoid lecturing or explaining anything for more than 2 minutes (even if what you say is correct, it does not enhance their learning).

Practical Application: There are three powerful ways to use the auditory mode:

- **Key Words:** Words should be used as a part of any demonstration to highlight skills. For example, when demonstrating the proper impact point on a groundstroke, the coach can pause the demonstration and stress the words "*Impact in front*".
- **Analogies:** Other experiences more familiar to students can be used to help them understand and remember new concepts. Words that give a descriptive picture aid memory. For example, instead of saying, "Have your racquet follow a 45 degree path upward", a word picture like, "*Up the escalator*", would be much more relatable, and memorable.
- **Sounds:** During the demonstration, highlight the sounds of the skill. For example, the "swish" of the racquet when it goes through the air fast, or the "pfft" sound of a spin ball. This strategy can help students remember a skill better and also associate sensations to the skill that help the kinesthetically oriented learners.



KINESTHETIC: This word simply means how the skill *feels*. It is the awareness the student has of how their body & racquet is moving. Once the initial visual picture of the skill is understood, it is common for **the kinesthetic mode to take over as the most important for learning technique in tennis**. Every skill has distinct feelings associated with the position of the body and the movement involved.

Practical Application: When learning a new skill, a player's body will often lie. What they think they do is not what really happens. The goal of a Coach is to, "**bridge the gap**" by giving the player feedback on what really happened and what it should feel like. For example, a student may feel they are swinging low-to-high for topspin, when in fact they are hitting the ball flat and rising their racquet after the impact. The coach needs to get the student to feel the sensation of the racquet rising at the impact. **Players must know what it feels like to correctly perform the skill, or they cannot practise on their own.**

Here are some strategies to help players learn kinesthetically:

- **Feeling Analogies:** Present the way movements should feel: For example:
 - (a) "Make your backhand feel like you are *drawing a sword*".
 - (b) "Keep your racquet angled towards the target like it is *going down a corridor*."
- **Impact Sensations:** Describe the feeling of the racquet work before/after impact:
 - (a) "**Jab**" (the racquet stops at impact)
 - (b) "**Follow-through**" (the racquet continues after impact)
 - (c) "**Block**" (the racquet doesn't move much before or after impact and is firmly braced)

- (d) **"Touch"** (the racquet doesn't move much before or after impact and the ball speed is absorbed)
- **Body Awareness:** Help students focus on the correct feeling of key body parts. For example, stroking while trying to balance a folded towel on their head will help their awareness of balance and keeping the head still.

Conclusion

The best learning strategy is to **use all three modes** when presenting a skill. Not planning to use all three modes will result in the lesson defaulting to the coach's dominant mode. This may alienate students with different dominant modes.