

Ball Control Basics

"Making the little round yellow fuzzy ball do what you want is what tennis is all about". Ball Control is the way a player solves problems on the court. For example, controlling the direction of a ball allows a player to hit away from an opponent. To master tennis, a player must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Controls (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)

DIRECTION ON SERVES

The "ABC's" of Serve Directions

All of the advantages of constructing the point, exploiting an opponent's weaknesses, and setting up your strengths start from a well placed serve. The 3 basic service placements (directions) are:

- **"A" = Angle:** Sending the ball wide, taking the opponent out of the court
- **"B" = Body:** Sending the ball at the opponent's body to 'jam' their stroke
- **"C" = Centre:** Sending the ball down the centre to stretch the opponent into the middle of the court.

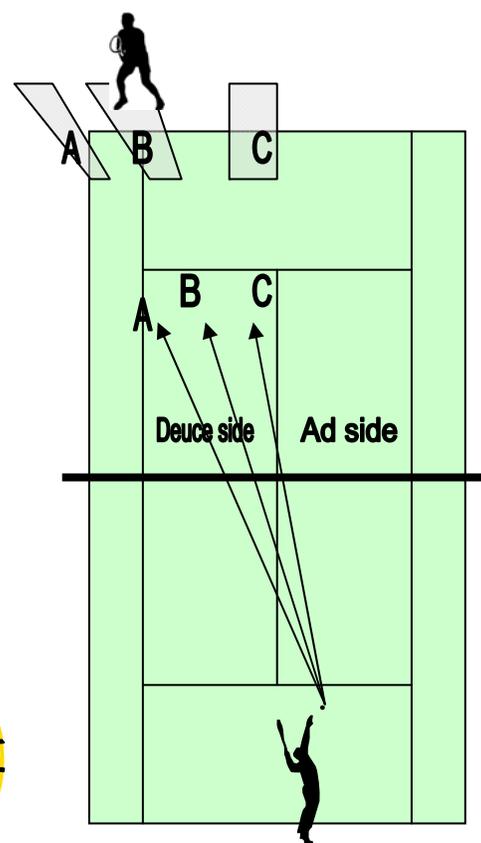
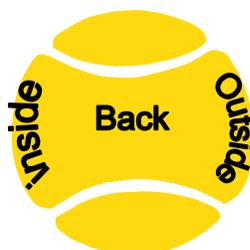
Initially, players should aim for targets in the service box. As your skills advance, it is more important what the serve does to the opponent. Measure effectiveness by where the serve is when it crosses the baseline (see diagram)

The direction of the ball is a direct result of the angle of the racquet face at impact. Wherever the 'face' of the racquet is looking, is where the ball will go (spin can change that rule slightly but will be explored in the article on spin)



Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

Just like the groundstrokes, the key feeling is to imagine the ball has 3 'sides' (back, outside, inside). For example, for a right-hander to hit the serve wide on the deuce side (target "A"), the feeling is to impact the ball where it is marked "outside" on this ball illustration. Hitting wide on the Ad side would require hitting the ball on the "inside".



The "ABC" of Service placement

~~Home work~~ Court

Serving Accuracy drill: ("24 Game") Place target areas (minimum 'hoola-hoop' size) on the court. Start by serving to the Deuce side. Serve 1st and 2nd serve combinations. 4 serves wide (two 1st serves, two 2nd serves), 4 serves to the body, 4 serves to the centre "T". Repeat on the Ad side. See how many you get out of the 24 total serves. The goal is 18 (approx. 75%)

Once you have mastered being able to serve accurately in practice, challenge your skills in competition. Play first player to win 5 points. Use the following formats:

- **Specific Accuracy Drill:** Play points with one serve placement (e.g. points with Deuce side wide serves only). Alternate servers each point.
- **Holding Serve Drill:** Only the server can win points. If a returner wins, they get to serve
- **2nd Serve Drill:** Play points with only 1 serve (to practice 2nd serves under pressure)