

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 distance of a ball allows a player to push an opponent back or, pull them forward. To master tennis, a player must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Controls (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)

DISTANCE

Sending different Distances

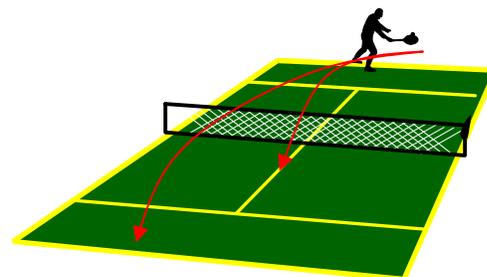
Just like in any battle, a key to successful tennis is to control territory. Controlling distance allows a player to push an opponent behind the baseline where they have little advantage or, draw them forward where they might not like to be.

Distance is a 'combination' Ball Control. In other words, it is the result of the specific combination of, Height, Speed, and Spin. For most shots, players should control the distance with a combination of height and speed (higher/faster for more depth, slower/lower for less distance). Spin changes things a bit. Topspin generally makes the ball land shorter (arcs it more). Underspin generally makes the ball fly longer.

Like all the other Ball Controls, Distance is determined by the PAS Principles (Path, Angle & Speed of the racquet through the impact).

Receiving different Distances

The goal is to quickly move to impact the ball at 'optimal' height (between knees and chest). Impacting above or below, will take away shot quality. For deep balls, move back until it drops to a comfortable level or, move forward to take it early. For short balls, move forward. The main challenge for beginner to intermediate players is to get sideways when moving up & back.

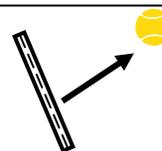


Controlling distance allows the full court length to be exploited

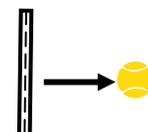


Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

On groundstrokes, the racquet path is easier to feel than the angle. Keep the angle stable with a firm grip. Feel the racquet path going low to high to add distance, level off to send the ball on a horizontal path and land it shorter. Only change the angle when extreme distance is required (like on a lob, or a drop shot).



To increase distance, open the racquet, swing low to high, and add speed



To decrease distance, close the racquet, level-off the swing, and decrease speed

Court Home-work

Sending & Receiving different Distances: On a baseline groundstroke exchange, pushing an opponent back with depth is effective. When the ball lands short, players should pounce on it and put pressure on opponents. This is a 'classic' drill for depth control. Start with both player and opponent on the baseline. The first shot is sent deep but 'friendly'. If the ball lands past the serviceline, players must remain back. If a ball lands shorter than the serviceline, players must move to the net. Play out the point. First to 7 points wins.