

5 Technical Fundamentals

To play tennis successfully, it is important to have technique that allows a player to be effective, not waste energy, minimize potential injury, adapts to the various situations a player encounters, and paves the way for higher levels of play. There are 5 basic fundamentals that build a solid technical foundation.

(1. Grip, 2. Set-up, 3. Impact Point, 4. Hitting Zone, 5. Recovery).

Grip

The grip is the connection between the player's body and the racquet. Held correctly, and the racquet becomes an extension of the arm and part of the player's body. An appropriate grip allows better control of the racquet face (which is the main controller of the ball).

To have a common reference to define the grips, we can use a few key elements:

Hand Reference: We can use the pad of the first finger knuckle as our 'grip reference'. All the major 'ranges' of grips are determined by the placement of this reference point on the grip. (For more advanced players, a secondary reference lower on the hand can be used as well however, for simplicity, we will only refer to the primary reference point in this article).

Racquet Reference: Every racquet grip is an octagon with 8 'bevels'. If we hold the racquet so the face is vertical, we can number each bevel.

A grip is determined by which bevel the grip reference pad on the hand is placed:

- **Continental grip:** Grip reference on bevel 2
- **Eastern Forehand:** Grip reference on bevel 3
- **Eastern Backhand:** Grip reference on bevel 1

For players 4.0 and lower, it is recommended to use these 'standard' grips. They produce the least limitations and make it easier to control the ball since the racquet doesn't need to change angles through the stroke.

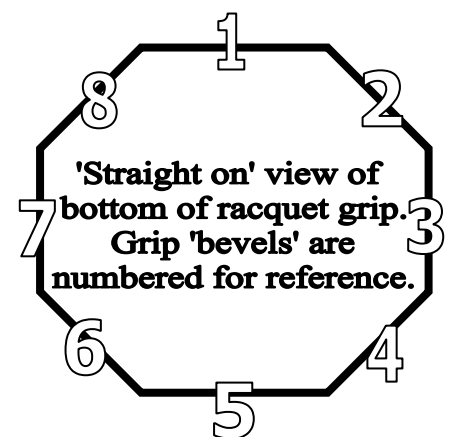
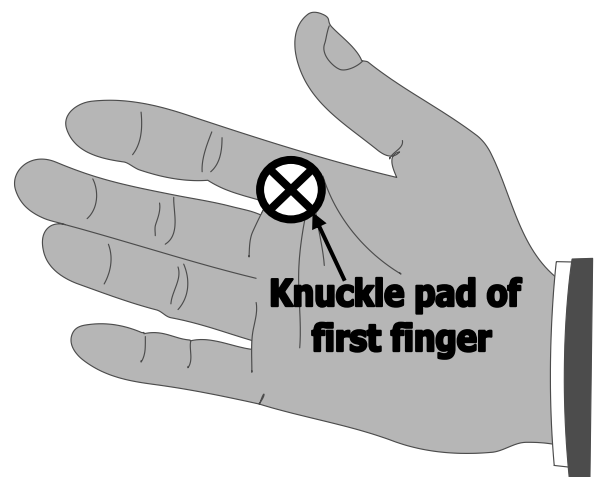
For more advanced players, there are other grip possibilities:

- **Semi-western Forehand:** Grip reference on bevel 4
- **Semi-western Backhand:** Grip reference on bevel 8
- **Full Western Forehand:** Grip reference on bevel 5

These grips will often be used by professionals as they allow a steeper low-to-high racquet path required for heavy topspin. They require forearm rotation and other advanced movements.

If starter players begin with the advanced grips, they tend to have difficulty with volleys, attacking actions, and defensive shots.

Grip References



"Eastern" Forehand



- Knuckle pad on bevel 3
- Recommended for groundstrokes or high driving volleys

"Eastern" Backhand



- Knuckle pad on bevel 1
- Recommended for groundstrokes or high driving volleys

2 Handed Backhand



- Right (bottom) hand Knuckle pad on bevel 2 (Continental grip) Left hand Knuckle pad on bevel 7 (Eastern Forehand grip)
- Having a continental grip on the bottom hand makes it easier for a player to let go and slice or volley

Continental



- Knuckle pad on bevel 2
- Recommended for volleys
- Recommended for serve and overhead
- Recommended for ½ Court and self-rally drills



NOTE: A full "Western" Forehand grip is with the Knuckle on bevel 5. It is not recommended for developing players because of the limitations for anything but heavy topspin groundstrokes.

Court Home-work

Beginner: Getting used to the appropriate grip can be a challenging process. The feeling of holding on to the racquet is very individual however, holding it 'any old way' makes tennis more difficult than it should be. To get used to the grips, play serviceline to serviceline. Do one shot at a time to get the feel (e.g. forehand groundstrokes, then BH groundstrokes, FH & BH volleys, Serves).

Intermediate: Switching grips on groundstrokes (continental is recommended for both FH & BH volleys) is just as challenging as getting used to a grip. The trick is to identify quickly which side of the body the ball is coming to (forehand side, or backhand side). Use the placement of the 'grip reference knuckle' as a cue word (knuckle on the "side" for a forehand, knuckle on the "top" for a BH). Call out loud where your knuckle is as soon as you read which side the ball is coming ("Side" or "Top").