

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).

HITTING ZONE

The face of the racquet is the determining factor that controls the ball. The longer the face of the racquet travels towards the intended target, the greater the chance of directing the ball there. This is especially true on groundstrokes but has application to serves and volleys as well.

The distance the racquet travels with the face of the racquet 'looking' at the target is called the "Hitting zone". Having a Hitting Zone (in contrast to just a contact point), gives a margin of safety. A player can contact the ball anywhere in the zone and still direct the ball properly.

Notice Roger Federer on the right executes a long Hitting Zone (see how long the racquet face travels forward to the target), even though he is hitting with power and topspin.

To visualize a Hitting Zone imagine a set of railway tracks that go from the impact towards the target. The racquet must travel along these tracks. To keep the racquet face travelling in the proper direction on groundstrokes, these elements can help:

Laid back Wrist: Making an 'L' shape with the wrist and forearm helps to keep the racquet from adopting a short circular path.

Body Rotation: By turning the shoulder through the shot, the racquet can move towards the target longer (forehand and 2 handed backhand). On the 1 handed backhand, turning the lead shoulder has the opposite effect and takes the racquet off track. By staying sideways, the stroke can hinge at the shoulder and stay on track longer.

Sideways Position: by turning the body sideways (especially the shoulders on the set-up), the hitting zone can be lengthened.

Federers' long Hitting Zone



Photos courtesy of TennisOne.com

Court Home-work

Beginner: To get a feel for the Hitting Zone, place the racquet on top of the net cord. Imagine hitting a ball towards the side of the court and perform a stroke while sliding the racquet along the net. Do this on the forehand and backhand sides. Next, stand at the serviceline and have a feeder toss the ball to you. Try to feel the same as when the racquet was sliding along the net.

Intermediate: This drill is called, "Alley Rally". Players rally from serviceline to serviceline but must keep the ball in the doubles alley. The alley lines will give an excellent visual reference for the Hitting Zone. If the players can rally 10 times from serviceline to serviceline, they then attempt the Alley Rally from baseline to baseline.