

BASIC SINGLES STRATEGIES

*Tennis is a game. Every game has ways to win. To be successful at any racquet sport, a player must control the critical elements of **time** and **space**. For this, players need a plan. The general and overall plans to win are called "**Strategies**". The specific intentions for shots to execute the strategy are called "**Tactics**". The combination of shots used to execute the tactic are called "**patterns**".*

Basic strategies: KEEP THE BALL IN PLAY

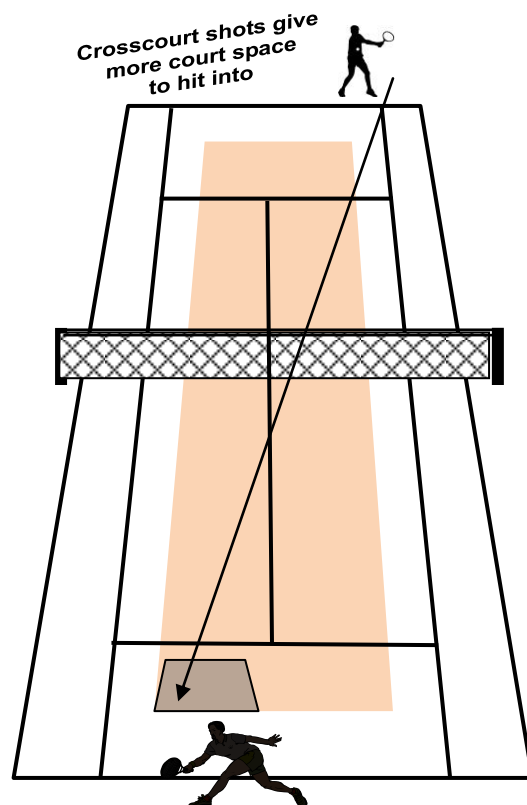
This is the most basic and powerful of all strategies in tennis (and the most misunderstood, especially at higher levels of play). Keeping the ball in play is called "consistency". Tennis by its nature is a game of errors. Players get a big percentage of their points (70-90%) because of opponent's errors (not hitting winners). Minimizing errors is the most effective way to win. The trick is to choose shots that are "High Percentage" (have the most chance to go in). A simple definition of High Percentage is this: if you had 10 attempts at a shot and you could consistently make 7, that's a high percentage option.

At higher levels, the concept turns to "competitive consistency". Just 'blooping' the ball back can give opponent's an advantage. On the other hand, trying to constantly hit 'winning' shots means you will get some great ones, but end up missing more than you get. Competitive consistency means finding the balance between putting the shot in, but making it challenging for the opponent.

Keep the Ball in Play tactics:

This list starts with lower level tactics on top and gets more advanced as you go down the list.

- Aim for the centre of the court (or service box)
- Keep the ball 1-2 meters over the net
- Hit crosscourt (more court space to go in)
- Hit higher to gain time when in trouble
- When volleying at net, aim for large areas (avoid small targets)
- Use topspin to arc the ball over the net and into the court
- Hit the ball in the same direction it came from (avoid changing angles)



Court Home-work

1.0-2.5 players: Play an 'Orange Court game'. As much as it seems like no strategy at all, try aiming for a $\frac{3}{4}$ size smaller court. Chase every ball your opponent gives and send it back with a high arc (1-2 meters over the net) into this Orange court. When serving, aim for the middle of the service box as well. The objective is to give your opponent as many opportunities to miss as possible while taking no risks yourself. Your practice partner should try to 'win' each point. You may be surprised what happens.

3.0+ players: Play the "+/-" game. One player serves for the whole 'game'. Score this game by giving a "plus" point for any winner or forced error. A "minus" point is taken away for any unforced error. First player to plus 5 wins the game or, first to minus 5 loses. The game is over either way. Switch servers. The objective is to stay out of the minus column. This game can be played for singles or doubles. It's a great game to build awareness of the relationship between winners and errors. The ratio between your winners and errors is often called your, "Aggressive margin".