

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**".*

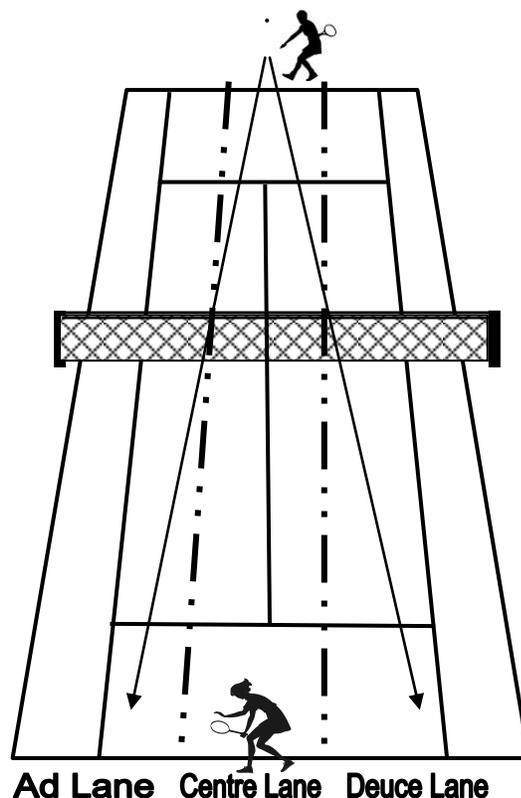
Basic strategies: MOVE THEM AROUND

The legendary coach Harry Hopman said, "Tennis is a game of control and restraint, and hitting the ball where the other guy ain't". Controlling space is critical. By using the space on the court to move an opponent around (whether side to side or up and back), they are less likely to hurt you and more likely to cough up a weaker shot to take advantage of.

It is also important when to **not** go for the openings. By dominating the space you are in (e.g. winning a crosscourt exchange) you can minimize the risk and stay with the 'percentage' shots when an opening is available.

'Space' tactics & patterns:

- Dominate the centre of the court by taking balls received in the centre of the court as opportunities to place shots to the sides.
- In general, hit crosscourts off any down-the-line shots you receive. Pick the right time to hit hitting down-the-lines (weaker balls where you are not outside the sideline). Down-the-line shots are riskier and can give your opponent an easy crosscourt that makes you run maximum distance.
- Hit to one side and then the other. As a surprise, hit 'behind the opponent' (hit to the same side twice) to mess them up (especially if the opponent starts 'anticipating' and moving early to cover the open court).
- Pull the opponent up to the net with a short ball or drop shot. Then, lob over their head. Or, hit a deep ball to keep them way back and follow-up with a drop shot or short angle.



Court Home-work

2.0-3.0 players: Play the "Lane drill". Split the court into 3 lanes from net to baseline (markers are helpful), a Deuce lane, an Ad lane, and a Centre lane. The goal is to hit to the lane furthest from the opponent. If the ball is in the centre lane, hit to whatever side is easiest. Start with one player just keeping the ball going and the other going for the lanes. Progress to both players going for the lanes. The game can start with groundstrokes or serves and play up to 7 points. For extra challenge, balls landing in the Centre Lane can be called out.

3.5+ players: Practice open court "combo's". Have one player act as the 'Runner'. The runner must cooperatively place the ball back to a designated area (to the centre, just to the Deuce lane, just to the Ad lane, etc). The other player is the "Dominator". The Dominator places the ball in specific combinations. (a) Side to side. (b) Side to side then hit behind the player. (c) X pattern (a short angle to one side, a deep ball to the other). (d) Drop shot/lob, deep ball/drop shot. Every time the Dominator can string together 3 shots in a row (to the appropriate area), they get a 'pattern point'. Play for 5 minutes or 5 points (whatever happens first), then switch roles. Once you get the feel for the drill, it is important to practice it off serves and returns.