

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).

SET-UP

At first glance, tennis seems to be all about sending the ball somewhere. As important as this is, the real challenge for players is **receiving** the ball. "Reception" is a critical skill in tennis since poor reception translates to sending the ball poorly. To master good reception skills, players need to train their "set-up" which includes judging the ball, positioning, and preparing for the impact.

The Set-up includes 3 key elements:

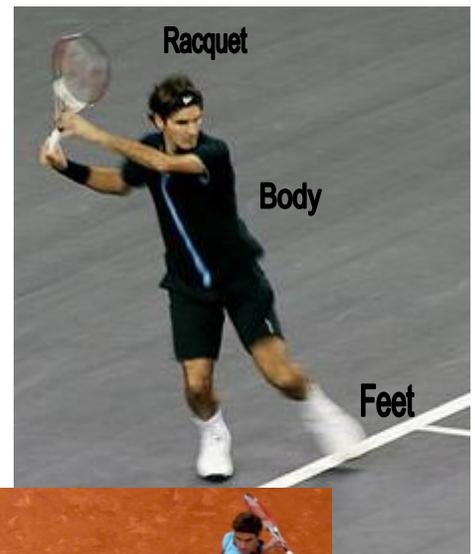
Body: This is the most important element as preparing the body allows for an efficient stroke. On groundstrokes and serves the shoulders, trunk, and hips need to be set sideways (more on BH). On volleys, the preparation is fully sideways on BH and 45 degrees on FH.

Racquet: Taking the racquet back too far is a major issue for non-professional players. On FH groundstrokes, the racquet should be prepared on the same side as the body (don't take it back further than your sideways shoulders).

Feet: The first move on almost every stroke is to 'step-out'. Turn your foot out (the same one as the side you are receiving the ball).

Make sure your non-dominant hand is fully involved in your set-up. It can set your racquet and shoulders into position (see Federer photos).

Position for the shot. Where do you need to be to make a good shot? The goal is to be "behind the ball" (not reaching for it or having it too close to your body). Ideally, this should be done before the ball bounces on your side on groundstrokes and returns, and before the ball comes over the net on volleys.



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Court Home-work

Groundstrokes: Training to judge the ball early is critical. The first judgment to train is which side the ball is coming to. Have a partner drop a ball to themselves and send it to either your forehand or backhand side (they should only make you move 2-3 steps). Call out "Forehand" or "Backhand" as soon as you can determine where it is going. Your partner should score your efforts. 1 point for judging before the ball bounces on your side. 2 points for judging before the ball comes over the net. Play to 10 points then switch roles. Next, connect your positioning and preparation to your early judgment by saying the word "set" when you have finished preparing for the shot. Try to get "set" before the ball bounces on your side.

Serves: Even on the serve, reception is important. Many players have difficulty tossing the ball well in order to set themselves up. It is more important where you toss than how you toss. Give yourself a target to aim for (6 inches to one foot over as high as you can reach up with your racquet is recommended). Another good target is to keep your tossing hand up and aim to place the ball so it falls into your extended hand. When the ball is at its peak, you can easily judge whether it will fall into your hand (go ahead and hit it) or not (let it drop and start your serve again). Practice hitting good tosses and leaving poor ones.