

Ball Control Basics

"Making the little round yellow fuzzy ball do what you want is what tennis is all about". Ball Control is the way a player solves problems on the court. For example, controlling the spin on a ball allows a player to better control its flight. To master tennis, a player must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Controls (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)

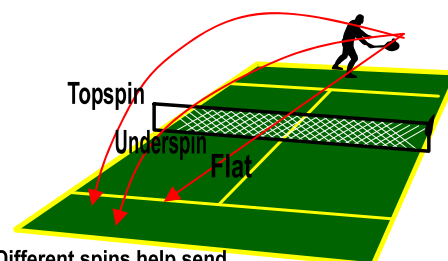
SPIN CONTROL

Making the ball spin is a key way to control the trajectory of the ball. Spins cause the ball to fly differently through the air. Spins also cause the ball to bounce differently as well. Using spin gives a player more options to challenge an opponent with. The 3 spins used in tennis are:

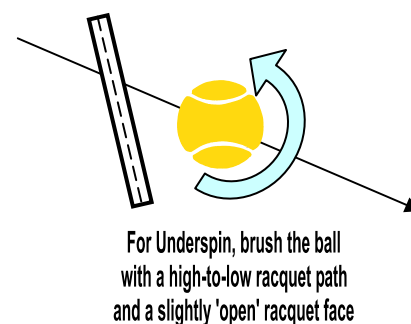
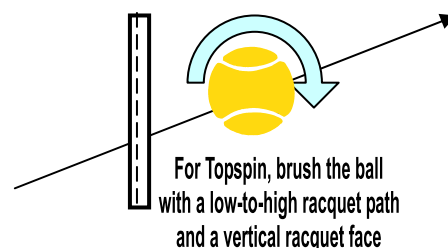
Topspin: Makes the ball arc more and bounce higher. It is created by a low-to-high racquet path and a vertical racquet angle.

Underspin (also called slice on groundstrokes): Causes the ball to fly in a more level trajectory and stay lower on the bounce. It is created by a high-to-low racquet path and a slightly open racquet angle.

Sidespin (also called slice on serves): Makes the ball fly in a curve and bounce off to the side. It is created by the racquet brushing across the side of the ball.



Different spins help send the ball with different trajectories



Receiving different Spins

As a player improves and their ball speed increases, it becomes important to use spin as a way of controlling speed. Since the racquet must brush across the ball in specific ways to make specific spins, players should focus their attention on the opponent's contact of the ball to 'read' the spin. Generally, when the opponent hits an underspin shot, move forward since the ball is usually low. When a topspin shot is identified, either move back and allow it to bounce and fall to a comfortable level, or move forward and take it early, before the ball bounces too high.



Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

The main challenge when learning spin is to feel the path of the racquet. Spin is actually, "a controlled mis-hit", so it feels strange at first to brush across the ball rather than strike it dead-on. Practice is the solution.

Court Home-work

Sending & Receiving different Spins in a Groundstroke Rally: One player is the 'spinner' who topspins the ball to a partner at the opposite baseline (a ball machine can be used for this drill however, getting practice on receiving spin is just as useful as practicing sending it). The spinner calls out which arc they intend to hit and hits the ball with various arcs ("high", "medium", "low"). The partner must rally the ball back with little or no spin so the spinner gets practice. Rally for 2 minutes. The spinner gets one point if they do three high, three medium, and three low arcs within the two minutes. After two minutes, switch roles.

The same game can be played with underspin. The three shots are, "deep slice", "short/low slice", and "drop shot".