

## Ball Control Basics

*"Making the little round fuzzy ball do what you want is what tennis is all about". Controlling the ball is how players create and solve tactical problems on court. To master tennis, players must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Control characteristics (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)*

### DIRECTION ON SERVES

#### The "ABC's" of Serve Directions

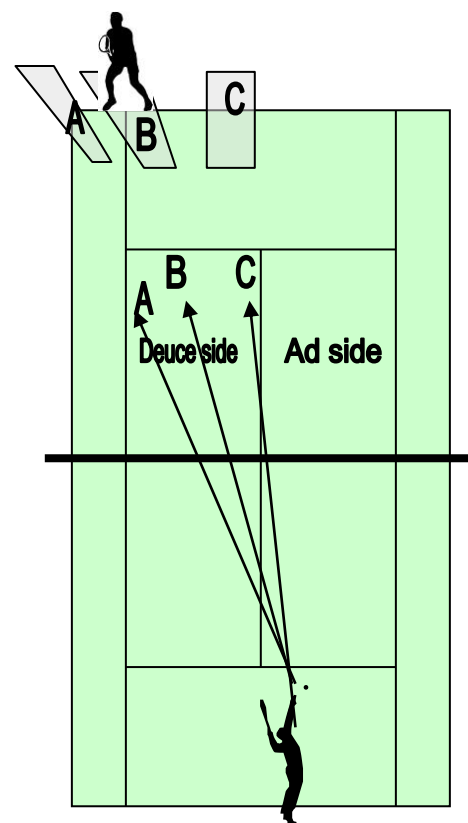
All of the advantages of constructing the point, exploiting an opponent's weaknesses, and setting up your strengths start from a well placed serve. The 3 basic service placements (directions) are:

- **"A" = Angle:** Sending the ball wide, taking the opponent out of the court
- **"B" = Body:** Sending the ball at the opponent's body to 'jam' their stroke
- **"C" = Centre:** Sending the ball down the centre to stretch the opponent into the middle of the court.

Initially, players should aim for targets in the service box. As your skills advance, it is more important what the serve does to the opponent. Measure effectiveness by where the serve is when it crosses the baseline (see diagram)

The direction of the ball is a direct result of the angle of the racquet face at impact. Wherever the 'face' of the racquet is looking, is where the ball will go (spin can change that rule slightly but will be explored in the article on spin)

**TACTICAL CONNECTIONS:** Direction is used to exploit the space of the court and move opponents around or to direct the ball to a weakness.

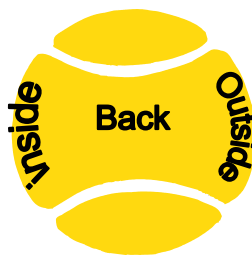


The "ABC" of Service placement



#### **Kinesthetic Key** (Key feeling when doing it)

Just like the groundstrokes, the key feeling is to imagine the ball has 3 'sides' (back, outside, inside). For example, for a right-hander to hit the serve wide on the deuce side (target "A"), the feeling is to impact the ball where it is marked "outside" on this ball illustration. Hitting wide on the Ad side would require hitting the ball on the "inside".



### ~~Home-work~~ Court

**Practice Activity: 'Serve Accuracy': ('24 Game')** Place target areas (minimum 'hoola-hoop' size) on the court. Start by serving to the Deuce side. Serve 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> serve combinations. 4 serves 'angle' (two 1<sup>st</sup> serves, two 2<sup>nd</sup> serves), 4 serves to the body, 4 serves to the centre "T". Repeat on the Ad side. Your score is how many out of 24 total serves. The goal is 18 (approx. 75%)

Once you have mastered being able to serve accurately in practice, challenge your skills in competition. Play first player to win 5 points. Use the following formats:

- **Specific Accuracy Drill:** Play points with one serve placement (e.g. points with Deuce side wide serves only). Alternate servers each point.
- **Holding Serve Drill:** Only the server can win points. If a returner wins, they get to serve
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Serve Drill:** Play points with only 1 serve (to practice 2<sup>nd</sup> serves under pressure)