

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)

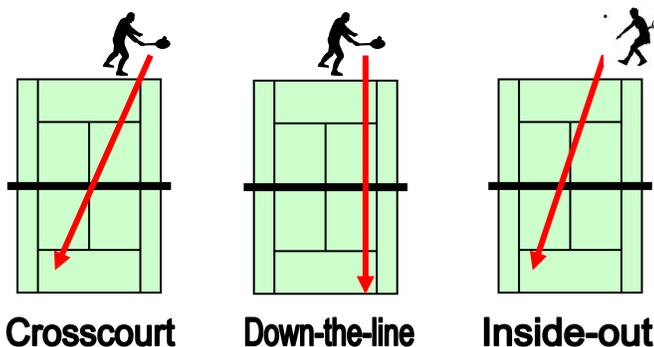
DIRECTION ON GROUNDSTROKES & VOLLEYS

Sending different Directions

The main determining factor in what direction the ball goes is the angle of the racquet at impact. In other words, the balls direction does 't' come from your body position, your foot set-up or your follow-through. Where the racquet face is 'looking' makes the ball go in a specific direction. The 3 basic 'tactical directions' in tennis are:

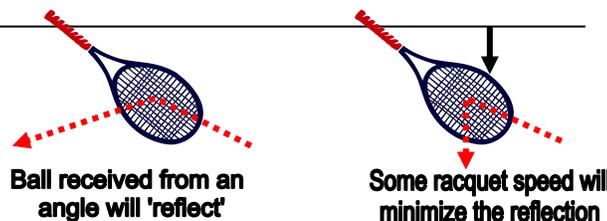
- **Crosscourt** (Sending the ball diagonally across the court)
- **Down-the-line** (Sending the ball from one side straight down the court)
- **Inside-out** (Sending the ball diagonally across the court with the opposite side stroke than usual)

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



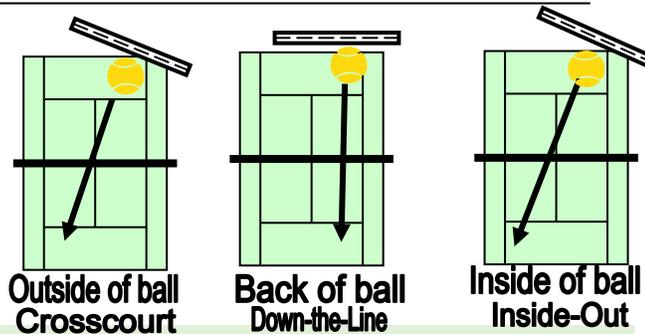
Receiving different Directions

A quick start and early preparation are key for receiving a ball hit away from you. On volleys especially, the angle the ball comes from should also be considered. To minimize any 'reflection' make sure your racquet is moving through the stroke with some speed.



Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

The key feeling is to imagine the ball has 3 'sides' (back, outside, inside). For example, on a forehand volley or groundstroke, feeling you are hitting the 'outside' of the ball will send it crosscourt. Feeling the impact on the 'back' of the ball will make it go straight.



~~Court~~ Home-work

Practice Activity: 'Sending & receiving different directions drill: Start with a partner on the opposite baseline (serviceline for beginners). Player one starts by hitting a medium paced groundstroke to player 2. Player 2 then sends the ball in a specific direction. Start with player 2 calling out ahead of time which direction they will send (crosscourt, down-the-line, inside-out). Progress to sending the direction at random with no warning. Player 1 should try to 'defend' against the placement with quick movement and preparation. Play out the point. First player to reach 7 points wins.

Practice Activity: 'Volley Direction': For volleys, a similar game can be played. Player 1 sends a medium paced ball to player 2 at the net (start just behind the serviceline where the typical first volley is hit). Player 2 sends a volley placement. Player 1 tries to chase the volley down and pass player 1. Play out the point. First player to 7 points wins.