

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)

DISTANCE CONTROL ON GROUNDSTROKES & VOLLEYS

Sending different Distances

Distance is a 'combination' of three other ball characteristics (Height, Speed, and Spin). For most shots, players should control the distance with a combination of height and speed (higher/faster for more depth, slower/lower for less distance). Spin changes things a bit. For example, on a groundstroke rally, topspin generally makes the ball land shorter (arcs it more). Underspin generally makes the ball fly longer (depending on the speed). Spin will allow for exaggerated trajectories making the distance options more deadly (e.g. a short topspin angle or a underspin drop-shot).

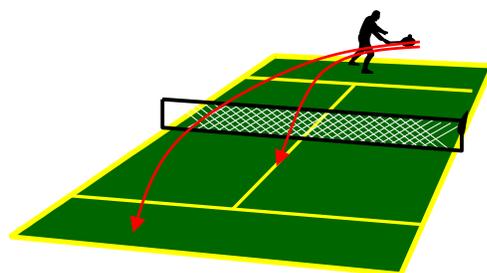
Like all the other Ball Control characteristics, Distance is determined by the PAS Principles (**Path, Angle & Speed** of the racquet through the impact).

On volleys, your location closer to the net allows for far more angles and distance options than on groundstrokes.

Receiving different Distances

The goal is to quickly move to impact the ball at 'optimal' height (between thighs and chest). Impacting above or below, will take away shot quality. For deep balls, move back until it drops to a comfortable level or, move forward to take it early. For short balls, move forward. The main challenge for beginner to intermediate players is to get sideways when moving up & back.

TACTICAL CONNECTIONS: Just like in any battle, a key to successful tennis is to control territory. Courts are longer than they are wider so controlling distance is key to exploit the entire court. Controlling distance allows you to push an opponent behind the baseline where they have little advantage or, draw them forward where they might not like to be.

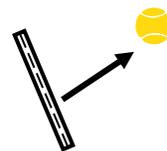


Controlling distance allows the full court length to be exploited

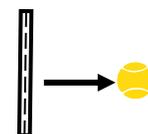


Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

On groundstrokes, the racquet path is easier to feel than the angle. Keep the angle stable with a firm grip. Feel the racquet path going low to high to add distance. Level off to send the ball on a horizontal path and land it shorter. Only change the angle when extreme distance is required (like on a lob, or a drop shot).



To increase distance, open the racquet, swing low to high, and add speed



To decrease distance, close the racquet, level-off the swing, and decrease speed or, add spin

Court Home-work

Practice Activity: 'Sending & Receiving different Distances': On a baseline groundstroke exchange, pushing an opponent back with depth is effective. When the ball lands short, players should pounce on it and put pressure on opponents. In the game, start with both player and opponent on the baseline. The first shot is sent deep but 'friendly'. Alternate who starts each point. If the ball lands past the serviceline, players must remain back. If a ball lands shorter than the serviceline, players must move to the net (or lose the point). A bonus point is gained if a player pulls an opponent into the net and wins the point (e.g. a Drop-shot). First to 7 points wins.