

ESTABLISHING YOUR TIMING

You hear it all the time. "I can't feel the ball, I keep miss-hitting, I am hitting late, I can't find the ball today". All of these statements are typically related to your timing being off. Tennis is an, 'impact sport'.

Timing is the single most critical element in the game. If it is off, your game is in serious trouble.

What can a player do to establish or reset their timing?

Timing Quick Fixes:

Here are some quick fixes that can help restore your timing. They are in no particular order. Sometimes you may need only one to get back on track, other times, you may need to implement all of them. Experiment and see which ones work best for you.

EYE TRACKING FOR CENTERING

Centering is solidly connecting with the ball and is a goal of good timing. It is more than someone telling you to 'watch the ball' (if you connected, you were watching the ball). To centre a ball, you must keep your eyes locked on the ball to track it right to the impact. The old trick of trying to read the name on the ball at impact (which no one can actually do) may 'fool' you into tracking and centering the ball.

BREATHING AT IMPACT

Coordinating a well-timed shot is challenging. To be fully coordinated, you need to be loose (minimal muscle tension). If you exhale *right at the impact*, it will keep you loose as well as help you to synchronize the Impact timing.

EARLY PREPARATION

Nothing hurts timing more than not being prepared on time. On groundstrokes, look for 'optimal' preparation. Too early hurts movement to the ball and stroke rhythm. Too late means a rushed stroke which can lead to all sorts of impact point problems. To prepare on time, say the word "Set" to yourself when your preparation is complete. Say "Bounce" when you see the ball hit the ground in front of you (exact synchronization is critical). If you do it right, there will be a split second gap between the words (with 'Set' being said first) You know you have prepared late if the word 'bounce' comes before 'Set'.

For volleys, say "Set" when you have completed your preparation and then "Tac" (short for 'contact') at impact. Make sure 'Set' comes a second before 'Tac'.



IMPACT POINT

Your Impact Point is where you contact the ball in relation to your body. Every stroke has an 'ideal' Impact Point'. When you feel you are not connecting where you want (e.g. late or too early, too high or low, etc), imagine a 3 dimensional box where your impact should be. Organize yourself around this box so the ball crosses through it. When your racquet meets the ball in the box say "Yes" to yourself.

STROKE RHYTHM

Stroke Rhythm is when and where your racquet moves slow or fast in the stroke. On most groundstrokes and serves, novice players sometimes have a, 'fast-preparation-and-slow-through-the-impact', rhythm. Intermediates tend to either have a slow-slow or fast-fast rhythm. Your goal is to have a slower part as you are preparing where you are calm and the racquet is lining the shot up, and then accelerate through the impact. This slow-fast rhythm makes timing easier but allows power as well because of the racquet speed (fast-slow-fast is fine as well). On groundstrokes & serves, use the cue "slooooww" as you are preparing and 'GO!' to cut loose and accelerate through the shot. Say the words at the same time and speed your racquet travels.