

Practice Drills & Tips.

Baseline Consistency - Basic drill

Choose a realistic number that you think you can make, rallying with a partner. Give yourself a maximum of 5 goes to focus your mind. Increase the number each time if you achieve it.

TIP. Try to hit a similar speed each time, any changes in speed will make it more difficult.

Baseline backhands - Basic drill

1 handed backhands. As you turn your shoulders to start the backswing holding the racket with both hands, turn the thumb on your dominant hand inwards towards your body so your knuckle is on the top of the handle, this gives your wrist strength.

TIP. Release the non hitting hand just before contact so both arms move equally in opposite directions and keep the arms straight throughout the shot.

2 handed backhands. As you turn your shoulders, turn your dominant hand slightly inwards towards your body. Swing both arms low to high away from the body as far as you can reach before ending over the shoulder to regain your balance.

TIP. Feel the non-dominant hand is copying a forehand action and the dominant hand is a stabiliser.

Baseline Consistency - Advanced drill

Set a stop clock to 3 mins and time how many shots you can hit without making any mistakes.

TIP. Learn to take the ball on the rise to rebound the incoming power.

Baseline Consistency - Advanced drill

One person hits a loopy topspin shot trying to force their partner back behind the court, the other tries to take the ball on the rise before it gets above shoulder height inside the court.

TIP. When taking the ball on the rise you need to prepare much earlier and start your swing just as the ball lands. When hitting loopy topspin, brush up the back of the ball. Both these roles require you to watch the ball very closely.

Baseline Accuracy + Consistency - Basic drill

Put down a target to aim at either end between baseline and serviceline in one corner and give yourself a time limit to hit the target before your partner.

TIP. Early preparation and good balance are key to being accurate!

Baseline Accuracy + Consistency - Advanced drill

One player has to hit crosscourt, the other down the line. Both players move side to side rallying in a figure of 8 on the court. Swap directions every time you achieve a figure of 8 (2 shots each in the correct half of the court)

TIP. Add the serve and play out the point to find out your strengths and weaknesses!

Serving - Basic drill

Practice directing your serve wide and centre of both service boxes.

TIP. Good balance is essential for accurate serving to control the racket face. Discipline yourself not to hit those place ups you know you shouldn't!

Serving - Basic drill

Ball arm - Your place up is crucial if your serve works under pressure. Place something on the ground arm's length in front of you slightly to your hitting side. Place the ball high enough you can count 3 secs before it lands on the target to get the correct height as well as direction.

TIP. To serve well you need to maintain a rhythm, create a routine and repeat the same rhythm every time until you can do it without any conscious thought.

Racket arm - The more relaxed your action the faster your ball will go. Accelerate the racket upwards on contact with a chopper grip that creates the spin to bring the ball down.

TIP. It is common to grip the racket so tightly that your wrist stops the racket head from accelerating over the top of the ball, thereby losing you control and power. Hold the racket lower down the handle so your little finger is not on the grip this will help you to loosen the tension.

Serving with a chopper grip.

This is often one of the biggest challenges for players who have played for many years with a forehand grip! The racket feels as though it will miss the ball completely but the chopper grip (which is when you hold the "V" of your thumb and first finger on the top of the handle, this allows maximum movement of the wrist to change the direction of the ball and vary the spins. The spins have a dual purpose, firstly to control your power back down into court and secondly to confuse the opposition after the bounce!

TIP. Start with the racket in a throwing position behind your head, place the ball straight up and slowly throw the racket up to the ball so you can see the angle on contact. Each one you do you will get a better feel for the direction. Don't be surprised if initially the ball goes down quickly. Try to turn (pronate) your wrist over the top of the ball this will start to make the ball go faster and straighter again. Be patient, it's well worth the effort!

Serving - Advanced drill

Exaggerate the width of the court by using spins. Aim to get the second bounce outside of the tramlines thereby forcing the receiver out of the court.

TIP. If you place the ball slightly to the side of you, you can slice/topspin as long as you have a "Chopper Grip".

Serving - Advanced doubles drill

Exaggerate a more upward and forward force by placing the ball high and in front to gain momentum to carry you into the net behind your serve.

TIP. Get your partner to choose the target for you to hit, this creates some pressure that will help you in a match!

Returns of serve - Basic drill

When your partner is practicing their serve, go through a routine that will mentally and physically mean you are ready! Start slightly further back than where you want to make contact with the ball, this creates time to move on to the ball rather than defend. Decide where ideally you would like to aim and have a plan for the serves that don't put you under pressure.

TIP. Watch the ball leave your opponent's hand to have an idea of what type of serve is coming. Coordinate this with a split step to start your movement.

TIP. Rule No.1 contact the ball in front of your body. This means the size of your backswing will have to change according to the speed of the ball! You could start with a chopper grip and block if it comes quickly or restrict the backswing (Agassi and Djokovic style) to drive through flatter.

TIP. If you are learning a new grip, start in your ready position with the new grip as you will change faster to your familiar grip.

TIP. If you imagine the court in four quarters this will help to focus on a target.

TIP. Under pressure aim across the court for a bigger target area. With less pressure, (maybe a second serve) you can use the return to take back control knowing the serve has to land short.

Net Play - Basic drill

Keep your hands in front of you, as if you were going to catch the ball, this way you can rebound the incoming power easily. Less hands, more footwork!

TIP. Try to look through the back of the strings on contact, just like Roger Federer!

Net Play - Basic drill

Both players volley keeping the ball off the ground angling the racket face up to create time to recover. Try to alternate forehand and backhand using chopper grip for both sides. Set a number as a target and count to help with concentration.

TIP. Try to relax the tension in your grip between hits by using your other hand to hold the racket.

Net Play - Advanced drill for doubles

Start on the serviceline, hit your first volley deep to your partner diagonally opposite, then move forwards, split step and then try to win the point by hitting an angle, if not play out the point.

TIP. Very often a softer volley is more effective than a powerful one, try to stay calm and look at the situation before you hit.

Net Play - Advanced drill for doubles

Both players move forwards every time they hit a shot so they both end up at the net volleying together. When you are comfortable with the drill play competitively.

TIP. Keep the ball low to have a chance to win!

Net Play - Advanced drill for singles

Start on the serviceline, hit your first volley deep, recover quickly to hit the overhead smash, play out the point.

TIP. Watch your partners body position to have a clue about when they are going to lob.