

BASIC STRATEGIES

Tennis is a game. Every game has ways to win points. To be purposeful about winning, players need a plan to win. The general and overall plans to win are called "Strategies". More specific ways to implement the strategies are called "Tactics". The combination of shots used to execute the tactic are called "patterns". It is good for players to understand these concepts to develop a winning game.

Basic strategies: KEEP THE BALL IN PLAY

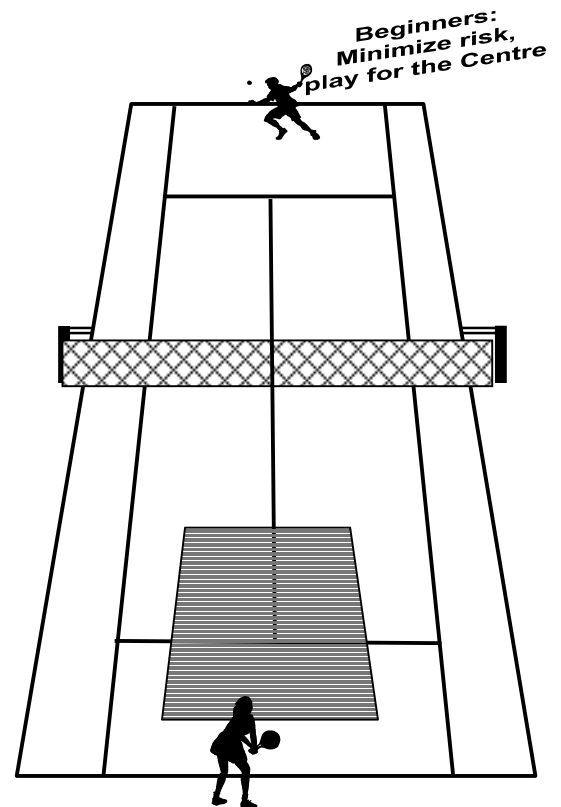
This is the most basic and powerful of all strategies in tennis (and the most mis-understood, especially at higher levels of play). Keeping the ball in play is called "consistency". Tennis by its nature is a game of errors. Players get a big percentage of their points (70-90%) because of opponent's errors (not their good shots). Minimizing errors is the most effective way to win. The trick is to choose shots that are "High Percentage" (have the most chance to go in). A simple definition of High Percentage is this: if you had 10 attempts at the shot, at least 7 should go in.

At higher levels, the concept turns to "competitive consistency". Just blooping the ball back can give opponent's an advantage. On the other hand, trying to constantly hit 'winning' shots means you will get some great ones, but end up missing more than you get. Competitive consistency means finding the balance between putting the shot in, but making it challenging for the opponent.

Keep the Ball in Play tactics:

This list starts with lower level tactics on the top and gets more advanced as you go down the list.

- Aim for the centre of the court (or service box)
- Keep the ball 1-2 meters over the net
- Hit crosscourt (more court space to go in)
- Hit higher to gain time when in trouble
- When volleying at net, aim for large areas (avoid small targets)
- Use topspin to arc the ball over the net and into the court
- Hit the ball in the same direction it came from (avoid changing angles)



Court Home-work

Beginner players: Play a 'Centre set'. As much as it seems like no strategy at all, try aiming for the middle of the court. Chase every ball your opponent gives and send it back with a high arc (1 meter over the net) to the centre. When serving, aim for the middle of the service box as well. The objective is to give your opponent as many opportunities to miss as possible while taking no risks yourself. Your practice partner should try to 'win' each point. You may be surprised what happens.

Intermediate-Advanced players: Play the "+/-" game. One player serves for the whole 'game'. Score this game by giving a "plus" point for any winner or forced error. A "minus" point is taken away for any unforced error. First player to plus 5 wins the game or, first to minus 5 loses. The game is over either way. Switch servers. The objective is to stay out of the minus column. This game can be played for singles or doubles. It's a great game to build awareness of the relationship between winners and errors.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge Tennis Canada and Louis Cayer for providing inspiration and source material
If you would like to ask a question, give feedback, or want more information, contact Wayne at:

www.acecoach.com