

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.

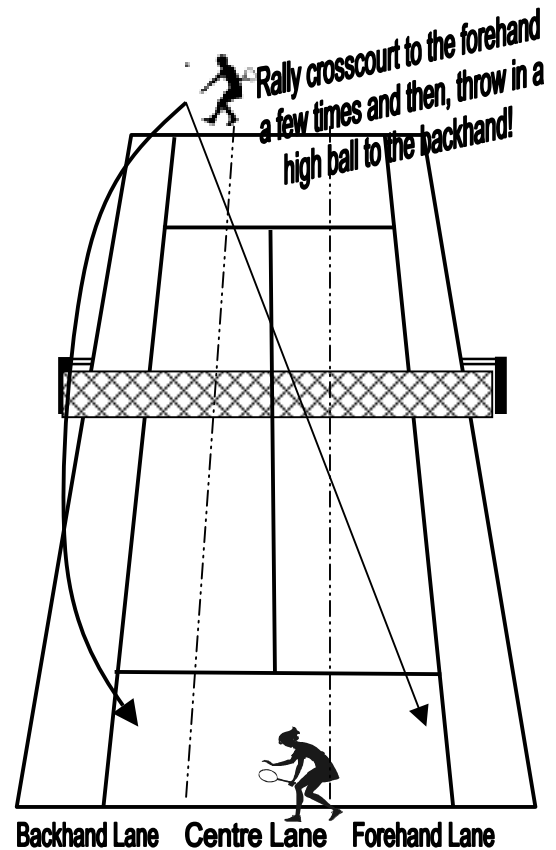
Basic strategies: MIX IT UP

Changing the way you send the ball to an opponent can coax an error or a lower quality shot out of them. Mixing things up challenges opponents by making them adapt their strokes in unexpected ways. The first aspect in mixing things up is to, 'keep your opponent guessing'. If they don't know what is coming, they have greater difficulty preparing for it. The second aspect is to establish a pattern that lulls your opponent and then throw in a, 'change-up' (e.g. in a rally, send a few medium trajectory crosscourt forehands then throw in a high ball to the backhand). When using this aspect remember, it does no good to mix things up if you don't establish a pattern in the first place. Be prepared to capitalize on the next ball from the opponent.

Mix it up tactics:

Changing one or more of the 5 Ball Controls is an easy way to remember what to change when mixing it up:

- Height:** Send the ball higher to prevent them from hitting at a comfortable height. Send it lower to make them bend & hit up to you.
- Direction:** Changing the ball's direction challenges an opponents movement. For example, change a crosscourt into a down-the-line (This can be a risky option, only change when the ball you receive is easier).
- Distance:** Deep balls challenge and opponent's ability to move back. Short balls challenge forward movement.
- Speed:** Changing the speed can challenge the timing of an opponent. Sending the ball faster gives less time to prepare. Sending it slower may seem like giving away advantage but it may mess up their swing rhythm.
- Spin:** Adding spin changes the way the ball flies through the air and how it bounces.



Court Home work

Beginner players: For beginner players, long-term development must be kept in mind. Shots in beginner play are often mixed up, but not on purpose. To be able to mix it up when you want in the future means training NOT to mix now. Practicing placing the ball consistently and in the same way is the key. Maintaining the same shot repeatedly is the goal. Practice by maintaining the same shot with a partner repeatedly (e.g. crosscourt or down-the-line rallies, open court volleys, serves to the forehand or backhand).

Intermediate-Advanced players: Practice changing shots after a pattern. Designate one player "the changer" and the other "the maintainer". The 'maintainer' starts the point with a groundstroke. The 'changer' hits the same ball the maintainer sends for 3 shots and then must change something. Practice changing only one of the 5 Ball Controls at a time until you have mastered it, then add another (e.g. don't change the ball's height, direction and spin. Start with height, then height & spin, etc.). This is just as much practice for the 'maintainer' who must learn to receive a change-up and not give up a weak response or an error. For added practice, incorporate the serve. Play 'badminton scoring' where points are only won on serve. If the returner wins a point, they get serve. Server can only hit the same placement 2 times in a row maximum and then must change. Try to construct a strategy of mixing it up.