

Ball Control Basics

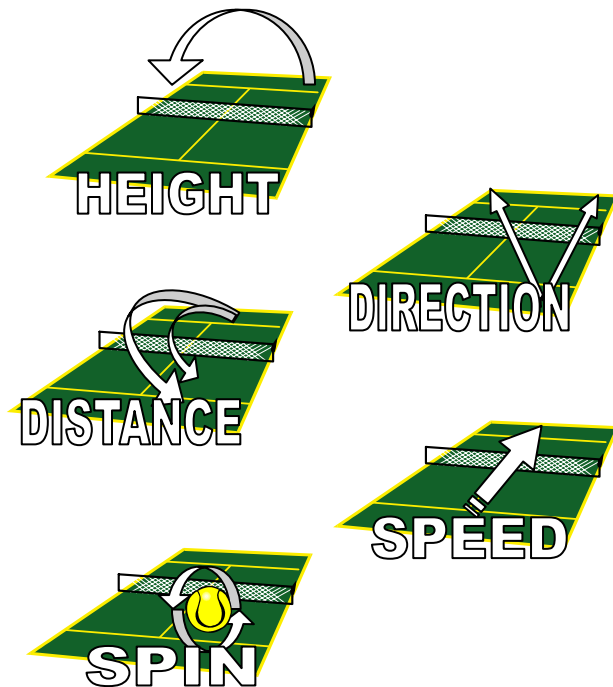
The goal of tennis in it's most basic form is to: "Make the little round, yellow, fuzzy ball, go where you want it to". There are only 5 ways to manipulate the ball in tennis (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin). To master tennis a player must learn how to receive variations of these 5 'Ball Controls' and send variations as well. The ball controls are the #1 tool players can use to solve their problems on court.

THE 5 BALL CONTROLS

For the Beginner... (Play Tennis Rating 1.0-2.5)

To make things simpler, beginners can focus on the first 3 controls of Height, Direction, and Distance. The primary task of a beginner player is to keep the ball in play (called "consistency"). To be consistent, players must learn to receive high and low balls, balls to the right and left, and balls deep and short.

When sending the ball, controlling height helps to clear the net (which is the first goal of every shot). Direction helps to place the ball into the court or away from an opponent. Distance mans sending the ball shorter or deeper in the court. These Ball Controls are how players problem-solve on court. For example, to beat an opponent at net, a player can control height to place the ball over the opponent's head. If the ball doesn't go where intended, the player must be able to correct the problem for future points.



For the Intermediate player...(Play Tennis Rating 3.0-4.5)

Once a player has a handle on the basic ball controls, they need to start mastering the remaining ball controls of Speed & Spin. Speed requires receiving and sending shots with power. Spin requires being able to 'read' and receive the different bounces spin produces. It also includes imparting spin to precisely control the trajectory of the ball).

Court Home-work

Beginner: Drill each ball control separately to improve the ability to 'read' the ball. Start with a 'Mini-Tennis' rally (serviceline to serviceline) then progress to $\frac{3}{4}$ court, then baseline to baseline:

Height: Place a long brush broom at the centre of the net with bristles pointed up. Rally each ball over the broom like the net was higher. Net errors account for over 70% of all baseline rally errors.

Direction: Player "A" starts points at any singles sideline and feeds the ball to player "B" who can hit to the open court.

Distance: Play points where either the service boxes are out (must hit deep) or a bonus point is won if a player misses a ball landing in the service boxes.

Intermediate: Players at this level can play modified points with the focus on one Ball Control.

Speed: Player "A" starts points in $\frac{3}{4}$ court with a hard shot. If Player "B" defends well and wins, they get to start the next point.

Spin: Use a modified grip (halfway up the racquet) to feel the racquet spinning the ball. Practice slice serves.