

Tanner Tennis — Week 2

Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

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Equipment Required

- Sound Speaker
- Basket of balls
- Attendance Sticks

Hour 1

Objectives

By the end of week one, students will be able to do the following:

- Students will prepare for groundstrokes by moving into position early and bringing back rackets.
- Students will coil, loading on their back foot, before accelerating into their shot. (Called, *Rattlesnaking*.)
- Students will follow through, extending out, turning their wrist over, and wrapping around as far as possible.
- Students will know everyone's name in the class.

Groundstroke SKILL #1 – Groundstroke Prep

Groundstroke Prep Instruction (2 minutes)

- **The Problem:** Many of you are losing out on power and consistency because you are not making contact with the ball in front of your navel. There are two, primary reasons for this:
 - Because you are not moving your feet to let your racket swing naturally through its strike zone.
 - Because you are beginning your stroke too late.

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- **The Solution:**

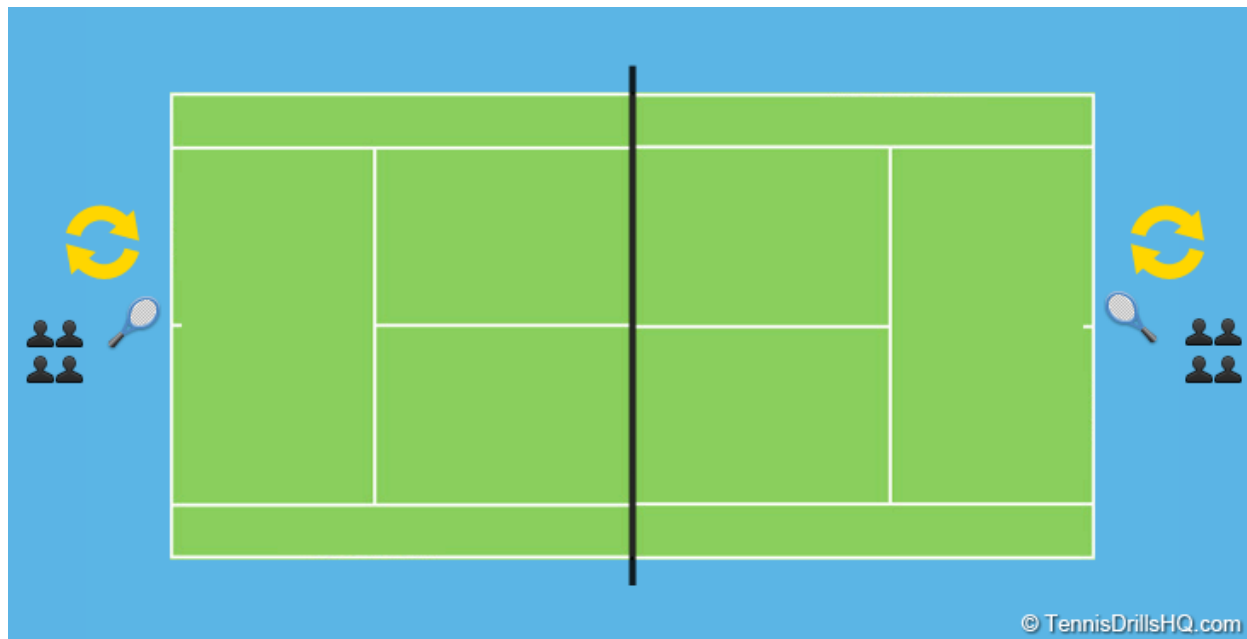
- To fix the footwork, you need to learn to appropriately measure the timing and distance of your steps as you approach the ball. Fixing this won't happen in a day; it takes a LOT of practice.
 - The concept is similar to golf. You take your biggest steps first (driver), then you use your shuffle steps (irons), and finally, you stutter to make tiny adjustments if necessary (putter).
- To fix the swing, start to bring your racket back as soon as the ball comes off your opponent's strings. The racket path will look like a capital C. High, low, high. Like a powerful wave of the sea, it is slow, and deliberate until it crashes up on the rocky shore."

Groundstroke Prep Practice (10 minutes)

In teams of 3 and four, spread out across the courts and hand feed one player on the opposite side of the net 4-6 balls. Each feed should vary in distance. Give the hitter practice taking "driver", "iron", and "putter" steps. The extra player/s shags balls. Everyone has a job and is constantly moving. Rotate.

Groundstroke Prep Drill/Game (15 minutes) "Ping Pong"

Ping-pong is a game that can be played by 4 or more players, in the example below there are 8 players on the tennis court. It's simply played by having each player in line hit one shot and then rotating to the back of the line as a rallying point is played out. It should be played first to 11 points with each point started by a feed by either a (winning) player or coach. No serves. Therefore each side is working as a team, hitting one shot each. This develops teamwork and allows time for each player to use their "steps" to run anywhere on the court. ([Source](#))



Groundstroke SKILL #2 – Rattlesnake

Rattlesnake Instruction (2 minutes)

- For greater power behind your strokes, you need to build up some potential energy first. Coil like a snake and then strike out at the ankles of the hikers across the net from you. (This means stay low as you contact and follow through; NO POP TARTS!)
- Cue: “Watch me snake. Now watch me slither.” (Silento’s *Watch me whip*)

Rattlesnake Practice (10 minutes)

Rattlesnake Game (20 minutes) “King of the Court”

Doubles. 6-8/court. 3rd ball live. Challenger feeds. Challengers need 2 consecutive points to dethrone the king. (No wave yet.)

Groundstroke Skill #3 – Wrap Around Follow Through

Follow Through Instruction (2 minutes)

- **The problem:** Sometimes, our shots are halted (and even spring back at us) because we are either trying to guide our shots or because we are anxious to return to a ready position. Decelerating kills both power and accuracy. (Test question: What gives us the most power at the contact point of our groundstrokes? Racket head acceleration.) Racket head speed is the primary force that transfers energy to the ball, giving our shots velocity.
- **The Solution:** To maintain racket head speed through the point of contact, we must continue the motion even after the strings have left our racket. The following drills and games are designed to train you to lengthen your racket’s follow-through motion.

Follow Through Cues:

1. **Extend**—After contact, but before the final position, your racket should extend out into the court. This promotes forward momentum.
2. **Timecheck**—Turn your wrist over so it looks like you are checking the time on a wristwatch.
3. **Muay Thai**—Lift your racket elbow like you are about to uppercut your opponent in the face, allowing yourself greater mobility.
 - a. For a double-handed backhand, a **bird beak** analogy works well.
 - b. For a single-handed backhand, the cue is, “*Fly Like An Eagle*.”
4. **Freeze**—Freeze for a split second in trophy pose. You have time.

Follow Through Practice (15 minutes)

Practice hitting while focusing on these four cues with a partner. Your goal is to hit 5-10 consecutive shots where you follow through. No need for too much power, just follow through.

Follow Through Game (15 minutes): “Et Tu Brutus?!”

- In this drill, you will practice hitting deep shots from the baseline by wrapping your arm around your neck and touching your racket hand to the back of your shoulder. It will look like you are stabbing yourself in the back. Think about how you would knife someone running away from you, hypothetically of course. You wouldn't lunge, then only poke. You would lunge and penetrate until the hilt hit the bone. (And probably twist.) Likewise, you accelerate through the ball at contact and continue the motion, extending your arm completely, and turning your wrist over, until your physiology stops you.
- The height of the “stab” will depend on how deep you want your shot to travel.
 - A deep shot will follow through over the shoulder.
 - A short shot will follow through over your arm (or even waist).

Coaching notes:

- Remind the students that, while in this drill the focus is on the hand reaching the shoulder, in real play, the players' focus ought to remain on the point of contact.
- It's normal to hit long at first. With time your body will make natural corrections to bring the ball back into the court.
- If the player is consistently hitting long, encourage them to stab lower on their body.
- Regardless of where you end up on the follow-through, your elbow should be lifted and facing your opponent.

Hour 3

Objectives:

By the end of hour 3, students should be able to do the following:

-

Groundstroke Skill #4 – Consistency

Instruction—(2 minutes)

- Whiteboard

Forehand Practice (10 minutes): “5 Each”

This drill focuses on a very practical skill that statistics show is key to winning most matches. Believe it or not, if you can hit five shots in a row in, you will win most rallies, so that is what this drill will build into you.

With your partner, take turns beginning rallies that must last at least 10 shots, five from each player. Once you have each hit five shots, start a new round. Your goal is to complete 5 of these rallies. Many players use this drill as a warm-up before class; it locks them into their fundamentals and gives them a nice goal for each rally as they get warm. It might take a while

for you to get to 5 rallies, but once you gain greater control and confidence in your strokes, you will be able to pound out 5 such rallies in no time. ([Source](#))

Forehand Drill/Game (10 minutes): “First to 100”

In this tennis game, two teams compete against each other to be the first team to have 100 hits. (If both teams are playing on the same court—on different sides, the coach can feed the balls.) Each team must pick a king to go to the other end of the court to be their return-shot player. Teams will line up on either side of the court and hit in a down-the-line direction, playing first to one hundred shots. Every time a mistake is made by the team’s king (return shot player), the player on the other side of the court must run down and swap positions with the return shot player. The coach (or player) will not feed the next ball until each player is in position. If a mistake is made the number of shots the teams are up to will continue, e.g. if a mistake is made after 24 shots, the next shot in the next rally will be the 25th shot. The coach will feed the next ball into play to the team that made the mistake. The team that hits 100 shots first wins. ([Source](#))

Groundstroke SKILL #5 – Accuracy (Directional Hitting)

Directional Hitting Instruction—(2 minutes)

Three key factors determine where your shots are directed:

1. **TIMING**—Hitting sooner will angle the ball crosscourt. Hitting later will direct the ball down “outside.”
2. **FOOTWORK**—The ball tends to follow the path of your feet.
3. **BODY ROTATION**—The more you turn your body into the shot, the more angle it will have on it.
4. ***CROSS BODY FOLLOW THROUGH**—The more you pull the racket across your body, with a firm wrist, the more of an angle you’ll produce.
5. ***INDEPENDENT ARM/WRIST MOTION**—Pros have the finesse to muscle angle shots somewhat consistently; NCAA does not.

Adjust the angle of your ball direction by:

- Swinging earlier or later
- Racket face
- Direction body is moving, led by your footwork

Directional Hitting Practice (10 minutes): Baby Ruth (Call your shot)

- (Beginner version) Think about **TIMING** your racket, **STEPPING** into the ball, and **ROTATING** your upper body. Hit across the net from a partner, repetitively targeting specific areas of the court. Try to call your shot.
 - Gameplay: Start with 10 points. If you miss, your spot, you lose a point.
 - Ad side (including alley), Deuce side (including alley)

- (Intermediate version) Think about TIMING your racket, STEPPING into the ball, and ROTATING your upper body to hit your target. Hit across the net from a partner, targeting alternating areas of the court. Players decide their targets before they begin.
 - Gameplay: Start with 10 points. If you miss your spot, you lose a point.
- (Advanced version) follow the agreed-upon pattern, then call out a deviating shot (e.g. "Down the line")
 - Ad court, Deuce court
 - Ad side, Deuce side (Backcourt)
 - (In front of them) Service Line, Baseline
 - Center Service Line, Doubles Alley
- Gameplay: Start with 10 points. If you miss your spot, you lose a point.

Directional Hitting Practice (5 minutes Intermediate): Quadrants

- Prep: Singles formation, with 2-3 balls between the two players.
- Gameplay: Before the fed ball to Player B, Player A must assign an area of court for Player B to hit. Player A then feeds the ball to Player B. Player B then attempts to return the ball so it lands in the intended area. If Player B makes it, he/she earns one point. Each player gets 10 attempts.
- There are 4 quadrants, not including the doubles alley: Ad/Deuce sides service courts, and backcourt. (Ad front, Ad back, Deuce front, and Deuce back)
- Scoring:
 - You must get 8/10 points to win.
 - The player with the most points wins.
 - Battleship—No shot calling. First to sink loses.

Directional Hitting Game (5 minute rounds): Bobsled

- This game starts just like "Team Singles." Two teams line up behind the baseline. Hit and rotate to the end of your team's line. If you miss, however, you must sit down at the midpoint of the center service line (note: place a tennis ball there for reference) on your side of the net. As players continue to mishit, they must line up behind the "bobsledder" in front of them. If your entire team is in the bobsled, you lose. You can redeem your team members if you hit an opposite "bobsledder." (Additionally, when redeeming a team member, you can also send an opposite team member to their bobsled to make things go faster.)
- Coach's note: It's easier to have students place their rackets in the doubles alley while in the bobsled.

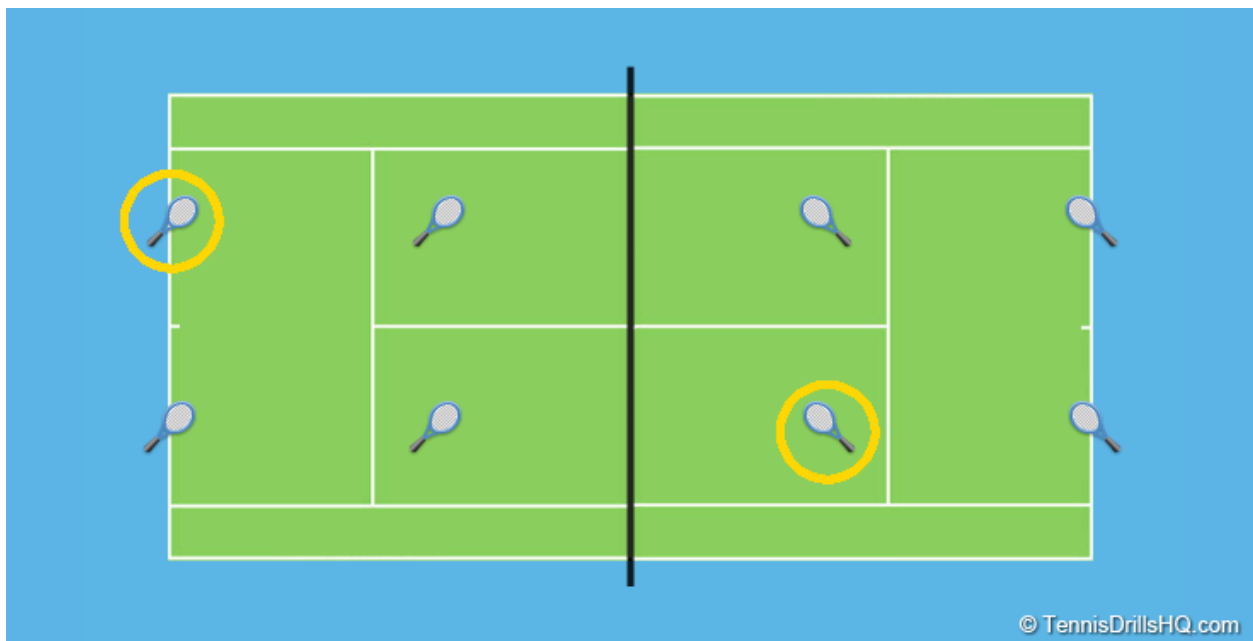
Directional Hitting Assessment (NA)

Success = For the rest of the semester, students will be able to hit toward correct areas of the court on the fly, when asked by the instructor.

"Jester" Drill/Game—(10 minutes)

The point of "Jester" is for each team to target the joker on the other end of the court. 4 per team. ([Source](#))

1. The coach will feed balls into play. The feed will rotate between the jokers on either end of the court.
2. Each time the Jester loses a point for their team, by either the Jester making a mistake or the ball being won in the Jester's section of the court (such as a winner) the opposing team will win 3 points.
3. The game will continue as per normal, outside of this 'Jester rule', where a normal point won that does not involve the Jester on the final shot or play, will still give the team that won the point 1 point.
4. Every 5 points the coach will need to select a new Jester.



Hour 4

Objectives

By the end of hour 4, students should be able to do the following:

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Groundstroke SKILL #6

Instruction (2 minutes)

Practice (10 minutes)

Drill/Game (10 minutes)

Groundstroke Skill #7 (15 Minutes) “Attack the Ball”

Instruction (2 minutes)

Many tennis players are regularly dissatisfied with their results but do not know what to do about it. To play your best tennis, you must anxiously await your opponent's next hit just like a Labrador Retriever would anticipate its master preparing to throw a ball—full of energy and ready to go to any length to return a ball. (Or if you're not a dog person, imagine you're a kid on Christmas morning, and the ball is a gift from Santa Claus!) Expect every ball to come back, EVERY TIME. After each stroke, don't just wait for the ball to come to you—

1. Anticipate where the ball might go next by "shadowing" the ball while it's on the other side of the court.
2. Recover to a neutral area of the court, in a balanced position.
3. Assuming you're not already on the run, split-step as you see the ball exit your opponent's strings.
4. Move diagonally forward towards your next shot, bisecting the trajectory of the ball's path.

Practice

Practice feeding balls to a partner (with rackets or not). The hitter needs to focus on two things:

1. Stepping into the ball on a bent forward knee.
2. Recovering to the centered, balanced location after each shot.

Assessment

Play out points to 10. If you fail to move forward (towards the net) while making contact with the ball, you automatically lose the point. (Call your own errors.)

Hour 3

Backhand SKILL #1

Instruction—(2 minutes)

- Whiteboard

Practice—(10 minutes)

Drill/Game—(10 minutes)

Backhand Skill #2 —

Instruction—(2 minutes)

- Whiteboard

Practice—(10 minutes)

Drill/Game—(10 minutes)

Hour 4

Forehand & Backhand Skill #1 - Footwork

Instruction—(2 minutes)

- Whiteboard

Practice—(10 minutes)

Suicide Drill/Game—(10 minutes)

Get into groups of 4. Have your 3 partners stand at the net near the center line each with 4-6 balls. You are at the baseline on the opposite side. Have the partners alternate hitting balls lightly in every direction, forcing you to constantly move. For every ball that you retrieve successfully, you get a point. For every ball that you miss or cannot get to, you lose a point. Keep playing until you reach a score of 10. Your objective is to play until the balls are gone. The player with the most points wins.

All kinds of great things will occur with this drill: you will improve your footwork, your quickness, and your shot-making on the run, as well as your endurance and recovery between shots. You will become exhausted during this drill, but it will help you never run out of gas when you are playing a match. The better your friend is able to hit corners and alternate sides, the better the drill will work you out. ([Source](#))

Forehand & Backhand #2 - Consistency

Instruction—(2 minutes)

- Whiteboard

Practice—(10 minutes)

Ally Drill/Game—(10 minutes)

“This drill is tough to master and might take awhile, but don’t get too frustrated and give up. You will eventually be able to do this drill fairly routinely. It is dynamite for your control.” Beginner: Stand opposite your partner on a single side of the court. Intermediate/Advanced: Stand within the doubles alley. Try to hit 10 shots with a partner, all within that area. If you can do 10, go up to 20. If you can do more than 20 in a row in the alley, enter your nearest USTA tournament! You can do this drill with strictly forehands, strictly backhands, or randomly, hitting whatever stroke comes up. You can make it more difficult by alternating sides or by going all backhand. Once you can hit 10-20 balls in a rally within this narrow area, the court will look as big as a football field to you. That will help you not only keep the ball in, but you will also be able to place it much better as you have gained excellent control of your shots. ([Source](#))