

# Beginning Tennis - Study Guide

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One of the enduring beauties of tennis is that people of all sizes, shapes, ages and physical abilities can enjoy playing tennis for the rest of their lives. Tennis is a skill sport that is based primarily on learning to handle the racket in order to direct the tennis ball.

Everyone learns differently, some visually, verbally or by using their kinesthetic senses (“get the feel) of a motion or shot. We will have a “show and tell” presentation of the KEY CONCEPTS of the game.

Whether you are a serious tennis player who is highly skilled or an occasional player who plays strictly for fun, you can improve your performance by understanding a few key concepts of the game.

## **KEY CONCEPTS - THE KINETIC CHAIN**

Hand & Racket	The Kinetic chain is a coordinated activation of the segments of the body starting with the ground reaction force to the feet on the ground and ending with the acceleration of the racket through the ball. Its purpose is to place the end segment, the hand and racket, in the optimum position at the optimum velocity to best “make the ball go”. Efficient use of the segments creates a racket velocity that is much more than the sum of its parts. The largest portions of kinetic energy or force generated in the stroke are developed in the legs and trunk. The kinetic chain is oriented to converting linear or straight line momentum to angular or rotational momentum around a stable post leg. There are several reasons for kinetic chain breakage, but the most common include muscle weakness, muscle inflexibility, joint injury and poor mechanics of the stroke.
Wrist	
Elbow	
Shoulder	
Trunk & Back	
Legs	
Feet	
Ground	

## **KEY CONCEPTS - THE READY POSITION & FOOTWORK**

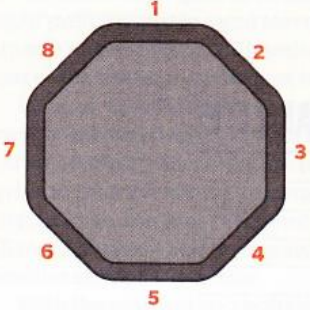
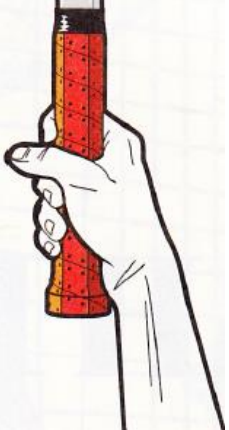

The ready position in tennis is much like the ready position in other sports. The infielders in baseball and the defensive backs in football use similar ready positions. To receive most shots, you should be a step behind the baseline with your feet shoulder width apart, weight on the balls of your feet (happy feet) and your knees bent slightly. A balance step (Split-step) is used when hitting shots within a point. It is made by evenly placing your feet shoulder width apart with your weight evenly distributed on each foot. Your torso should be forward. Both hands should be on the racket, with your eyes focused on the ball on the other side of the net. Be relaxed and ready to react.

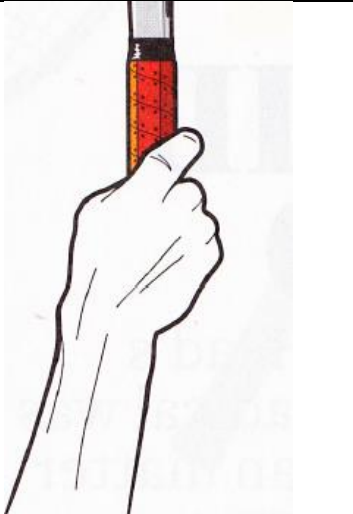
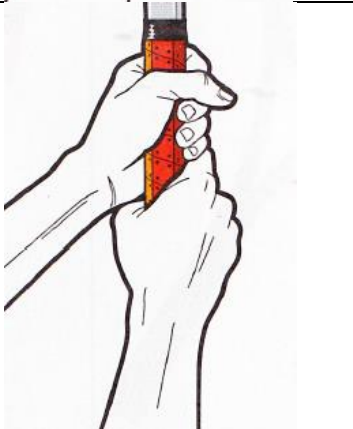
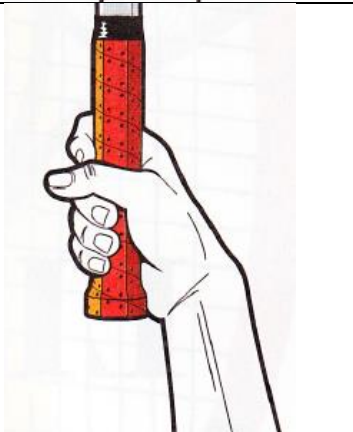
Your footwork should get you to the ball in a proper hitting position. Keep your feet moving, never stand still, since the ball will rarely come to you in a perfect position to be hit. Footwork is one of the most important fundamentals of tennis. Good footwork gets you into the best possible position from which to execute your shots.

When waiting for the ball assume an active ready position, prepared to move quickly in any direction. As soon as the ball leaves your opponents racket use your eyes to pick up the ball and determine its direction so you can move toward it. Your first step is accompanied by a turn of the hips and shoulders,

thus initiating the backswing. Your weight should be on your back foot and your racket should point to the back fence. When transferring your weight forward (with large, small or diagonal steps) get in a good position to stroke the oncoming ball. Pushing off on the balls of your feet contributes to a quicker start. Shift your weight forward as you make your swing and contact the ball as you follow through across the midline of your body and over your opposite shoulder. After hitting the ball recover quickly to your ready position.

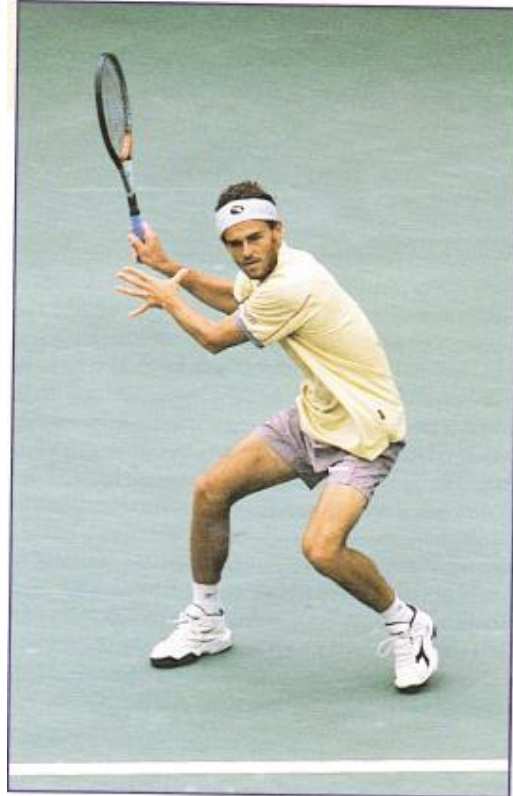
**KEY CONCEPTS - THE GRIP**

	<p>Grips are the foundation of tennis strokes. How you position your hand on the eight sided handle has a direct impact on each ball you hit. To find a grip, use the base knuckle of your index finger as the main reference point. The diagrams for each grip show the top view of a racket handle that has four main sides and four narrower bevels between the sides. The top facing bevel is 1, move clockwise for 2 thru 8 (Lefties reverse). Hold the racket firm, not loose or tight.</p>
	<p><b>Eastern Forehand Grip</b> This grip is best for beginners and intermediate players. It provides feel, control, and the right angle to the racket head when swung properly. Place your hand flat against the strings and slide it down to the grip, shake hands with the racket. The base knuckle of your index finger slides onto bevel 3. It's easy to switch quickly to other grips from the Eastern Forehand.</p>
	<p><b>Continental Grip</b> This grip is used primarily for serves, volleys, overheads, slices and defensive shots. Find it by putting the base knuckle of your index finger on bevel 2, which puts the V created by your thumb and forefinger on top of the handle. This grip allows your forearm and wrist to naturally pronate when serving and hitting overheads. On volleys it provides a slightly open racket face for underpin and control. You can hit flat or with slice with the Continental grip but it is tough to put topspin on the ball.</p>

	<p><b>Eastern Backhand</b></p> <p>This is the one handed backhand. From a Continental grip, shift your index finger knuckle one bevel counterclockwise (clockwise for lefties) so that it is on the very top of the grip on bevel 1. This is a good versatile grip that provides good stability to the wrist. You can roll the ball for some spin or hit through it for a more penetrating ground stroke. The Eastern backhand grip is not ideal for hitting topspin shots near shoulder level. It also can be difficult to control high bouncing balls.</p>
	<p><b>Two Handed Backhand Grip</b></p> <p>If you are finding that you don't have enough strength, control, or consistency with the one handed backhand try the two handed variety. A more compact stroke than the one hander, the two hander relies on shoulder rotation and an efficient swing to provide power. There are probably as many variations of a two handed grip as there are people using the two handed stroke. The soundest mechanical grip utilizes a Continental grip with the right hand and an Eastern forehand grip with the left hand. One of the main advantages of the two hander is your ability to disguise your shots, however your reach is limited.</p>
	<p><b>Semi-Western Forehand Grip</b></p> <p>Moving your index finger knuckle one more bevel clockwise (counterclockwise for lefties) to bevel 4 from the Eastern forehand grip puts you in a semi Western grip. This has become a prevalent grip for power baseliners on the pro tours. This grip allows you to put more topspin on the ball and take a bigger swing at the ball as the added topspin will help keep the ball in play. Since the grip naturally closes the racket face, forcing you to swing up from underneath the ball, it can be difficult to return low bouncing shots with this grip.</p>

## **KEY CONCEPTS – FOREHAND GROUNDSTROKE**

- Always start from a ready position
- The forehand is a full body motion
- The body summates the velocity of different segments –The Kinetic chain
- Stroke production: preparation, backswing, forward swing, contact and follow through
- Prepare with an early shoulder rotation and pivot of the feet as soon as you see the ball coming off your opponents racket
- Activate the loop (circular) or a straight back backswing
- Swing from slightly low to high, with the follow through extending high and across the midline of your body.
- Make contact with the ball in front of your left leg, opposite for lefties
- Maintain a full, synchronized sequence to the timing of the stroke



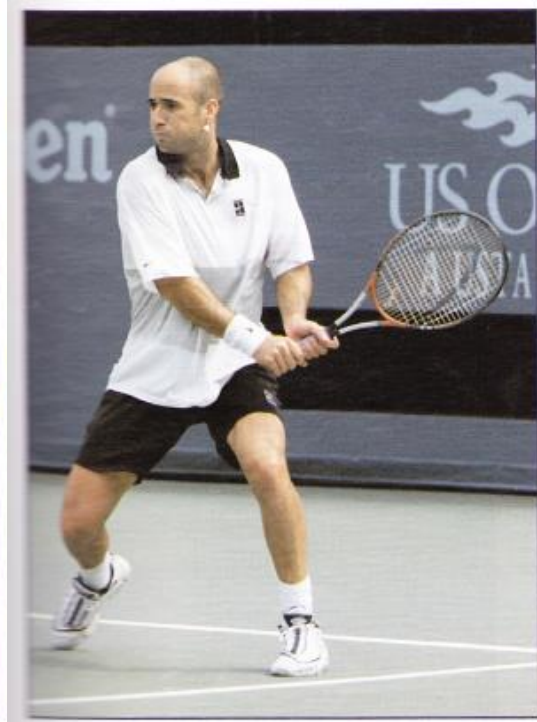
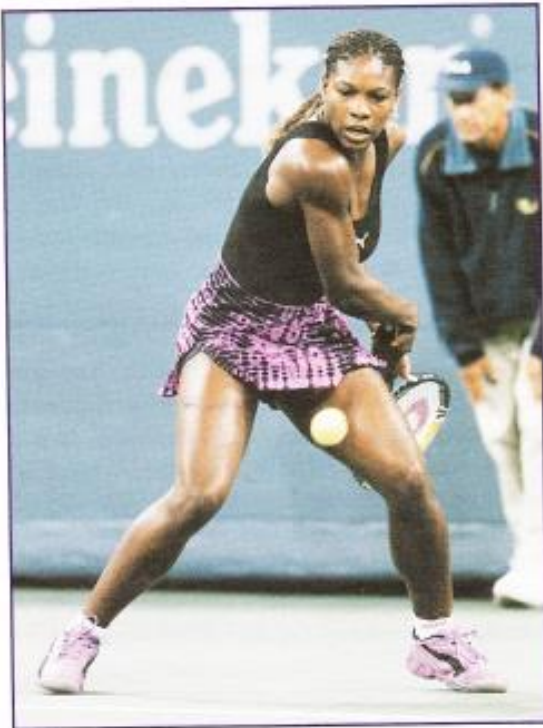
### **KEY CONCEPTS – BACKHAND GROUNDSTROKE**

- Always start from the ready position
- Prepare with an early shoulder rotation and pivot of the feet
- Get your racket back fast and move to the ball
- Activate the loop or a straight back motion backswing
- Change the grip from eastern forehand to eastern backhand as the racket is brought to the backhand position
- Transfer the weight from the back to the front foot as the racket moves from backswing to contact point to follow through
- Hit the ball out in front of your left leg (opposite for lefties)
- Use a strong follow through across the midline of your body
- Keep a full synchronized sequence to the timing of the stroke



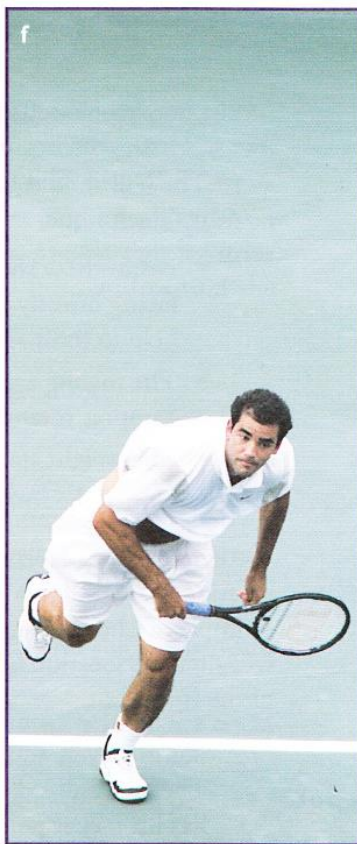
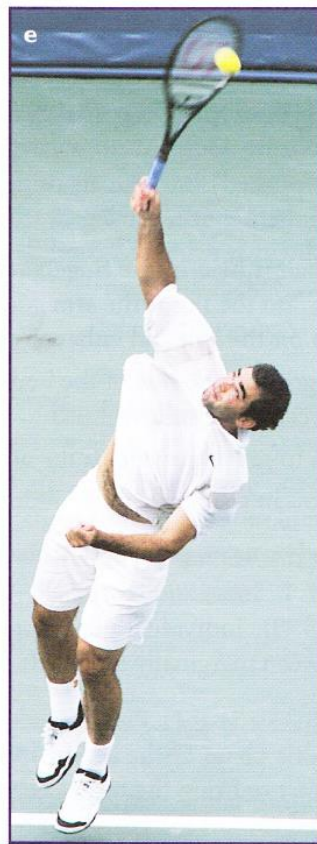
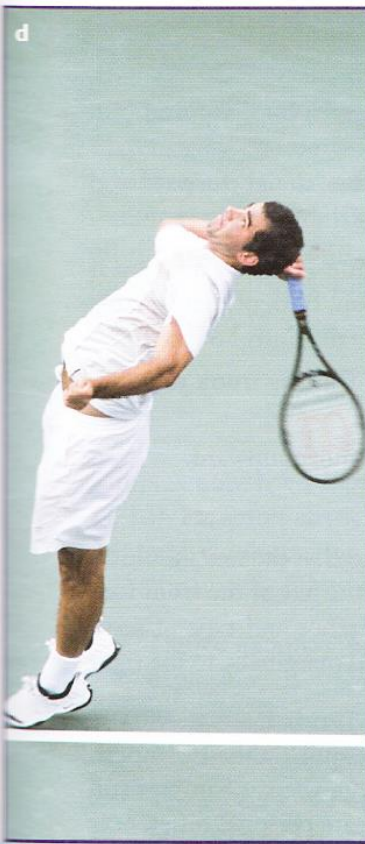
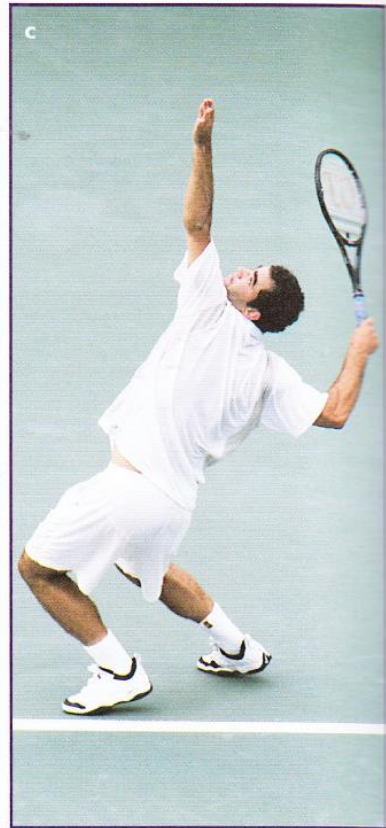
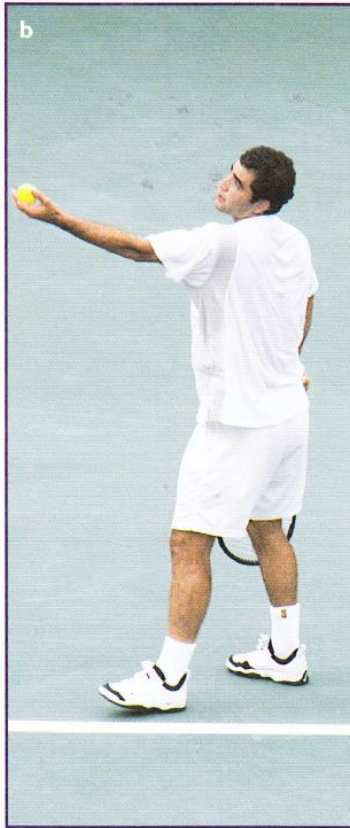
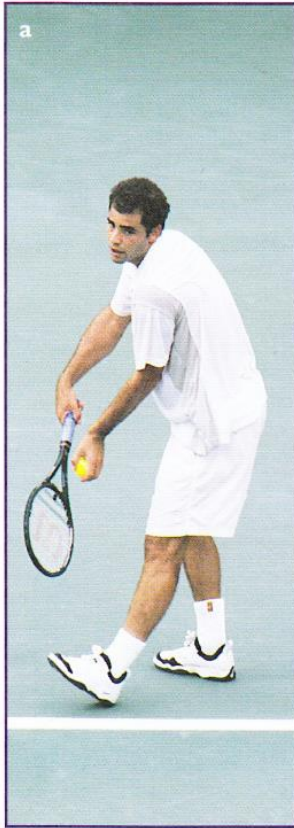
### **KEY CONCEPTS –TWO HANDED BACKHAND**

- Move into position quickly and take your racket well back in preparation
- Make sure you change to a two handed backhand grip and keep your hands snug to each other on the grip
- Keep your arms close to your body throughout the stroke
- Hit the ball out in front of your right leg
- Use a strong follow through past the midline of your body and over your right shoulder
- Swing from low to high as you hit the ball to provide a little topspin
- Keep your balance, and your follow through position for a split second and then recover fast



## **KEY CONCEPTS – BASIC SERVE**

- The serve is the stroke that puts the ball in play and is the most important stroke in the game
- The server is allowed two attempts (plus any let serves) to get the ball into play by serving into the proper court
- The server begins each game from the right of the center mark and serves to the diagonally opposite right service court
- The second point is started from the left of the center mark, and the server serves to the receiver's left service court, and so on, alternating service courts until the game is finished
- There are two grips for the serve, the standard Eastern forehand grip and the Continental grip which should be used as soon as possible
- Put your left foot about an inch behind the baseline and 1 or 2 feet to the right of the center line at a 45 degree angle (this angle varies with some players) so that your toes point toward the net post on the right
- The ball is placed (not thrown) in the air with the heel of the hand facing up, extending the arm and hand ending in full extension forward of the right shoulder with little or no spin
- If the toss were allowed to drop, it would land in the court approximately eighteen inches in front of the right shoulder
- Make the toss higher than the racket can reach and time the toss with the take back of the racket (answer the phone)
- Coil the body by arching the back and bending your knees during preparation
- Bring the racket up through the ball with an explosive forward motion
- As the ball starts down, the weight shifts forward, the shoulders and trunk rotate forward, the wrist and elbow "snap" the racket head upward and forward contacting the ball with the body, arm, and racket at full extension (high five the giant)
- Let your weight transfer carry your body and racket forward in the direction of the ball, with your back foot coming forward to regain balance (put the sword away)





### ***KEY CONCEPTS - RETURN OF SERVE***

- The return of serve is probably the least practiced stroke and one of the most important
- The return of serve is a groundstroke, forehand or backhand
- Watch the ball off the server's racket and try to anticipate the location and speed of the serve
- Get the racket back early
- Be aggressive and step into the ball at contact
- Use a compact swing with a short backswing and follow-through
- Hit deep on all returns if possible
- Focus on getting the ball in play

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – THE VOLLEY***

- The volley is a stroke used to hit the ball after it clears the net and before it contacts the ground
- Eastern grips are preferable for most beginners, while the Continental grip is used by many advanced players
- There is little or no backswing in most volleys
- Keep the backswing and follow through brief
- Punch the ball, don't swing at it
- Keep the racket above the hand throughout the stroke
- Step into the ball if time allows
- Make contact in front your body
- Maintain control of the racket with a firm grip and firm wrist throughout the stroke

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – THE LOB***

- Hit the lob high and deep
- An offensive lob is used to force your opponent back to the baseline into a weaker position, a good way to stop a net rusher
- It is usually hit from inside the baseline at a lower trajectory than a defensive lob
- A defensive lob is used to help a player get out of trouble, usually hit from deep in the court, it has a high trajectory and is aimed deep in your opponents court to give you more time to recover for the next shot
- The lob is started the same way as the groundstrokes, whether on the backhand or forehand side
- Make your follow through high

### ***KEY CONCEPTS - THE OVERHEAD SMASH***

- The answer to the lob is the overhead smash
- The forehand overhead is similar to the service motion
- The grip is the same as that used for the serve (Eastern forehand or Continental)
- As soon as you determine the return is a lob, turn your body sideways to the net and get your racket back and your non racket hand pointing to the incoming ball
- Make certain the ball remains in front of you
- When hitting the ball rotate your shoulders forward, extending your arm, and snapping the racket head through the ball
- After contact continue your follow through the same way you would for your serve
- Let the ball bounce when it is lobbed extremely high

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – SINGLES STRATEGY***

- Keep the ball in play, don't beat yourself
- Concentrate on steadiness, accuracy and consistency
- Keep your shots down the middle and deep and your opponent behind the baseline
- Play percentage tennis and hit "safe" shots
- Remember more shots are lost on errors than won on placements
- Change the pace and keep your opponent off balance and guessing
- Vary the speed, the spin and the placement of your shots
- Effective placement of the serve requires hitting down the center, wide or directly at the receiver's body using both pace and spin
- Return of serve should be deep and back in line with the server's position
- Do not change a winning game strategy, always change a losing one

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – DOUBLES STRATEGY***

- Each player has less court to defend in doubles
- Players can attack more, which makes doubles play much more aggressive than singles
- You go after your opponents by playing the net
- A two back doubles formation is a defensive alignment that positions players behind the baseline
- A one up and one back formation can be used however it is vulnerable to leaving gaping openings on the court
- A two up doubles team provides the most effective offensive alignment in doubles
- The "I" formation is sometimes used when an opponent has a great cross court return

- In the “I” formation the net person straddles the center line of the service box and stays as low as possible
- Poaching, is an advanced technique in which the net player moves diagonally forward to cross in front of your partner to “steal” a ball that would normally have been played by your partner
- Getting your first serve in is critical in doubles, substitute pace for placement
- Return of serve requires hitting at the feet of the net player or the in rushing server, passing the net player, lobbing the net player or hitting cross court angled toward the server
- The key to successful doubles is gaining control of the net
- All good doubles teams communicate between games, between points, and even during points

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – TENNIS ETIQUETTE/ UNWRITTEN RULES***

- Tennis has a tradition of sportsmanship
- To start the game spin the racket (like heads or tails) and the winner gets his or her choice of whether or not to serve or which side of the court to defend
- When you are the server, always begin a point with at least two balls in your possession
- The server must call the score (his/her score first) before the first serve
- Tennis players are expected to make all the calls on their side of the court only
- If the ball is “out” say out and point your index finger up in the air
- If the ball is “good,” just keep playing it, or if it is not playable say “good” or give a hand signal by placing the palm of your hand down
- If the ball hits a line it is good
- If a ball from another court enters your court in such a manner that your play was interfered with then play a let(a play over)
- A serve that hits the top of the net but is otherwise good is reserved (let)
- The order of service is a simple alternation of serves after each game is played
- Players change sides of the court on uneven total number of games (1,3,5,7,)

### ***KEY CONCEPTS – SCORING***

- A tennis match is played in a sequence of points, games, sets and matches
- Tennis has its own peculiar scoring system
- There are at least four points in a game, at least 6 games in a set, and 3 to 5 sets in a tennis match

- There are a minimum of four points in a game, and the winner must win by two points
- To win a set, you must win at least 6 games and the winner must win by two games
- The game score is called in large numbers (15,30,40), while the set score is in low numbers (1,2,3,)
- When a player has not scored a point in a game his or her score is called **love**
- The servers score is called first. The first point in a game is called **15**, which is sometimes abbreviated as **5**. The second point is called **30**. The third point is called **40**. If the score is tied at **40** or any point thereafter, it is called **deuce**. When a player has scored one point after a deuce score, it is his or her **advantage**. This is sometimes shortened to ad in or ad out. A score of **ad in** means that the advantage is with the server and ad **out** means the advantage is with the receiver.
- If the server has two points and the receiver has one, the game score would be 30-15. If it is tied at 30, it is called **30all**. If the server wins the next point the score is 40-30. If the receiver evens it up the score is deuce. The game will continue with ad ins, deuces and add outs until one person with the advantage wins another point and it is game.
- To win a game, you must have won four points, and you must be at least two points ahead of your opponent. To win a set, you must have won six games and be at least two games ahead of your opponent. Thus you have not won the set if the score is 6-5. If you win the next game, you win the set 7-5, but if you lose the next game and the score becomes 6 all, the 12 point tie breaker must be played.
- In the best of three set matches you need to win just two sets (6-4, 7-5) to win the match
- A set score of 6-6 requires a 12 point tiebreaker. A tiebreaker is played to 7 points with a winning margin of 2 points. If it is your turn to serve, you serve the 1st point from the right side of the court. Your opponent serves points 2 and 3 from the left court and right court respectively; you serve point 4 from the left court and point 5 from the right court. Your opponent serves point 6 from the left court. Players then change ends and your opponent serves point 7 from the right court. This pattern is followed until one player goes ahead by two points with at least 7 points scored, thus ending the set. The score of the set is recorded as 7 games to 6 (7-6).
- Game point 40-30
- Break point 30-40
- Set point 5-4, 40-30
- Match point 7-5, 5-3, 40-30