There are five fundamental tennis strokes that every player needs to learn. Let’s go through the basics of each one:

**1. Serve**

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/12725329483_6d46ca7896_z.jpg)

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The serve is the most important shot in tennis. All points begin with a serve. The key to this stroke is fluidity, rotation, and use of the entire body to snap upward into the shot.

Start at the baseline with the tennis ball in the non-dominant hand and the racquet in the other hand. Use a continental grip to serve. You should be turned predominately sideways with the front foot at approximately a 45 degree-angle pointing towards the netpost.

Players most commonly begin with both racquet and ball together in front of the body, then bring the racquet back while tossing the ball in the air and slightly to the right (for right-handers) or left (for left-handers) and in-front of the body. You should reach a point in the motion where the tossing hand is extended upwards and the racquet head is pointed up and behind the head.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/12725245393_dc5c35a1cb_z1.jpg)

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Load the hips and knees while remaining sideways and then uncoil into the serve. Mimic a throwing motion with the racquet to whip up into the ball and hit it into the opposite service box. Focus your eyes on the ball until contact.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/12725552024_a5e57d5d45_z.jpg)

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The serve takes a lot of time and effort to master, but the effort will be [**well worth the reward**](https://tennisfiles.com/reasons-to-practice-your-tennis-serve). The service motion will feel natural and fluid with consistent practice. Meticulous attention to technique and dedicated serve practice sessions are a must if you want to become proficient at the tennis serve.

**2. Forehand**

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Kei-Nishikori-Citi-Open-Final-Forehand.jpg)

*Kei Nishikori Citi Open Final Forehand – Photo by Mehrban*

The forehand is usually a player’s strongest shot because it uses the dominant hand. The key to a great forehand is footwork, racquet preparation, and balance. Most players use a semi-western grip to hit a forehand.

You must get into position, bend the knees, and (like the serve) stay turned with the hips and torso coiled before striking the ball. You can use the non-dominant hand to help track the ball while your dominant hand loads your racquet before the strike.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/511921614_b68e755f74_z.jpg)

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Ideal backswing lengths vary according to how much time a player has to strike the ball, but you should generally follow a half-circle (visualize a lowercase “c”) pattern. If you use too large of a backswing you will make contact with the ball too late, resulting in loss of power and an inefficient ball strike.

Occasionally, you may opt to hit a slice forehand when stretched wide, to approach the net, or to vary the spin against your opponent.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/3121326490_ed287b0829_z.jpg)

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Develop your forehand into a weapon that you can use to dictate points. The forehand will usually be your opponent’s stronger shot.

**3. Backhand**

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/7028061603_4c4216ffa5_z.jpg)

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You can either use a one-handed or two-handed backhand. A one-handed backhand will provide you with longer reach and is better-suited to handling shots coming into the body than the two-handed backhand.

However, the two-handed backhand provides more stability and control. Players also generally have less trouble hitting high balls with a two-handed backhand than with one-hand. Children may find the added strength of a second hand more suitable.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1282643465_9ee83efda8_z2.jpg)

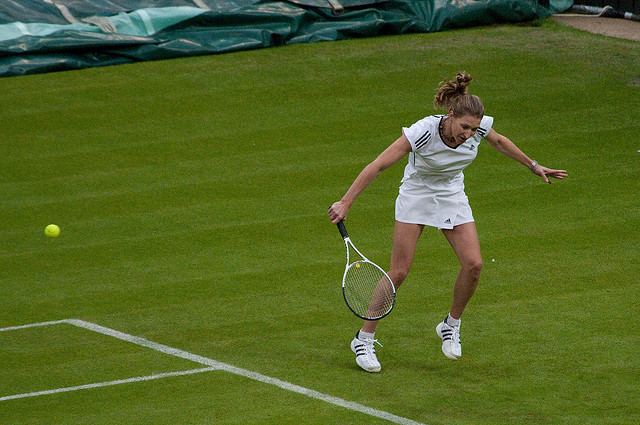
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Ultimately, you should try both a one and two-handed backhand to see which one feels more natural to you.

The majority of players with a one-handed backhand use an Eastern backhand grip. For the two-handed backhand, most players use an eastern or continental grip for the dominant hand, and an eastern or semi-western grip for the non-dominant hand.

Like the forehand, you must get into position with excellent footwork to hit a great backhand. Balance, knee bend, racquet preparation, and body rotation are crucial in order to maximize the power, speed, and spin of a backhand.

The follow through is especially important for a backhand in order to give it enough depth into the court. Players tend to shorten their backswing on the backhand, resulting in short, weak, and flat shots.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/3539727201_2c8d6c2cc5_z.jpg)[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/293779138_8ee217ac09_z.jpg)

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Make sure to keep balanced while hitting backhands, and lean forward into the shot whenever possible. On a two-handed backhand, your non-dominant hand should be used equally or more than the dominant hand during the stroke. This facilitates a more powerful and lengthier extension during the follow-through.

You can also hit a slice backhand, either to approach the net, when stretched wide, or to make your opponent hit a low ball. An effective slice backhand stays low to the ground after bouncing and can be a tough shot to handle for many opponents, especially those with a more closed-faced grip like the western or semi-western.

The backhand is often a player’s weakest link. You must practice this shot and get the proper technique down to prevent your opponents from exploiting it during match play.

**4. Volley**

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/3893797216_e33f14dea7_z.jpg)

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Players who approach the net will often make contact with the ball while it is in the air. This stroke is called a volley. Use a continental grip to hit volleys.

The key to the volley is a compact backswing, making contact with the ball in front of the body (and to the side), and footwork. Most players have problems hitting a proper volley because they do not get into good position.

When this happens, you will either be forced to reach for the ball, or hit the volley too close to the body. These shots will feel awkward, unbalanced, and are hard to control.

Another common flaw when hitting volleys is a big backswing. This causes players to make contact with the ball too late. The volley is a simple and compact stroke. There should be minimal if any take-back when hitting a volley. You must use the opponent’s power and think to “block back” the shot by moving forward while hitting the volley in front of your body.

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/3580333774_daa074e64b_z1.jpg)

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You will also have to master a variation of the volley, the half-volley, when approaching the net. For the half-volley, you should utilize the same preparation and compact stroke mechanics as a normal volley. The difference is that for a half-volley, you will make contact with the ball right after it hits the ground instead of before the ball bounces.

**5. Overhead**

[](https://tennisfiles.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/9645467535_6ba6acce93_z.jpg)

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The overhead is basically a tennis serve that requires footwork and does not involve a ball toss. It is imperative that you get into position so that you can hit the overhead in your ideal strike zone (same place as the serve). You should not plant your feet until right before impact.

This means that once you get into the general area where the ball will drop, you need to keep taking small adjustment steps to get into the right position to hit the overhead.

The racquet head and arm should both be up and ready in time to strike the ball. You should be turned sideways and ready to uncoil your energy into the overheard, similar to a serve. However the racquet take back should be more abbreviated than a serve. Use a continental grip to hit overheads.

Some of you asked me why I didn’t include the **lob** or **drop shot** on this list. While they are important tennis shots, I think the lob and drop shot are extensions of the forehand, backhand and volley strokes. As a result, the lob and drop shot are types of shots, but are not strokes.

I have personally never heard of someone describe a drop shot or lob as a stroke. But forehand, backhands, serves, volleys, and overheads are definitely strokes. In any case, we will dive into the mechanics of all the different shots in tennis in the future. It’s all semantics anyway

Credit: https://tennisfiles.com/five-tennis-strokes