

The 8 fundamental singles strategies and how to practice them

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Unless you have a clear goal for each point in the match you will not be able to play up to your potential. The good news is that there are only a limited number of strategic options in singles play. Here is the list with some ideas on how to practice them.

Out-rally the Opponent. The goal here is to win the point by keeping the ball in play until the opponent misses, so consistency and depth are essential.

-) One player hits crosscourt and the other down the line. Try to see how many balls you can hit without mistake.
-) You play “no winner” points. Players are allowed to place the balls but should never try for an out right winner. If a player happens to hit a winner through a series of placed shots it counts. Variation: Players are not allowed to hit the ball inside the service boxes.

Force the Opponent. This strategy involves being aggressive from the start of the point, hitting hard and trying to catch balls early.

-) The server has 3 serves (2 first serves) but has to win the point in three shots including the serve.

-) The server has one serve and the returner has to finish the point in 3 shots including the return.

Play your Strengths. The easiest way to improve your game without changing much is by hitting your best shot more often.

-) Mark the court so that the playing area measures about 2/3 the normal size of the court. Play points using only your best shot. That is, run around your weaker shot. If the opponent gets the ball to your weaker side, you lose the point. Normally your best shot will be your forehand, but it may not be.

Play to the Opponent's Weakness. Making the opponent hit his/her weaker shot as much as possible will definitely give you an advantage.

-) Play points where one of the players has to hit everything to one side of the court while the other one can hit to the whole court. This includes the serve. Start the point to a specific target. A good way to do this is to have the returner play every shot back to the side where the serve came from.

Attack the Net. Putting pressure on the opponent by charging the net is a very useful strategy when playing consistent opponents or opponents that have a weak side.

-) Play points where the server has to serve and volley on first serves and the returner has to return and volley on second serves.
-) Play points crosscourt, where players can only hit down the line if approaching the net.

Bring the Opponent to the Net. Many players do not feel comfortable at the net and forcing them to come in will force them into a vulnerable position.

-) Play games where a drop shot winner is worth 3 points and winning the point against a net player, 2 point.

Use Variety to Promote Mistakes or Short Balls. Having to continually adjust is much more difficult than returning similar shots over and over. Variety is a great way to force short returns or mistakes.

-) Play points where players are not allowed to hit the same type of shot twice. Players have to change the spin, height and depth every shot.

Open the Court. In general the player that has to move more will lose. Opening the court with angles is a great way to force mistakes or create opportunities to hit winners.

-) Play points where players are not allowed to move past the doubles sideline or a prolongation of it past the baseline. If one player forces the opponent over the line, the point is over. The drill is a great way to work on angles and at the same time on catching the ball early to avoid stretching over the doubles sideline.

Tennis tactic can seem complicated but focusing on these 8 strategic concepts is a great way to get simplify it effectively and get ready to play any opponent. The drills are only examples. You can easily come up with other options to work on the different fundamental strategies.