

# TENNIS CONNECTION

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## Ask the Coach



### “How can I improve my volleys?”

**I notice on Tennis Connection Sundays, when players miss their volleys, that:**

Many of the players mis-hit the volley, because they make the mistake of ‘swinging’ at the tennis ball. Although the ball may appear to be an easy target and well above the net, swinging at the ball changes the angle of your tennis racquet significantly.

To help prevent swinging at a ball, try to imagine your back being against a wall, so when volleying, your racquet cannot hit/pass that wall behind you. Also, try to imagine yourself being a wall with another wall behind you. Walls don’t move/swing and they never miss when a ball is hit at them! That’s why when you hit a tennis ball at a wall, the ball always comes back!

The best grip to use when volleying is the “Continental” grip (also known as the “hand shake” grip). The Continental” grip enables you to hit a forehand and backhand volley without changing your grip during volleying. This is important when there’s little time to react to a tennis ball, such as when it’s hit hard at you and/or at close range (i.e. a reflex shot at you).

To have a good volley, the player should have a firm grip of the tennis racquet and block/punch through the ball, out in front of him/her. It would also be helpful, if the player can tighten his/her grip at the moment of

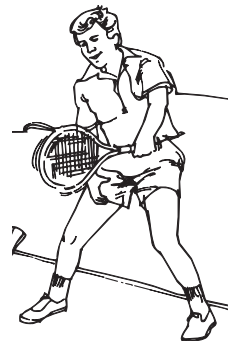


impact (unless you’re trying to hit a control/drop shot).

Remember to focus your eyes on the ball, to try to make good contact in the center of the tennis racquet, and hit through the ball, so the ball lands deep near the base line.

Hitting down on the ball will not always put the ball away, unless you’re trying to hit at the opponent’s feet and/or placing the ball for a winner. Although there

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**Block/punch through the ball, out in front of your body.**

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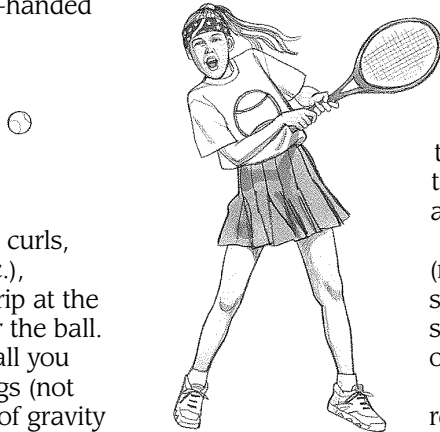
are many pros (e.g. Agassi, William sisters, etc.) that you'll see on T.V. that have swinging volleys, they all have exceptional athletic ability/talent [that's their day job :- )].

Although many players prefer volleying with their forehand rather than their backhand, the backhand volley position does have a greater range when it comes to protecting one's self [especially if you're a male :- )].

Some players use a two-handed grip for a backhand volley, because they don't have a strong enough grip to handle the volley. It's recommended that you try to strengthen your grip by means of weight training/exercise (i.e. wrist curls, squeezing a tennis ball, etc.), because the two-handed grip at the net will limit your reach for the ball.

When volleying a low ball you should always bend your legs (not your back), so your center of gravity is low also and your eyes will be closer to the ball when making contact. If you have time, try to step forward at the point of impact to get more weight/power behind your volley. If you're unable to step forward, you should at least try to punch forward with your racquet.

If your volleys are going into the net, you're probably



swinging at the ball and/or the face of the tennis racquet is angled downward too much. If your volleys are going long and/or popping up too high, then probably the face of the tennis racquet is angled upward too much. Many advanced players will use underspin when volleying so the ball will carry deeper and bounce lower, but, we have a day job!

### Doubles Strategy Volley Tip:

If your partner has a strong serve, you should be aggressive at the net and take chances by poaching on the opponent's return of serve. This will force the opponent to also watch the net person and thus create a smaller angle/area for the opponent's return of serve.

On the other hand, the net person of the opposing team (receiving serve) should stay further away from the net or stay at the baseline to defend against the poach/strong serve. This will allow more time to react to a poached shot on a return of serve.

Always remember, Lesson No.1: Learn to hit the ball correctly and Lesson No.2: Do it a million times (then it will become automatic). If you need additional help with your volleys, see one of the Tennis Connections Instructors for assistance.

See You Sunday,

Gilbert