



How To Hit A Tennis Forehand In 5 Steps



How to hit a forehand in tennis in 5 steps. The tennis forehand stroke is the most used stroke when in a rally situation in tennis. After the serve and return of serve it becomes the most important shot in building points and controlling rallies.

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All the best players in the world have a powerful, yet consistent forehand that they can dominate play with. Follow 5 step guide and you too can build a deadly tennis forehand to dominate your opponents with.

Let's get started!

Step 1: The Foundation

The grip that we recommend for most players is the semi western forehand grip. This grip allows us to hit with good levels of topspin which is crucial for consistency on the tennis forehand stroke but it also allows us to flatten out the stroke if we want to. The Eastern forehand grip is great for players just starting out as it allows for an easy path to contact, however this grip has it's limits for producing good levels of topspin and dealing with high balls. The full Western forehand grip allows for huge levels of topspin but because of the angle of the strings during the contact zone, this grip limits the player to hitting flatter strokes and dealing with low bouncing balls becomes a major issue with this grip.

Once your grip is set, the next step is to get into a good ready position. Have your non hitting hand holding the throat of the racket, the racket head higher than the grip level and a wide base with your feet. If you are 6 feet tall when standing, when in the ready position you should be waiting at 5 feet. The key in this position is that you want to hit as many forehands as possible, be ready to cover all the balls on the deuce side (if you are right handed) and all the balls that come in the middle of the court with your forehand. Imagine covering 60-70% of the court with your forehand stroke. The reason we have the racket head higher than the grip in this position is that it creates leverage right from the start of the stroke. Leverage is basically force over the ball which we will use later in the swing to create effortless power.

Step 2: Unit Turn

Once you have recognised that the ball is coming to your forehand, the next step is to have a full unit turn with your upper body and hips. A very common mistake that players make is that they move to the ball front on, still facing the net, then once they get to the ball they try to turn and hit the stroke. Time is of the essence in tennis and anything that creates time for you should be used to the full extent. By turning as early as possible and moving to the ball sideways, you are creating time for yourself but also as equally important you are pre-stretching the oblique muscles (side abs) creating that coiling motion that we want for effortless power. It's that coil and uncoil action that is fundamental to easy power on the forehand groundstroke.

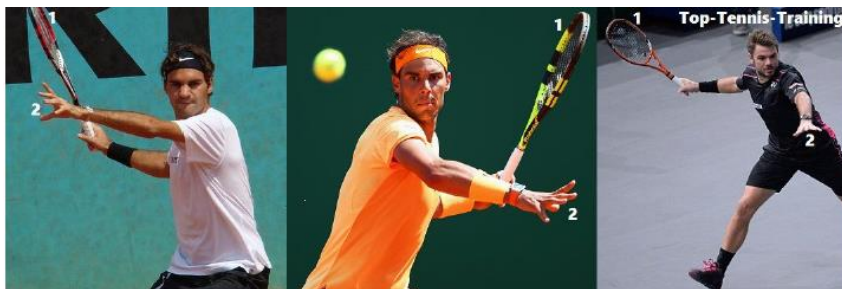


Nadal, Federer and Murray all use the coil - uncoil action to great effect on their forehands. As you can see all three have great unit turns and are fully sideways when moving to the ball

Step 3: The Power Position

On the serve, most pro players reach a very similar position called the trophy position, also known as the power position. On the tennis forehand stroke, it's no different. This position is the "back end" of the stroke, from here we will start our forward acceleration and use as much leverage in the racket and hand as possible to once again create that effortless power. In the power position for the tennis forehand groundstroke, have the tip of the racket pointing upwards towards the sky, the non hitting arm outwards almost like you are reaching out to catch the ball with that hand, which will help balance the upper body and have the arm away from the body.

One of the common problems for players in this position is having the elbow tucked into the side of the body, creating a jammed stroke and blocking the path to easy acceleration.



1 - Tip of the racket pointing upwards in the power position creating leverage in the hand and racket
2 - Non hitting hand reaching out towards the ball helping to track the ball and balance the body

Step 4: Racket Lag

From the power position the next step is to start the forward swing towards the ball. This is where the uncoiling begins and it all starts with the hips and trunk rotating forwards towards the net. Many people think that this uncoiling occurs from the ground up, which in many cases is very true, however on a running forehand or when you don't have time to set up correctly, the uncoiling still occurs due to that pre-stretch of the obliques. When you have time the leg drive will initiate that uncoiling however if you don't have the time to load up with the legs, don't worry. Focus on opening up now towards the net. From this position, if you keep the arm/wrist/racket relaxed, racket lag should happen if you achieved a good power position with the wrist flexed back slightly and the tip of the racket pointing upwards. Creating lag in this phase will be very difficult and require excellent timing if you are starting with the racket head on the same level as your hand, even worse would be starting with the racket head lower than the hand in the power position. Imagine now that the bottom of the racket is a torch and you are shining that torch onto the incoming ball, try to get that alignment and imagine now that you will hit the ball with the butt cap of the racket. Then naturally let the racket head come through and make contact out in front of the body.



Racket Lag demonstrated by Federer, Nadal and Djokovic. Notice that Federer and Nadal have fully extended arms but Djokovic has the slight bend

Step 5: The Finish

The end phase of the tennis forehand swing is the finish or follow through. There are 5 main ways to finish on the forehand groundstroke, each one serving its own purpose when needed but for now we'll focus on the main finish. One of the main reasons that players break down on the forehand is due to having an incorrect or incomplete follow through. It's also a leading cause of elbow, shoulder and wrist injuries. Imagine swinging the racket at full speed up until contact, then suddenly stopping the racket or finishing in an unnatural way. This causes a huge amount of stress on the shoulder, elbow and wrist. So not only will a good finish allow for a much smoother stroke but it will also reduce the risk of injury significantly. The finish we recommend is to swing all the way up to your left shoulder (if right handed) and stop when the elbow is across the body. For kids it's great to tell them "imagine you have a really big nose with your elbow". This finish is very simple, allows for an upward swing path (low to high) which will help create topspin on the stroke and allows the muscles to slow down in a natural way.



1 - Both Federer and Djokovic finish with the tip of the racket pointing behind them and slightly to the right side
2 - The elbow is high and pointing forwards

SPORT & FORMATION

Chemin des Ormes

04800 Gréoux-les-Bains

Tél: 06 11 81 77 55/06 50 97 70 87

817 576 275 RCS Manosque

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