

# THIS CONTENT IS A PART OF A FULL BOOK - TENNIS FOR STUDENTS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY - SOFIA

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## Volleys

These are efficient strokes that are used to play fast and unconventional balls from the air before touching the ground. They are used mostly to end up the point and are part of the technical repertoire of the professional players. While in motion in the air, the ball moves at a high speed, so the time for preparation and hitting is short. Therefore, higher skills are required and their implementation is reflective to a considerable extent. The players' goal when using volleys is to intensify the game activity near the net.

The volleys vary depending on:

- the side of impact - forehand and backhand;
- the height of impact - low, medium and high; i.e. a slightly below, around the middle and high above the top level of the net;
- the type of impact: flat - mostly at high volleys; executed with underspin - slice, and with top rotation - topspin.

The stroke technique is characterized by: quick reaction, high flight velocity, along with little time for preparation and hitting the ball by the player. This also predetermines the specifics of the preparatory movements for the execution of the striking actions:

**Racquet (holding) grip:** A significant part of the professional players use a continental grip for the forehand and backhand volleys. In the initial stages of training, it is advisable to start with the eastern grip or to change it for the each side. At the high velocity of the ball ('s flight, however, the change is difficult to implement.

**Starting position:** Similar to what the player takes when playing from the baseline, but the hands are positioned a little higher and the head of the racquet is at eye level, i.e. above net level. This position allows to return balls by quick left-and-right turns, which usually come at the level of the chest. The body is slightly bent forward with the weight falling mainly on the front part of the feet. The legs are apart and bent into the knee joints. The player springs on his/her toes and is ready to react to any ball which is coming at different speeds and distances.

The swing of the volley depends on the distance of the player to the net - with or without a short swing when standing close, and larger when s(he) is further away.

**Preparatory position** – approaching to the net. To execute one or two volleys, the player moves from the baseline to the net with short and quick steps. This is done in the following ways:

(a) Several footsteps and a jump with landing of both feet in the near (most often) the service line. The body is slightly inclined forward and the weight falls on both legs, half-folded in the knee joints.

(b) Moving and stopping with a forward step with the opposite or most often the same foot on the impact side. The weight of the body is on the onward leg that is bent in the knee joint to play according to the height of the coming ball.

c) Net play. The player's movement is minimal and depends on the velocity of the ball and its direction, where forehand volley is most often used to protect the body.

**A. Forehand volley.** In the preparatory phase, the handle is firmly held and the head of the racquet is perpendicular to the court, raised to the level of the eyes and facing towards the ball. The weight of the body is on the back leg but often on both are in line when body is in open stance. The shoulders are turned slightly to the right and the arm, racquet and shoulder are in a/one line almost parallel to the net (Fig.32b).

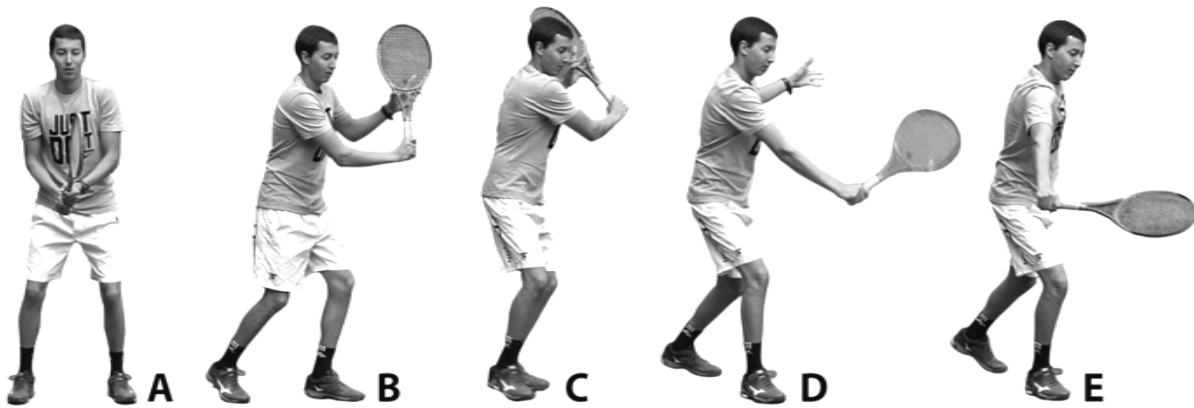


**Fig. 32.** Forehand volley

The stroke is done with short and fast movement of the arm and the racquet forward (fig. 32c). The ball is hit flat in front and to the side of the player, coupled with a step forward with the left foot - this creates extra speed and increases the impact strength (Fig. 32d and Fig. 32e). The movement of the racquet is very short in the direction of the ball and immediately moves to back the other hand in standbys to be ready for the next stroke.

**Slice shot.** In a number of cases, the striking movement of the arm and the racquet can also be forward - "obliquely", from high to low and forward, creating a backspin to the ball. The racquet's face is oriented vertically and is slightly open.

A. **Backhand volley.** The impact technique does not differ significantly from the one described above.



**Fig. 33.** Backhand volley

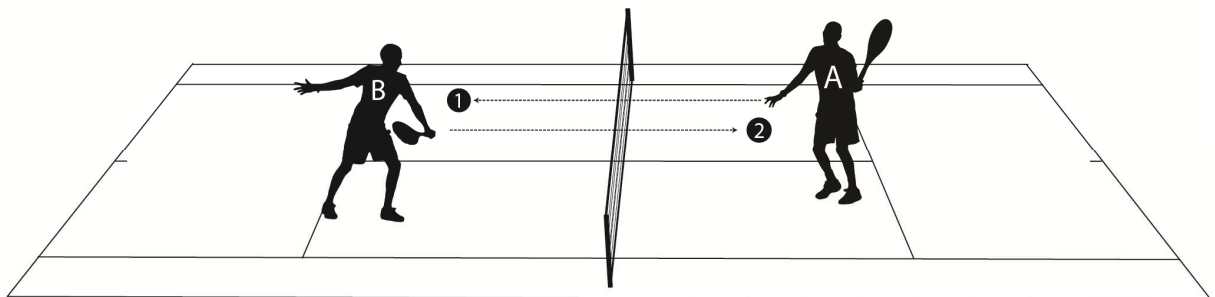
**Preparation to hit:** The shoulder is rotated and the racquet is taken back to the shoulder's line with its head being relatively high - above them. It is combined with a rotation of the left leg's heel (Figure 33b).

The striking action is quick and short with a straightforward slicing movement of the racquet. The hand moves from the top down and forward, extensively unfolded in the elbow. The racquet is oriented almost horizontally to the terrain parallel to the net (Figure 33c). The ball is hit with a slightly open racquet head, giving it a backspin motion. At this point, a step forward is made with the right foot made the player steps forward with the right foot (Figure 33d and Figure 33e).

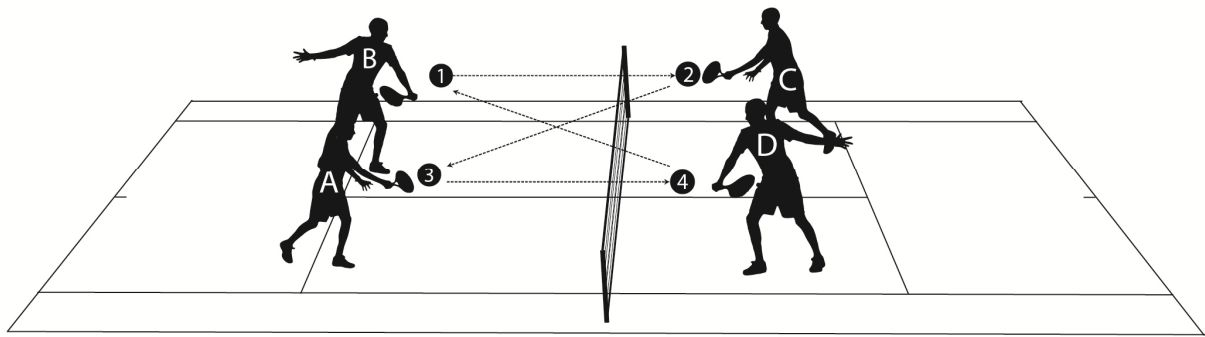
**Errors in the training and execution of forehand and backhand volleys:**

- The impact is executed without turning sideways to the net.
- The striking movement is performed only with the playing hand, without the help of the other.
- Player is late for the shot and the ball is taken too close or behind the body.

**Exercises for studying and improving forehand and backhand volleys:**



**Exercise # 1:** Two players, A and B, are located inside the service box. Player A lightly feeds the ball for a forehand volley to player B. Player B returns the volley to player A in order to start a rally by keeping the ball in the air without dropping the ball on the ground. In this way, the two players continue to play until the ball goes in the net or touches the ground. The same can be applied to the backhand volley.



**Exercise # 2:** Four players - A, B, C, and D are placed inside the service fields as shown in the picture (in case that players A and B are more experienced, they can play from the service line). Players A and B feed the ball down the line to players C and D for a volley, as the goal of players C and D of the latter ones is to hit their volleys cross court (as a cross as an X letter). The ball should not touch the ground or go into the net.