

The Fundamentals – Grip, Ready Position, and the Swing

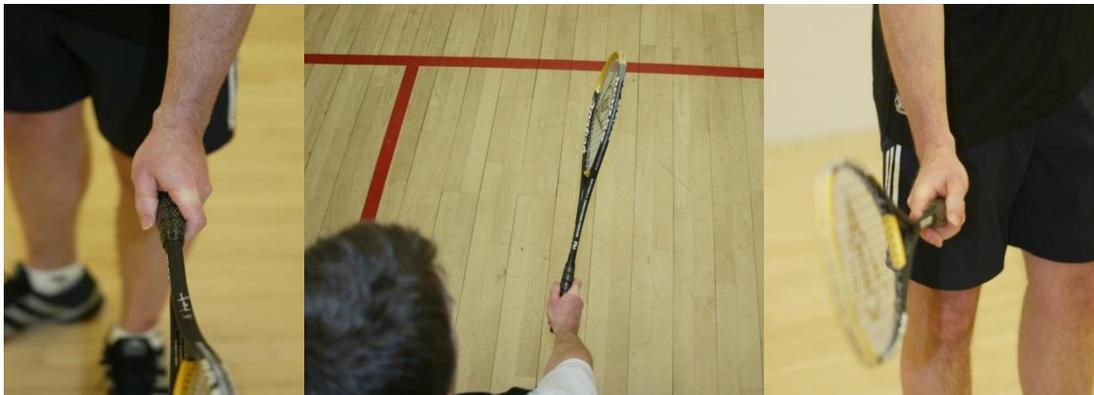
The Grip

Because there is little time during a rally to change grips, the same grip is used in learning forehand and backhand strokes. The grip has three major components: hand placement, finger placement, and tension.

Proper Grip

- With the racquet head perpendicular to the floor, the racquet grip is placed across the fingers, and the hand is wrapped over the top of the grip so that the knuckle of the index finger lies on the top right edge of the racquet.
- The “V” between forefinger and thumb points over the non-hitting shoulder.
- The forefinger should be slightly separated from the middle finger.
- The grip tension should be tight enough that the racquet does NOT slip, loose enough that the hand does NOT form a fist.

Diagrams



Activities

- Supervise students practicing their grip.
- Students practice first with their eyes open, then with their eyes closed.
- Students practice alone, in pairs, in threes, etc., and evaluate one another’s grip.
- Using a colored pen, mark correct hand placement on the grip.
- Use the phrase “trigger finger” to encourage students to extend the forefinger up the grip.

The Ready Position

The ready position gives students the best opportunity to cover the court and get ready for the opponent’s return.

The ready position has two components:

- The position the student takes on court while waiting for the opponent's return. This is the conventional ready position.
- The action the student takes a split second before the opponent's return is complete. This is called the **split step**.

The court location for the ready position is as follows:

- Stand about 1 1/2 racquet lengths behind the short line (about halfway between the short line and an imaginary line across the court that joins the back of the service boxes together).
- Straddle the centerline that divides the court into sides.
- The head and eyes focus on the ball and the opponent. This may require rotating the head or the shoulders.
- As the wrist is cocked up, the racquet head is held above the wrist.
- The body's weight is distributed evenly over the feet.

Diagram



Split Step

- As the opponent initiates his or her stroking action, there is a slight unweighting – an upward movement of the body through the ankles and knees.
- This unweighting puts students on their toes just before they take their first step. It also allows them to turn and change direction quickly.

Activities

The following activities will help players familiarize themselves with the ready and split step positions:

- Have students assume the stance for the ready position in an appropriate location on court. They then move around the court into different positions – in front of, behind, and beside their original position – that make them use different postures and actions (turning the head and shoulders, focusing on the opponent, etc.)
- Have students experiment with a low versus a high center of gravity to discover differences in initiating momentum and changing direction.
- Have students assume the ready position slightly behind the “T”, and stand facing them. At a predetermined cue, students make a split-step and move in the direction you point to.

The Swing

The fundamental process of the swing of the racket has four phases, each varying depending upon the intention of the stroke:

- Preparation
- Action to contact
- Contact point
- Follow – through

Preparation

The preparation of the racquet prior to the start of the forward motion of the racquet is:

- Short or long (distance from contact point)
- Higher or lower

Action to Contact

In the contact zone, just prior and during striking, the path of the racquet is moving:

- Low to high
- Level
- High to low

Contact Point

The contact point is most often:

- Slightly ahead of the hitting shoulder but occasionally is further ahead of the hitting shoulder

Follow Through

The follow through is towards the target on the front or side wall and is either long or short