

How To Win Singles Matches



Five Tactics To Win More Matches:

1. The Golden Tactic
2. Bread and Butter
3. Coast to Coast
4. Controlling Time
5. Superpowers

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Tactic One - The Golden Tactic

If your opponent makes five balls in a point and you make six, you win the point. It's very simple. The golden tactic is less strategy but more a mindset. Any tactic you try to use will only work if you can do it within tactic one - be more consistent than your opponent.

Too often, players will do too much and beat themselves in the match. They'll overhit, go for big second serves and play low percentage tennis.

Very often, all that is needed to win matches at all levels of the game is to simply be more consistent than your opponent. Out-rally them!

Find your opponents threshold, in the first few games of the match, get yourself into a few long rallies and see when your opponent breaks down. Is there a pattern?

Maybe they break down around six shots in, maybe ten shots in. Most players will break down at a certain level and you'll know that it takes "X" amount of shots to break them down!

The entire match, whenever you need to win a point and don't want to force play too much, you can always fall back on being more consistent than them. Don't feel like you have to do more than that, simply out rally the opponent by being the more consistent player!

Rafa Nadal has used this tactic throughout his career with great results. Out-rallying his opponents and forcing them to break down first.



Tactic Two - Bread and Butter

The second most important tactic is to find your opponents weakness and exploit it. Your bread and butter strategy to winning tennis points - at all levels!

This is where you'll have to do some research.

In the warm-up, test out the opponent's backhand - do they drive it? Do they slice it?

What sort of grip do they use for both strokes?

An extreme grip on either side will give you some ideas about what they might not like. Give them high balls on both sides, give them low balls, move them around a bit.

How do they deal with all of these different shots?

You'll start to build an image in your mind of what they like and more importantly, what they don't like! Once the match starts, carry this on. Test out as many options as possible in the first few games and you should find something you can exploit. Remember - you don't need to use it on every point, you might want to save it for the big points in the match, break points, deuce points etc. Andy Murray is a master of working out opponents and exploiting their weaknesses!



Tactic Three - Coast to Coast

This tactic was the go-to strategy for Andre Agassi and nowadays is used extensively by Novak Djokovic. You move your opponent and force them into breaking down.

Coast to coast represents the two singles sidelines, hit one shot into one side of the court and then the following shot into the open space on the other side.

However, you can also move your opponents around the court with drop shots and lobs, you could hit back behind them and exploit them when they're recovering, you could hit deep, high balls that push them way off the court and then exploit the space near the net. There are many ways to make your opponent run but the key will be to do so in a consistent way.

Many players struggle to hit on the run and you might find that it only takes two or three shots in a row to break them down.

Remember, you might not reap the rewards right away, some players will be able to handle you moving them around for a while but slowly they'll start to tire and fatigue will make them break down more often and miss shots they wouldn't normally miss.

Agassi, when playing in slams would often expect a very tight first set and then run away with the next few sets because he wore his opponent down by making them run so much in that first set. He would often have a clear space for an easy winner but would choose to hit a shot he knew his opponent could reach just so the opponent spends more energy chasing down yet another ball. Cruel strategy but highly effective.



Tactic Four - Controlling Time

Time on the tennis court is a precious commodity. Think about it, when you have time, you can set up well for your shots and you can think about what you want to do with the ball. On the flipside, when you don't have time, you feel rushed and hit the ball late, often being forced into errors.

Controlling time is a very effective tactic. There are a few ways you can really take time away from your opponent but we'll focus on one of the most effective - attacking the net.

By approaching the net, you greatly reduce the time your opponent has to set up and execute their shot. You also reduce the space they have to hit into, this combination is often enough to break them down.

When someone comes in against you, think about how you feel?
You see less court and feel like you're being attacked.

To use this tactic effectively, you want to come in on the right balls. This could be when the ball has landed inside the service boxes, off a short second serve, when you're serving or when you have a slower ball. You could also ghost in, when you see your opponent in trouble on the run and they are tracking the ball, often they'll lose track of you in their peripheral vision and you can sneak in to finish the point at the net.

Tim Henman was a master at finishing points off at the net! He even used this strategy to reach the semi-finals of the 2004 French Open.



Tactic Five - Superpowers

We all have unique skills on the tennis court. Some players can generate massive power while other players know how to construct points really well.

This strategy is all about using our strengths, things we do well on the court, to force our opponents into breaking down or giving us easy balls we can put away.

It's important to develop your weapons, this might be your serve or forehand. It could also be your return of serve or backhand slice.

Whatever it is you do well, you need to find a way to use it in matches.

If your forehand down the line is a great shot, you might set it up by hitting short crosscourt shots to create space down the line. You might serve out wide on the deuce side and then look to hit down the line with your first strike.

If you can match up your strength against your opponents weakness, then you'll really be able to exploit them!



By Coach Simon
Top Tennis Training