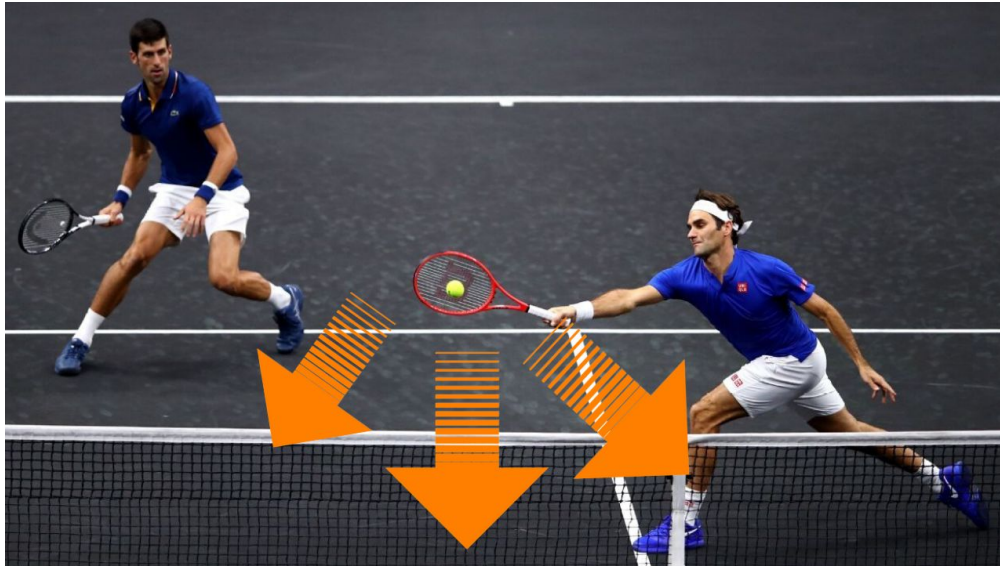


How To Become A Better Doubles Player



Five Ways To Become A Better Doubles Player:

1. Using The Court
2. Controlling The Net
3. How To Pass
4. Serve and Volley
5. Communication

Using The Court

Doubles is a very different game to singles. When we're playing singles, we try to maintain good length and we aim for the baseline. Maintaining good depth allows us to make sure that our opponent cannot attack us. If we hit short balls in singles, we often end up getting punished for it. In doubles, however, we want to use the width of the court and that means aiming towards the tramlines. If we hit the deep in doubles often this will allow the net player to poach and attack with the volley. So instead of thinking

about having good depth, in doubles we want to focus on using the angles. By hitting wide, you always keep the ball away from the net player, reducing the chances of them intercepting and attacking at the net. Using angles also opens up the middle of the court for your team and allows you to exploit that space if you set up the point well.

Controlling The Net

The second thing you should work on and improve to become a better doubles player is to look for those chance balls, this means shorter balls, balls that are floating or balls you feel like you can really put your body weight behind and get into the net. Remember the team who controls the net often wins in doubles and if you're staying on the baseline and grinding, trying to out-rally the other team, it becomes a very hard thing for you and your partner to win!



Often a short or weak second serve will be the perfect chance for you to attack and come to the net. Don't feel like you have to hit your return and stay on the baseline, you could come forward and finish the point with just that return plus the volley.

How To Pass

The next step to becoming a better doubles player is how you deal with the opponents when they're at the net. Too often, singles players will try to overpower the net players by going for aggressive shots using big swings. This tends to end up creating many errors for the baseliners or balls that good doubles players simply knock off at the net. There are three main ways that you can defeat the net player, the first one is to pass them down the middle. If both of your opponents are at the net, if you hit your shot into the middle of the court, often the opponents will get confused and either leave that ball, or react late and end up rushing the volley. Even if they make it, both players lunging towards the middle ends up opening up space on the side.

By hitting down the middle, you also give yourself the most amount of margin, so going down the middle is your first option when trying to pass. The next option is to hit it into the tramlines but this is a riskier option and it requires a lot of practice to be precise with this passing shot.

The third option is the lob. If both players are at the net and they like to close down, a well executed topspin lob can win you many points in doubles.



You also have the option of setting up the passing shot by hitting the ball into the opponents feet, this means your first shot can go into the players feet, they then have to volley up to make that ball and then you can pass them on the next shot.

So this is the two-step passing shot, you're aiming the first shot into the feet, the opponents then have to volley up and then you have options. You can go into the middle, you can go into the tramlines on either side or you can hit the lob but that first shot has to be a ball that is dipping into the opponents feet and this is normally done with aggressive topspin.

Serve and Volley

The next step to becoming a better doubles player is holding your own service games. This means that you have to calculate where are you serve, with what type of spin and how fast you serve. Very often, singles players will play their normal service games in doubles which often doesn't work. In doubles, it's all about reducing the angles that your opponents have to pass you with, it's also about taking control of the net as early as possible and this means serving and volleying even on the second serve sometimes.

By serving and coming straight into the net, you reduce the amount of court that the returner has, but also you're applying pressure. If your partner is at the net already and then you run in behind your serve, the returner now has two obstacles that they have to pass in order to have a chance to win the point. This is a lot of pressure and by constantly applying the pressure hopefully you'll be able to win many points on your serve just by using the serve and volley.



In general you want to serve either into the body or down the T, this is to reduce the angles that the returner has to play with, if you do serve out wide, remember to tell your partner, if you don't tell your partner, they have a big space down the tramlines to cover so the returner has a lot more chance to pass the net player with those wide serves compared to the T or body ones. If your partner knows you're serving out wide, they can cover the trams and anticipate a down the line return. That is why in general, going down the T or going into the body works best in doubles. Of course, you'll still want to use a wide serve every now and then to keep your opponents guessing and keep them honest on their return games.

Communication

The fifth thing that you can do to become a better doubles player is to communicate well with your partner. This means that if you or your partner plays a bad point, don't get negative and get down on yourself or them but encourage each other and make sure you have a lot of positive feedback even when things are going bad.



By staying positive and energetic, you'll hopefully inspire your partner to do the same. It's hard to be motivated when you see your partner is down or frustrated, but if you look over and see your partner bouncing on their feet, making sure that they give you a high-five or a fist bump after every point, it can uplift you, so you want to do the exact same to them!

By Coach Simon
Top Tennis Training