1) **Grip the racket.** The basic grip for the tennis racket is the "Continental Grip," where you hold the racket just as you would hold a hammer, w/ the base knuckle of your index finger on the 1st bevel on the racket, putting the "V" created by your thumb & forefinger on the top of the handle. For lefties, the knuckle should go on bevel No. 4. Though this grip is most ideal for serves & volleys, it's a good way to start.

- As you advance in tennis, you can use the Eastern or Western grip, which can help you hit topspin and add more power to your strokes.
2) Position yourself to hit the ball. This is the most important part of hitting a ground stroke or a volley -- any stroke other than the serve, really -- is to position your body so that you can comfortably swing and hit the ball. If you reach out for the ball and are flat-footed on the court, you won't get to the ball in time or you won't be able to use your skills to your advantage.

- Tennis is all about the footwork. Take dozens of little baby steps as you anticipate the ball so that you can comfortably swing the racket and hit the ball as it moves in front of you.
- Of course, there will be times when all you can do is stick your racket out and hope to hit the ball in time. But for every other shot, making the effort before you hit the ball will greatly improve your game.
3) Hit a forehand. Start by grabbing your racquet with your dominant hand, as though you're shaking hands with it. Here's how to do it:

- Step forward with the foot on your non-dominant side. Turn at the waist and pull your dominant arm back to swing the racquet back behind you. You'll need to wind up to generate momentum for your forehand. Turn to the side so that your shoulder is pointing in the direction where you want the ball to go.
- Swing your entire arm forward to hit the ball. Don't twist your wrist. Hit the ball in the center of your racquet strings, the "sweet spot" of the racket.
- Bring the racquet across your body toward your opposite shoulder. This motion is called the follow-through. The racket should swing upwards at the end, to generate enough power to move the ball over the net. If you swing your racket across your body and end at your other side instead of your shoulder, the ball will go into the net.
4) **Hit a backhand.** The 2-handed backhand is the easiest to master. Here's how:

- Grab the racquet w/ your dominant hand as though you're grabbing a hammer. Your dominant hand should be near the bottom of the handle.
- Grip your racquet with your non-dominant hand by placing your other hand above your dominant hand on the racquet handle.
- Twist at the waist and pull your racquet back on your non-dominant side. Your dominant forearm should be facing the net. Turn at the side so your shoulder is pointing where you want the ball to go. Bend your knees to generate more power.
- Turn at the waist and use the power in your non-dominant arm to hit the ball across the net. Bring your racquet to your non-dominant shoulder to follow through.
- To hit a one-handed backhand, just hold the racket with your dominant hand and don't put your non-dominant hand on it. Bend at the knees to generate power and hit the ball in the center of your racket, just as you would with a two-handed backhand. If you can master this stroke, you can generate a lot of power, but it's harder to be precise.
5) **Perfect your serve.** Stand behind the baseline near the center of the court with your non-dominant foot out in front of you. Hold your racquet in your dominant hand. Point your shoulder in the direction where you want the serve to go. You can bounce the ball on the ground a few times to generate stability. Here's what you do next:

- Toss the ball straight up into the air with your non-dominant hand. Toss the ball just a little bit in front of you, high above your head. At the same time as you toss the ball, pull your racquet upward and position it behind your dominant shoulder.
- Bend back at your waist, and bend your knees.
- Hit the ball. Use not just your arm power but also the explosive power generated by straightening your back and your knees to propel the ball over the net. The ball should land in the service box that's diagonal to where you are standing.
- Think of it as hitting the ball at the top of its arc, as if you're reaching over a fence to hit a ball just on the other side, creating an arc that powers the ball forward.
6) **Learn to volley.** Here's how to do it:

- **Forehand volley:** Hold the racquet in your dominant hand. Hit the ball before it bounces with a downward motion. Pull your elbow toward your belly button and keep your racquet face open. You need to use a continental grip.

- **Backhand volley:** Hold the racquet in your dominant hand w/ the back of your hand facing the net. Pull the racquet across your body & down, as though you’re elbowing someone out of the way w/ your dominant elbow.
7) **Return a serve.** To return a serve, stand on the side of the court that's diagonal to the court that your opponent is serving from. You can stand behind the baseline for a first serve and come in slightly in front of the baseline for a second serve.

- Hold the racquet using both of your hands. Your dominant hand should be on the bottom of the handle. Holding it with both hands will put you in position to quickly execute the return when the serve comes at you.
- Watch the server and try to anticipate where the ball will land on your side. When you see where the ball is going, move quickly to execute a forehand or backhand.
- If the ball is coming too quickly for a good backswing, just stick out your racquet and block the ball back to keep it in play.

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