How to Play Tennis

Have you always wanted to learn to play tennis, but you've been unsure of where to start? Do you love watching Rafael Nadal or Maria Sharapova dominate the courts? Playing tennis is a great way to build speed, power, & fitness as well as a great way to spend time w/ your family or your friends. Follow these steps to learn how to do it.

Method 1 of 4: Master the Rules

1) Master scoring in tennis. Tennis is made up of games, sets, and matches. Traditionally, you must win 6 games (or, in special cases, 7) to win a set, and you must win 2 out of 3 sets to win a match. Here's what you need to know:

   - Each game begins with 0 points ("love") earned on each side. The first point won by a player is called 15, the second is called 30, and the third is called 40. If the first player has earned 40 points while his opponent has 30 or less, then he can win the game by winning the next point.
- If both players have 40 points, then the score is called "deuce," and they must keep playing until a player wins by two.
- You must win a set by two games, so if you and your opponent are playing at 6-5 (you have won 6 games and he has won 5), then you must win the next game to beat him 7-5 for the set. If he wins the next game, then you are stuck at 6-6, and you must play a tiebreaker to determine who wins the set.

2) **Master the court.** Before you can start playing tennis, you need to understand the layout of a tennis court. Here are the basics:
- The tennis court has two sides that are separated by a net in the middle. Each court has two sides: the deuce side, or the right side of the court, and the ad side, or the left side of the court.
- The court has alleys on either side, and if one player hits the ball in his opponent's alleys in a game of singles, he loses the point.
○ Each court has a right service box and a left service box. The server's goal is to serve the ball into the service box on the opposite side on his opponent's team. So, if the server is standing on the deuce side (the right side) of the court, he needs to serve the ball into his opponent's right service box.

○ Each player's court is framed by the baseline at the bottom and the singles sidelines on each side of the court. One player's ball must land on or within these lines of the opposing players court during a rally (any point after the serve) to be considered in.

3) Serve the ball. Start by standing on the deuce side of the court behind the baseline and serve the ball to the box that's across the net and diagonal to you. You have two chances to get your serve in. If you don't get your serve in the first time, it's called a fault; if you don't get it in the second time, it's called a double-fault and you've lost the point and have to move to the opposite side of the court.
If the ball hits the net and then bounces into the service box, then it's called a "let" and you can play the point over again. If it hits the next and bounces back into your side of the court or outside the service box on the other side of the court, it's a fault.

4) Play until someone hits a winner or commits an error. A winner means that the ball bounces in the court, but the person can't hit it back. An error means that you either hit the ball out of bounds or hit the ball into the net.

- The winner of the first point gets 15. The loser of the first point is scored at "love." If the server wins, the score is 15-love. If the returner wins, the score is love-15. The server will always say their score first.
5) **Play the next point.** Move to the "ad" (left-hand) side of the court. Serve the ball and play the point. The score proceeds 15, 30, and 40. The first person to exceed 40 by two wins the game.

- If both players are tied 40-40, then they are at "deuce."
- The player who wins the next point has the advantage (add in). If that player wins another point, then he or she wins the game.
- If the player fails to win the advantage point, the score goes back to deuce. The game doesn't end until someone wins both an advantage and then a winning point.
6) Play a new game. The opposite player serves the ball starting in the deuce court.
7) Continue playing until you win the set or until you reach a tie breaker.
8) Play a tiebreaker if the score is 6-6. Here’s how you do it:

- Start with the player who did not serve in the last game. This player serves once.
- The opposite player then serves twice. For the rest of the tiebreak, each player serves 2 points.
- The tiebreak ends when a player reaches 7 and is leading the other player by 2 points. If a player reaches 7, and the other player is at 6, then they have to continue to play until the winner beats the other player by 2 points.
9) **Start the scoring over to play the second set.** Play the second set just as you played the first.
10) **Continue to play until someone wins 2 out of 3 sets.** The winner of 2 sets wins the match. In professional tennis, women have to win 2 out of 3 sets while men have to win 3 out of 5 sets. In high school and recreational tennis, though, the standard is 2 out of 3 sets.

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