

How To Get More Power On Your Tennis Serve



Three Ways To Increase Power On Your Tennis Serve:

1. Power Sources
2. Timing
3. Relaxation

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Power Sources:

There are many different power sources available on the tennis serve. The three main sources of power include -

1. Ground Force
2. Rotational Power
3. The Swing

Power Source #1 - Ground Force

Ground force is the amount of push you can generate from the ground up. This all starts with your stance. There are three main stances, the platform stance, the pinpoint stance and the hybrid stance.



Platform Stance

In this stance, you keep your feet apart throughout the motion, until you drive up and off the court. Typically the feet will be around shoulder width apart. Federer and Djokovic use this stance.

Pinpoint Stance

In this stance, you start off with your feet apart but during the motion, the back foot lifts off the ground and joins the front foot in the pinpoint position.

Nadal and Murray use this stance.

Hybrid Stance

Also known as the wide pinpoint or narrow platform stance, this is where you have both feet close together but not touching as in the pinpoint. The feet are normally around 3-4 inches apart.

Roddick and Monfils use this stance.

Whichever stance you use, you'll want to maximise the ground force you can generate using an explosive down and up action on your leg drive.

The faster you can make the down-up motion, the more explosive power you'll generate on your serve plus you'll make contact at the highest possible point.



Power Source #2 - Rotational Power

At the start of the serve, most pros will coil their upper body.

This can range from a little rotation, someone who keeps their upper body facing the side of the court, to a lot, someone who turns their back towards the net.

Once you reach the trophy position, you'll want to uncoil the body.

This all starts with the tossing hand pulling down and away from the contact point, initiating the uncoiling of the shoulders and trunk. The faster you pull away, the faster you'll uncoil the body and the more rotational power you'll get.

Pete Sampras had the greatest rotational power of any server, in the history of the sport.



Power Source #3 - The Swing

The more racket head speed you generate throughout the motion, the more power you'll get. Building racket head speed is much easier if you don't break the swing at any point. If you pause for instance, in the trophy position, or in the racket drop position, any momentum you created up to that point is lost.

Most of the biggest servers throughout history have used a continuous motion that builds momentum throughout the swing to generate the racket head speed in a relaxed way.

Timing

You could have the best service motion in the world, however, if you don't have good timing, you'll struggle to generate power on your serve.

Good timing starts with your ball toss. The higher you toss the ball, the slower your motion will have to be in order to time the contact point.

The lower your ball toss, the easier it will be to hit the ball close to the apex. Once you release the ball, it travels up, hits the peak, then starts to drop. The higher you toss it, the faster the ball will be travelling when you try to make contact.

Most pro players will toss the ball no higher than 6 inches above the contact point. However, when you look at the biggest servers, players like Nick Kyrgios, Andy Roddick, Sam Groth, Goran Ivanisevic and many others, they toss the ball quite low.

Many of these players make contact directly below the apex, Kyrgios sometimes hits the ball at the apex.



Another major advantage that these players get, is that in order for them to make contact at their ideal height, using a low toss forces them to speed up their motion. The timing between the start of the motion and the contact point tends to be around 1.5-2.0 seconds for the majority of tennis players. Club and pro level.

But many of the biggest servers are much quicker, typically around one second.

Roscoe Tanner, who was the biggest server of his generation and someone who used a fast motion, would typically get around 0.8-0.9 from the start of his motion until the contact point.

Kyrgios is similar in numbers these days.



Whatever your serve is like, to get the most amount of power from your body, you'll want to build momentum throughout the action by having a continuous motion with no breaks in the kinetic chain.

Relaxation

Being relaxed will help you get more power on any stroke.

If you've ever tried to swing your racket as fast as you can, with stiff and tight muscles, you'll know it doesn't get you far.

When the body is relaxed, the muscles can fire properly. A loose muscle can generate much more elastic energy than a tight one.

If you want to serve with more power, on a consistent basis, without getting injured, being relaxed is key!

There are a few ways you can help the body stay relaxed when serving.

- Breathing
- Grip pressure
- Muscle activation/relaxation

Breathing

When you hold your breath, on any stroke, the body will end up getting tight during the contact zone. To be as relaxed as possible when hitting a stroke, you want to be exhaling during the contact point. This means that the exhale has to start prior to making contact with the ball.

On the serve, the easiest way to time this is to start your exhale when you reach the trophy position. Once you get into the trophy position (not holding that position, simply passing through it) you'll then want to explode up, into the ball.

This is also when you are most likely to tense up, because you want to create power, the body can sometimes stiffen up and actually ruin your chances of getting more power.

By breathing out during this phase, you'll help the body relax, even though you are going at full speed here.



You may have to play around with the timing of your exhale, some players benefit from starting the exhale just before they make contact.

Test out the timing to see what works best for your game.

Grip Pressure

When you hold your racket, you can apply a lot of pressure or you could hold it very loosely. Good players know when to grip harder, for instance when dealing with a powerful shot at the net, and when to hold loose, for instance when hitting a touch shot like a drop shot or drop volley.

When you serve, you don't want to hold the grip too tight as this will tense up the muscles and restrict your movements.

You want to hold it as loose as possible, without losing control of the racket.

A simple trick that Pete Sampras would use to relax his fingers, was to release a few of them during the lifting phase of his serve.



Sampras would release his pinky, ring and middle finger during the lift into the trophy position and this ensured that his grip pressure was relaxed, allowing his muscles to be loose. You don't need to release your own fingers but you can squeeze the grip prior to

the start of your motion and then relax them, this squeeze and release will help you to feel that relaxation in the hand before you start your service action.

Muscle Activation

Another way to help your body relax is to use muscle activation-relaxation in between points. This can be done when going to pick up a ball, when going to your towel or when waiting for your opponent to serve.

You can use this technique on any muscle group but let's focus on the forearm muscles for now, as they play such a major role in pronation during the serve.

Activate your forearm muscles as much as you can by squeezing them as hard as you can, as if you wanted to show off your muscles to someone. Then totally relax them.

By activating them fully for a second, then relaxing them, you'll feel that relaxation that you want to maintain heading into the next point.

You won't want to use this method too much, only when you start feeling tight. Once every few games would do the trick!



Thank you for reading, I hope you've learned something new that will help you improve your serve speed.

All the best
Coach Simon
Top Tennis Training