



GLOSSARY OF TENNIS TERMS

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A

Ace: a service point won by the server because the receiver doesn't return, or even touch, the ball.

Advantage (or ad) court: left-hand side of the court.

Advantage (or Ad): the point played after deuce, which if won, ends the game.

Advantage set: a set that can only be won when one opponent has won six games and is two games clear of their opponent.

All: term used when both players have the same number of points from 15-15 (15-all) to 30-30 (30-all). When the score is 40-40 the term is deuce.

All-court player: someone who is equally comfortable playing from the baseline, mid-court and net.

Alley: (see tramlines.)

Approach shot: a shot used by a player to pin their opponent behind the baseline so they can run to the net for a volley.

ATP: Association of Tennis Professionals, the governing body of men's tennis.

ATP World Tour: circuit of men's professional tennis tournaments.

Australian Open: First Grand Slam tournament of the tennis calendar played in January at Melbourne Park on hardcourt surface.

B

Back court: area behind the court between the baseline and the back fence.

Backhand: shot struck by holding the racquet in the dominant hand but swinging the racquet from the non-dominant side of the body with the back of the dominant hand pointing in the direction the ball is being hit.

Backspin: spin imparted on the underside of the ball causing it to revolve backwards while travelling forwards. Used in slice and drop shots.

Backswing: component of the swing where the racquet is taken back behind the body in preparation for the forward motion that leads to contact with the ball.

Bagel: colloquial term for winning or losing a set to love, the 0 in the score line evoking the shape of a bagel.

Ballkid: person responsible for retrieving tennis balls that are out of play and supplying them to the server before each point.

Baseline: the line at each end of the court behind which the server stands to serve.

Baseliner: a player who prefers to play at the baseline, relying on their groundstrokes.

Billie Jean King Cup: annual international women's team competition staged by the ITF (previously known as both Federation and Fed Cup).

Break: a service game won by the player receiving serve.

Break back: game won by a receiver who has previously conceded their own service game during the same set.

Break point: point held by a receiver that, if won, earns them their opponent's service game. The scores 0-40, 15-40, 30-40 and 40-Ad are all break points.

Bye: situation in which a player advances automatically to the next round of a tournament without having to play a match.

C

Call: a player or court official's decision as to whether a ball was in or out.

Career Grand Slam: the feat where a player wins each of the four Grand Slams across their career.

Challenger tournaments: week-long ITF events positioned one tier below ATP and WTA Tour tournaments that are staged all over the world and are part of the Pro Tour in Australia.

Change of ends: 90-second rest period taken courtside, between odd games, before players move to the other end of the court and continue play.

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C

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Chip: to block a shot back into court. Sometimes used as a tactic to counteract a powerful serve.

Chip-and-charge: tactic where a player chips the ball into their opponent's court and immediately approaches the net for a volley.

Clay court: playing surface made of finely powdered red or green clay.

Code violation: penalty for breaking tennis' code of conduct rules. The first infraction incurs a warning, the second a point penalty, the third a game penalty and the fourth results in default from the match.

Counterpuncher: player who employs a defensive playing style.

Court: the area within which a match is played.

Cross-court shot: shot hit from one corner of the court to the diagonally opposite corner.

D

Davis Cup: annual international men's team competition staged by the ITF.

Dead rubber: match played after the result of a team competition has already been decided.

Default: disqualification of a player due to code violations.

Deuce: a score of 40-40. A player must win two consecutive points from deuce to win the game.

Deuce court: the right-hand side of the court.

Dirt-baller: colloquial term for a clay court specialist.

Double fault: consecutive faults on serve, resulting in the returner winning the point.

Doubles: a match between teams of two players.

Down the line: shot hit straight down the court, close to one of the sidelines.

Drop shot: a delicate shot employing backspin that drops just over the net.

Drop volley: a delicate volley employing touch that drops just over the net.

E

En Tout Cas: playing surface made from coarse crushed red brick material.

Exhibition: match or tournament played for entertainment and prize money but not for ranking points.

F

Fault: a serve that hits the net or doesn't land within the service box and consequently does not start the point. Consecutive faults are termed a double fault and result in the loss of a point.

Foot fault: penalty when a serving player steps on or over the baseline, or over the baseline's centre mark, before connecting with the ball, resulting in a service fault.

Forced error: an error made off a difficult shot hit by an opponent.

Forehand: stroke made with the front of the dominant hand facing the direction in which the ball is being struck.

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G

GOAT: acronym for Greatest Of All Time.

Game: the building blocks of a set.

Game point: a point that, if won, will result in a player winning the game they are playing.

Game, set, match: the words a match umpire uses to indicate that a match has concluded.

Golden Grand Slam: the feat whereby a player wins all four Grand Slam tournaments and an Olympic gold medal in the same year.

Grand Slam: the feat whereby a player wins all four Grand Slam tournaments in the same year. Also known as majors, the four Grand Slam tournaments are the most prestigious tennis tournaments on the annual calendar, offering the most ranking points and the highest amount of prize money. The Grand Slams are the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open.

Groundstroke: shots hit from on, or behind, the baseline after the ball has bounced.

H

Half volley: volley made off a low-bouncing ball by placing the racquet close to the court surface.

Hold serve: situation in which a serving player wins their service game.

I

II-formation: doubles formation where the net player on the serving team straddles the centre service line at a crouch with the aim of cutting off a cross-court return.

K

Kick serve: a serve where the ball is imparted with topspin making it "kick" up upon connecting with the court surface.

L

Let: a stroke or point that doesn't count and must be replayed. Occurs when a serve clips the net before bouncing into the service box, when a point is interrupted by outside interference or if an umpire overrules a call made by a linesperson.

Linesperson (line judge): court official responsible for making calls on a particular line.

Lob: high-arching shot intended to pass over an opponent's head and land within the playing area.

Love: tennis word for zero, meaning no points in a game or a set.

Love game: a game won by a player without their opponent scoring any points.

Lucky loser: player who loses in qualifying but gets into the main draw of a tournament due to another player withdrawing, generally awarded to the highest ranked non-qualifying player.

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M

Masters: A tier of ATP tournaments that sits just below Grand Slams, offering 1000 ranking points. Not to be confused with tennis programs for older players.

Match: competitive format for tennis usually decided by the best of three or five sets.

Match point: point in a match that, if won, brings the match to an end.

Match tiebreak: method used to decide the outcome of a doubles match, usually when players are at one set-all. Players alternate serve, with the first to reach 10 points with a two-point advantage winning the match.

Mini break: a tiebreak point won on an opponent's serve.

Mixed doubles: doubles match played with one male and one female opponent on team.

N

Net: netting stretched horizontally across the mid-point of the court, supported by net posts

Net cord: white band from which the length of the net is suspended.

O

Official: member of the on-court officiating team. Includes the umpire, linespeople, court supervisor and referee.

Overhead: see smash.

P

Passing shot: shot that passes to the left or right of a net player (not over them) and lands within the playing area.

Q

Qualifying (Qualies): preliminary event offering players whose rankings don't gain them direct entry in the main draw of a tournament, the opportunity to win a spot in the main draw.

Qualifier: person that wins through to the main draw of a tournament via qualifying.

R

Rally: exchange of a series of tennis strokes during a game that ends when a player makes an error or hits a shot that their opponent can't return.

Receiver: player returning serve.

Referee: senior official responsible for enforcing tournament rules.

Reflex volley: instinctive volley made with no time to think about the shot or get the racquet in position.

Retirement: withdrawal of a player during a match, usually due to injury and illness.

Roland Garros: second Grand Slam of the tournament calendar. Played on clay courts in May in Paris (also known as French Open).

Round robin: style of tournament play whereby the draw is divided into similar sized groups and each player plays every other player within their group.

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Seed: highly-ranked player whose position in a tournament draw has been arranged so they don't meet another highly-ranked player until the latter stages of the tournament.

Serve: over-arm stroke played from behind the baseline and to the opposite side of the centre mark, used to start a point.

Serve and volley: style of play whereby a player serves the ball and then rushes the net to finish the point early with a volley.

Set point: point that, if won by the player who holds it, brings a set to an end.

Singles: tennis game played by two opponents.

Slice: shot hit with backspin and sidespin.

Smash: stroke similar to a service action played when the ball is travelling above a player's head, for example off a lob.

Spin: direction in which the surface of a ball rotates while travelling through the air (includes topspin, backspin, sidespin).

Split step: small two-foot hop made by players to adjust their footwork as they gauge the path of an oncoming ball.

Straight sets: a match won without the loss of a set.

Stroke: way in which a tennis ball is struck, for example forehand, backhand, serve.

Sudden death: point that, if won, brings a game or tiebreak to an end without the need for a player to be two points clear of their opponent.

T

Tanking: colloquial term for losing a game, set or match on purpose.

Tennis elbow: common tennis injury in which the muscles and tendons of the elbow and forearm become inflamed and painful.

Tie: collective term referring to the group of matches played between two teams in a team event, typically used in Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup competitions.

Tiebreak: method used to decide the outcome of a set, usually when players are at six games-all. Players alternate serve with the first to reach seven points with a two-point advantage winning the set. (See also Match tiebreak.)

Topspin: spin imparted on a tennis ball by stroking it from low to high, causing it to rotate forwards as it moves through the air and bounce high upon landing.

Tramlines: external court lines that run parallel to the singles lines, defining the area of play for doubles.

Tweener: trick shot whereby a player hits the ball between their legs, typically when chasing down a lob.

Two-handed backhand: backhand stroke where the racquet handle is also supported by the non-dominant hand.

U

Umpire: court official responsible for monitoring the calls made by lines people and enforcing the rules of tennis during a match.

Unforced error: error committed due to poor technique or judgment on a player's part rather than as the result of a good shot by their opponent.

US Open: fourth and final Grand Slam tournament of the calendar year, played at Flushing Meadows in New York.

Unseeded: term given to a player whose ranking does not afford them a protected (seeded) position in the draw.

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Volley: forehand or backhand stroke executed at the net before the ball bounces, the racquet moving in a punching motion.

W

Walkover: victory awarded to a player when their opponent concedes a match before it begins, usually due to injury or illness.

Wildcard: free pass into a tournament draw awarded when a player's ranking is not high enough to gain them direct entry or they have not entered the tournament by the closing date for entries.

Wimbledon: third Grand Slam tournament of the tennis calendar, also known as The Championships. Played on grass at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in South West London.

Winner: shot that lands within the playing area and ends a point because the person receiving it is unable to return it effectively.

WTA Tour: Women's Tennis Association Tour, the governing body of the women's game

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