

TEACHING THE SERVE PROGRESSION

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The serve progression will start without racket or ball so as to minimize interference with the players learning process. This approach considers the **LOADING** and **UNLOADING** of the legs as the reference by which we time all other movements. Consider the accompanying [video](#) of John Isner and Roger Federer.

1. Loading the legs

- Without a racket or ball and no arm movements
- Spread feet shoulder width with even weight
- Rock weight to back foot
- As you rock weight to front foot, bring back foot forward as you bend your knees
- Repeat slowly until smooth

2. Unloading the legs

- Without a racket or ball and no arm movements
- Start at the loaded knee position with feet together
- Unload both feet by pushing up and forward into the court
- Repeat slowly until smooth

3. Loading and Unloading the legs

- Without a racket or ball and no arm movements
- Combine steps 1 & 2 and repeat until smooth

4. Loading the legs

- Include the racket arm without the racket
- Start racket arm in normal position for starting a serve motion.
- Go thru step 1 very slowly and end step 1 (i.e. full knee bend) with your racket forearm pointing vertical at the same time as the full knee bend.
- Repeat slowly until smooth

5. Unloading the legs

- Include the racket arm without the racket or ball
- Start racket forearm in the vertical position
- Go thru step 2 very slowly and end with the racket elbow bent and racket hand near your head and just behind your ear (maximum racket drop position).
- Now add the upward motion to take the imaginary racket from the deep drop position to the contact point.

6. Loading and Unloading the legs

- Include the racket arm without the racket or ball
- Combine steps 4 & 5, and repeat until smooth.

7. Repeat the 6 steps while slowing increasing the speed making sure to maintain the 'perfect' timing with a non-hurried swing.

Using an [Enhanced Tennis Twist](#) and a 'tilt block', adjust the ball machine and player(s) to where the delivered ball will go over their extended imaginary racket. Use chalk to mark the position of the feet on the court surface. Select TWS = 0 and turn ON the ET2 with the player in the starting position for the serve.

1. Repeat step 7th without a racket and have the player start their serve swing (approximately) when the RED LED sequence is just about to turn on the 3rd RED LED.
2. A full motion must be executed with the learned loading and unloading of the knees along with the proper timing of the delivered ball.
3. Repeat until the correct starting point in the RED LED sequence has been obtained and the motion is perfect; this may take considerable time to perfect.
4. Repeat step 3 using the player's racket.

- Gauge the correct position of the player depending on their height & racket length so that the contact point will occur when the racket arm is fully extended.
 - Emphasize that the player must concentrate on the loading and unloading of the legs and not worry about where the ball goes (if contact is made).
 - Reiterate the importance of starting the racket using the RED LED sequence as a reference.
5. Once step 4 has been mastered then we want to add the motion of the ball throwing hand and arm.
- Continue to use the ET2 as a ball thrower.
 - High ball tosses will occur if the ball tossing arm is started early.
 - Wait until the racket tends to point to the rear of the player and then begin the upward motion of the toss.
 - See John Isner's low ball toss and check when he actually starts the upward ball motion.
 - Repeat slowly until smooth and natural; 'the myelin is still growing' and we want the execution to be perfect.
 - If the loading or unloading or timing is off, we should stop and go back to develop the individual steps before involving all of the motions and movements necessary for the serve.
6. At this point the player may be ready for practicing the ball toss alongside the tennis court fence.
- Stand the player next to the windscreen and extend their racket and arm to the service contact point (i.e. above their head), then draw a 1 foot circle on the windscreen with a piece of chalk using the tip of the racket as center point.
 - Re-position the player facing the fence with their feet perpendicular to the fence at about 1 arm's length away from the fence.

- With a ball (racket on the ground) have the player lift (as opposed to toss) the ball to where it rises to the height of the chalk circle on the windscreen.
 - The ball should rise vertically and stay the same distance from the windscreen (i.e. no arcing towards the rear of the player).
 - However, the ball should move in a small arc parallel to the fence and forward to the center of the chalk circle on the windscreen.
 - Re-positioning the player may be necessary to achieve the correct ball toss to the contact point.
 - At least 5 out of 10 tosses should be perfect and the others very close to the 'perfect' lift.
 - Add the motion of the racket arm along with the unloading and loading motions.
 - Repeat the ball toss slowly until perfect and then achieve a more normal delivery.
7. Players will slip back and forth as the myelin develops and the coach should monitor with repeats of various steps.
 8. The player is now ready to serve on the court.
 9. As a side note, one has only to change the take back of the racket and we have the abbreviated motion needed for the 'Overhead'.
 10. This seems like a long and boring process and the innovative coach is challenged with motivating and yet realizing the serve is one of the most important parts of the game of tennis (of course the split step is the most important).

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