

The Contact Move

Introduction

I have always said that ‘Tennis is a dance and the ball is your partner!’. Footwork, balance and athletic movement are crucial to successful tennis. Great qualities that all successful tennis players possess is that they are fit, strong, balanced and move exceptionally well around the court. But, perhaps even more importantly when they make contact with the ball the result is a stroke that is extremely effective and very efficient.

Many footwork articles have dealt with getting ready, reading, reacting and recovering on the tennis court. This article touches on these subjects but also introduces the Contact Move * - the responding part of the game!

The Contact Move

A Contact Move is an athletic move that you make when you make contact with the ball. My research shows that there are 15 different ways you make contact with the ball. Remember the research world is one where I contribute and you can take the information and experiment i.e. use what works for you! In this chapter you will learn 9 common contact moves. To further understand and see the contact moves in more detail go to www.thebaileymethod.com

When deciding which contact move to select, you must first:

1st – Read an Approaching Ball

2nd – Decide what Footwork Steps you are going to use to reach the ball

3rd – Set your feet up into a Hitting Stance

4th – Respond with a Contact Move

5th- Control your centre of gravity with a Balance Move

6th – Recover and Get Ready for your opponents’ next shot

Reading the Approaching Ball

It is important to understand that the selection of which contact move to use will depend on the type of approaching ball that is hit by your opponent. Below is a table of some different types of approaching balls and their various speeds, spins, heights and depth that occur when hitting your selected contact move ground stroke.

*Note: This article deals with ground strokes only. Not all the existing contact moves are dealt with in this chapter.



	Mid-court Ball	Fast Deep Ball	High Deep Ball	Wide Ball	Angled Wide Ball	Opportunity Ball
Speed of Ball	Slow	Fast	Medium	Fast	Fast	Slow
Spin on Ball	Flat or floating	Flat, sliced or topspin	Heavy topspin or Floating	Sliced Topspin or flat	Topspin or sliced	Flat
Height of Ball	Chest, hip or knee level	Hip level or knee level	Shoulder or head level	Hip level	Knee level	Hip level
Depth of Ball	Middle of back-court	Near baseline	Near Baseline	Corners of backcourt	Cuts singles line before baseline	Just behind service line or in service box

Footwork Selection

To categorise the contact moves in this article I have divided them into 3 types of footwork selection i.e. how you decide to react with your feet to the approaching ball. (Note: a footwork pattern is a combination of footwork steps!)

1. Offensive Footwork Selection

Where you attack the ball with your feet and these tend to be on mid-court or opportunity balls.

Diagram of tennis court with the offensive footwork area shaded

2. Rally Footwork Selection

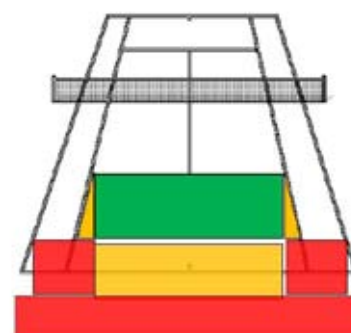
Where you keep your position on the baseline and let the ball come to you and these tend to be on fast deep balls.

Diagram of tennis court with the rally footwork area shaded

3. Defensive Footwork Selection

Where you are pushed wide or back off the baseline and these tend to be on wide, angled wide or high deep balls.

Diagram of tennis court with the offensive footwork area shaded



1. **Offensive Zone**
2. **Rally Zone**
3. **Defensive Zone**



Setting up the Hitting Stance*

The hitting stance is the way the player positions his/her feet to set –up their centre of gravity (when stationary) or ‘checks’ their stride(when moving), so they are in the best balanced position to make their selected contact move. The hitting stance is very closely linked to shot selection and contact move selection. Setting up the stance is the last thing done before contact is made, while some stances are more restrictive than others. The quicker the player set-up their stance the more options they have because they can delay or ‘hold’ their shot. Keep the feet moving though, for if you sit too early you lose the rebound effect of the contracting muscles.

However, sometimes the player doesn’t have time to set up at all i.e. with a angled wide ball, and thus the hitting stance is by passed. This is when a temporary anchor step is made or you ‘check’ your stride before contact.

* See sequential photos for pictures of Hitting Stances

The 6 athletic skills of the Contact Move Ground Stroke

There are 6 athletic skills you need to master on the tennis court when hitting ground strokes and this is relevant to players who are 6 to 60, a beginner or tennis professional. An athletic skill is the way you use your lower body when hitting the ball. These include-

- 1.) Pivoting the hips (pivot moves)
- 2.) Shifting the hips (mogul moves)
- 3.) Multi – directional hopping (hop moves)
- 4.) Transferring from the back foot to the front foot (transfer moves)
- 5.) Lateral lunging of the legs (power moves)
- 6.) Spinning the hips around a fixed axis (spin moves)

1.) Pivoting the hips – A pivot is when either 1 foot or both feet stay on the ground through contact. This can be used by pivoting on the front foot, 1 foot, 2 feet or off a closed stance. In this chapter you will see a step down pivot move, a 1 foot pivot move, and a 2 foot pivot move.

2.) Shifting the hips – This is when there is a sideways or backwards shift of the hips from an open stance in a straight line beyond contact of the ball. In this chapter you will see a mogul move.

3.) Multi-directional hop – This is when you take-off and land back on the same foot. A hop can be made forward, backwards and sideways. In this chapter you will see a front foot hop move.

4.) Transferring the weight – This is when the weight is driven forward from the back foot to the front foot in an elevated manner from a semi-open stance. In this chapter you will see a forward transfer move.

5.) Lateral lunging of the legs – This is when the weight is driven sideways from a running stance in an elevated lunging motion.



In this chapter you will see a power move.

6.) Spinning of the hips around the head – This is when the hips spin from a semi-open stance and the head stays still through contact.

In this chapter you will see a low spin move and a reverse spin.

The Balance Move

With every contact move there is also a relevant balance move which is crucial for balance on contact and helps define each contact move. A balance move is use of a knee, leg, foot or feet while making contact with the ball. Selection of a balance move will depend on intention of shot i.e. hitting the ball down the line, middle or cross-court.

Note: The same contact move can also have a different balance move depending on the height of the ball.

1.) Knee Up



2.) Back-knee drop



3.) Inside –knee drop



- 4.) Kick back
- foot kicks behind body towards side fence hips closed on contact



- 5.) Leg curl
- heel kicks up towards butt hips open up on contact



- 6.) Side Kick
- foot kicks to side of body towards side fence. Hips open on contact



- 7.) Mogul step
- shift sideways, brake with inside foot & push off inside foot

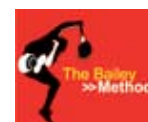


Recovery and Getting Ready

Even though this crucial area of the game is not covered in this article, the importance of quick, explosive recovery steps to the midline of the opponents next shot cannot be over emphasized. Just as important is gaining control of your center of gravity with a strong athletic base that is wide and stable. You must be ready to react on balance by splitting your step as your opponent makes contact with the ball, thus not getting caught in behind you or being slow to explode to the next shot

Sequential Progression of 9 Contact Moves (3 offensive, 3 rally, 3 defensive)

The following pages will explain the chosen contact move by listing the relevant approaching ball, footwork selection, hitting stance, contact move and corresponding balance move. The contact moves have been further classified by their footwork selection being offensive, rallying or defensive contact moves.



Offensive Contact Moves

Offensive Contact Moves use offensive footwork patterns where you attack the ball with your feet and these tend to be on mid-court or opportunity balls. Examples of offensive contact moves are the step-down pivot move, the front foot hop move and the forward transfer move.

1.) Step Down Pivot Move

The step down pivot is an offensive contact move where the ball is hit off the front foot. The front foot stays on the ground during and after the hit.

Approaching Ball – Mid court Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Offensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Back foot Stance.

RESPOND with a

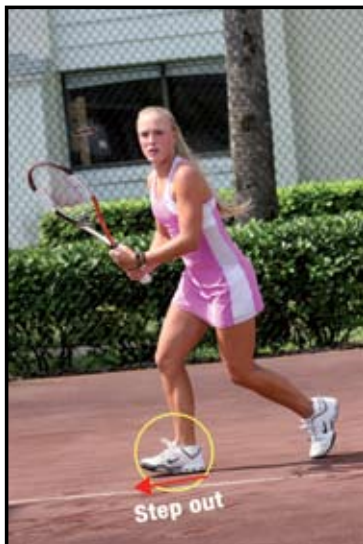
Contact Move – Step down Pivot Move

and a

Balance Move - Back knee drop



Offensive Contact Move - Example of Step Down Pivot



1st

Step out with foot closest to the ball onto the heel

2nd

Step down the court into a neutral stance and drop back knee



3rd

Strike the mid-court ball and finish the swing



4th

Bring back leg around 45 degrees and keep angles in legs



2.) Front Foot Hop Move

The front foot hop is an offensive contact move where the ball is hit off the front foot. The player takes off and lands on the same foot in a forward position to the take off point.

Approaching Ball – Opportunity Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Offensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Neutral Stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Front Foot Hop

and a

Balance Move - Kick Back



Offensive Contact Move - Example of Front Foot Hop



1st

Forward cross into a neutral stance

2nd

Make contact with the ball first hitting off the front foot



3rd

Front foot hop with kick back off a short opportunity ball



4th

Land on same take off foot. Keep angles in legs through contact



3.) Forward Transfer Move

The Forward Transfer Move is an offensive contact move where the ball is hit off a semi-open stance and the weight is transferred from the back foot to the front foot. The body becomes elevated just before contact as the hips square up to face the net. With the Forward Transfer the weight goes out towards the target with a leg curl balance move. The front foot always finishes pointing in the direction of the hit.

Approaching Ball – Floating Mid court Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Offensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Semi-open Stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Forward Transfer

and a

Balance Move - Leg curl



Offensive Contact Move - Example of Transfer Move



1st

Drop into the semi-open stance with outside toe pointed towards the side fence

2nd

Let the floating ball drop into the strike zone



3rd

Forward transfer with a leg curl



4th

Transfer weight in direction of shot and bring leg through for balance



Rally Contact Moves

Rallying Contact Moves use rally footwork patterns where you keep your position on the baseline and let the ball come to you and these tend to be on fast deep balls. Examples of rallying contact moves are the low spin move, the 2 foot pivot move and 1 foot pivot move.

4.) Low Spin Move

The low spin move is a rallying contact move where the ball is hit off a semi-open stance. The hips stay low and rotate around a central axis. The body becomes elevated slightly after contact while the outside toe should always finish pointing in the direction of the hit. When completing the low spin, be careful not to over-rotate and always keep the head still.

Approaching Ball – Fast Deep Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Rallying footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Semi-open Stance.

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Low Spin Move

and a

Balance Move - Outside foot lands slightly before inside foot



Rallying Contact Move - Example of Low Spin Move



1st

Drop into the semi-open stance with 65% of weight on back leg

2nd

Low spin, make contact first on a fast deep ball



3rd

Spin hips and stay low. Outside toe points in direction of shot



4th

Cross over step helps to recover quickly

5.) 2 Foot Pivot Move

The 2 foot pivot move is a rallying contact move where the ball is hit off an open stance. The hips stay low and rotate around a central axis. The body pivots on the balls of both feet and there is a dropping down of the inside knee and the hips. When completing the 2 foot pivot make contact first before pivoting the hips.

Approaching Ball – Sliced Fast Deep Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Rallying footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Open Stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – 2 Foot Pivot Move

and a

Balance Move - Inside Knee Drop



Rallying Contact Move - Example of Two Foot Pivot



1st

Step out pivot or pivot feet into an open stance. Keep good angles with legs

2nd

In a 2 foot pivot make contact first on a fast deep ball



3rd

Then pivot on balls of feet and drop down inside knee and hips



4th

Square your hips as soon as possible to anticipate opponents next shot



6.) The 1 Foot Pivot Move

The 1 foot pivot move is a rallying contact move where the ball is hit off a back foot stance. The body pivots on the ball of the back foot and there is a lifting of the front knee for balance. When completing the 1 foot pivot the back foot rotates from the side fence and finishes facing the net.

Approaching Ball – Topspinning Fast Deep Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Rallying footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Back foot Stance.

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – 1 Foot Pivot Move

and a

Balance Move - Knee Up



Rallying Contact Move - Example of Back Foot Pivot



1st

Step back into a back foot stance

2nd

Make solid contact with the incoming heavily spinning deep ball



3rd

Pivot back foot and bring knee up after contact



4th

Push off inside foot and then recover



Defensive Contact Moves

Defensive Contact Moves use defensive footwork patterns where you are pushed wide while having to use crossing or running 'out' steps to the ball, or you have been forced back from the baseline. These tend to be on wide, angled wide or high deep balls. Examples of defensive contact moves are the mogul move, power move and the reverse spin move.

7.) The Mogul Move

The mogul move is a defensive contact move where the ball is wide and hit off an open stance. Mogul moves are contact moves where both feet skim the ground as the hips shift sideways in a straight line. Mogul move on contact and move 'beyond the ball'.

Approaching Ball – Wide ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Defensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Open Stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Mogul Move

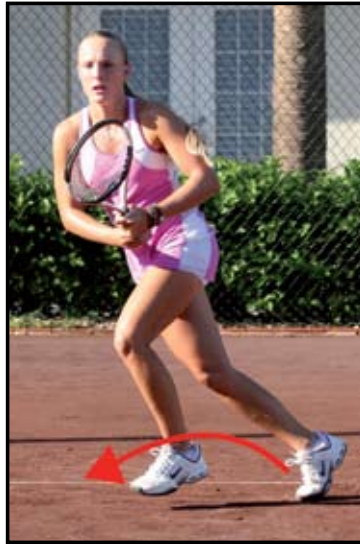
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Balance Move - Mogul Step*

* A step involves movement with feet, legs and hips only. A move involves a step with the swinging of the racket as well!



Defensive Contact Move - Example of Mogul Move



1st

Use crossing outsteps to get in good position for the best contact move

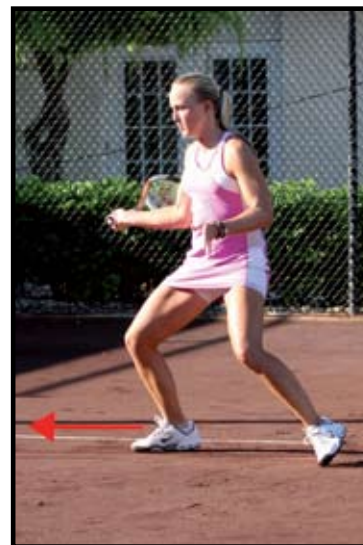
2nd

Prepare to hit low wide deep ball off an open stance with hips facing side fence



3rd

Mogul move, make contact first while shifting sideways



4th

Stay low, go beyond the ball. Keep positive angles with legs. Recover by pushing off outside foot

8.) The Power Move

The power move is a defensive contact move where shots are hit off a running stance. Both feet come off the ground after or just before contact while the hips remain closed through contact. The rear leg kicks back for balance while the front foot is pointing towards the side fence. A power move is really a sideward elevated lunge. When running attempt to cut the angle where possible!

Approaching Ball – Angled wide ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Defensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Running stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Power Move

and a

Balance Move - Kick back



Defensive Contact Move - Example of Power Move



1st

Use running outsteps to get in position for the contact move

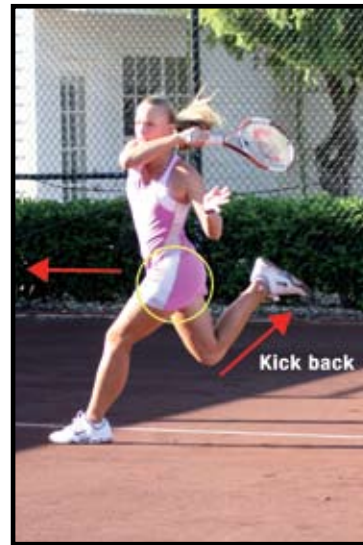
2nd

Prepare to hit very wide difficult ball off running stance with hips facing side fence



3rd

Power move with kick back. Keep hips closed through contact



4th

Change direction with brake step, ie outside leg swings around extends and stops body



9.) The Reverse Spin Move

The reverse spin is a defensive contact move where the ball is hit off a semi-open stance after moving back from the baseline and letting a high deep floating ball drop into the strike zone. Reverse spin the hips and side kick the outside foot. Land on the inside foot with the landing foot pointing to the side fence. When completing the Reverse spin, be careful not to over-rotate and always keep the head still and facing the net.

Approaching Ball – High Deep Floating Ball

REACT with

Footwork Selection – Defensive footwork

SET UP with

Hitting Stance – Semi-open Stance

RESPOND with a

Contact Move – Reverse Spin

and a

Balance Move - Side Kick



Defensive Contact Move - Example of Reverse Spin

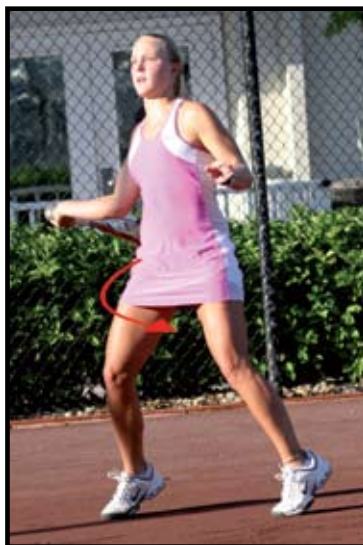


1st

Move back into a semi-open stance and load legs

2nd

Let the ball fall into the hitting zone. Reverse spin on this floating deep ball



3rd

Side kick outside foot. Land on inside foot which points to side fence



4th

Regain balance and recover to baseline and anticipate opponents next shot



Teaching the Contact Move

The best way to learn the previous contact moves is to:

First

Learn the Look by studying the sequential photographs, watching 'The Bailey Footwork Method at Bailey Method DVD' and/or watch the professional tennis players' playing live or on TV. Observe the way the pros get ready, read, react and recover on the tennis court.

Second

Practice the moves without the ball! This is done by what I call shadow tennis. This will work on muscle memory but is also a great work-out and is very specific footwork and fitness training.

Third

Have someone feed the appropriate ball so you can practice the contact move without any pressure.

Fourth

Introduce the contact moves into a live ball situation with set hitting or strategy drills as seen at www.Nicksstrategyzone.com

Fifth

Introduce the contact moves into point play, followed by set play and finally tournament play.

Remember, 5% of the population are naturally gifted athletes. This is for the 95% that need some guidance on how to become better tennis athletes.

Conclusion

The aim of The Bailey Footwork Method is to introduce a language to the game, where these contact moves become easily recognised by coaches, players and parents alike. This will not only improve your game athletically but will create a bias eye towards what contact moves can be made when striking the ball. And, this will make things like viewing the game on TV, playing on court or teaching a tennis lesson fun and exciting!

