

Wardlaw Directionals

- Inside and Outside Ground Strokes (Forehands and Backhands)

-- Outside Ground Strokes

--- Outside ground strokes occur when the ball **crosses in front of a player's body and is moving away or to the outside** (see figures 1 & 2 below).

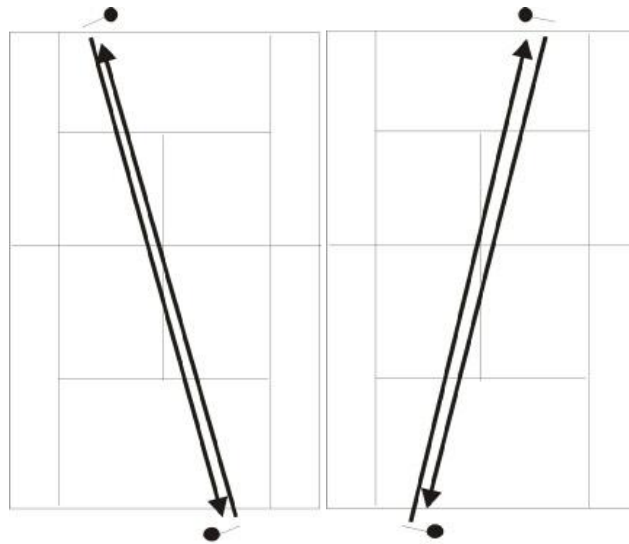


Figure 1
Outside Forehands.

Figure 2
Outside Backhands.

-- Inside Ground Strokes

--- Inside ground strokes occur when the ball **does not cross in front of a player's body and the ball is coming into or inside the body and doesn't cross the body** (see figures 3 & 4 below – dotted line is the incoming shot from your opponent).

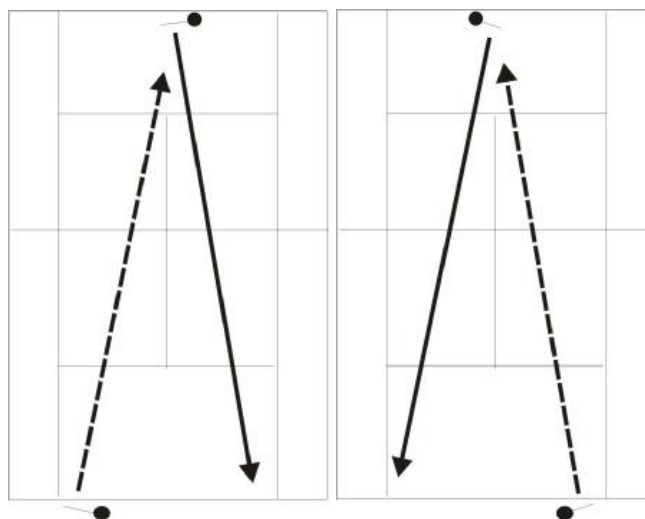


Figure 3
Inside Forehand.

Figure 4
Inside Backhand.

- Directionals: The Basic Guidelines

- The relationship between the ball and the player (not the ball and the court) determines whether an inside or outside ground stroke will be hit. If the ball crosses in front of a player's body then an outside ground stroke will be hit. If the ball doesn't cross in front of the player's body then an inside ground stroke will be hit.
- Guideline One: Outside Ground Strokes—No Change of Direction
 - Highest percentage shot is to **not change** the direction of the ball
- Guideline Two: Inside Ground Strokes—Change Directions
 - Because you hips and shoulders naturally rotate, it is far more productive to change directions on inside ground strokes and hit to the open court.
 - Inside strokes give you **offensive control** of the point.
 - Be **alert** and **step into the court** on inside ground strokes and **take the ball on the rise**.
 - Court position inside **the baseline** is the key to taking offensive advantage of an inside ground stroke.
- Guideline Three: Changing Directions on Outside Ground Strokes—The 90 Degree Change of Direction
 - On deep outside ground strokes the high percentage shot is to stroke the ball back to where it came from (not changing directions). However, there are times when it's important to be able to change directions on outside ground strokes—the most obvious being on **cross court shots landing short**.
 - When changing directions on an outside ground stroke, hit the ball so that it crosses your opponent's baseline **perpendicular to the baseline**. If you contact the ball three feet from the sideline, the ball should cross your opponent's baseline three feet from the sideline.
 - This is called a 90 degree change of direction (90 COD).

- Guidelines for Playing with a Weapon

- Players with a strong forehand may **overplay** their forehands by running around their backhands to **create many more inside ground stroke opportunities** to capitalize on. Two types of inside forehands must be developed and used when playing with a weapon (a strong forehand).
- Inside Forehand One: Inside-Out Forehand—No Change of Direction
 - Inside-out forehands are simply inside forehands hit with **no change of direction**.
 - Usually hit off of **deep shots** and are **used to create opportunities** for shorter inside forehands from which to attack.
- Inside Forehand Two: Inside Forehand—90 Degree Change of Direction
 - Because the weapon player is playing from the ad court, the inside forehand is hit as a 90 degree change of direction. The **emphasis is on depth and penetration** rather than width. This shot is usually hit off $\frac{3}{4}$ court depth or shorter balls. Having **court position inside the baseline** is the cue for when to hit the inside forehand 90 degree change of direction shot.

- Implementing the Directions

- Following the Wardlaw Directionals makes play natural and uncomplicated and creates numerous change of direction temptations for your opponent. As you consistently

make correct change of direction decisions, you will find your opponent continually takes the bait by hitting to the open court, making change of direction errors usually on deep outside ground strokes. However, two temptations arise for the player using the Directionals:

- Going for too much on inside ground strokes
 - You go for too much and hit the shot wide. Inside ground strokes give you control of the point and should be thought of as part of a sequence and rarely a point-ender. Having your inside ground stroke cross the baseline before the sideline will aid in resisting this temptation. Again, emphasis should be on penetration through the baseline, not on width. Don't be tempted to overhit!
- Changing direction on deep outside ground strokes
 - The shot looks easy and the court is open, but you are hitting a difficult, low percentage ground stroke. If you miss you'll leave your opponent an easy inside ground stroke or you'll miss the shot wide. Choose carefully when to change directions on outside ground strokes. The shorter the outside ball to change directions on, the better! Don't be tempted by the open court on the deep outside shots.

- Building a Game

- Outside ground strokes. (These are the safest to play and the fundamental base.)
- Inside ground strokes. (These are the offensive opportunity to open the court.)
- 90 degree change of direction shots. (These are the highest risk because of the angle of deflection, but are important for the high level player to master.)

- Outside Ground Strokes

- The first step in becoming a tactical player is learning how to hit outside ground strokes with the emphasis on **patience, placement, depth, spin, and pace in this order**.
- Even though outside ground strokes are the least offensive oriented shots of the Directionals, **hitting deep cross court shots** is high percentage tennis and entices the opponent into change of direction errors.
- Outside ground stroke rallies need to be **diagonal rather than vertical** with shots landing out of the middle third of the court with the emphasis on penetration, not width.

- Inside Ground Strokes

- Hitting outside ground strokes well will generate numerous inside ground stroke opportunities.
- The key is learning to take control of the point and take advantage of these inside opportunities by making your inside ground strokes **pressuring shots**.
- The pressure is created by penetrating the baseline and not worrying about width.
- The inside ground stroke is your opportunity to change directions and hit to the open court forcing your opponent to hit while moving.
- Learning to take a short ball on the rise will increase your chances for success.

- Changing Directions on Outside Ground Strokes

- Change direction on **short** outside shots (usually on shots without much pace).
- Eliminate the mental image of aiming at the "line," shots should cross the baseline before the sideline—emphasis is on penetration and not width.
- These shots are usually part of a sequence and not point-enders.

-- Players typically make deep errors on approach shots because they fail to adjust their stroke in the midcourt.

- Volley Directionals

-- Outside Volleys

--- There are two situations that typically occur on outside volleys: (1) the passing shot is hit high or not too hard so that you can control the volley or, (2) the passing shot is hit low or with so much pace that control is difficult.

--- On outside volleys **you can control** you have the option to:

---- Not change direction.

---- Hit a 90 degree change of direction.

--- Choose the best shot based on your opponent's court position, whether they are moving or not, your court position and closeness to the net, and the need for being less predictable.

--- On low outside passing shots or heavy paced outside passing shots, **no change** of direction is preferred. Your opponent has hit a good shot, but you are now able to close in farther to the net, cutting down the passing angles and hopefully, your next shot will present a better volley opportunity.

-- Inside Volleys

--- Require changing directions, just like inside ground strokes!

- Return of Serve Guidelines

-- Return of First Serves – Because the server has the advantage and typically tries to take the initiative on first serves, the job of the returner when returning first serves is to **neutralize the point**. Neutralizing the point means that the server does not gain a position in which to pressure the returner off the return.

---Deuce Court Returns

---- On all outside returns there is no change of direction.

---- On hard inside returns (serves at the body and to the backhand), a 90 degree change of direction return is best, therefore changing the direction of the ball.

--- Ad Court Returns

---- On all outside returns there is no change of direction.

---- On inside returns (serves at the body), a 90 degree change of direction return is best.

---- Ad court returners with a forehand weapon will hit either a 90 degree change of direction or an inside-out forehand on inside returns, therefore keeping the court closed.

-- Second Serve Returns

--- When returning second serves, the job of the returner is to take advantage of the reduced pace of the serve and **pressure the server** by shifting the court (forcing with location) or by pressuring with pace and penetration—usually through the middle of the court with no chance for wide errors.

--- If you are not going to attack the second serve, you should get the ball on the outside of your opponent, so that he has to hit his next shot with an outside stroke.

- Approach Shot Guidelines

-- Approach shots create volley opportunities and should be thought of as part of a **two-shot**

sequence—approach, volley!

- Approach on $\frac{3}{4}$ court deep balls or shorter
- Outside Approach Shots
 - Hit a 90 degree change of direction with pace or use your slice to go up the middle.
- Inside Approach Shots
 - Players who split the court (those without a forehand weapon) will change directions
 - Players with a weapon will either change directions or not change directions on their inside-out forehand.

- Teaching Anticipation

- Follow the Directionals!
- You **react** to your opponent as if they play by the Directionals.
 - If you give your opponent a deep outside ground stroke expect an outside ground stroke back.
 - If you give your opponent an inside ground stroke, move to cover the cross court return.
- Reading the play, moving, and covering certain areas of the court before the ball is hit is the key to developing anticipation!