

Lines, Lines, Lines

Games, Drills, and Exercises

For Fun and Fitness

by Joe Dinoffer

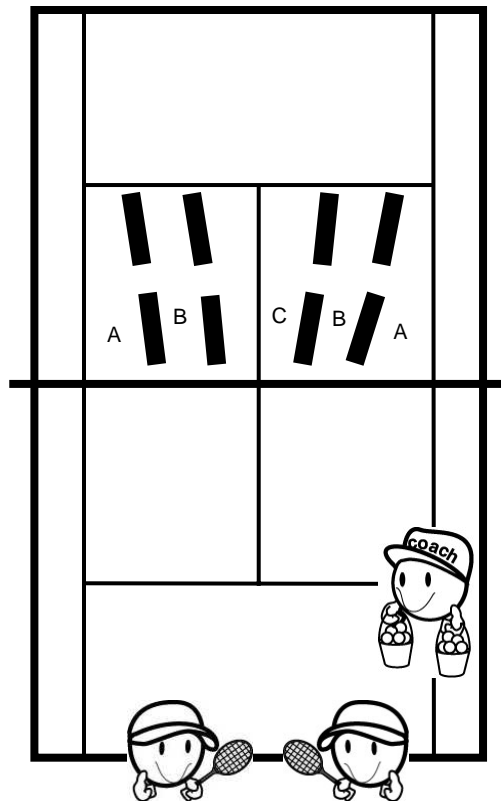
President, Oncourt Offcourt, Ltd.

About the Author

Joe Dinoffer has had an extensive "world class" career in the tennis industry, having conducted clinics and exhibitions in over 50 countries, personally logging over 30,000 hours of instruction in English, Spanish, and German. He is a USPTA and PTR Master Professional, a distinction that has been awarded to only a handful of tennis professionals in the world. He is also the founder and president of Oncourt Offcourt, Ltd., a company exclusively serving the needs of tennis, fitness, and physical education coaches with innovative training aids and educational tools.

Joe is the author and editor of 9 books, 18 DVDs and hundreds of magazine articles, having written numerous articles for *Tennis Tennis Life*, and *Racquet Sports Industry Magazine*. He has also appeared numerous times on television on The Tennis Channel in the United States.

#1 Serving ABC's



SERVING DRILLS: This pattern effectively divides the service boxes into thirds for a variety of drills.

Variation #1: Players call out ahead of serving A (alley), B (at the body) and C (center).

Purpose: To decide direction ahead of serving.

Variation #2: Players pair up and call out "A, B, or C" for their partner after the ball is tossed.

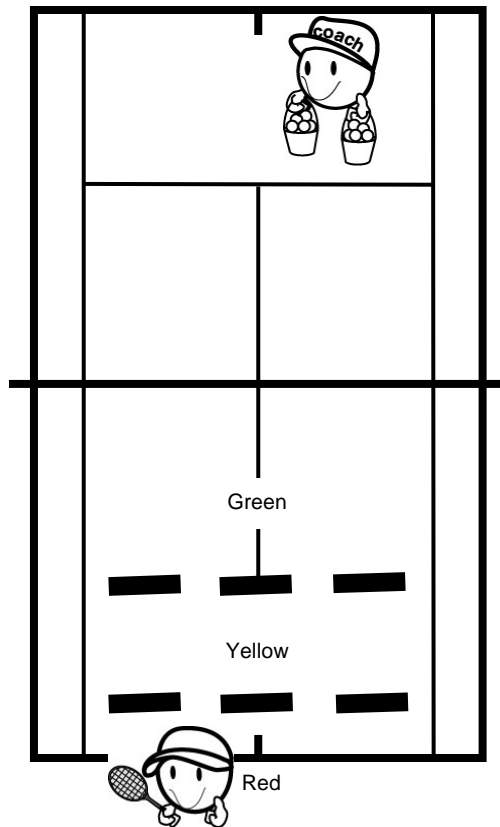
Purpose: Helps players better disguise the direction of their serves.

Variation #3: Same as #2 except for advanced players, call "flat, slice, or topspin" plus A, B, C.

Purpose: Pete Sampras has been called one of the best servers in the history of tennis. His secret? Great disguise.

Tips: Even at beginning levels these are great exercises. For beginners, however, move them forwards to the mid-court area.

#2 Approach – Yes or No



APPROACH DRILLS: This pattern works well for singles or doubles and all levels of play.

Variation #1: Coach feeds balls of varying depth. Player returns balls calling out the color of the section of the court where they are standing when they contact the ball.

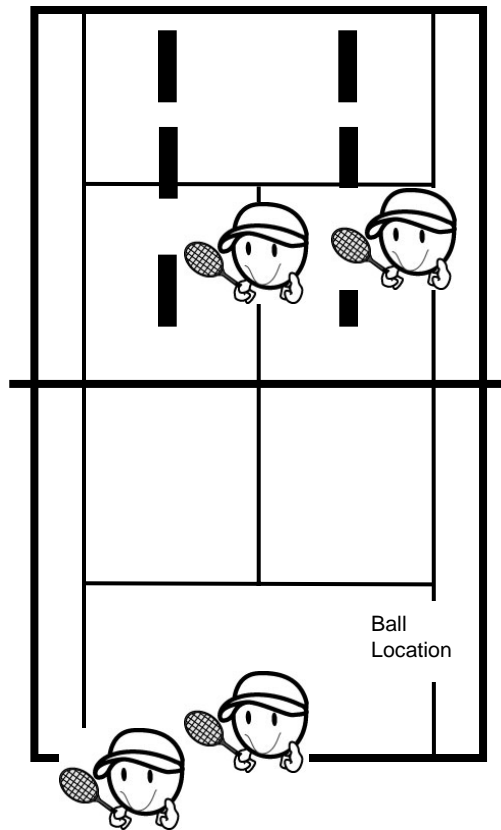
Purpose: Helps players identify court zones.

Variation #2: Similar to #1 but points are played out. Player goes to net from green zone, and makes decision in the yellow zone. From the red zone he or she stays back on the baseline.

Purpose: Helps players make early decisions and have a purpose behind every shot, particularly knowing when they should or should not approach the net.

Tips: Have advanced players call out the color before the ball even lands on their side of the net.

#3 Doubles Thirds



DOUBLES DRILLS: Many say the doubles court should always be covered in thirds. These drills help players better understand court positions and their responsibilities.

Variation #1: The baseline team feeds the first ball from the corner. The net players shift to cover the angles and points are played to 15 points.

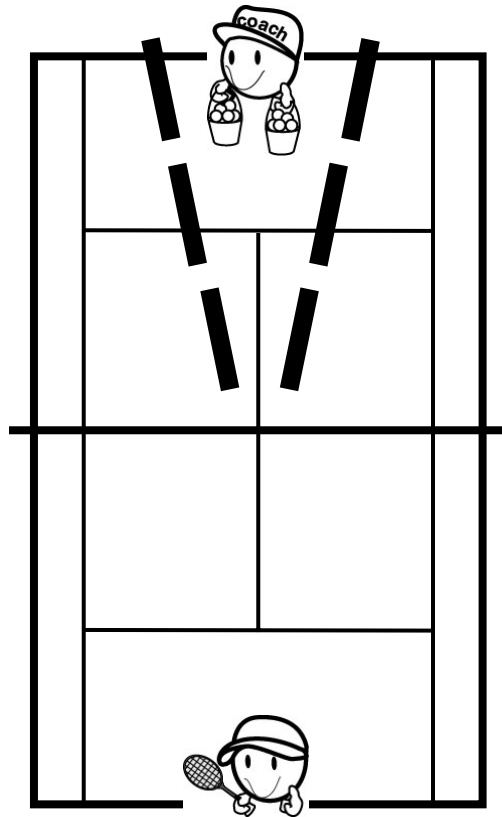
Purpose: Helps players shift as a team.

Variation #2: The volley team feeds ball the anywhere on the baseline and moves to cover the correct angles. Play games to 15 or 21 points.

Purpose: Helps players communicate as a team.

Tips: The key to these drills working for all levels of play is to make sure the teams are shifting and in position before the opponents make contact with the ball. Try having the net players both call out "ready" to make sure they are.

#4 Out of the Middle



SINGLES DRILLS: This pattern uses lines to clearly identify the middle of the court.

Variation #1: The coach feeds the balls randomly and the player can hit only forehands crosscourt.

Purpose: For players to develop strengths.

Variation #2: Players call out down the line or crosscourt before hitting.

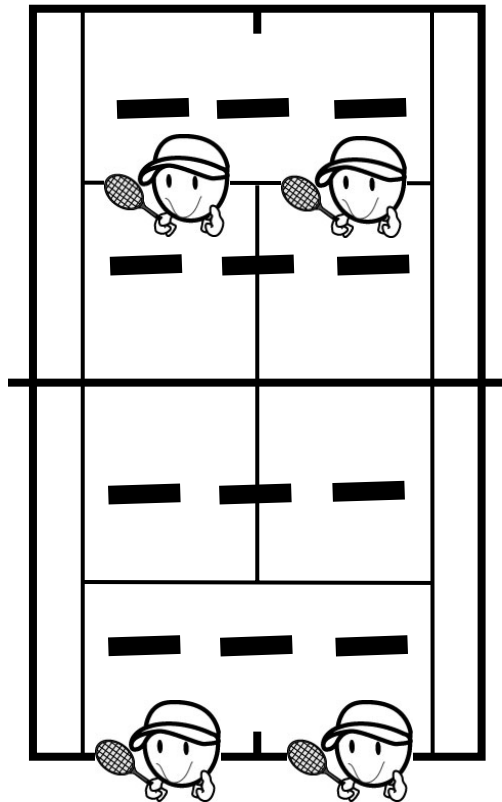
Purpose: Helps players make clear decisions and direct the ball out of the middle area.

Variation #3: Now the coach call out where he or she wants the player to hit the shots.

Purpose: Helps players develop disguise on their groundstrokes since they won't know in advance where to hit each ball.

Tips: Sometimes it is helpful to hit down the middle – another way to use this pattern.

#5 Parallel Doubles



DOUBLES DRILLS: This pattern clearly defines court positions for doubles teams.

Variation #1: Start both teams on the baseline. Start points with bounce-hit or serving. When hitting, teams must both be in the same section of the court or they immediately lose the point.

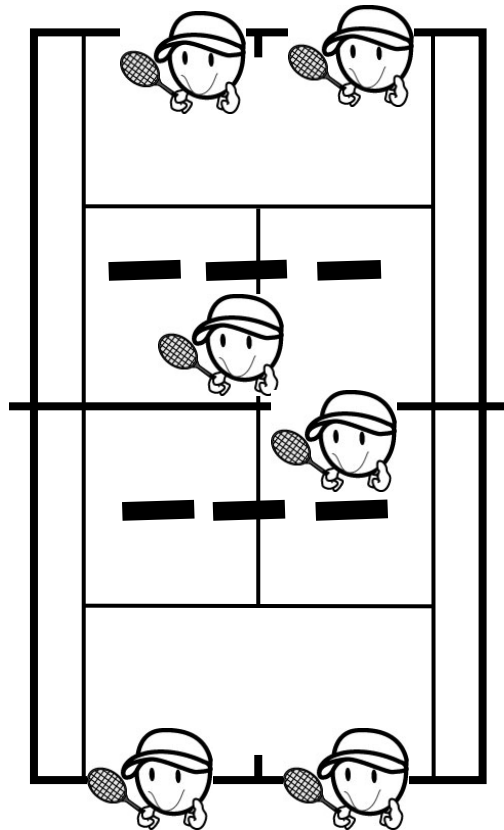
Purpose: Communicate and move as a team.

Variation #2: Same as above but the team that wins the point moves forwards one section of the court to begin the next point. If they are all the way back and lose, they stay on the baseline. And, if they are already at the net and win, they remain.

Purpose: Communicate and move as a team.

Tips: The key is for the teams to move quickly as a team and to be very proactive.

#6 Monkey in the Middle



TEAMWORK DRILLS: This is a specific six-player drill formation with many possible variations.

Variation #1: Points start with a bounce-hit from the baseline. Volleyers must stay in the front and the baseliners in the back. Volleyers are free to poach as much as they want to put pressure on the baseliners and win points. For advanced players, add the rule that if a player hits another with the ball, they win five points! But, for safety reasons, players can only be hit below the knees.

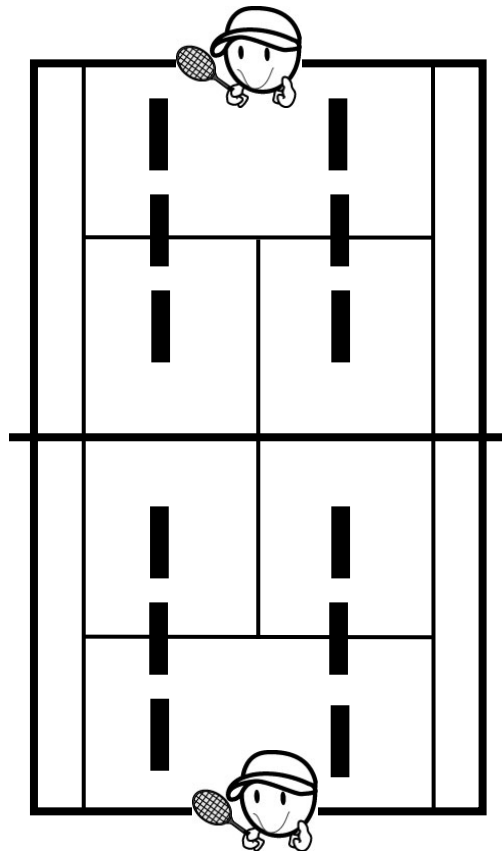
Purpose: Helps players more aggressively poach.

Variation #2: Same as above except the volleyers do not have racquets. They win points for their team by catching the ball out of the air.

Purpose: Increases player movement at the net.

Tips: If play gets too wild in #1, stand the players between the service line and temporary lines.

#7 Inside Outside



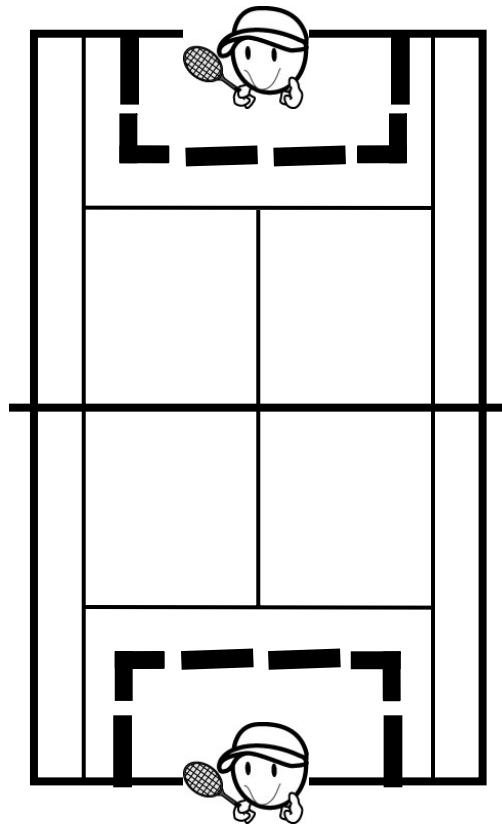
SINGLES DRILLS: This pattern identifies inside and outside balls. Players should hit outside balls crosscourt, and inside balls in either direction.

Variation #1: One possible game is cooperative with players scoring as a team. They get two points for balls in the outside area and one point down the middle. This drill is great for team workouts as many pairs can compete on several courts at the same time. Either give them a two-minute time limit to see how many points each team can accumulate or see which team can reach 50 points first.

Purpose: Helps players work cooperatively on control and direction at the same time.

Tips: There are many other variations with this pattern, both cooperative and competitive. You can even assign one player to hit down the middle and the other to only hit to the outside.

#8 Deep and Deeper



SINGLES DRILLS: This pattern uses lines to clearly identify the deep middle of the court.

Variation #1: For a cooperative game, have the players score three points for all balls landing in the deep area and one point for all other balls landing in the court.

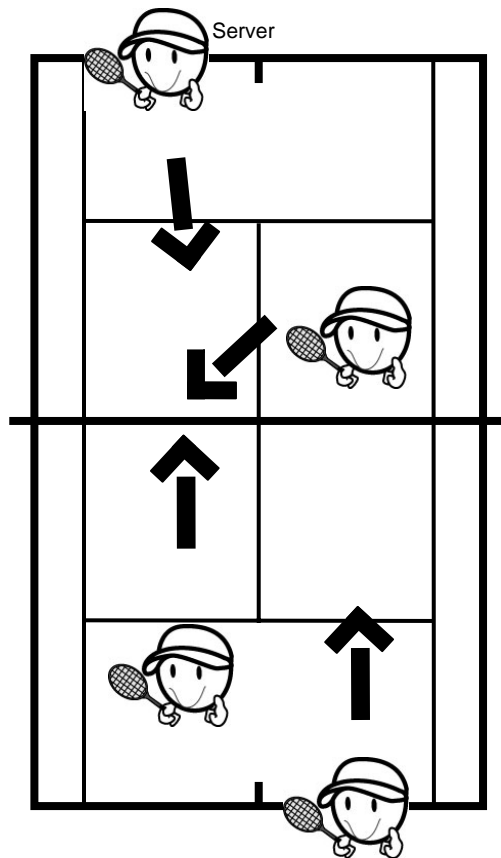
Purpose: To focus players on depth and control.

Variation #2: In this competitive variation, play begins with a serve and the first player to hit into the back area immediately wins the point.

Purpose: Helps players connect hitting deep down the middle with winning.

Tips: Remember to adjust the size of the deep area to challenge the level of play. And, in the case of two players of uneven ability, adjust the size of the target to challenge both players relative to their skill.

#9 Movement Pointers



MOVEMENT DRILLS: This pattern uses lines to guide correct movement.

Variation #1: This diagram covers doubles basics. To add a little extra focus, instruct the baseline players to split step in front of the arrow in front of them. The volleyers, on the other hand, will only move forwards if the situation allows.

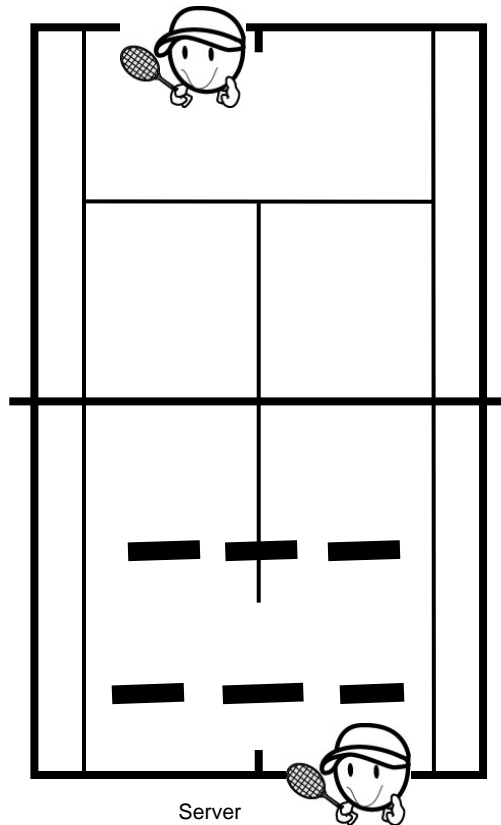
Purpose: To help beginners learn doubles.

Variation #2: The variations for using lines and corners as arrows are virtually endless. Just think of a situation in tennis and you can use them. Be creative and have fun!

Purpose: To help players better visualize movement goals in specific situations.

Tips: Even at beginning levels these are great exercises. For beginners, however, start them off in the mid-court area to encourage more success.

#10 Serve and Volley



SERVE-AND-VOLLEY DRILLS: This pattern works well for both singles and doubles.

Variation #1: Two players cooperatively work on a five-ball sequence: Serve, return, first volley, return, and second volley.

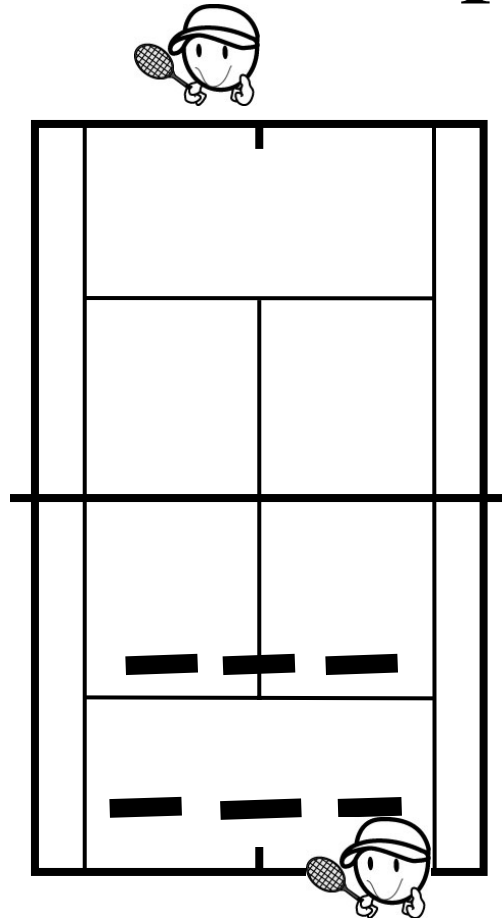
Purpose: The purpose of the lines is to guide the server to move in sequentially instead of rushing forwards and crashing into the net.

Variation #2: Similar to #1 but points are played out competitively. The server must play the first ball after the serve in the middle area and all balls thereafter in the front area. Receivers may not lob.

Purpose: To help servers gain confidence to come to the net behind their serves.

Tips: Lines in this pattern can dramatically help players serve-and-volley, much better than verbal instructions.

#11 Chip and Charge



CHIP-AND-CHARGE DRILLS: This pattern works well for both singles and doubles.

Variation #1: Two players cooperatively work on a four-ball sequence: Serve, chip return, ground-stroke, and finishing volley from the receiver. Have the server remain on the baseline.

Purpose: The lines guide the receiver to move in sequentially instead of rushing forwards too fast.

Variation #2: Now play points out competitively. The receiver must play the return inside the first line and the point-finishing volley inside the second line close to the net. The server may not lob the return of the chip return of serve.

Purpose: Helps receivers gain confidence to come to the net behind their returns.

Tips: The key is for the receiver to split-step for the return in front of the line before the serve.