

INTRODUCTION

The Tac-Tic Elbow Trainer functions well as a kinesthetic guide by using auditory bio-feedback to help the user develop a desired motor skill. Simply put, if the Elbow Trainer clicks at the right moment, the right technique is in place. Below you will find guidelines to find those “right moments” to get you on track to better tennis. Of course, as you use the Elbow Trainer, you will undoubtedly adjust some of these checkpoints to suit each student’s needs and also combine them with your own understanding of tennis technique. Remember that there is no single “right way” to hit a tennis ball, as is demonstrated by the many subtle differences among the world’s top players. To use, simply place the device over your hitting elbow so the Tac Tic insert is midway over the elbow bone and straight up the back of the arm.

Ready Position on the baseline

Generally, the best players wait at the baseline with a forehand grip. In this case the Elbow Trainer is in the bent or “clicked” position.



Forehand groundstrokes

The action of the elbow for topspin forehand groundstrokes can vary slightly depending on the grip and swing style. Since the most common grip for competitive junior players is the semi-western or eastern, here is our simple guideline: Although the arm will extend and straighten into the swing, do not let it straighten completely. Therefore the Elbow Trainer will not “click” at all during the forehand groundstroke.



Two-handed backhand topspin groundstrokes

There are several styles of two-handed backhands. Here we will give the guideline for perhaps the most common; namely, when the non-dominant hand takes over and becomes the dominant hand for the two-hander. For example, if you play right-handed, your left hand would become the dominant hand for the two-handed topspin groundstroke. In this case, the Elbow Trainer will not “click” at all during the swing, similar to the topspin forehand groundstroke above.

One-handed backhand slice or backspin groundstrokes

On the one-handed slice backhand, we’ve noticed that as a player becomes more advanced, the Elbow trainer will remain “clicked” into the bent position as it is taken back and then remains in that position through the rest of the stroke. Yes, the arm will extend at contact but it will not overextend and straighten. If it straightens too much, the Elbow Trainer will “unclick” straight and indicate that you have over-extended.



One-handed backhand topspin groundstroke

Again, there are several styles for the one-handed topspin backhand. Assuming you are hitting it with an Eastern backhand grip and fairly heavy topspin, here is what should happen with the Elbow Trainer. From the bent or “clicked” position in the ready position, the Elbow Trainer should “unclick” just *after* you contact the ball and extend the hitting arm. The key is making sure the Elbow Trainer (and therefore the elbow) doesn’t straighten too early.



Ready Position at the net

With the ready position at the net, assuming you have a continental grip, the elbow and therefore the Elbow Trainer should be in the “clicked” or slightly bent position. Remember that the purpose of a consistent ready position at the net is to be able to get prepared quickly for any type of volley.

Forehand volley

The checkpoints for the volleys using the Elbow Trainer are rather simple. Since the Elbow Trainer should begin bent or “clicked” in the ready position, you want to keep it in approximately that same bent position or “clicked” position throughout the entire forehand volley. If you incorrectly straighten the arm to meet the ball too far out in front, the Elbow Trainer will tell you by “unclicking”. If you hear it “unclick”, simply make a conscious effort to move closer to the ball and maintain a more compact and minimal swing.



Backhand Volley

The checkpoints for the backhand volley using the Elbow Trainer are fairly simple. As mentioned above, the Elbow Trainer should begin “clicked” in the ready position. Keep it slightly bent at contact, but if you are volleying a relatively slow ball, you will need more of a swing to generate enough power. In this situation, you want to extend the arm so the Elbow Trainer “unclicks” just after contact. If you straighten the arm and the Elbow Trainer “unclicks” into the straight position before contact, you will probably experience a loss of power.



Overhead

The Elbow Trainer and the overhead are an interesting combination.

Ideally you will start in the volley ready position with the elbow comfortably bent as explained earlier.

If you hit an overhead with solid mechanics, you will have an abbreviated backswing with the racquet face closed during the preparation phase of the swing and the Elbow Trainer will remain bent.

As the racquet drops before extending, it will still remain bent. Then, as you extend upwards and make contact

with the ball, you should hear the Elbow Trainer “unclick” during that extension. Finally, after you hit your overhead, you should hear it “click”

once again as your elbow bends during the release phase of the stroke. This release phase is similar

on the both the overhead and the serve.

serve.





Serve

The Elbow Trainer is just terrific for helping players gain a better feel for the serve. There are many ways to prepare and take the racquet back on the serve, as is evidenced by Roger Federer (neutral elbow with straight Elbow Trainer to start), Maria Sharapova (cocked elbow to start), and Andy Roddick (overbent elbow to start). In this explanation, we are assuming you serve with a continental grip. Although these three players begin differently, they all have similar motions when the racquet sets up to hit the ball and then extends upwards to contact. In the preparation phase of the swing, the racquet face will be closed and the Elbow Trainer will be straight or “unclicked”. As the racquet drops before extending, it should “click” as your elbow flexes back while your racquet head drops behind you. Then, as you extend upwards to reach for the ball, you should hear the Elbow Trainer “unclick” during that extension as you make contact with the serve. Finally, as you contact the ball at full extension and relax to complete your follow-through, you should hear it “click” once again as your Elbow bends in the release phase of the swing, as it does in tennis on both the serve and the overhead.