

# Think Different, Think Padel.

*it's not a game of power,  
it's a game of strategy.*



THE PADEL  
MENTOR

QUAD

## INDEX



I always knew my real passion was coaching, so I gave up my dream of becoming a full-time athlete to focus on helping others make their way to the top.

As a Padel player, I competed in World Padel Tour tournaments and played on the Portuguese National Team, where I was fortunate to always be around great coaches who developed my technical and tactical skills.

I had the opportunity to be Head Coach of the UAE National Team in the 2022 Season and I am Head Coach at one of the best club facilities based in Dubai, but life can be tricky sometimes.

I recently discovered I have Crohn's disease, which took me away from the court for several months, and so my motivation was writing a book, to keep teaching without being physically on the court. Now that I am back on track on the court, I hope you enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

I am sure it will make you Think Different and Play Great Padel!

This book is dedicated to my mum, who was always a warrior of faith and determination, an example I will carry forever in my heart.

### The Author

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sebastião Mendonça". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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A photograph of a Padel court with a blue surface. In the foreground, a player in a white shirt is out of focus, holding a racket. In the background, another player in a striped shirt is in a ready stance, holding a racket and a ball. The court is enclosed by a glass and metal fence. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# Basic Tactical Concepts

The fundamentals of becoming a good tactical player

This chapter includes a presentation of a Padel Court, referring where and how to play to be successful, the scoreboard so that you understand the points in a Padel game. It also explains where you should position yourself and with your partner and its consequences: wrong and right positioning. You can learn about the different ways to hit the ball and the famous “traffic light system” in Padel.



# Dimensions of the Court

The court measures 20 meters (65.7 ft) in a straight line and 22.36 meters (73.3 ft) diagonally, therefore, the distance when playing crosscourt is higher.



You have a better chance of hitting the ball inside the court when playing crosscourt, rather than playing long.



The net measures 88 cm (34.6 in) in the center and 92 cm (36.2 in) at the ends.



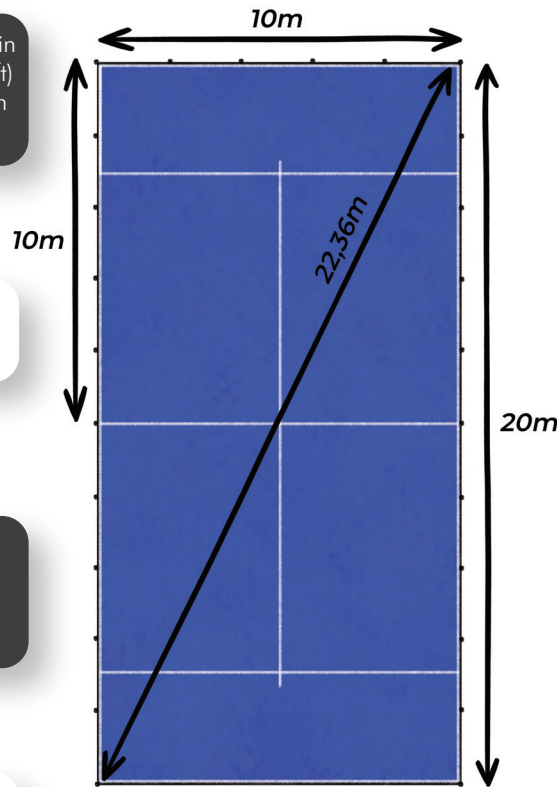
You have a better chance for the ball to cross the net when playing through the middle of the court.



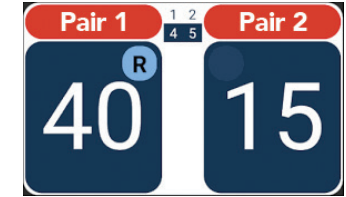
There are 2 types of main materials surrounding a Padel court: GLASS and FENCE.



The glass will always give a predictable bounce, while the fence provides an unpredictable bounce, making it harder for your opponents to execute their next shot.



# Scoring Board



0 points = 0

1 point = 15

2 points = 30

3 points = 40

Tied score = 15 All, 30 All

40-40 = Deuce

Server wins deuce point = Advantage to the serve

Receiver wins deuce point = Advantage to the response

- Four points win a game (1-0), six games win a set (6-0). If there is a tie (6-6), the players have to play a Tie-break.
- Tie-break points are (0), (1), (2), (3), etc. The tie-break will be won by the first to reach 7 points, with a difference of 2 points.
- Two or three sets win a match (2 sets to 0). If, there is a tie regarding the sets (1-1), it can be played a third set or a Super Tie-break. Super Tie-break is just like any other tie-breaker, but played to 10 points.

## Types of Shots

In Padel, you can consider 2 types of shots: Basic and Advanced. Basic shots are the most executed shots while playing a match, and studies show that you hit about 80% of these shots during a match; on the other hand, you only hit 20% of Advanced shots, depending on your level. What we can conclude is that perfecting the basic techniques of Padel is fundamental to have a better chance of winning the point.

### Basic Shots

- Forehand
- Backhand
- FH Glass
- BH Glass
- Side Glass
- Lob
- Volleys
- Bandeja

### Advanced Shots

- Double Glasses
- Chiquita
- Bajada de Pared
- Vibora
- Smash
- Smash to the Fence
- Play Against the Backwall
- Drop-Shot



## Levels

**Beginner level** - The player already has a perception of the most critical shots in a match. However, he still lacks control and power. For example, players tend to avoid backhand shots at all costs because they have a higher degree of difficulty. In addition, players at this level struggle to control volleys.

**Medium/advanced level** - The player is capable of very good forehands and net shots, achieving reasonable control and power, as well as versatility with slices, topspin and flat shots. Similarly, the player has already mastered the basics of a backhand shot with few glitches.

## Positioning



Like in most racket sports, Padel has an ideal generic position on the defense and attack.

In the **defense area**, players should be 1 meter (3.2 ft) behind the line and in between the intersections of the side glasses and the first and second back glasses. This position makes it easier for you to defend, because you are far enough from the net to afford extra time to prepare your next shots, but you are not too close to the glass to limit the preparation of your shots. Plus, you are able to better control the bounce after the ball hits the glass.

In the **attacking area**, you should always be in between the second fence and closer to the middle. It's a position in which you are neither too far from the net, where you always receive balls on your feet, nor too close to the net, where the ball can always pass over your head.



In Padel, there are 3 main game zones:

**The Defense Zone**, **The Transition Zone** and **The Attacking Zone**.

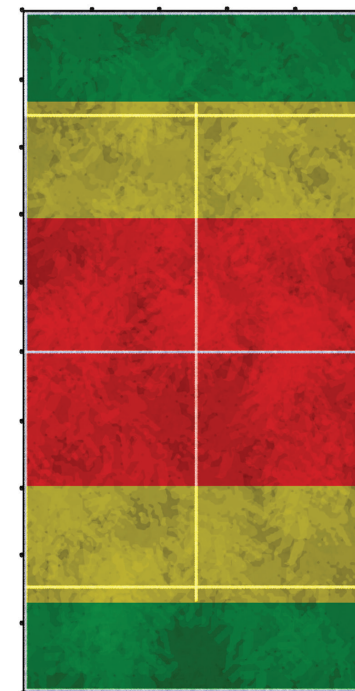
**The Defense Zone:** Is between the service line and the back wall, approximately **75 cm** (29.5 in) behind the line. It's your starting position when you're responding. During the game, you should always try to return to this position while defending. In this position, you can help yourself with the glass, especially when the opponent's ball goes deep on the court. It also gives you enough time to prepare for the next shot if the opponent's ball is not going to reach the glass.

**The Transition Zone:** Initiation/Medium level players who stay long periods in this zone, usually lose the point.

**The Attacking Zone:** It's the zone between **3 m** (9.8 ft) to **1.5 meter** (4.9 ft) from the net. Usually, players don't let the ball bounce while in this position.

**Why do players want to be in this zone most of the time?**

As you're improving as a player and become more efficient with your attacking shots, such as volleys, this is the position you want, removing time for your opponents to prepare their shots and making them struggle to perform without missing. Also, the closer you are to the net, the lower the probability of missing your own shots in the net.





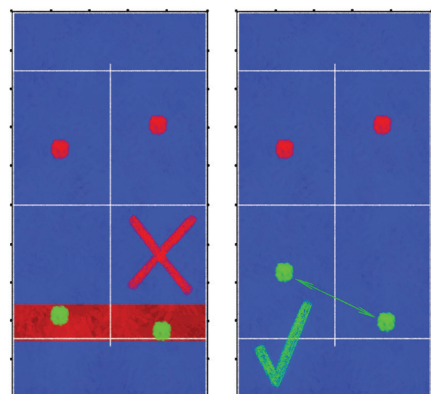
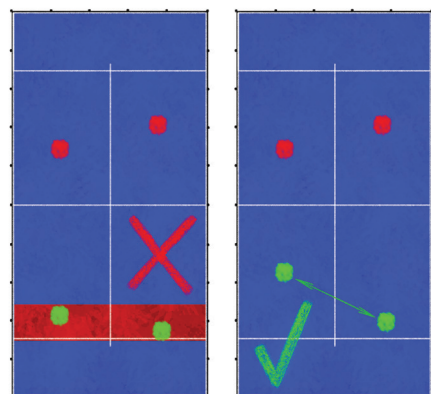
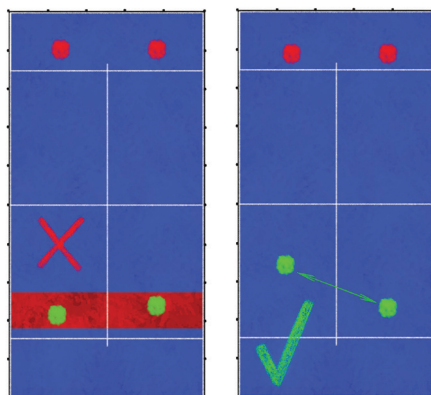
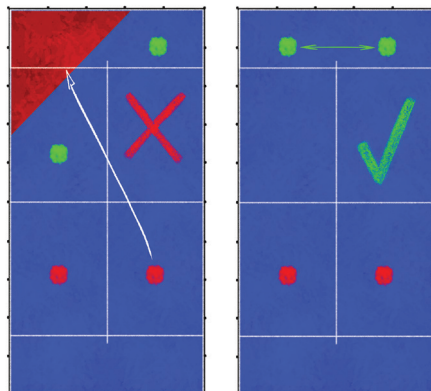
## Positioning with your partner

In Padel, you should always be at the same level of positioning as your partner, this avoids opening unwanted spaces in the middle. The players move back and forth between the defensive and attacking zone as a unit. However, when your level starts to improve there are a few important variations to consider.

### Variations

When both of you are in the attacking zone, if you see your partner going backwards for the bandeja, don't go backwards with him. The goal of this shot is to maintain the net, so if you already know that your partner is coming back to the net, don't go backwards and then forward again with him. It saves energy and, after the shot, it is easier for you to cover the net, instead of having to rush back to it unbalanced.

When both of you are in the defense zone and your partner receives a drop shot or a shot to the fence, don't run with him forward, as he probably has to perform a difficult shot and will leave the ball easy for your opponent to execute the next shot. Instead, try to stay back and defend the whole court in the back.



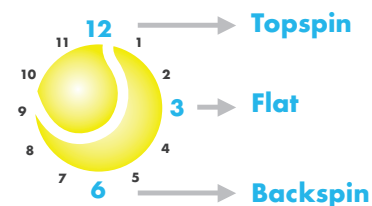
## Spins

There are different ways to hit the ball; your point of impact and shot design determines the type of spin you input on the ball.

**Flat** - This is the most common spin on the ball. The point of impact requires less precision than the other spins, so it is perfect for "stressful" situations. You should try to apply this spin whenever: you're defending, you are in the transition zone, or your opponent just returned an unexpected shot.

**Backspin** - When you're already a medium-level player, you probably have to start applying spin on your shots to improve your game. Backspin is usually a good option on volleys, making the ball bounce lower, with less probability of jumping high from the glass.

**Topspin** - For advanced players, topspin plays a significant role when smashing the ball outside the court; it needs to be extremely precise and should only be used by players with a vast portfolio of shots and well-performed executions.



### Points of impact on the ball

The ball needs to be interpreted as a clock in order to execute different spins on the ball.



# The "Traffic Light System"



## DEFENSE

### Red Zone

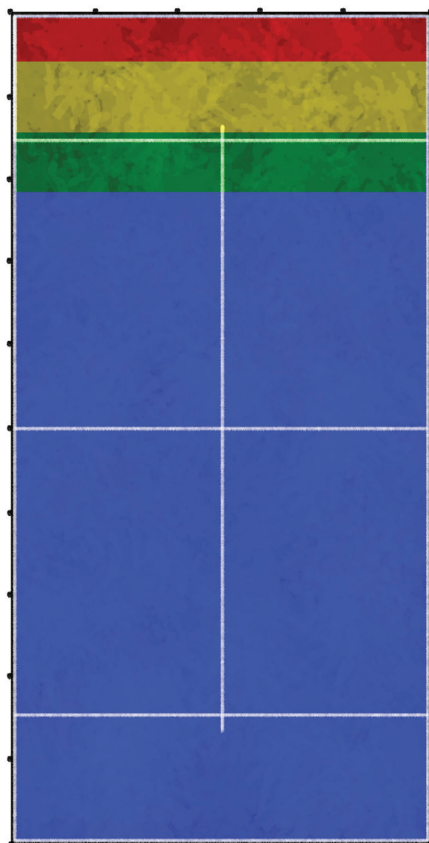
It goes from the back wall to 1 meter (3.2 ft) in front. You do not want to be in this zone, because it is a difficult defensive position and you will most likely lose the point. Use only defensive blows, especially lobs or chiquitas to have time to regain your position.

### Yellow Zone

It goes from the red sub-zone to a little before the service line (half a meter (1.6 ft) before approx.). Still not the ideal place to defend, but it is somewhat better than the previous one. The player who is at the bottom of the court may use defensive and offensive shots while waiting for the return.

### Green Zone

It ranges approximately from the yellow zone to 1 meter (3.2 ft) in front of the service line. Defense from here is easier. The blows you use can be more offensive, and you can even think about winning the net against your rivals, counterattacking with more angled shots while looking to move to an attacking position.



## ATTACK

### Red Zone

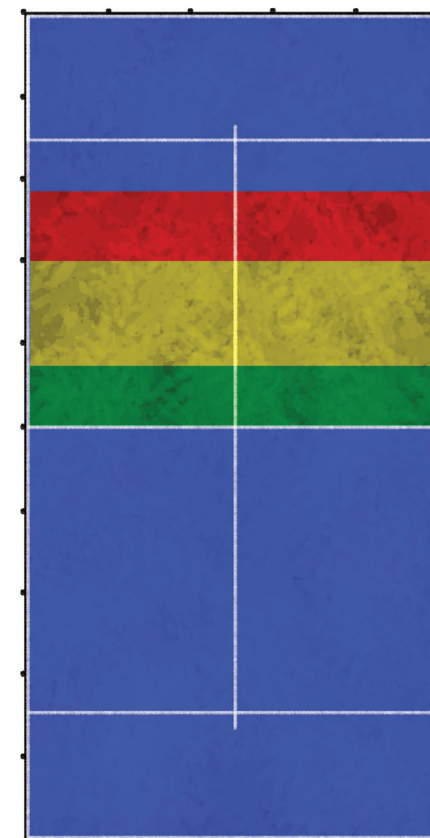
It goes from the defense green zone to 2 meters (6.5 ft) in front of the net. Here, the most common outcome is that your attack does not cause damage to the opponent. That is why you should execute the hits conservatively, looking more for direction (ball well placed) than speed.

### Yellow Zone

It goes from the red zone to 2 meters (6.5 ft) toward the net. Bandejas, faster volleys and power shots are used, but still without too much risk, because you are not in the green zone yet, where you can be more aggressive and try to define the point.

### Green Zone

It is approximately 1 meter and a half (4.9 ft) from the net. This is where you can take more risks and strive to define the point, since the distance from the net is shorter. Shots can take more speed and spin in order to win points.







# Tactical Concepts

The fundamentals of becoming a good tactical player

On this chapter you can find all the shots used in a Padel game, it details what, where, why and when to use the shots, combining tricks and tips when applying them on a game. Some of the most interesting aspects mentioned are the tips to remember during the game and shots combinations that players use while playing, according to their level.





## Serve

Serving is the only time when **you are in full control of your shot**, so you should take advantage of it. You need to balance speed with placement of the shot, so that your opponent struggles to make the response and you gain enough time to reach the net in a balanced position. A great way to use variations in your serve is to add spins, such as the backspin.

### Serve Placement

**Deep serve on the glass** - Forces the opponent to use the side glass.

**Serve to the line** - If you serve to the middle, you can create an opening in the corner to where you can volley. This serve will also limit your opponent's ability to generate an angle.

**Serve to the body** - To catch your opponent off guard and make him use an unnatural movement to hit the ball.

**Note:** Always try to serve from the center of your side. If you serve too close to your side glass, you have to run a longer distance to the net, and if you are too close to the middle of the court you have no angle to serve on the glass.



## TOP TIPS

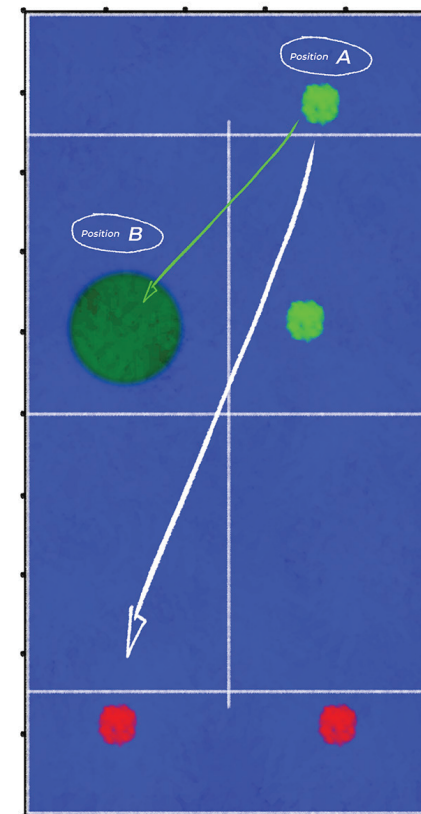
Always remember, after you serve, move forward into the attacking zone. The speed of the serve determines how fast you need to be to reach the net, so always take that into account. Staying in the defense zone unbalances your team, giving your opponents the opportunity to win the net. Also, remember to be conservative on your second serve, you should avoid double faults.

## Aussie Formation

In Padel, unlike most tennis doubles games, players tend to stick to their position instead of changing between the right and left side.

**Advantage** - Allows players to specialize in one side of the court and develop the characteristics needed for that specific position.

**Disadvantage** - Players tend to find it difficult to move to their position, from point A to point B.



## The Return

There are different goals when responding to a serve. Depending on the level you are playing and how difficult your situation is after the opponent's serve, you should always prioritize:

- 1 **Not missing the return**
- 2 **Not leaving the ball easy for your opponent**
- 3 **Make your opponent do a neutral shot**
- 4 **Counterattack with the return**



## Return Placement

**Don't miss the return** - At a beginner level, the only goal is not to miss the shot.

**Don't leave the ball easy for your opponent** - When you start having more control of your shots, try not to leave the ball in a comfortable position for your opponent. For example: respond to the player who just served, so you catch him in an unbalanced position.

**Make your opponent do a neutral shot** - When you're already a medium/high-level player, you can try to be more perfectionist with the return shots. For example: play to the body, lob to the line, or place the ball on the player's high backhand.

**Counterattack** - High-level players, especially with a second-serve response, try to take advantage of the return by performing high-quality lobs or chiquitas to win the net.



## Defensive Shot Variation

Chiquita

Lob

Play to the backhand volley

Play to the body

**All these shots can be defensive/counterattack.**

When defending, the player must combine different shots to achieve open spaces.

**A player that generates variations is a good defender.** If a player only hits the ball at the same repeated speed to the opponent's volley, the attackers start adapting to the speed of the ball, making it easier to develop more aggressive and controlled shots as the game progresses.

With different shots, you can make your opponent feels unbalanced, forcing them to **make mistakes at the net**. You also improve your chances of winning the net quicker as the point progresses.



## Chiquita

**What shot is this? Where should you aim?**  
It's when you successfully place the ball on your opponent's low volley, while defending.

**When should you use it?**

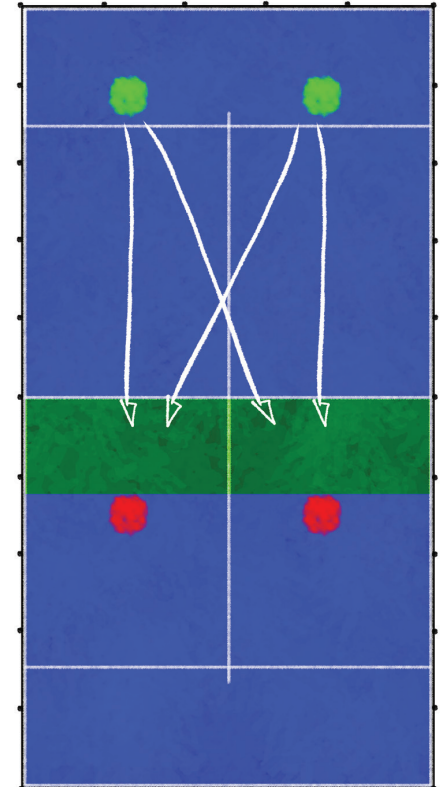
Whenever you have a ball bouncing from the glass at neutral speed, or if you have a good "hand feeling" you can do it without the glass after receiving an easy/neutral ball.

**Why should you use it?**

If it's successful, your opponent has to perform a shot at a **height lower than the net**, making it impossible to attack with speed, which gives you more time to prepare your next shot.

For beginners, it is advised to remain in the defensive zone and wait for the next shot to try to win the net.

**Medium to advanced players** can go forward into the transition zone to try to win the net in the next shot.







# Lob

## What shot is this?

It's when you try to place the ball over your opponent.

## When should you use this shot?

It would be better if you lob only when you have a comfortable ball. When players get a difficult shot and are under pressure, they tend to rush into making a poorly executed lob which can lead to an attack from their opponents.

## What is the purpose of a lob?

It's to push the opponents backward, so you win the attacking position and change the momentum of the point.

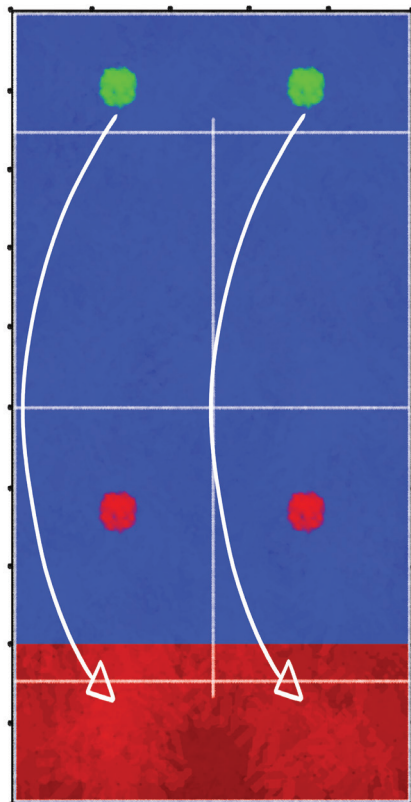
## Where should you aim?

At an initiation level, you should try to aim the ball to pass over the opponent's head.  
At a medium-high level, you can place the lob closer to the corners of the opponent's court.

## Tips

Aim for a high lob that will bounce less from the glass, avoiding a counterattack "Bajada de Pared\*."

\*Bajada de Pared is when your opponents attack the ball coming from the glass, usually after a lob.



# Types of Lobs

At a medium to high-level, you can use variation and sequences on your lob to receive a more comfortable ball.

**Fast Lob** - This lob is low and fast, robbing your opponent the time to prepare his shot.

**High Lob** - The height of this lob makes your opponent struggle with their perception of the ball. It is a lob most commonly used in outdoor matches.

## Directions

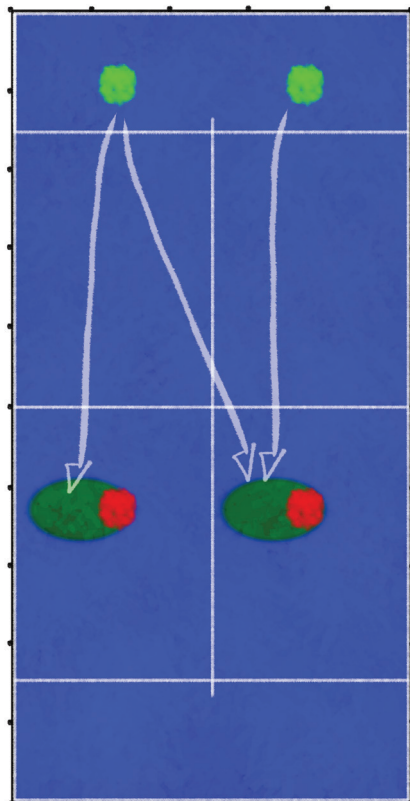
**Crosscourt** - The advantage here is that you have more distance for the ball to travel, granting you a smaller chance of missing. However, it also opens a wider angle in case your opponent intercepts it in the air.

**Middle** - It pushes your opponent backward and, even if they can intercept it with a bandeja, their corners are left open for your follow-up shot. It's considered a risky lob, because it can also leave you vulnerable to an attack. ("Bajada de Pared").

**Down the Line** - Usually used for faster lobs, but far riskier than the other directions.



## Play to the Backhand Volley



### What shot is this? Where do you aim?

It's when you place a neutral ball in your opponent's backhand volley. A neutral shot is a ball that you can safely control the direction and height of the ball.

### When should you use it?

Whenever you have a neutral shot in front of your body; when responding to your opponent's serve; or when there is a neutral shot coming from the glass and the trajectory is comfortable. For example: when the ball is bouncing from the glass into your forehand.

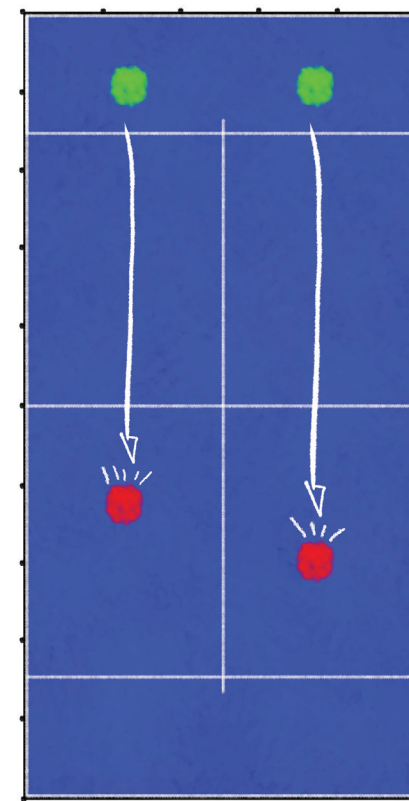
### Why should you use it?

For most players the backhand volley is an uncomfortable shot, consequently they will try to play a safe volley, giving you more time to prepare the next movement. For medium/advanced players, just placing the ball on your opponent's backhand is not sufficient, because at a higher level all players are comfortable with their backhand shot.

**Instead try to place the ball on their high backhand volley at neutral speed, it's a very hard shot to put power and precision into.**



## Play to your Opponent's Body



### What shot is this? Where do you aim?

It's when you play an aggressive shot to the opponent's body.

### When should you use it?

Whenever you have a ball in front of you that's either close to the line or in front of the line. Usually, execute it with your forehand shot, because players, in general, can execute this shot with more power, without losing control and precision.

### Why should you use it?

Because it takes time away from your opponent to execute their forehand or backhand volley. Most of the time, your opponent just tries to block the ball, reducing the speed, and giving you more time to execute your next shot.

Always be aware of your maximum power without losing precision, many players tend to overdo it, which results in missing the ball.







## Winning the Net

It's the ability to switch from a defensive position (on the back) to an offensive position (closer to the net).

★★★★★  
*Trying to lob the ball over your opponent is the easiest way to win the net.*

★★★★★  
*Passing the ball through the middle of your opponents.*

★★★  
*Chiquita and go forward to volley to push the players backwards.*

★★★  
*Lob and going forward to block the bandeja/vibora.*

## Volley

The volley is the main shot used to move the player out of his "comfort zone". Using variations, such as **Placement, Power/Cut and Deepness/Height**, can generate open spaces where you can win the point.

### Volley Tactical Placement

**Initiation** - The first goal of the volley is to be consistent since statistically you already have a higher probability of winning the point just by being closer to the net. The best option is to choose conservative placements of the ball, such as in the middle or to the opponent's feet.

**Medium to advance level** - At this level you can start taking more risks, depending on which area of the attacking zone you're in.

If you are in the **red attacking zone**, you should try to minimize the risks by playing the volley to the middle of the opponent's feet.

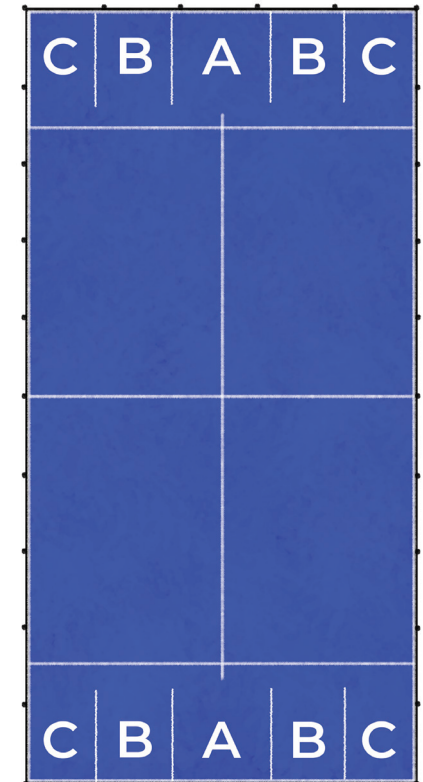
If you are in the **yellow & green attacking zone**, you can be more aggressive, by playing the ball to the corners of the opponent.

## You can divide the Direction of your volley into 3 different zones

**A** **Middle of the court**, whenever you want to move your opponent out of their comfort zone, the middle is always a great option, because it can create spaces on the corner for the attacking player to take advantage of.

**B** This is the **players' comfort zone**, percentage wise you shouldn't be playing to this area unless you have a green zone volley, where you can play fast on your opponents' feet. This is a great way to rob your opponent time to think about their next shot.

**C** **Corners**, when you want to be more aggressive and disrupt your opponent's defense or win the point, you should aim at the corner when you see it was left open/vulnerable.



### TOP TIPS

You should never go from Area C to the other Area C, as it can be counter-productive, because your net covering is not as efficient. You should avoid insisting on the Area B as the player will most likely counterattack with a lob eventually, since in that zone the player is in a balanced position.



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### First volley after the serve

The first volley after the serve is the most important one. Whenever you are serving and advance to the attacking zone, keep in mind that you have just tackled a big distance from point **A** to point **B**, so your volley is not as accurate as if you were standing still before performing the shot. Try to place the ball (with enough margin) in a zone that doesn't open up trajectories to lose the net or isn't a very risky shot, such as the middle (**zone A**) or to your opponent's feet (**zone B**), as described in the image.

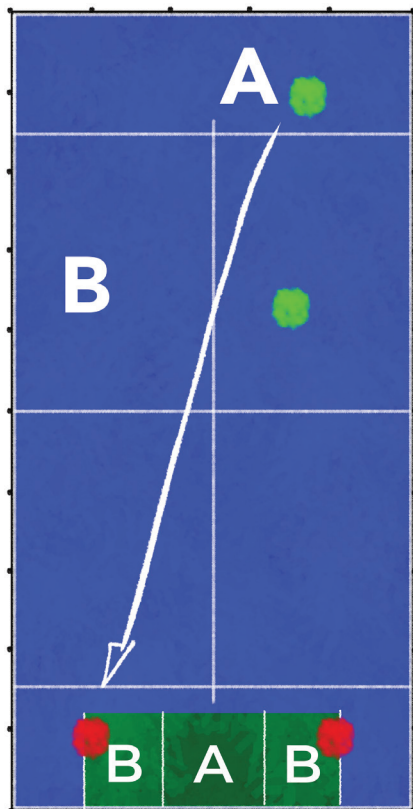


### Volley Tactical Power/Cut

**Initiation Level** - In order to stay consistent, limit your power in the shot.

**Medium to High-Level** - At this level you can start taking more risks, depending on which area of the attacking zone you're in. If you are in the red attacking zone, you should try to minimize the risks by applying less power and cut in the volley execution, making sure you minimize the risk of missing the volley.

If you are in the yellow/green zone you can be more aggressive by playing with more power or spin, depending on your objective and skills.



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### Volley Tactical Deepness and Height

#### Initiation Level

You should be more conservative with the deepness of the ball, aiming most of the times to the line and always giving a comfortable height to the ball to avoid missing on the net.

#### Medium to High-Level

At this level, you can start taking more risks, depending on which area of the attacking zone you're in.

If you are in the red attacking zone you should try to minimize the risk by applying less deepness and being more conservative with the height of the volley, making sure you reduce the risk of missing.



If you are in the **yellow/green zone** you can be **more aggressive** by:

- 1 - Trying to place the ball **before** the line whenever you want to play in the middle, to make your opponents hesitate between hitting the ball before or after the glass and to make them dislocate a bigger distance;
- 2 - Pushing the ball a bit deeper into your opponent's corner, forcing them to play a tricky shot with the double glass or side glass.



### Defending at the Net

Sometimes you are at the net (the attacking zone), but you are still defending! It sounds like a contradiction, but when your opponents are playing aggressive shots, your best strategy is to hold the net and reduce the margin of errors (Ex: Blocking).


**Blocking** - This is when you reduce the length of the movement of your volley and take advantage of the speed of your opponent's shot to push the ball to your opponent's court in a safe way.

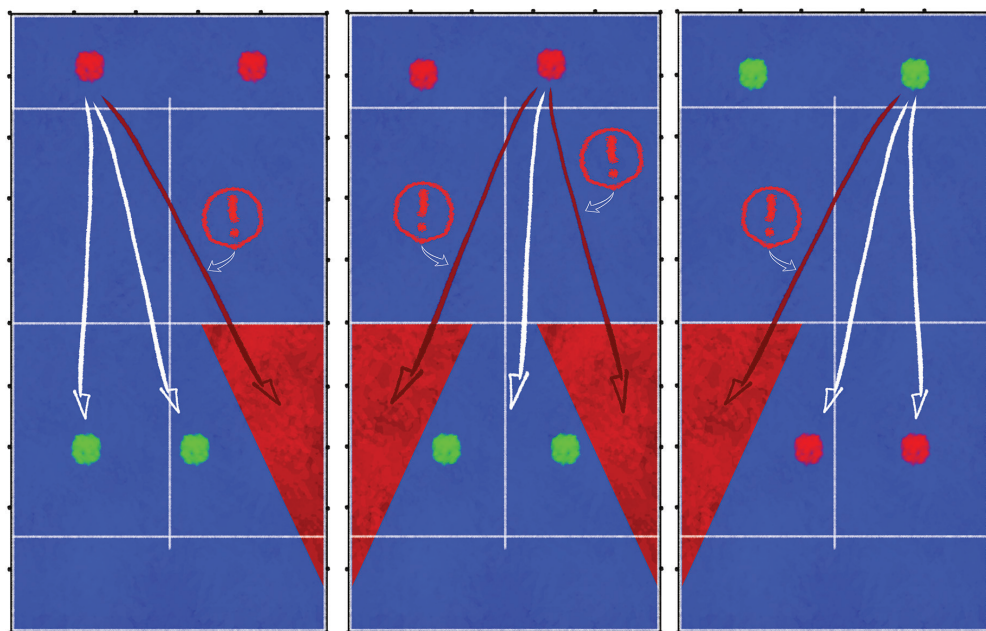


## Covering the Net

Winning the net is as important as keeping it. When you and your partner are misplaced at the net it is easier to leave open vulnerable spaces, resulting in your team losing the net more often. Here are some guidelines to help you maintain the attacking position:

The court has ten meters from one side to the other horizontally, while you and your partner in arms plus racket length can cover about eight meters, making it impossible to cover the entire court.

So, how can you optimize the way you secure the net? Simple! By always leaving your opponent the hardest trajectory to pass you through 



## Bandeja



Bandeja is a shot performed between the attacking and the intermediate zone. Players confuse the bandeja as an **aggressive shot, when in fact it's a defensive shot**. Players tend to play aggressive bandejas hoping to win the point, when the goal is just not to lose the net. It's one of the hardest movements to control, because the point of impact needs to be precise and the player has to perform the correct termination.

### How to be more consistent with your bandeja.

**Early preparation** - As soon as you see the opponent hitting the lob, the first thing you should do is put the racket close to your head and your elbow at the height of your shoulder, ending up with a 90-degree angle.

**Steps** - At the beginning of the preparation give large steps backward and when you are already close to the ball, start adjusting to the ball with small steps.

**Left hand in the air** - Always try to point at the ball with your left hand, so your eyes have a better perspective of when to make the point of impact.

**Be conservative** - Don't aim to the end part of the corner, try to always aim at your opponent's feet or the line.

**Crosscourt** - Playing the bandeja crosscourt gives extra space to put the ball inside the court. You have a higher probability of not missing. Plus, you might cause the opponent to struggle with the glasses if he lets the ball pass by him.

**Understand your position on the court** - Body awareness (where you are going to be at the moment of impact) helps you understand if it's the right decision to execute a bandeja or if you should just let the ball pass over you and lose the attacking zone.

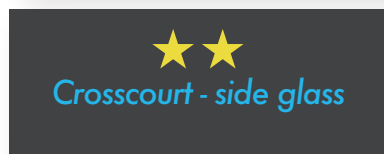
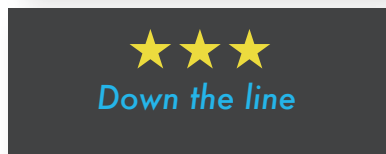


## TOP TIPS

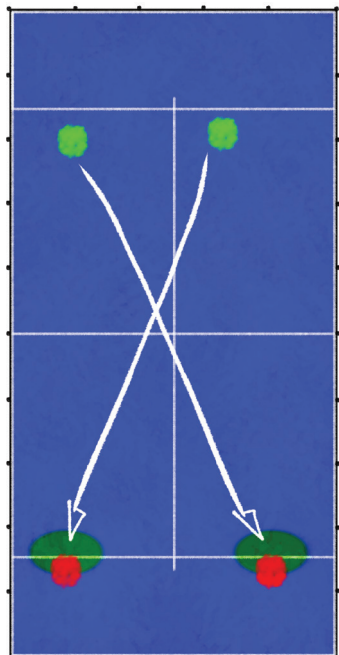
It's a very unique shot, there are no similarities with all other racket sports shots. Bandeja is a Spanish word for tray, it was named by players after seeing similarities between the shot preparation and a waiter carrying a tray above the head.

## Bandeja Placement

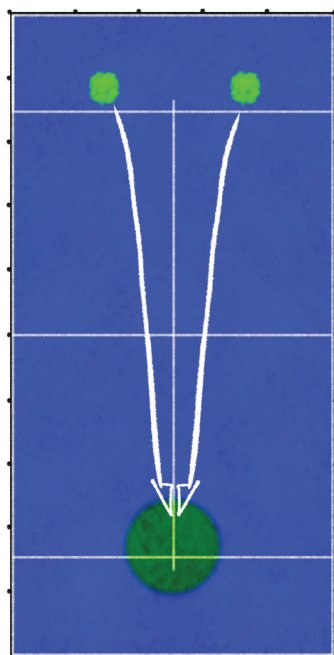
You can place the bandeja in several zones, depending on where your opponent is in the court and how far from the net you are when hitting the ball. The main 4 zones to place the bandeja are:



Crosscourt - Players Feet



In the Middle



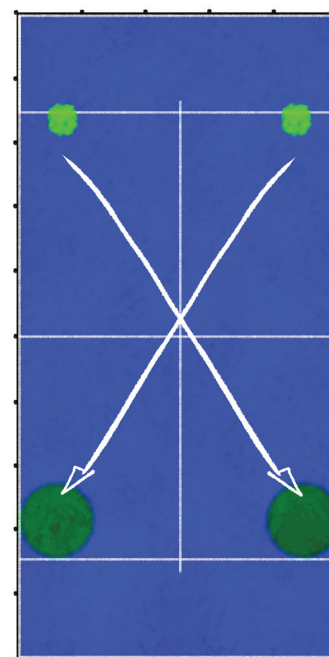
## Crosscourt - Side Glass/Fence Down the Line

### For a beginner level

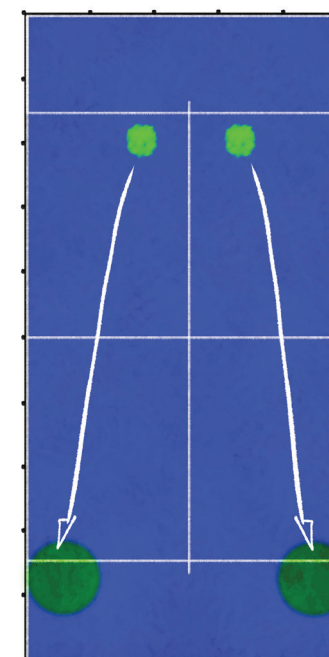
You can start by placing the shots with margin. That way you can improve your tactical performance and court awareness without getting frustrated with unforced errors.

**Medium/advanced player** - Should insist on becoming comfortable performing these trajectories and being tactically disciplined. It reduces the percentage of mistakes and you return to the net more comfortably.

Crosscourt - Side glass fence



Down the Line



### TOP TIPS

In these trajectories take into account the difficulty to perform each placement, depending on where you are at the moment of your shot, your bio-mechanics and the angles you give your opponent to win the net (passing shot). You can still perform the placement of the shots from the wrong zone, it's just harder and the probability of missing or leaving the ball easy for your opponent's counterattack is higher.



## Smash



### What shot is this? Where should you aim?

Smash is a definition shot, typically used by medium/advanced players. Where you aim depends on your level and how comfortable and precise you are executing the shot.

### Different Types of Smash

**“Winter Smash”** - The goal is to aim close to the rear glass of your opponent’s court and, because of the power and direction you used, the ball quickly bounces back to your side.

**4 meters smash** - When the ball is so high and close to the net that, by simply smashing it down at the beginning of your opponent’s court, it bounces high enough to go over the four-meter fence attached to the back glass.

This smash is very popular, because when you succeed in its execution, you immediately win the point.

**3 meters smash** - If you have a good smashing technique when applying top spin, this shot should be easy. With precision and topspin, you hit the ball towards the middle of the court, rebounding on the back glass and, with the help of the spin, the ball ends up outside of the court, passing over the 3 meters fence.

### When should you use this shot?

You should only use the smash when you’re balanced, in the green attacking zone, and receive a slow comfortable ball to execute the smash.

**Note:** If you are a beginner, using the smash is not recommended, as it’s a very complex movement. Most often you won’t impact the ball hard enough, so your opponents will reach the ball easily, giving them an opportunity to counterattack. Or you might miss the shot and lose the point, which is worse because you lose it when you were in a very comfortable situation.



### Why should you use it?

As your level progresses, winning the point by simply placing the ball correctly gets harder. Smashing allows you to end the point in a faster way, if your opponents leave the ball easy for you. It also opens up the possibility of “fake smashing”.

## Smash to the Fence

### What shot is this? Where should you aim? Why should you use it?

It uses the same technique as a smash, but its goal isn’t as aggressive as other types of smashes, being more similar in terms of intention to the bandeja. You aim for the fence or side glass and perform a smash with reduced power. What happens is that the ball will go around the court, bouncing from the side glass or fence and into the back glass. This gives you precious extra seconds to return to the net.

It is most commonly used by left-side players.

### When should you use this shot?

Whenever you are in the red attacking zone and receive a lob that is falling close to your fence, giving you the best angle to execute this shot.

My tip for beginners who want to start using this shot is to first try it with a flat effect, instead of topspin, and to aim for the side glass with a lot of margin.

If you’re at a more advanced level, feel free to use Topspin.



## TOP TIPS

“Fake Smashing”- The act of preparing the smash movement while watching to see if your opponents run forward. If they do, trick them by placing a very slow ball through their middle instead, so that it dies behind them.





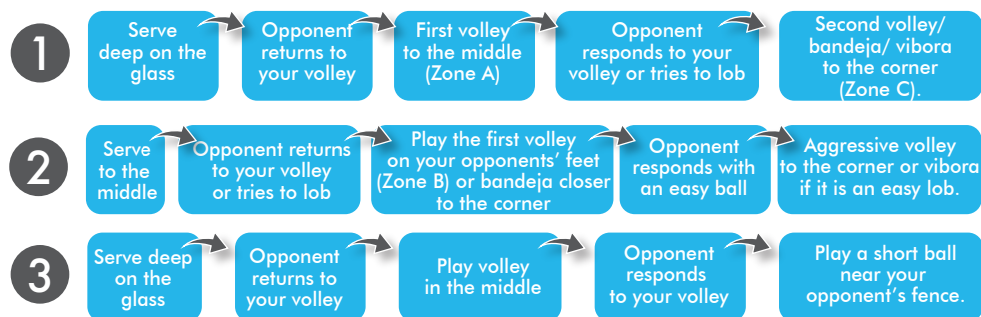
# Shot Combinations

*“Padel is like a chess match, you need to understand all the pieces in play and always think 3 steps ahead.”*

Whenever players go to a match, they should always think about the 3 shots rule to keep their heads organized, especially since they're not playing alone. Remember that this is a game of anticipation and agility, and if your ideas are already in order it becomes much easier to perform your shots. Always visualize them in your mind.

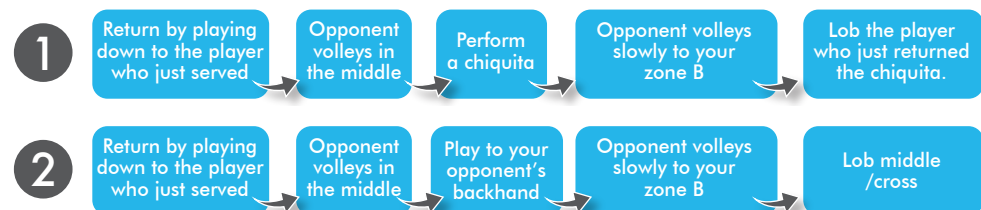
Below are general examples of shot combinations used by most players.

### If your team is serving:



**Note:** In order for these combinations to be successful, remember that you should play all these shots to the same opponent, to get the most benefit from moving the player into different positions on the court.

### If your team is responding:



There are a million possible combinations, pick your favorite ones, see if they take into account the level you are playing at and how well you can execute them, and talk to your partner about it.



# Game Day

This last chapter about the Game Day is very important because it lectures in strategies to play a game, the external factors which can influence your decisions during a match and how to start thinking in order to win games: consistency and communication are two of the most important concepts on Padel.



## Prepare your Material

The material you choose starts becoming more and more important the further you progress. **Selecting the right racket for you is always a tricky choice. It comes down to preferences and characteristics of each player inside the court.**

### Weight: Heavy (370-390 gr)

A heavier racket gives more power, but reduces your control. It is typically used by former tennis players, advanced players, or players who prioritize their aggressive shots.

### Light (350-370 gr)

A lighter racket will give you more control, but reduces the power of your shots. It's perfect for beginners who still can't control their shots or players that prioritize control and precision over power. It also enhances your reaction skills, since it's easier to move the racket from point A to point B.

### Usually, you can find rackets in 3 different shapes:

**Round shape** - Is characterized by having a sweet spot in the center of the Padel racket, which is larger than in other shapes. It is ideal for beginners.

**Teardrop shape** - Known as "balanced Padel rackets", they have as much power as control and tend to be the preference of most players.

The sweet spot is in the middle, but a bit smaller than a round-shaped racket. If you are already a medium-level to advanced player, you should try out this shape.

**Diamond shape** - It's the perfect shape for very aggressive players, who prioritize winner balls over control. This type of racket has a sweet spot closer to the top of the racket that helps you get an extra edge on your overhead shots.



## TOP TIPS

Sweet Spot in Padel rackets - The Sweet Spot is the ideal point of contact between the racket and the ball. This spot generates the most power and control when hitting the ball.

## Besides a Padel racket, you should buy:

**Padel shoes** - Never dismiss the importance of having shoes designed for Padel. They make you faster and protect you from injuries since they are designed with special protections, soles, and weight to make you faster and more comfortable on the court.

**Padel bag** - To carry your material, making you feel secure and comfortable.

**Bottle of water** - To stay hydrated throughout the match.

**Banana and/or protein bar** - During a long match it's normal to see players eating this type of food, because it is a great source of carbohydrates, giving the players the extra energy they need to keep their intensity when playing, and also to prevent cramps during those long matches.

**Extra grips, wristbands or towels** - One of the most important aspects of the game is gripping the racket. Some players sweat too much during a match and it becomes an issue. With this material on hand, you struggle less with grabbing the racket.

**Extra shirts** - Whenever you are sweating a lot it's good to change your shirt while changing sets, in order to feel more comfortable, or if there is a long break and you start feeling cold.

**Jumping rope and elastic band for warm-up** - Essential kit to help you get a good warm-up before the match. They help you activate your muscles.

**An extra racket** - Be prepared, Padel rackets are fragile and often break. So, it is advisable to always have an extra one, so you can change rackets if you suddenly don't have a good racket to play with. Make sure that is the same brand and model as the one you are currently playing with, so you don't have to adapt to a new racket while in the middle of the match.



## How to Define a Strategy

1

### Know Yourself

1. What are your best and worst shots?
2. What's the state of your physical condition?
3. Are you better at attacking or defending?

2

### Know your Teammate

1. Develop your strategy together, also considering your partner's strengths and weaknesses.
2. COMMUNICATION above all is the most important key in this sport.

3

### Observe your Opponents

1. Which hand do they use?
2. Which shots do they perform well and which they don't?
3. What stands out about their physical condition?

4

### External Factors

1. Indoor or Outdoor
2. Weather (wind, sun, rain)
3. Altitude
4. Type of turf and balls

TOP  
TIPS

Challenge yourself to play with different partners and opponents. By frequently switching those variables, you are forced to overcome new adversities and incentivize your brain to think of new strategies to win a particular game. One of the easiest ways to make your level stagnate is by always playing with the same people.

## External Factors

When playing Padel, the conditions are not always the same. A big challenge of the game is to keep adapting to different situations. Here are a few tips to think about while playing:

**Outdoor Padel** - When you're playing an outdoor match the first factor you need to think about is the wind. Is it windy enough to influence the game? If yes, you need to understand on which side you're in favor of the wind and on which side you're against it. When you're against the wind, you can play the lob higher, deeper, and play a higher percentage of lobs. When you're in favor of the wind you should lob only when the ball is easy enough to be precise on your lob, try not to lob so high so you lose control of the ball.

**New Balls or Used Balls** - At a medium/advanced level it starts to matter how worn out the balls are. When you are using new balls the ball bounces more from the glass, giving a perfect opportunity to be more aggressive at the net. Smashes are also easier to execute with the trajectory you pretend. At the defense and volley, try to be extra careful preparing the shot, and maintain the preparations small and steady so you don't lose control of the ball and end up missing. As the game progresses or if you already started playing with used balls, the ball starts having less pressure not giving as much rebound as you pretend.

**Types of Turf** - As Padel grows, more clubs use courts with "professional" turf, with less visual sand and more accurate bounces, but when that is not the case, a court with a lot of sand and less grass can be very frustrating. Here are a few tips to play better in these types of grasses: Short preparation on your movements, and be more conservative in your defending shots in terms of power and placement. Shoes with a good grip will make a big difference in your stability on the court.

TOP  
TIPS

To understand where the wind is blowing, before the match just throw a ball to the air to understand if the trajectory of the ball makes sense or if the wind "dragged the ball"; or just step outside the court and see if you feel the wind blowing on your face, if yes then you are playing against the wind side of the court.



## Warming Up

Warming up physically before the match is not only important for injury prevention, but it can make a big impact on your game. By already being physically active you can more quickly reach those early game balls than you would without warming up. It gives you more time to process the shot you are going to make, which might be the difference in winning those early points and giving you a boost of confidence during the match. Also, it helps you create a mindset of being prepared for the match, instead of just playing without any warm-up and feeling that you are not moving as fast as you should, starting to feel pressured and having those negative thoughts.

### Warming up

#### Yes

- Reach those early game balls more quickly
- More time to process the next shot

- Helps you win those early points in the set

- Boost of confidence
- Less pressure on the first set

#### No

- Late in reaching those early balls in the first set
- Decisions under pressure

- Harder to win points

- Generates lack of confidence
- Extra pressure on the first set

## Visualization

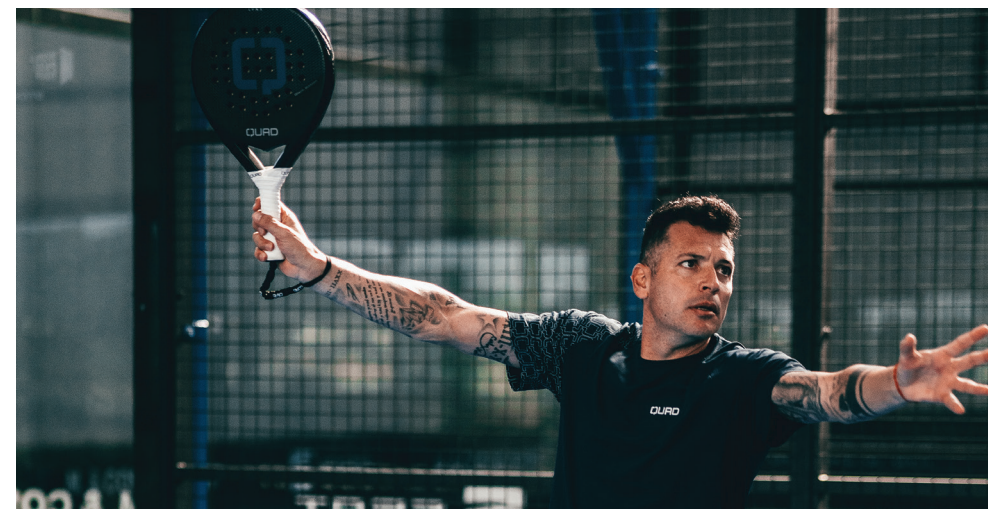
It's the practice of imagining what you want to achieve in the future as if it were true today. The process of visualizing directs your subconscious to be aware of the end goal you have in mind. This is very helpful when you already know your opponents or have played against them before. You can develop a strategy based on what you know and then try to visualize the strategy, so your body is unconsciously more prepared to apply it.

## Beginning of the game

When you start a match always be conservative with your selection of shots. Generally, players tend to make more mistakes in the beginning of a match, because they are still adapting to the environment (court, new balls, your type of shots) or they haven't yet done enough repetitions of the shots, so their confidence level is neutral. If you enter with the mindset of only executing neutral shots, it gives you the opportunity to evaluate your opponent strengths and weaknesses and force them to do these early mistakes in the game.

## Control the timings of the game

Don't be controlled by your opponent's timings, after you make a mistake it's normal to be frustrated, take a deep breath and give yourself enough time to focus on the next point, even if your opponent is already ready to play.



## Consistency

**Padel is all about consistency** - You can have a bad technique or weak physical ability but if you are consistent, you have a bigger chance of winning your matches.

### Tips to be More Consistent

**Body stance before performing the shot** - Always try to be in an active body stance, with your knees flexed and your body lining forward. It will give you a better reaction time for your shot, also giving you more time to prepare for the next one.

**Play with margins** - Be cautious with the room for error you give to your shot. Attempting to constantly pass the ball very close to the net can result in many unforced errors. Take advantage of the size of the court, play cross or through the middle, so that you always have bigger margins, as explained on page number 4 (Dimensions of the Court).

**Return the ball to the same opponent that returned to you** - Don't keep changing the direction of your shots. For example, if your opponent plays the ball cross it's easier to return the ball to him, rather than change the direction of the ball and play long.

**Understand if your opponent's ball is easy, neutral, or aggressive** - When a ball is easy and in a good zone you can counterattack.



## Communication

It's one of the most important aspects of the game. If you and your partner are not communicate, the game becomes "2x more difficult." Below are the basic rules to communicate with your partner:

### Define a strategy together

First, take into account what are your strengths and weaknesses. Define if you are playing on the right side or left side. Usually, if the players' level is very different, the player with the highest level plays on the left, being allowed to cover more court with his forehand. If one of the players is left-handed then they automatically play on the right side, so that both of you can cover most of the court with your forehand.

### Motivate your partner

Don't be the player that keeps making "ugly faces" after your partner misses the shot. This will influence both players negatively, because if you are still stuck thinking about the shot from before you cannot focus on the next one. Plus, your partner feels more pressured and uncomfortable while playing.

### Talk during the point

Let your partner know where the opponents are situated on the court. For example: If your partner is going to hit the ball behind him, you should shout the position of the opponents. The best way to help your partner is to shout the position which you are referring to (right side or left side) followed by where they stand (Defense, Transition or Attacking Zone).





### Follow the strategy

It's very easy to get deviated from the strategy while you are in the "heat of the moment." A lot of players start changing their strategy based on the result, which can cause more despair and confusion. You should only change your strategy based on how comfortable you are in the game. For example, if you are feeling like the points could go either way, but you are losing points because your opponents are in a good moment and winning with a lot of risky shots, you should keep the same strategy and trust that eventually your opponents start making more mistakes.

Always remember, in a Padel match it is very hard to keep playing at your best level until the end of the game, there are always ups and downs. Therefore, try to benefit and take advantage of situations in which your opponents are in a bad moment, are missing shots or making more mistakes. Be sure not to lose your patience if the score is not going your way.

### Changing strategy

You have set up a strategy at the beginning of the game, but today is not your day. Everything is making you uncomfortable and you're losing confidence in yourself...the simple solution is "pass one more shot." Start having the mindset of just putting the ball inside the court with a lot of margins and a greater volume of lobs and volley/bandejas to the middle of the court. This strategy reduces the risk of your shots and builds up your confidence because you are now passing more balls, and you're forcing your opponents to actually win the point instead of you giving the point away with an unforced error.

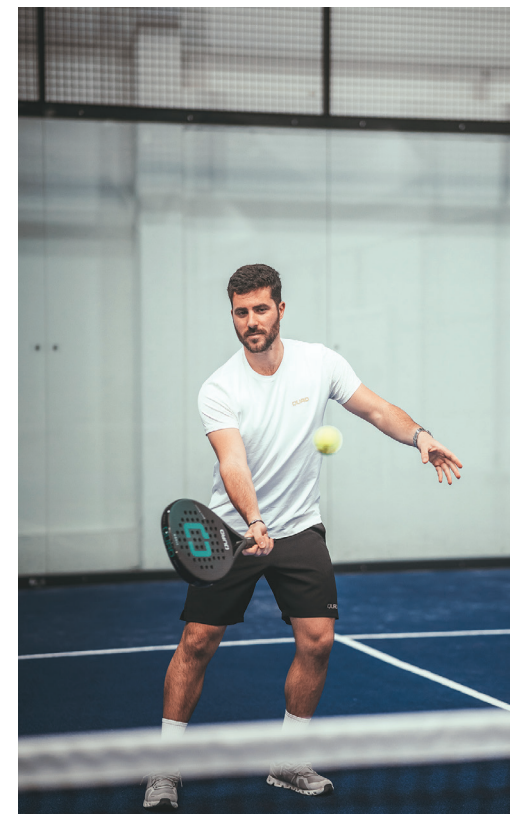


### Reduce your unforced errors

An unforced error is a mistake you make when you are in a comfortable situation, for example: missing a bandeja or a second serve response. Taking risks does not compensate in the long run, especially in lower levels (beginner to medium level players). You should always prioritize consistency.

### Secure the important points

You need to intensify your levels of focus and consistency in these points. Because of the scoring way of the game, points have different levels of importance.

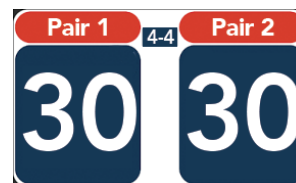


### Example:



### Score Board - 3-0 40/0 and you are serving

If you miss the next shot you still have 3 more points to spread your advantage, it does not affect your confidence.



### Score Board - 4-4 30/30 and you are serving

If you miss the next shot the opponent has a break point in a very important game, mentally it is very hard to play relaxed the next point.

Also, be aware never to lose track of the score, it can be frustrating to have your brain start thinking about the score, instead of the game itself.

### Freezing one of your opponents

In Padel, it is very hard to find teams that are at the same exact level or have the same physical condition, so one of the most generic strategies is to play a bigger percentage of shots to one of your opponents, while the other player rarely gets to play any kind of shots, this is called “freezing one of your opponents”.

**Benefits** - You create pressure on the team by targeting only one of the players, one feeling overwhelmed by getting all the balls, while the other suffers anxiety for not being in control of the match. This usually leads to mistakes, the player that has not been frozen tries to cover more court and when he tries to finish the point, he misses the shot.

**Disadvantages** - You need to always aim at a smaller percentage of the court so you have to be more precise on your shots, making it harder to be consistent.

**Getting out of the freezer** - If you realize you are stuck in the freezer, what should you do? To get you out of the freezer you and your partner need to come up with a strategy that usually involves your partner playing more shots down the line, so the opponent will have more difficulty not playing to you. Your job is to try to cover more of the middle and increase the risk on your shots, trying to intercept balls you normally wouldn't, so you can regain your place in the game.



### Deciding on golden points

In tournaments the original and general type of scoring is playing best of 3 sets, with advantages. But you can have different rules of scoring such as playing the third set with a super-tiebreak (tiebreak until 10 points) or playing with a golden point.

#### The golden point

Is when you reach **40-40** in a game and the next point decides who wins that game, instead of having advantages. For example, if the score is **2-2 40-40** in the first set, if you win the next point, it becomes **3-2**. If the score is **40/40**, be conservative and play safe.

The major rule about the golden point is that the returner decides who responds to the serve.

**Exception:** If you are playing mixed doubles, the woman serving always serves to the woman returning, and the same goes for the man.

#### How to decide who gets the golden point?

The first thing you should ask yourself is who has been consistently more comfortable getting good returns to this specific opponent's serve. Then, who has the strongest mindset and is comfortable under pressure? If both of you are equivalent, then see which side your opponent's server is playing. If your opponent's server is playing on the right, then your team's left player should ask to respond, since it creates an added difficulty for the server, because he has to move further in order to get to the right-side position and vice-versa.





### Protect each other worst shots

As a team, if you have played long enough throughout the year with the same partner, you can combine strategies to help each other cover the shots you have more difficulty executing.

Practical examples that are very common:

The right-side player doesn't have a smash as good and powerful as the left player, so when the left player sees an easy ball coming for the right player's smash, he calls the ball, so the right-side player gets out of the way, and the partner can perform the smash instead.

If a left player has difficulties defending with the glasses the right player will ask to cover more court in the defending red and yellow zone, controlling more of the defense shots variations.

The more your team level progresses, the more you will be able to help each other in a synchronized way.

### Closing the match

It's probably the most nerve-racking stage for players. The fact that you are so close to winning that you can already taste the victory can create anxiety for every player, no matter the level. The secret is to know how to control that feeling. The first thing before entering those final points of the match (when you are 2 to 3 points from winning) is to recapitulate what was your strategy until this stage, so you don't change it. But also take into account your opponent's mental state at this point. If they are nervous about losing the game, you should try to be more consistent, leaving them to produce errors or easy shots for you to win the point. However, sometimes they become more relaxed because they have nothing to lose and start to play their best when the game is supposed to be almost over.

When this last situation occurs try not only to be consistent, but also to secure the net no matter what, so you don't "risk it all".



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*"It's much more than the basics. The knowledge shared will help players from a beginner to a very advanced level."*

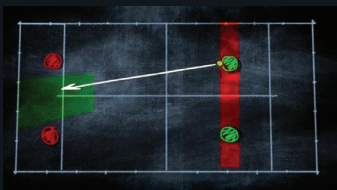
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Tito Allemandi

*"It doesn't just teach you how to play the game, it teaches you how to win."*

Diogo Rocha



Curious about Padel? never played, but want to start?  
Already a medium/advanced player, but want to step up?

**THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU!**

**Think Different, Think Padel.**

- Intended for all players from all levels to understand the most fundamental strategies of Padel
- Straightforward language so everyone understands the concepts
- Amazing tips, illustrations and videos that enhance the learning experience
- Explanations on how to better use the knowledge of the game itself to start winning games

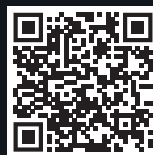
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