

**USPTA-SOUTHERN DIVISION**



**Presented by Bob Love  
USPTA (Master Professional)**

**MODERN TENNIS – Footwork, Form, and Fun!**  
**Presented by Bob Love, USPTA**

**I. Introduction**

**A. What makes MODERN TENNIS “Modern”?**

1. Equipment
2. Sports science research
3. Improved coaching
4. Players trying to get better

**B. What will be our approach to learning?**

**“Modern Tennis—Footwork, Form, and FUN!”**

**II. The Footwork Toolkit**

**Tool 1: The Drop Step**

**Tool 2: Recovering (SEW-GO-SEW!)**

**Tool 3: Dynamic Balance**

**III. Form: The Kinetic Chain**

**Tool 4: The LOAD step**

**Tool 5: “FIRING the hips”**

**Tool 6: The BRAKE step**

**IV. Grips. Contact Zones, and Racket-head speed**

**V. Special Features and Competitive Footwork**

**Tool 7: Forehand features/footwork**

**Tool 8: Two-handed backhand features/footwork**

**Tool 9: One-handed backhand features/footwork**

**VI. “LOAD and EXPLODE!”—connecting the Kinetic Chain**

**Tool 10: *Closed Stance*: Front LOAD, Back BRAKE**

**Tool 11: *Open Stance*: Outside LOAD, outside BRAKE**

**VII. Thoroughly MODERN TENNIS FUN!**

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# Teaching Modern Tennis Footwork

Bob Love USPTA

## Initiate Movement---DROP STEP

**Concept:** From a ready position, bring the foot on the ball side under the center of the body (torso) and then push off of it to initiate lateral movement.

**Pedagogy:** 1) Use three plastic strips to demonstrate the techniques.  
2) Have students line up side-by-side, on cue *DROP STEP* and move laterally. Return to the opposite side.  
3) "*MOSES*" drill: Have students line up side-by-side and move (using the *DROP STEP*) to the sidelines, "*sewing machine*" footwork, and then return (using a *DROP STEP*) to the middle of the court.

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## Initiate the KINETIC CHAIN--The RIGHTs and LEFTs of LOADING

**Concept:** To initiate power, MT players must be able to LOAD (press down) with one leg so the kinetic chain can be properly established.

**Pedagogy:** Players must first learn to discriminate between loading with their right or left feet. This series of drills will facilitate the learning process.

- 1) Partner tosses ball. Thrower calls load foot. Catch with two hands
  - 2) Partner tosses ball. Receiver calls load foot. Catch with two hands.
  - 3) Partner tosses ball. **THROWER CALLS LOAD FOOT**. Load one foot and use soft mini-stroke to gently tap all to thrower. Finish with **DYNAMIC BALANCE**. **GLIDE STEP** back to starting point.
  - 4) Partner tosses ball. **HITTER CALLS LOAD FOOT**. Load one foot and use soft mini-stroke to gently tap all to thrower. Finish with **DYNAMIC BALANCE**. **SLIDE STEP** back to starting point.
  - 5) "*MOSES*" variations:
    - A. Side by side
    - B. **DROP STEP**
    - C. \*\*\*\*\*Move laterally and **SHOULDER TURN** \*\*\*\*\*
    - D. **SET-UP** with desired **LOADED** foot
    - E. "**FIRE**" **HIPS**
    - F. **BREAK STEP** with proper foot
    - G. **RELEASE RACKET HEAD**
    - H. Swing to **DYNAMIC BALANCE**
    - I. **RECOVER** to next position.
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## FOOTWORK COMBINATIONS

**Concept:** Different strokes require different **LOADING** combination. These may be determined by ball position or the purpose of the stroke.

**Pedagogy:** 1) **NEUTRAL (closed):** **LOAD FRONT** foot in closed stance. **BREAK back**.  
2) **NEUTRAL (open):** **LOAD OUTSIDE** foot in open stance. **BREAK front**.  
3) **DROP-BACK:** **LOAD** on **BACK** foot, **BREAK** front foot. **ADD topspin** and "**GIVE THE BALL AIR**"  
4) **MOVE-IN (A):** **LOAD BACK FOOT** -- **FIRE HIPS**—**BRAKE FRONT FOOT!**  
5) **MOVE-IN (B):** **LOAD FRONT FOOT** – **FIRE HIPS WHILE STEPPING THROUGH WITH BRAKE FOOT**. **ROTATE SHOULDERS AND KEEP MOVING IN**.

# TENNIS WITH LOVE

## Grip Information Sheet

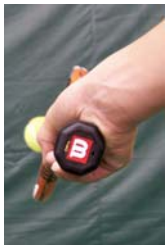
### Bob Love USPTA

**Introduction:** Grips are an incredibly important and often-neglected element in proper tennis technique. The PURPOSE of GRIPS is to provide the proper body-racket contact so sound strokes will result.

**STEP ONE:** MAKE GRIP LINES ON YOUR PALMS as shown in the photo at the right. These will be the placement lines for the grips shown below.



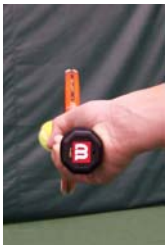
**STEP TWO:** Examine your racket grip to locate the bevels as shown in the photo at the left. NOTE: THE GRIPS SHOWN BELOW ARE FOR RIGHT-HANDED PLAYERS. LEFT-HANDERS NEED ONLY REVERSE THE POSITIONS.



### CONTINENTAL FOREHAND/BACKHAND

**Hand Position:** Grip Line on BEVEL 2.  
(Left photo)

**Contact Zone:** As shown in photo at right.



### EASTERN FOREHAND

**Hand position:** Grip Line on BEVEL 3.

**Contact Zone (at right):** A bit more forward than the Continental contact zone.



### SEMI-WESTERN FOREHAND

**Hand position:** Grip Line on BEVEL 4.

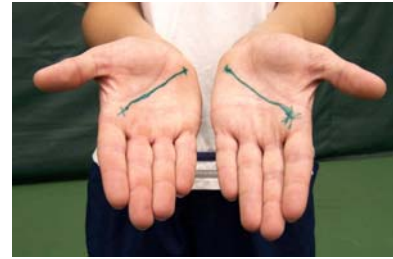
**Contact Zone (at right):** Even MORE forward than the Eastern contact zone.



**IMPORTANT CONCEPT:** AS THE FOREHAND GRIP MOVES AROUND TOWARDS THE WESTERN (BEVEL 5), THE CONTACT ZONE MOVES FORWARD!

# TENNIS WITH LOVE: Grip Information Sheet

**STEP ONE: MAKE GRIP LINES ON YOUR PALMS** as shown in the photo at the right. These will be the placement lines for the grips shown below



**STEP TWO: Examine your racket grip to locate the bevels** as shown in the photo at the left. **NOTE: THE GRIPS SHOWN BELOW ARE FOR RIGHT-HANDED PLAYERS. LEFT-HANDERS NEED ONLY REVERSE THE POSITIONS.**



## EASTERN ONE-HANDED BACKHAND

**Hand Position (at left):** Grip line is on BEVEL 1.

**Contact Zone (at right) .** Slightly in front of body with rear hand going back for balance.



**NOTE: For TWO-HANDED backhands; the DOMINANT ARM provides GUIDANCE while the NON-DOMINANT ARM supplies POWER!**



## DOUBLE-FOREHAND TWO-HANDED BACKHAND

**Hands Positions:** Right Hand grip line on BEVEL 3 (RIGHT-HANDED EASTERN FOREHAND) while Left Hand grip line is on BEVEL 7 (LEFT-HANDED EASTERN FOREHAND).

**Contact Zone:** Immediately in front of right hip.



## CONVENTIONAL TWO-HANDED BACKHAND

**Hands Positions:** Right Hand grip line in on BEVEL 1 (EASTERN BACKHAND) while Left Hand grip line is on BEVEL 7 (LEFT-HANDED EASTERN FOREHAND).

**Contact Zone:** *Fire the hips* and meet the ball more in front of the body than the Eastern backhand.



*TENNIS WITH LOVE*  
**Modern Tennis Footwork**  
Bob Love USPTA

**“LOAD AND EXPLODE”** is the motto of MODERN TENNIS. Move to the ball, **LOAD YOUR LOWER BODY**, and **EXPLODE** through the **KINETIC CHAIN** of your body’s linkage. MODERN TENNIS STARTS WITH FOOTWORK!

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TO BEGIN WITH: THE DROP STEP, SHOULDER TURN, AND STRIDE



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figure 1) **BALANCED READY POSITION** (Figure 1) with forehand grip.

Figure 2) DROP STEP and SHOULDER TURN--Bring **RIGHT** foot **UNDER** your body so put your weight on top of the Center of your torso .

Figure 3) PIVOT YOUR HIPS and STRIDE RIGHT— Towards your hitting location.

Figure 4) DROP STEP and SHOULDER TURN —Bring **LEFT** foot **UNDER** your body to put your weight on top of the Center of your torso.

Figure 5) PIVOT YOUR HIPS and STRIDE LEFT —towards your hitting location.

Vocabulary

“LOADING” YOUR BODY: Pressure your weight **DOWN** towards the ground to “LOAD” energy into that leg.

SHOULDER TURN: As the shoulder turns (Figures 2 and 4) the **ANGLE** of the **RACKET SHAFT** is roughly **PARALLEL** to the player’s **SPINE**.

FIRE YOUR HIPS: Push up from the **LOADED LEG** and let the **HIPS ROTATE** while the racket **DROPS** into a **POWER PATH**.

“EXPLODE”—THE **SUM OF LOADING, FIRING ONES HIPS, and CREATING EXCEPTIONAL RACKET HEAD SPEED.**

KINETIC CHAIN: The **SEQUENTIAL MOVEMENT OF BODY PARTS FROM THE KNEES THROUGH THE WRIST.**

“BRAKE FOOT”—The foot a players lands on to prevent over-rotation and establish one’s **DYNAMIC BALANCE** then move to the next shot.

**LOAD and EXPLODE! LOAD and EXPLODE! LOAD and EXPLODE!**

# TENNIS WITH LOVE: Modern Tennis Footwork

## OPEN STANCE MODERN GROUNDSTROKES

**“LOAD” ON THE OUTSIDE FOOT!**

**“BRAKE” ON THE OUTSIDE FOOT!**

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### OPEN STANCE: MODERN TENNIS FOREHAND



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Step 1) Move to intercept the ball's path, LOAD the OUTSIDE FOOT, TURN SHOULDERS, and KEEP RACKET HIGH. (Figures 6 and 9)

Step 2) EXPLODE OFF THE OUTSIDE FOOT and ACCELERATE the racket through the ball, finishing with the elbow in front of the face. (Figures 7 and 10)

Step 3) BRAKE (LAND) ON THE OUTSIDE FOOT and quickly pull the hands back in front of the chest to “center” the body and establish DYNAMIC BALANCE. (Figures 8 and 11)

### OPEN STANCE: MODERN TENNIS BACKHAND



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

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### CLOSED STANCE: MODERN TENNIS BACKHAND

**“LOAD” ON THE FRONT FOOT!**

**“BRAKE STEP” WITH THE REAR FOOT!**



**LOAD FRONT FOOT!**



**EXPLODE!**



**BRAKE STEP with REAR FOOT!**

# TENNIS WITH LOVE: Modern Tennis Footwork

## CLOSED STANCE: MODERN TENNIS FOREHAND

**“LOAD” ON THE FRONT FOOT! “BRAKE STEP” WITH THE REAR FOOT!**



**LOAD FRONT FOOT!**



**EXPLODE!**



**BRAKE STEP with REAR FOOT!**

## **SPECIAL NOTES: MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE BALL**

- 1) LET YOUR HANDS LEAD WHEN MOVING TOWARDS A BALL!  
Think about taking your hands TO the ball!
- 2) SPRINT—NOT SHUFFLE—WHEN MOVING TOWARDS A WIDE BALL!



## **SHORT BALL: MODERN TENNIS FOREHAND**

### **STYLE 1**

**1) “LOAD” ON THE RIGHT FOOT!**

**2) FIRE THE HIPS**

**AND**

**LET THE SHOULDER ROTATE THROUGH THE STROKE!**

**3) “BRAKE STEP” WITH THE LEFT FOOT!**



### **STYLE 2**

**1) “LOAD” ON THE LEFT FOOT!**

**2) FIRE THE HIPS**

**AND**

**LET THE SHOULDER ROTATE THROUGH THE STROKE!**

**3) “BRAKE STEP” WITH THE RIGHT FOOT!**



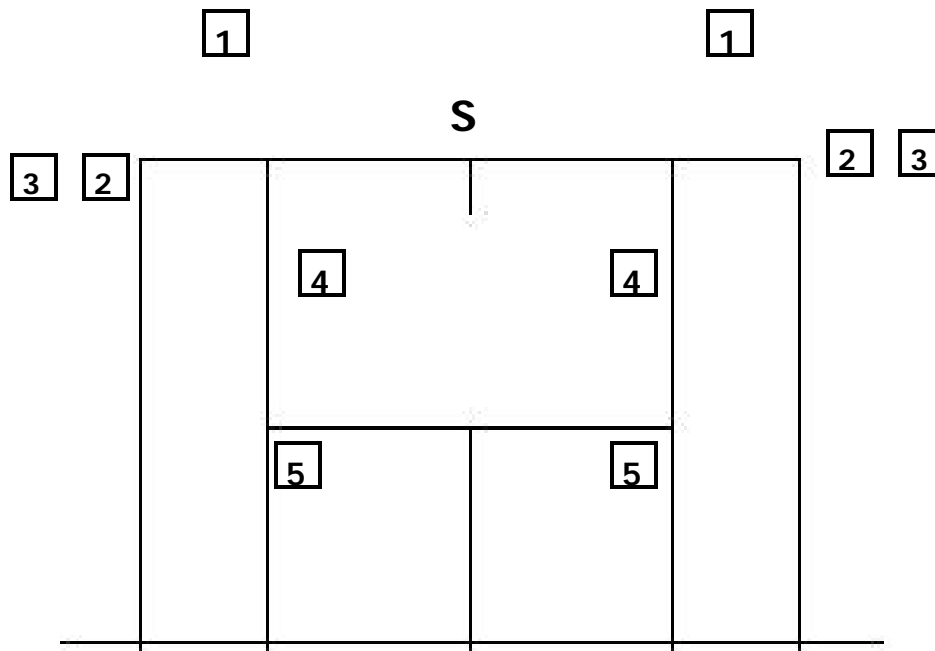
**LOAD and EXPLODE!**

**LOAD and EXPLODE!**

# Teaching Modern Tennis—Footwork and Form

Bob Love USPTA (Master Professional)

## FIVE-CONE DRILLS



S = STARTING POINT for drills

- 1 = DEFENSIVE STROKES—ADD SPIN AND GIVE MORE "AIR"  
LOAD—REAR FOOT BRAKE—BACK OR FRONT FOOT
- \* \* \* NEUTRAL STROKES—MOVING ALONG BASELINE \* \* \*
- 2 = CLOSED STANCE = LOAD FRONT + BRAKE REAR FOOT
- 3 = OPEN STANCE = LOAD AND BRAKE OUTSIDE FOOT
- 4 = OFFENSIVE RALLY = LOAD INSIDE + STEP THROUGH  
WITH THE OUTSIDE FOOT.
- 5 = OFFENSIVE APPROACH = LOAD RIGHT AND BRAKE RIGHT  
LOAD LEFT AND BRAKE LEFT  
STEP TOWARD NET WITH REAR FOOT

## FENCE (CURTAIN) STROKES



Open Stance  
Shoulder  
Turn

**PURPOSE:** Develop concepts of *KINETIC CHAIN*: SHOULDER TURN, LOADING, "EXPLODING" WITH DROP-THRU STROKE, FORWARD RELEASE, BRAKE STEP, DYNAMIC BALANCE.

- 1) START about 2' from a curtain or fence.
- 2) TURN SHOULDER keeping racket high and front hand with racket.
- 3) LOAD desired foot. (Press knee down.)
- 4) EXPLODE lower body with DROP-THRU STROKE.
- 5) BRAKE STEP with desired foot!
- 6) RELEASE IN FRONT. (Use SWISH TEST for desired sound.)
- 7) CATCH FINISH with DYNAMIC BALANCE.
- 8) FOLLOW-UP by moving to position for next shot.



Open Stance  
Brake Step  
Balanced Finish

# Teaching Modern Tennis—Footwork and Form

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## FIVE-CONE STROKES and TECHNIQUES



LOAD  
REAR



BRAKE  
BEST

### CONE 1— DEFENSIVE (DEEP) GROUNDSTROKES

- 1) Move **BACK**—**LOAD** on **REAR** foot with **FRONT** foot to side.
- 2) **EXPLODE THROUGH THE BALL**, **ADD TOP SPIN**, and **"GIVE THE BALL AIR!"**
- 3) **LAND (BRAKE)** ON THE **MOST FUNCTIONAL FOOT!**
- 4) **QUICKLY RECOVER** TO THE **STARTING POINT**. (**ANGULAR MOMENTUM WHILE TURNING** is KEY!)



LOAD  
REAR



BRAKE  
BEST



LOAD  
FRONT



BRAKE  
REAR

### CONE 2— CLOSED-STANCE GROUNDSTROKES

- 1) Move along baseline and **LOAD** on **FRONT** foot.
- 2) **EXPLODE THROUGH BALL** and **LAND (BRAKE)** on **REAR** Foot
- 3) Finish with hands in **DYNAMIC BALANCED** position and **RECOVER TO THE STARTING POINT**.



LOAD  
FRONT



BRAKE  
REAR



LOAD  
OUTSIDE



BRAKE  
OUTSIDE

### CONE 3 — OPEN-STANCE GROUNDSTROKES

- 1) Move along baseline and **LOAD** on **OUTSIDE** foot.
- 2) **EXPLODE THROUGH BALL** and **LAND (BRAKE)** on **OUTSIDE** Foot
- 3) Finish with hands in **DYNAMIC BALANCED** position and **RECOVER TO THE STARTING POINT**.



LOAD  
OUTSIDE



BRAKE  
OUTSIDE



LOAD  
INSIDE



BRAKE  
OUTSIDE

### CONE 4 — OFFENSIVE RALLY SHOTS

- 1) Move toward short ball and **LOAD** on **INSIDE FOOT**.
- 2) **EXPLODE THROUGH BALL** and **STEP THROUGH BALL** with **OUTSIDE** foot (BRAKE STEP).
- 3) **FOLLOW UP** by **RETURNING TO THE STARTING SPOT**.

**AS YOU MOVE IN, ADD SPIN!**



LOAD  
INSIDE



BRAKE  
OUTSIDE

### CONE 5 — OFFENSIVE APPROACH SHOTS

- 1) Move toward short ball and **LOAD** on **FRONT** foot
- 2) If to the **RIGHT**, use **LOAD RIGHT** and **BRAKE RIGHT**.
- 3) If to the **LEFT**, use **LOAD LEFT** and **BRAKE LEFT**.
- 4) **LOAD** and **EXPLODE THROUGH THE BALL** and **STEP TOWARD NET** with the **REAR FOOT**.
- 5) **FOLLOW THE SHOT** with **HANDS** in a **DYNAMIC, BALANCED READY POSITION**.

**AS YOU MOVE IN, ADD SPIN!**



LOAD  
OUTSIDE



BRAKE  
INSIDE



LOAD  
OUTSIDE



BRAKE  
INSIDE