

THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ALL TABLE TENNIS STROKES

By Richard McAfee, USATT Certified National Coach

This article is unique because the information it contains impacts every stroke in the game. These concepts cut across all differences in grips, playing style, and personal technique. Strict adherence to these principles is necessary for any individual stroke to be successful.

1. Timing - When To Touch Ball

There are three possible timing possibilities

- As the ball is rising
- At the top of the bounce
- As the ball is descending

STROKE TIMING (Changes according to type of ball being struck.)			
Stroke	TIMING		
	Rising	Top	Falling
Counter	•	•	
Fast Loop		•	
Slow Loop		•	•
Re-loop Off Bounce	•		
Re-loop, Mid-Range		•	•
Push, Normal		•	•
Push, Fast	•		
Chop			•
Block Against Loop	•		

2. Application of Force and Friction - How to Touch Ball

- Force contact occurs when a forward moving racket strikes the ball. An example of this occurs when you bounce the ball straight into the air on the racket.
 - You can often hear a “wood” type of sound (hard sound).
 - Most of the energy goes into producing forward motion.
- Friction contact occurs when you brush the ball with the racket.
 - Most of the energy goes into producing spin (ball rotation).
 - Sound is muffled (soft sound).
- Most strokes are a blend of Force and Friction.
 - Slow Loops, serves, and pushes are maximum friction and minimum force.
 - Fast Loops are medium Force and medium Friction.
 - Counters and Kill shots are maximum Force and minimum Friction.

DIRECTION OF STROKE FORCE (Changes according to type of ball being struck.)	
Type of Incoming Ball	Stroke Direction
	1

Against Topspin	Down & Forward
Against Backspin	Up & Forward
Against Right Sidespin	To Your Left & Forward
Against Left Sidespin	To Your Right & Forward
Against a High Ball	Downward
Against a Low Ball	Upward

3. Ball Contact - Where to Touch the Ball

- Most important of the 3 principles.
- Always contact the **Front** of the ball.
- Front of the ball is an area, not a specific point.
- Front of the ball is a constantly changing area, determined by the trajectory of the ball.
- **It is the part of the ball facing the direction of travel.**

AREA OF CONTACT FOR VARIOUS STROKES (Changes according to type of ball being struck.)	
Stroke	Contact Area On Ball
Counter Against Topspin	Above Center
Kill Against Backspin	Center
Slow Loop Against Backspin	Center Or Below Center
Fast Loop Against Backspin	Center Or Above Center
Re-loop From Mid-Distance	Center Or Below Center
Re-loop From Close To Table	Top
Push Against Backspin	Below Center To Bottom
Chop Against Topspin	Center Or Below Center

Definition of "Front" and Relationship between the "Front" of Ball and Stroke Timing

The area of the ball facing the direction of travel defines the "Front" of the ball. The Front does not change even if the ball is spinning. When you are aiming for a spot on the ball you must also consider the stroke timing that you are using.

Here is an example of how the contact point on the ball will change with the timing you use. Let's assume that your opponent chops a ball to your forehand that you wish to loop. According to the chart on where to contact the ball for this stroke, the contact should be below the center of the "front" of the ball. Now look above at where that point on the ball would be when the ball is struck at the top of the bounce. Now compare how that location would change if you let the ball fall. You can see how your racket angle would have to change as your timing changes.