

# THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD

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# F TWORK

**H**ow you move on the tennis court is arguably the most important part of the game. Former world no.4 doubles standout Tom Gullickson once said, “If footwork was easy, they wouldn’t call it footWORK”

The upper echelon of players all have one thing in common, superior footwork. This crucial part of the game forms the framework of any great player. Being an elite mover means you need to be fast, and the feet are always moving, and because there is so much movement involved, you HAVE to position yourself optimally.

Excellent footwork allows the player to think ahead in the rally as you will see that great players can get to their shots early in a balanced and well-prepared way.

Sluggish footwork is a serious problem for developing players. The feet should never stop moving when the ball is in play. Players need to be fast, agile, and strong, and they need good aerobic capacity and great reactions. Players also need to be flexible to prevent injury. This conditioning is formed through good stretching habits and routines.



Here are three simple exercises that will improve your footwork, anticipation and court positioning:-

1. **SKIPPING** - The physical benefits of skipping not only improves your footwork, but it also helps improve your cardio-respiratory fitness, co-ordination, flexibility, symmetry, rhythm, and balance, as skipping is both anaerobic and aerobic exercise. It also tones thighs, hips, glutes, and calves. Do four sets of three minutes on a daily basis.

2. **LADDER DRILLS** - The sky is the limit as far as your imagination is concerned as to how many ladders drills you can do. Simple ladder drills are quick side-steps, hopping, jumping, in and out, and cross overs, to name a few.

3. **SHADOW TENNIS** - The concept of shadow tennis is to be able to play tennis perfectly without a ball. This requires good visualization skills, an absolute must for any tennis player. Shadow tennis is the repetition of fast stroke production and good footwork. Start in a ready position, split step, reproduce a ground-stroke or volley and recover. Shadow tennis is very physical if done correctly. Five by one-minute sets with a good intensity will help improve to achieve great footwork.