



HOW TO GET STARTED IN PLAYING SQUASH

Coaches Training
Manual / Resource

SQUASH
START 



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What is SquashStart?

SquashStart is a set of eight lesson plans with an accompanying DVD which allows coaches to easily deliver beginner coaching sessions.

SquashStart itself isn't a programme, but the combined resources (manual and DVD) will form the foundation of a number of different beginner squash programmes. Initially, Squash NZ will make marketing materials available for Squash Ignite – a coaching programme aimed at teenagers and Social Slam – a beginner programme that focusses on the social side of squash and having fun, aimed at those aged 20-35 years (although it can be for any age group). In the future, Squash NZ will make new marketing material available to clubs and coaches, that also utilise the SquashStart resources.

Delivering SquashStart

The programme is set up in five distinct phases which are outlined below

1. General Movement

- These are skills developed using the gross and some fine motor movements of the head, legs, arms and trunk and are prerequisites for developing sport specific skills as the players develop.
- General movement activities help to develop forward, backwards, lateral and diagonal movements along with squash based movements such as the lunge.

2. Ball Control

- The ball control activities help to develop some finer ball control skills which will assist when developing technique and striking in a game situation.

3. Conditioned Games

- Also known as Teaching Games For Understanding (TGFU).
- TGFU is an approach which directs players toward understanding strategies about why a skill is performed before they learn how to perform.
- TGFU emphasises a deeper understanding of tactics before teaching techniques.

4. Technique

- The technical aspects may be some of the most difficult aspects for new players to master.
- The coach should be especially mindful of keeping the coaching at a basic level in the early stages particularly without moving to some of the more complex parts of the swing or shot.
- For each technical component the coach will explain and demonstrate to all members of the group, allowing them to practically attempt this by feeding the ball appropriately to them and then providing feedback.

5. Game Play

- In this part of the programme we give the players some time to put into practice skills that have been learnt.
- The Game Play section is the same for each lesson, although the coach can vary the activity, by adding emphasis to particular skills and technique that have just been learnt in that lesson.

Lesson 1: Introduction

6

Introduction to the Game

General Movement

Forward, Backward & Lateral

Ball Control

Balance, Bounce & Walk

Conditioned Games

Cooperative Rallying

Technique

Grip & Drive

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 2: The Drive

17

General Movement

T Movements & The Lunge

Ball Control

Lined Up

Conditioned Games

Alley Games

Technique

The Drive

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 3: Serve & Return

25

General Movement

Six Corner Ghosting

Ball Control

Service Preparation

Conditioned Games

Service Games

Technique

Serve & Return

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 4: The Drop

33

General Movement

Front Court

Ball Control

Wall Tapping

Conditioned Games

Drop Zone

Technique

The Drop

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 5: The Volley

40

General Movement

Lateral Movement

Ball Control

Short Volleys

Conditioned Games

Volley Conditioning

Technique

Volleying

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 6: The Boast

47

General Movement

Back Court

Ball Control

Corner to Corner

Conditioned Games

Let's Boast

Technique

The Boast

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 7: The Lob

54

General Movement

Front Court & Lunge

Ball Control

Lob up

Conditioned Games

Lob Game

Technique

The Lob

Game Play

Court Games

Lesson 8: Tournament

61

Game Play

Tournament



I PLAY SO I CAN KEEP

Lesson 1

Introduction

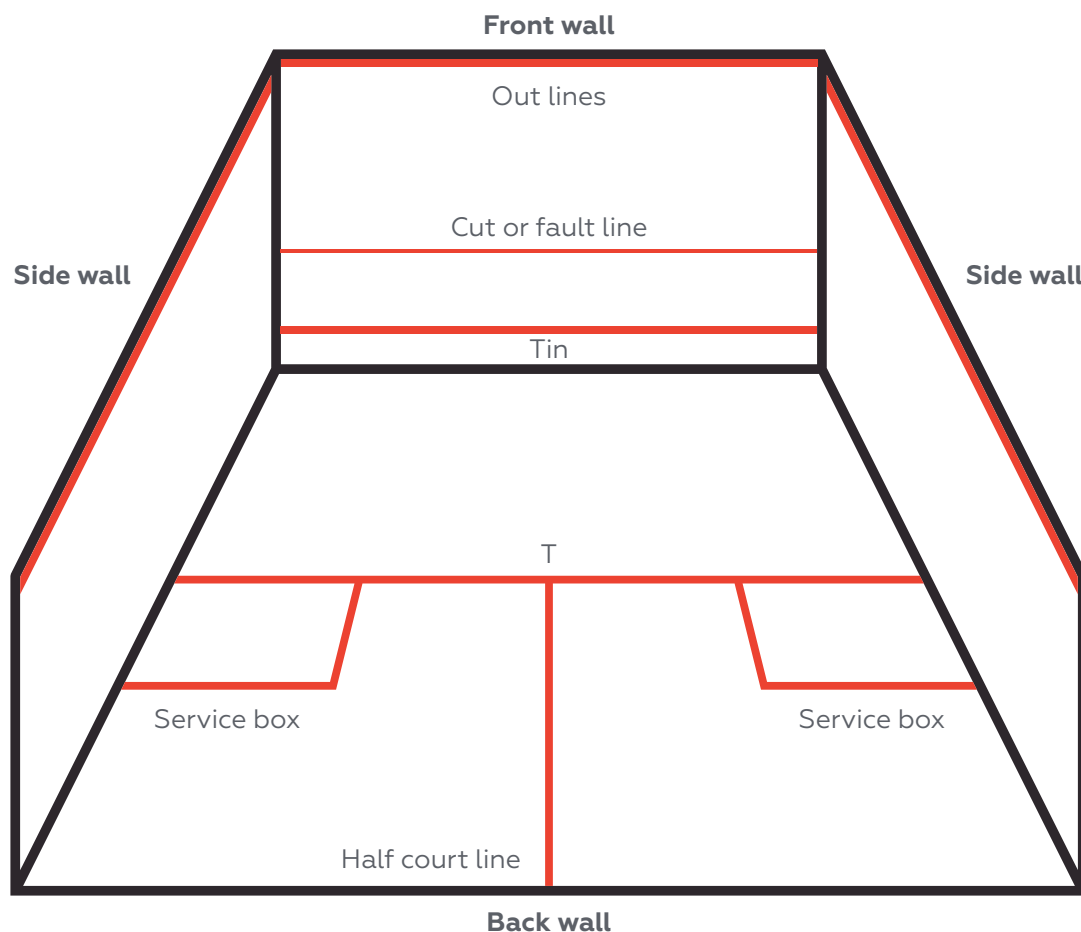
Learning Outcome: Develop an understanding of the basic rules on how to play squash, including understanding the court layout.

The Court

- It is important that participants have an understanding of the squash court before coaching begins.
- It is not so important to know the dimensions but it is essential that players know the simple terms. Coaches will use these terms throughout their coaching sessions so players must understand what these terms mean.

- Players should know where the following are on a squash court.

- Front wall
- Back wall
- Tin
- Side wall
- Cut or fault line
- Service Box
- Out lines
- T



The Basic Rules

As with the court, in order to begin coaching, the coach needs to be confident the players have a basic understanding of the rules. There is no point teaching players the technical aspects of squash if the players don't yet understand how the game works. Some of the basic concepts players must understand are...

The Scoring

- In most cases, a match is the best of five games.
- Each game is played scoring one point per rally, until one player reaches 11 points (unless the score reaches 10-10). At 10-all, one player needs to win by two clear points to win the game, e.g. 12-10, 13-11, 17-15.
- If the players are graded C1 and below, we recommend the matches are played scoring one point per rally to 15. If the score reaches 14-all, one player must win by two clear points, e.g. 16-14, 17-15, 18-16.

The Warm Up

- Before the start of a match, both players are allowed up to five minutes (2.5 minutes on each side) to warm up both themselves and the ball, on the match court.
- When a ball has been changed during a match, or if the match has been resumed after some delay, the players warm up the ball to playing condition.

The Service

- The player to serve first is decided by the spin of a racket.
- Play commences with a service.
- The server continues serving until losing a rally, when the opponent becomes the server.
- The player who wins the preceding game serves first in the next game.
- At the beginning of each game and when the service changes from one player to the other, the server can serve from either service box. After winning a rally the server then continues serving from the alternate box.
- To serve, a player stands with at least part of one foot on the floor within the service box.
- For a service to be allowed, it must hit the front wall directly, above the service line and below the out-of-court line, and its return must reach the floor within the back quarter of the court opposite to the server's box (unless volleyed first).

Acceptable Return and Rallies

- A return is acceptable if the ball, before it has bounced twice on the floor, is returned correctly by the striker onto the front wall above the tin and below the out of court line, without first touching the floor.
- The ball may hit the side walls and/or the back wall before reaching the front wall.
- A return is not acceptable if it is:
 - Not up (ball struck after bouncing more than once on the floor, or not struck correctly, or a double hit).
 - Down (the ball after being struck, hits the floor before the front wall or hits the tin).
 - Out (the ball hits a wall on or above the out of court line).

Lets

- A let is an undecided rally.
- The rally does not count and the server serves again from the same box, e.g. a let may be allowed if the ball in play touches any article lying on the floor, or if the striker refrains from hitting the ball owing to a reasonable fear of injuring the opponent.
- A let must be allowed if the receiver is not ready and does not attempt to return the service, or if the ball breaks during play.

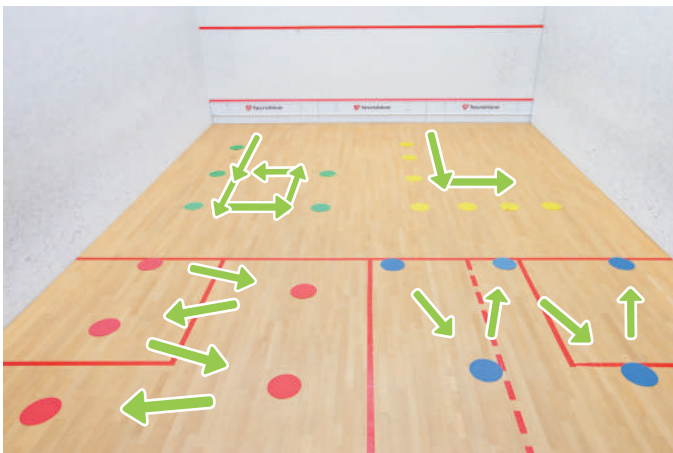
Interference

- When it is their turn to play the ball, a player is entitled to freedom from interference by the opponent.
- To avoid interference, the opponent must try to provide the player with unobstructed direct access to the ball, a fair view of the ball, space to complete a swing at the ball and freedom to play the ball directly to any part of the front wall.
- A player, finding the opponent interfering with the play, can accept the interference and play on, or stop play. It is preferable to stop play if there is a possibility of colliding with the opponent, or of hitting him or her with the racket or the ball.

Learning Outcome: Development of forwards, backwards and lateral movements.

Activities

- Split the court into four distinct quarters to create the four shapes below using spot markers:
 - Box run
 - Lateral zig zag
 - Forward and backward zig zag
 - Giant L
- Assign two players to each area/shape.
- Player 1 completes the movement at 50% pace, followed by Player 2.
- Player 1 then goes again but at 75% pace, followed by Player 2.
- Player 1 repeats at 100% pace, followed by Player 2.
- Once each activity is completed three times by each player, all teams change to a new shape until all shapes are completed.



Questions you could ask

- Does bending at the knee assist with balance and movement?
- What part of the body will assist you with your balance?

Can you see?

- Heads up, soft knees, on toes.
- Use of arms for drive and balance.

Learning Outcome: Introduction to the racket and ball and basic hand-eye coordination.

Activities

- Two groups are standing in a circle facing inwards. One ball is placed on a racket and then has to be passed around the circle without dropping the ball. Start with:
 - Once around
 - Twice around
 - Have races
 - Spread out the players to full stretch
- With a ball each get them to walk around the full court area trying to keep the ball on the racket...
 - At snail pace
 - Walking
 - Jogging
 - Running
- Complete the same tasks while attempting to bounce the ball on the racket.
- With two players to each wall, get them to hit the ball against the side wall without letting it drop on the floor (ie. a volley) with a forehand swing. Repeat with a backhand.
- Now try forehands and backhands alternately without letting the ball drop.



Questions you could ask

- Do you have the racket face open?
- How high do we need to hit the ball on the wall to make it easier to consistently hit the ball and keep it going?

Can you see?

- Watching the ball.
- Gentle touches.
- Good grip.

Learning Outcome: Develop a basic understanding of rallying.

Activities

- This activity uses the front half of the court only and requires two players per court.
- Player 1 hits a serve onto the wall (above service line) to land in the front half of their opponent's side of the court.
- Player 2 tries to return the shot to the front wall after one bounce or on the full, landing in the front half of their opponent's side of the court.
- A rally of alternate hitting continues until one player cannot return the ball onto the wall to land in the opponent's half (before it bounces a second time).
- Score one point for every successful returned shot.
- Players can use both forehand and backhand.



Questions you could ask

- What aspects can you change to enable you to keep the rally going (angle of swing, height on the wall, and pace of shot)?

Can you see?

- Varying pace and height to keep the rally going.
- Players moving their feet to get into a good position to play the ball.

Learning Outcome: Develop a basic understanding of how to grip the racket correctly.

Develop a basic understanding of the technical concepts and coaching points of a forehand and backhand drive.

Technique 1: The Grip

- The grip is one of the most important technical aspects of squash - everything else that you will teach in the game all stems from having a good grip.
- With a good grip comes the ability to handle the racket and control the racket face consistently and effectively. A player with a poor grip cannot perform shots accurately and will soon run in to difficulties when under pressure.
- Use the same grip on the forehand and the backhand - the speed of the game does not normally allow you to change grips (like you can in tennis).

Key Coaching Points

- Place your hand on the grip approximately halfway up and grip the racket as though you are shaking hands with it.
- The thumb and index finger should make a v running down the top inside edge of the racket shaft.
- Curl your index finger around the handle and make sure that you leave a gap between the index finger and the bottom three fingers - this is important to allow you to keep control of the racket head. Do not hold the racket in the same way that you would hold a hammer.
- The racket face should be slightly angled or open so that you can just see the strings of the racket face.
- Cock your wrist in an upward position, which should make a 90 degree angle between the racket and your forearm.
- Hold the racket steady and firm so that you feel as though you have control of the racket head.
- After each shot, return the racket to this position and do not let the racket head drop towards the floor - for good control of the racket and allow quick reactions.
- The wrist remains cocked and does not flop around or down – this will result in a lack of control.

Reminder of key points

- The racket hand is placed on the racket handle so that a v is formed by the thumb and straight index finger.
- The thumb rests on the index finger side of the middle finger.
- The fingers are slightly angled around the handle.
- The fingers are comfortably spread; the grip is firm but not vice-like.
- The size of the handle should JUST enable the index finger of the non-racket hand into the gap between the finger ends and the pad of the thumb of the racket hand.
- The shape of the handle is a matter of personal preference; it should have the 'right feel' to the player.
- The position of the hand is again a matter of personal choice; in the conventional position the end of the handle presses into the heel of the hand.
- The term 'cocked wrist' refers to the angle made at the wrist joint of the racket hand, between the line of the forearm and a line extending along the hand, parallel to the extended fingers. This should be the general rule but as players progress they may make use of the wrist to cause deception for their opponent.

The Grip: Error Detection and Correction

- Errors related to the grip are mirrored affecting the stroke on both sides.
- Below are some common errors seen with the grip...

Hand placed on top of the grip with the racket head facing down.



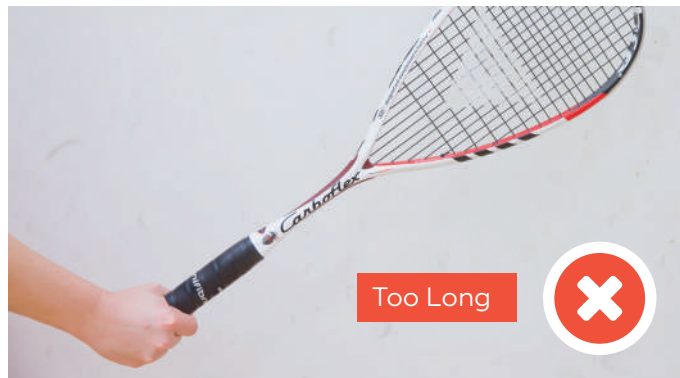
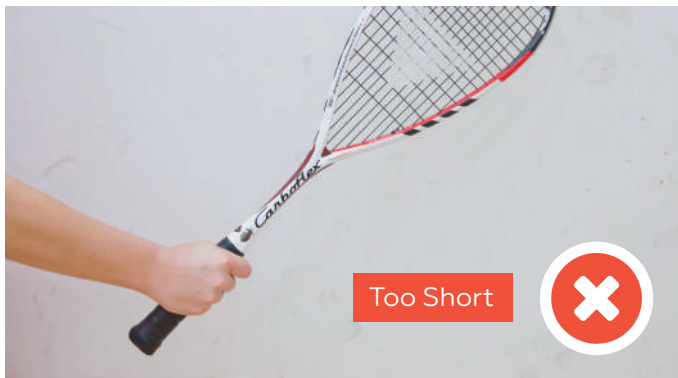
Racket face too open, grip held too far round.



Racket gripped hammer style with no gap between top two fingers and thumb wrapped straight round the grip.



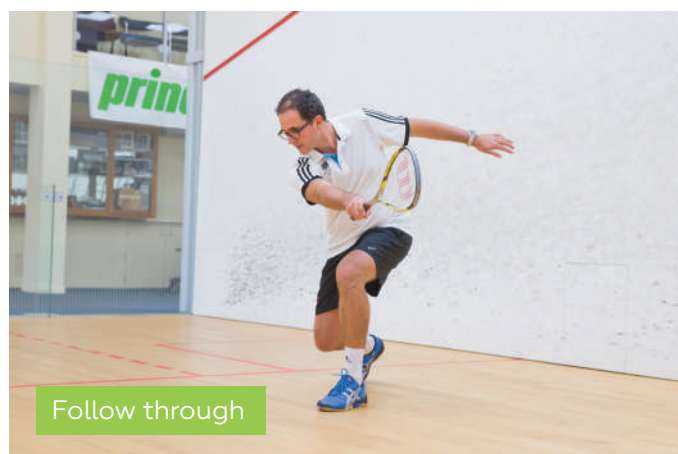
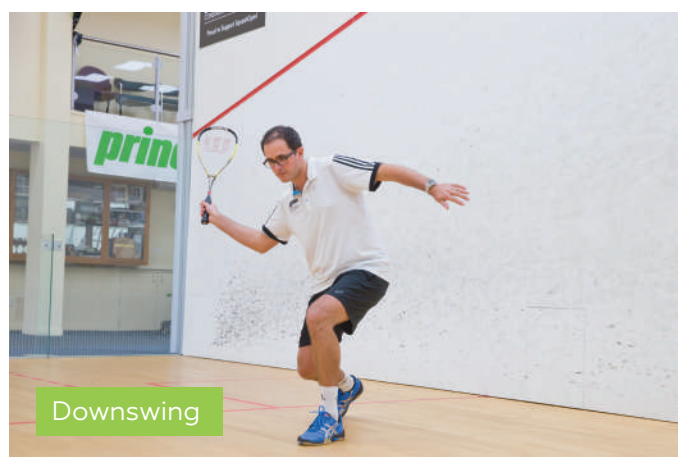
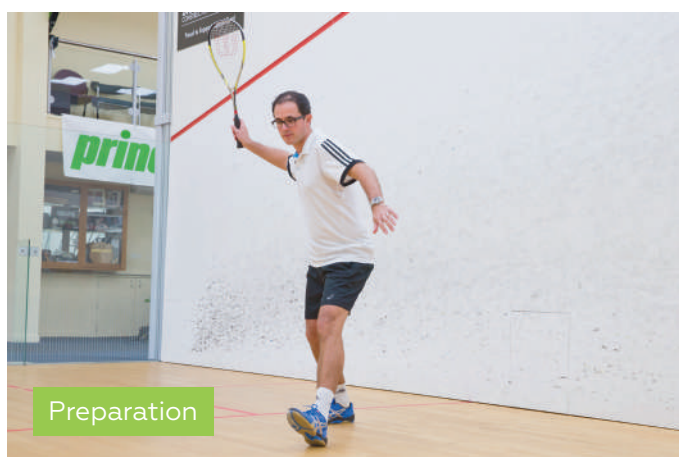
Racket held too short or too long.



Technique 2: The Drive

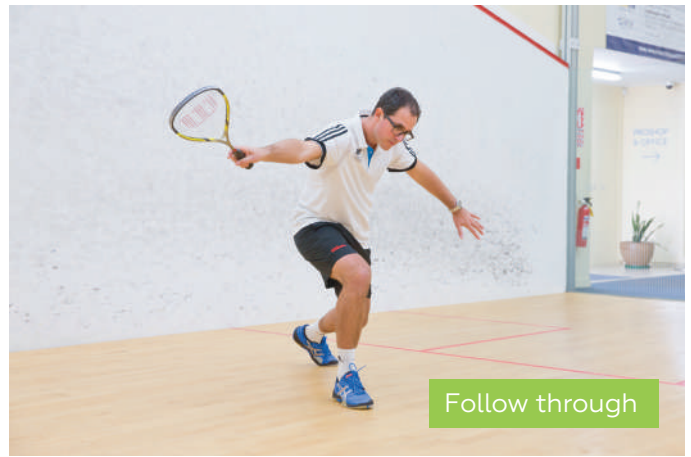
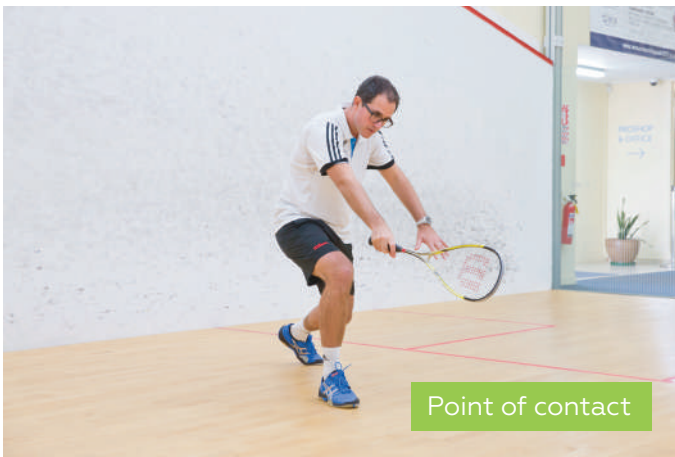
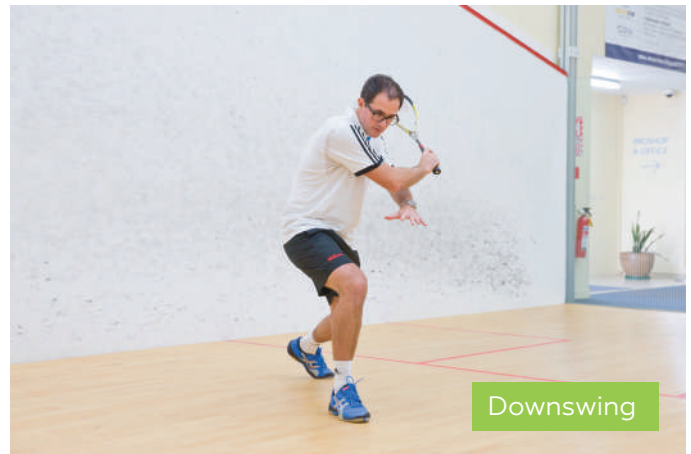
- The Drive is a shot that can be hit straight or cross-court in an effort to put pressure on an opponent in the back corners.
- The straight drive is played close to the side wall in an effort to make it difficult to return. The other advantage is that a good drive will draw an opponent away from the T area, giving you control of that area.
- A cross-court drive goes on a diagonal to the back of the court. The shot can be very effective if hit well, however it can cause problems if not hit wide enough as it can be picked up by the opponent on the volley.

Coaching Points: Forehand Swing



- Take the racket head up and back, ensuring that you have a full backswing with good spacing between the elbow and the body.
- Begin with the elbow at 90 degrees, 'throw' the racket head forward, extending your arm as you do, so that at the point of impact the arm is fully extended.
- Turn the shoulders and hips away slightly in the early phase with them finishing square to the side wall before striking for a straight drive. For a cross-court the shoulders should be in line with where you want the ball to travel.
- Weight is transferred from back foot to front foot. Lunge with your lead foot, with the knee bent, keeping your back foot down. Front knee should be just behind the foot (not in front of it).
- Staying balanced, hit through the ball, pressing the racket head forward towards its target.
- The ball should be struck level, or slightly in front of the front foot.
- Watching the ball closely, return to the T.

Coaching points: Backhand Swing



- Take the racket head up and back, ensuring that you have a good start position - elbow away from the body at 90 degrees with the racket head pointing upwards.
- Downswing should be on and through the ball.
- Elbow should be extended in the follow through, left arm acting as a balancing lever.
- Turn the shoulders and hips away slightly in the early phase with them finishing square to the side wall before striking for a straight drive. For a cross-court the shoulders should be in line with where you want the ball to travel.
- A little turn away from the ball with the shoulder and a slight rotation of the hip will help you to load the racket up in the preparation phase.
- Weight is transferred from back foot to front foot. Lunge with your lead foot, with the knee bent, keeping your back foot down. Front knee should be just behind the foot (not in front of it).
- Staying balanced hit through the ball, pressing the racket head forward towards its target.
- The ball should be struck level, or slightly in front of the front foot.
- Watching the ball closely, return to the T.

Learning Outcome: Develop an understanding of how to play a basic game of squash.
Develop a basic understanding of how a match is refereed.

Activities

- Two players play a game for five minutes.
- Two players referee a game, one is scoring the game whilst the other makes any let/stroke, in/out of court or down decisions.
- After five minutes, the players swap around so that the referees become the players and the players become the referees.
- Continue until all players have had a turn in both roles.
- Run through some cooling down exercises with participants.
- Debrief during cool down: ask the participants what they learnt from the lesson and some key points that they can take away.

Variations

- $\frac{3}{4}$ court games where the game is only played in three quarters of the court, as shown in the image below (ie. the front half court and a back quarter). The remainder of the group stands in the back quarter of the court (ie. the out zone). After each rally the winner moves to the right serving box, the loser moves to the back of the line and a new player joins the rally.
- In future lessons, add points for particular shots that are related to the theme of that lesson (eg. extra point for playing a volley).
- If extra time allows, Court Games can continue for longer than the suggested 15 minutes.



To view the full manual

Visit the Squash NZ Learning Portal:



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Lesson 2