

Maximizing your Practices

What does it take to get the most out of practice? 30 minutes of footwork drills? 2000 forehand loops? Tons of games and matches? If everyone was the same level and we all had identical goals then this would be easy to answer. However, this is clearly not the case. To attack this question successfully we need find out what you hope to accomplish at each practice.

If *overall improvement* is your main desire, you should focus on doing more drills and less games. Get together with a practice buddy and shoot for two forty-minute back-to-back sessions. Warm your forehand and backhand up for 10 minutes and then trade off with each side doing 7 1/2 minute drills. It might be helpful to place a watch or small clock near the net to help keep track of time.

Mix random and fixed placement drills and strive for consistency. Take a short 5 minute break after both players have done 2 drills each. During the break, drink plenty of water and do some light stretching. Finish the second forty minutes with more point-oriented drills. Try to get your strength into play and treat each point as if you were playing in a tournament. I will devote future weekly updates to suggested drills to practice.

If *pure enjoyment* and *exercise* are your aim, challenge as many different opponents at possible during each practice. Take pride in your wins, but don't get too upset if you lose. As you improve the wins will come on their own. If you are much stronger than an opponent, try playing to their strengths to make the match more competitive.

Likewise, if you are on the shorter end of the stick, try to play your opponent's weaknesses to keep it close. If you have a chance for the upset, go for it! Don't hold back, you have nothing to lose. To get the maximum aerobic workout, jog to pick up the ball and again drink plenty of water in between matches.

If *winning tournament matches* is your goal, then you need to take a more systematic approach. My first suggestion is to do some pre-practice planning. Take the time to use a small diary (or a notebook) to put down on paper what you want to accomplish at each practice. I have included a sample log below, but feel free to add additional categories as you see fit.

Writing down your goals, drills and thoughts before arriving at the club will help focus your intensity and ensure a more fulfilling practice. Afterwards you should schedule your next practice as well as write down any tips you learned. You should aim for a balanced mix of drills and games to maximize your tournament preparation. The closer to an upcoming event the more games and point oriented drills you should try to play. During the off-season or directly after a tournament do more drills and focus on consistency.

In the upcoming weeks, we'll focus on creating journals 2 through 4 for your book of improvement.

Perfect Practice Log	
Date:	Location:
Partner(s):	
Short Term Goal:	
Long Term Goal:	
Drills:	
Skills working well:	
Skills needing improvement:	
Notes:	
Next Practice (Time/Date):	