

MasterClass

SERENA WILLIAMS

—
Teaches Tennis



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WELCOME TO MASTERCLASS

SERENA WILLIAMS TEACHES TENNIS

A FEW FACTS ABOUT SERENA WILLIAMS

- ▶ When asked in a Trans World Sports interview at age 11 what tennis player she would like to be like, Serena responded, "I would want other tennis players to be like me."
- ▶ She has 21 Grand Slam Singles Titles, 13 Grand Slam Women's Doubles Titles, and 4 Olympic Gold Medals.
- ▶ Serena has a max serve speed of 128.6 mph (3rd fastest recorded women's serve.)
- ▶ When Serena watches match footage, she plays it on mute.
- ▶ She has also never read an article about herself: "I don't want it to go to my head. I consider myself an average individual, I just so happen to be a good tennis player."
- ▶ Serena eats a mostly raw, vegan diet.

“

Tennis is a fun sport and a great opportunity to learn a lot about life. You can learn how to fight, you can learn how to never give up. — *Serena Williams*

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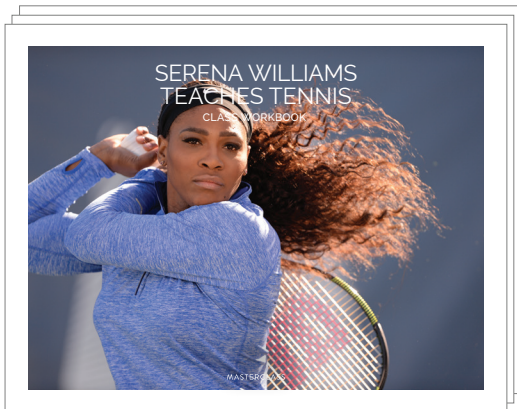


HOW TO USE THIS CLASS

Before you dive in, we have a few recommendations for getting the most out of your experience.

THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED

To enjoy this class you only need your racquet, your computer, and a desire to learn. We've found that some students learn best when using a few other tools, so here's a short list of 'nice-to-haves' to help maximize your learning potential.

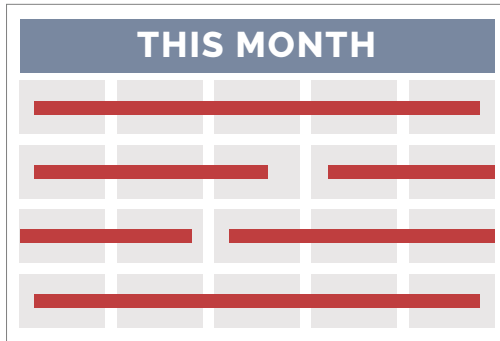


CLASS WORKBOOK

This printable PDF is filled with lesson recaps, tennis drills, and follow-up assignments.

SUGGESTED VIEWING SCHEDULE

Serena imparts her wisdom and techniques over the course of 10 lessons. While it's tempting to finish all of them in one sitting, we'd like to recommend our suggested viewing schedule, which you'll find on page 4 of this Class Workbook.

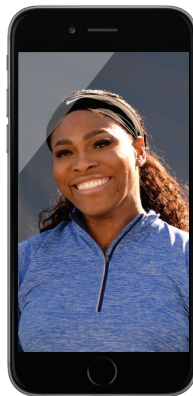


PEN OR PENCIL

Studies show that students recall more material if they record it with handwritten notes.¹ We've included space for jotting down your thoughts on each page of the Class Workbook.

WEBCAM OR SMARTPHONE

Record and upload assignments and questions for Serena to her Office Hours page.



A BLANK TENNIS JOURNAL

Start with a blank journal that you will fill with tips and techniques that you can use as reference and inspiration on the court.

A RACQUET & TENNIS BALLS

Make sure you have a racquet you are comfortable playing with and lots of new tennis balls for practice.

1 (Kiewra, K. A., DuBois, N. F., Christian, D., McShane, A., Meyerhoffer, M., & Roskelley, D. (1991). Note-taking functions and techniques. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 240-245)



THINGS YOU WILL SEE

Here are a few general tips for navigating your way around the class site:



LESSON VIDEOS

Watch and listen as Serena explains and demonstrates the fundamental philosophy of tennis, one lesson at a time.



INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Take advantage of the innovative tools and interactive assignments we've created to enhance your education.



LESSON DISCUSSIONS

Share your tennis successes and ask your peers for help and support if you've hit a roadblock.



OFFICE HOURS

Watch Serena answer questions and critique video demonstrations submitted by MasterClass students.



COMMUNITY

Continue connecting with your MasterClass peers with our community features.



QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

We want to hear from you!

Email support@masterclass.com

“

The serve is the only shot where everything relies on you.

– *Serena Williams*

”

CLEAR MIND

- ▶ A winning serve starts with a clear, relaxed mind. Put the last point behind you and forget about the score; you need to devote all your focus to your form and your serving strategy.
- ▶ The best way to clear your mind is to give it a simple task, that's why top players develop pre-serve routines. Whether it's the way they bounce the ball (like Serena), the way they bend their knees, or take a breath – the trick is to choose an easy habitual task and perform it with total concentration before every serve.

PRACTICE

- ▶ Serena's pre-serve routine is to bounce the ball 5 times before her first serve and 2 times before her second serve. Now it's time for you to develop your own. Try a few different options ten times each: don't actually hit any serves, just perform the routine and try to clear your mind. Pick whichever routine made you feel the most comfortable and relaxed.

LESSON RECAP

- ▶ Clear mind
- ▶ Toss
- ▶ Form
- ▶ Contact point
- ▶ Pronation
- ▶ Second serve
- ▶ Variety
- ▶ Adding power
- ▶ Hitting aces

NOTES

TOSS

- ▶ More than power, more than placement, Serena thinks consistency makes her serve great. The key to a consistent serve is a good, reliable toss.
 - ▼ A good toss should travel straight up in the air without spinning.
 - ▼ Keep your arm extended and hold the ball in the tips of your fingers. When you release the ball, think about your fingers opening like the petals of a flower. If the ball is spinning through the air, you need to work on perfecting this release by evening out the pressure of your fingers.
 - ▼ If the ball is moving forward or backward, work on when you're releasing. Find the perfect arm position to send the ball straight up.
 - ▼ Your toss should travel high enough that you have to reach for it when you swing through.

PRACTICE

- ▶ Spending just ten minutes a day on your toss can work wonders for your serve – you don't need a court, and you won't even break a sweat.
 - ▼ Practice somewhere where you're tossing against a visual backdrop – trees, powerlines, etc., and try to send each ball to the exact same spot.
 - ▼ Once things are feeling pretty good, film yourself from a few different angles and see how consistent your toss really is.

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PRONATION

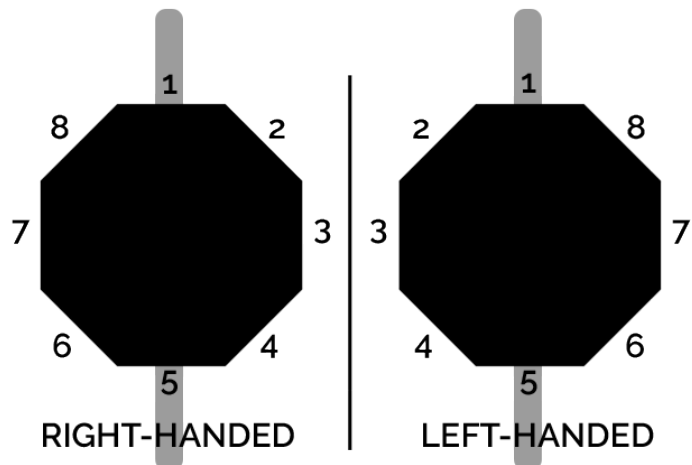
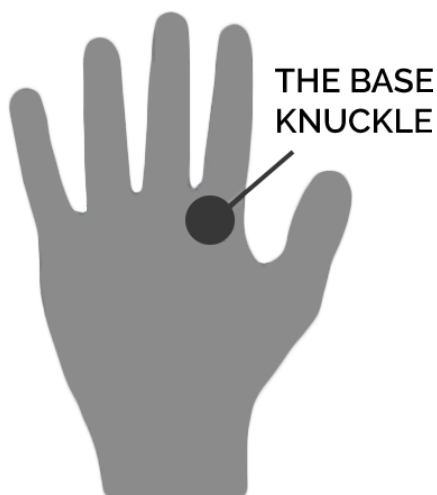
NOTES

- ▶ Now, time to start adding power. For her strongest serves, Serena tosses further out in front of her, changes her grip and pronates her wrist.
 - ▼ Tossing in front of you means your body has to drive forward to connect with the ball – this reduces spin and adds speed.
 - ▼ Serena uses an Eastern forehand grip, rather than a Continental when she serves for power. This brings the strings into more direct, perpendicular contact with ball. The more your strings are smacking the ball directly – as opposed to brushing across the ball – the less spin and more power you'll hit with.
 - ▼ Pronation is big word for "rotating your wrist." Hold your arm in front of you with your palm facing up, then turn your palm to face the ground – you're pronating your wrist. When you reach up to hit a serve at full extension, you have to pronate to bring the racquet face more perpendicular to the ball.

PRACTICE

- ▶ Proper pronation on serves separates great tennis players from good ones.
 - ▼ If you haven't already, get comfortable serving with an Eastern forehand grip. To achieve this, look down at your racquet from the bottom of the handle. There are 8 angles on the handle, and each is called a bevel. The blade of your racquet lines up with bevel #1 at the top. Now count to the right to find bevel #3 and place the base of your index finger knuckle there to find an Eastern forehand grip. Hit a few serves and feel how the movement of your arm, wrist and racquet changes.
 - ▼ Changing grips changes your racquet's path. The racquet head and the inside of your wrist start facing toward you as you swing, then as you snap through the serve, they rotate and end up facing away from you.
 - ▼ If this is happening, and it should be, you are pronating naturally. It may feel awkward at first, and you should allow yourself to make mistakes as you serve through a bucket with this new motion in mind.
 - ▼ For some, it feels less like "hitting the ball with the racquet" and more like "throwing the racquet at the ball." As a matter of fact, it is very much like throwing. Our wrists pronate in a similar way when we throw baseballs or footballs properly – and throwing balls can be a great way to get comfortable with the feeling of pronation.

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HITTING ACES

- ▶ Serena's not afraid to try for aces and you shouldn't be either. Saving yourself from running around the court to win your points can be crucial to conserving your energy. And an ace always rattles an opponent.
- ▶ In the 2013 French Open, Serena could tell she was too nervous and tired to win with her groundstrokes. She thought to herself, "Ok, to win this I just need to hit aces," and went on to win 6-4, 6-4. Aces take confidence. Imagine yourself sending a 124MPH ace across the net, throwing your racquet in the air to celebrate, and the fans cheering your well-deserved win.

PRACTICE

- ▶ Now's the time to put it all together. Review the list below to remind yourself of the key serve components you've practiced. Now when you serve through your next bucket put it all behind you, clear your mind, and try to hit aces.
 - ▼ A clear mind.
 - ▼ A reliable toss.
 - ▼ Good energy loading in the legs and core.
 - ▼ A high contact point.
 - ▼ Fast, fluid pronation of your wrist.
 - ▼ Muscle power.

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