

## *Net Play*

Where do you prefer to play most of your game? Some people prefer to play mid- or back-court or back and forth. Others try to play a “Net Game”, which is close to the kitchen line.

If you’ve watched pros play tournaments, you’ll notice they almost always play net games. But WHY? Experts tell us that Net play is valuable because most points are won at the Kitchen Line (non-volley zone). If you haven’t tried it, net play is a strategy that will improve your game, according to instructors and pros.

*But won't I make lots of foot faults if I'm that close to the kitchen line? (You're not allowed to step on the kitchen line during play).*

That’s the trick. You always need to know where you are in relationship to the line, and plant your feet right behind it. This way the only time you’re going to step forward is to take the ball off the bounce, when it’s legal to step over the line and into the kitchen. It’s something you need to practice so you don’t get called on foot faults. (Although our play is more relaxed, so sometimes foot faults are ignored.... but not in tournaments!)

Getting up to the line is not the same as staying at the line. Often a player will do a great job coming up to the line...but two shots later, they’ve backed up a foot two or three feet from the kitchen. Once you back up, it’s hard to return, and more likely your opponent will keep hitting the ball at your feet to push you farther back from the line, shot by shot. You might want to do this instead: Look down at your feet at the end of every point and notice how far you are from the kitchen line. If you’re not within 1-3 feet of the line, chances are that’s why you lost the point.

Note: Players are responsible for calling the lines on their end of the court. More on faults next week!