

# 10 beginner mistakes that cost you points

The free guide to improve faster at padel

## BEFORE WE START

You've played a few padel matches. You lose points, and half the time you don't even know why. The ball comes back, you swing harder, you miss. Your opponents lob you, you panic, you smash into the net. Sound familiar? Good news: at beginner level, you don't lose points because you lack talent. You lose them because of 10 specific mistakes, repeated again and again. Fix them and you'll climb levels without spending €60 an hour on private lessons. This guide breaks down each mistake, why it costs you points, and exactly how to fix it on your next match.

# #01

## Hitting too hard instead of placing

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

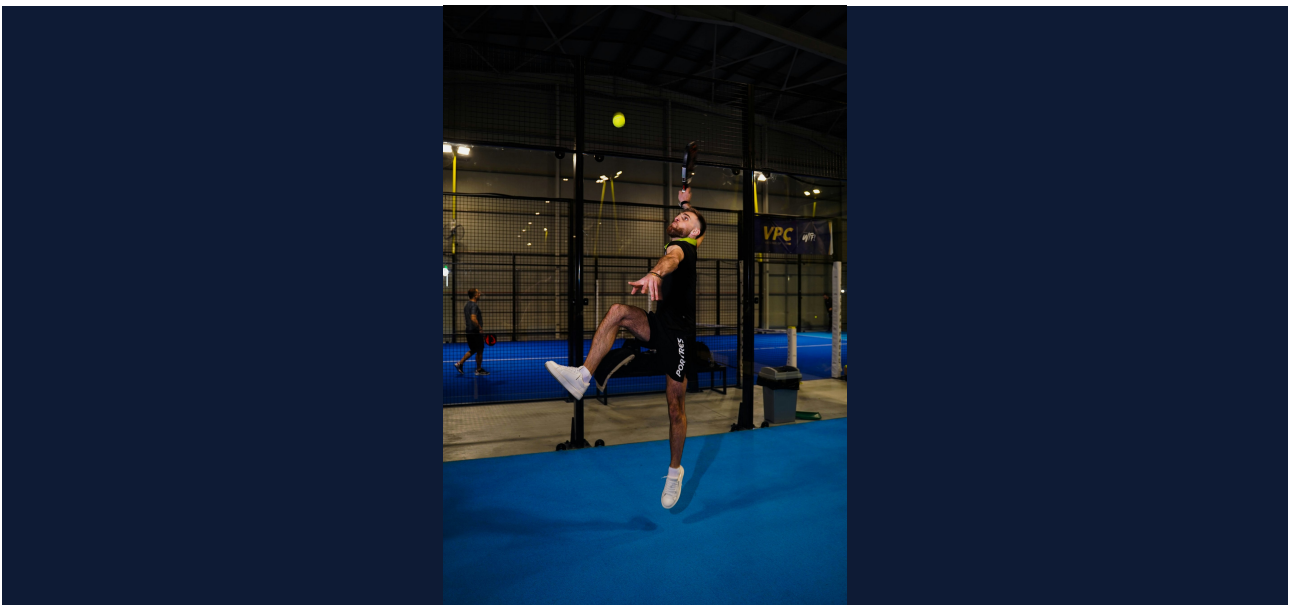
Padel is not tennis. The walls send everything back. The harder you hit, the faster the ball bounces off the glass and comes back to you. You give your opponents free counter-attacks and you make more unforced errors.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Aim for 60% power, 100% control. Place the ball at your opponents' feet, in the corners, or low at the net. A slow ball with good placement wins more points than a rocket in the middle. Before every shot, ask yourself: where, not how hard.

### PRO TIP

Play 3 full games where your only goal is to keep the ball in. You'll be shocked how many points you win just by staying patient.



# #02

## Backing up too far (letting the ball bounce off the back wall)

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You glue yourself to the back wall, the ball bounces, hits the glass behind you, and you have no space to swing. Result: a weak return your opponents finish at the net.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Stay 1 to 1.5 metres in front of the back wall. Let the ball bounce on the floor, then off the wall, then you hit. This is called the wall exit: you use the wall's rebound to play a controlled shot, often a lob. Move your feet, don't move the wall.

### PRO TIP

Mark a line on the court with your foot, 1 metre from the back wall. Don't cross it backwards. Train your body to wait for the ball, not chase it.



# #03

## Not watching your partner and opponents (game reading)

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You only watch the ball. You don't see that your partner is out of position, that the opponent is preparing a smash, or that a gap is wide open. You react late, you cover the wrong zone.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Train your eyes to scan: ball, opponents' bodies, partner's position. Between shots, glance at where your partner is. If they're pulled wide, you cover the middle. If the opponent winds up high, get ready to defend low.

### PRO TIP

After your shot, immediately look at your opponent's shoulders and racket. They tell you where the ball is going before they hit it.



# #04

## Wrong grip / racket hold

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

Most beginners hold the racket like a frying pan (face flat to the ground). You can hit a forehand, but your backhand collapses, your volley is unstable, and you can't slice.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Use the continental grip: shake hands with your racket, like you're holding a hammer. The V between thumb and index finger lines up with the top edge. This single grip works for forehand, backhand, volley, bandeja and smash. No need to switch mid-rally.

### PRO TIP

Check your grip every time you start a point. The first 100 hours of correcting it feels weird, then it feels obvious.



# #05

## Serving too hard / bad serve zone

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You blast your serve. It goes long, into the net, or sits up perfectly for the returner to smash. The serve in padel is underhand, below the waist. Power is not the goal.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Aim for a slow, low serve that bounces and dies into the side glass (the T zone). The ball should kick into the wall, forcing your opponent to dig it out awkwardly. Hit at 50% power, with slice if you can.

### PRO TIP

Win 7 out of 10 first serves before adding any power. A reliable serve into the glass is worth 10 risky bombs.



# #06

## Smashing everything that goes overhead

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

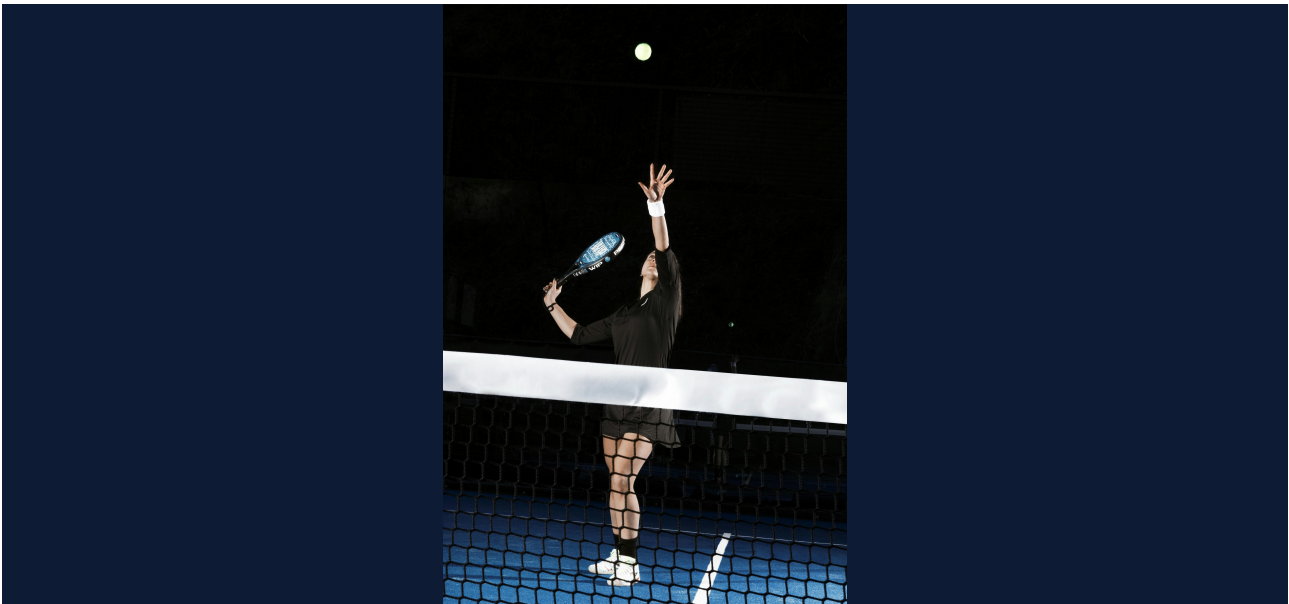
Any ball above your head, you smash. Hard. The ball flies out, or rebounds off the back glass straight back at you. Your opponents counter-attack and you lose the net.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Learn the bandeja: a controlled overhead shot, hit with slice, that lands deep in your opponent's court. It's slower than a smash, but you keep your net position. Use the smash only when the ball is short, high, and easy. Use the bandeja for everything else.

### PRO TIP

Rule of thumb: if the ball is behind your head, bandeja. If it's in front and short, smash. When in doubt, bandeja.



# #07

## Staying glued to the net without moving

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You reach the net and freeze. The opponents lob over you, or pass you wide. You can't reach anything because you're a statue.

### HOW TO FIX IT

The net is a zone, not a spot. Move forward to attack short balls, step back for lobs, slide sideways with your partner. Stay on the balls of your feet, knees bent, racket up. Move together with your partner like you're connected by a rope.

### PRO TIP

If your partner moves left, you move left. Two metres of distance between you, no more, no less.



# #08

## Not doing the bandeja / not exiting the baseline

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You're stuck at the back. Every time you get a lob you can attack, you either smash it badly or hit a soft return that lets the opponents stay at the net. You never recover the front position.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Use the bandeja to climb. Hit it deep, with slice, then move forward 3-4 steps while the ball is in the air. The goal is not to win the point with the bandeja, but to take the net. Padel is won at the net, so getting there is half the battle.

### PRO TIP

Every time you hit a bandeja, count out loud: one, two, three steps forward. It forces your feet to follow your shot.



# #09

## Communicating too late with your partner

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

Two players go for the same ball and collide. Or both leave it. You lose the point because nobody talked. Padel is a team sport played in 4 seconds per rally.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Talk before the ball arrives, not after. Use short, loud words: mine, yours, leave, out, up, back. Decide before every point who covers the middle. The player with the forehand in the middle usually takes it.

### PRO TIP

After every lost point, take 5 seconds with your partner. Not to blame, but to adjust: 'next time, you cover the lob, I take the middle.'



# #10

## Choosing the wrong racket for your level

### WHY IT COSTS YOU POINTS

You bought a black diamond-shaped racket because it looks cool and a pro uses it. It's stiff, heavy, head-heavy, and built for power. As a beginner, you have no control, your arm hurts, and you blame yourself for shots the racket is causing.

### HOW TO FIX IT

Beginners need a round-shaped racket, soft, light (340-360g), with a low balance. It forgives off-centre hits, gives you control, and protects your elbow. Save the diamond shape for when you can already place the ball at will.

### PRO TIP

Before buying, borrow 2-3 rackets from your club. Play a full match with each. Your body will tell you which one feels right, no marketing needed.



## WRAPPING UP

You don't need 50 hours of private lessons to fix these 10 mistakes. You need awareness, repetition, and honest feedback. Pick one mistake per session. Focus only on that one for an entire match. Then move to the next. In 10 matches, you'll already feel like a different player. Padel rewards smart players, not strong ones. Place over power, position over panic, partner over solo. The faster you accept that, the faster you climb.

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