# Week 6: Creating Space for Speedups

**60 minutes | 16 players | 4 courts | Current level: 4.0+**

Hi everyone! This week we are focusing on speedups off the bounce, including using movement and dink positioning to create attacking opportunities. Part of the goal is to realize that speedups don't have to be particularly hard when opponents are out of position. That means that our plan needs to be recognizing when a hole exists and then keeping the attack from being too hard.

## Goals for this week

- Some basic work on resets while approaching and retreating.
- Using middle and wide dinks to move opponents, to set up speedups.
- Controlling off-the-bounce speedups to various targets.
- Communicating middle coverage and attacking possibilities with your partner.

## Drilling Plan

| # | Time | Drill | Type | Minutes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 00–15 | One step at a time | Warmup | 15 |
| 2 | 15–30 | Middle, wide, putaway | Tactic | 15 |
| 3 | 30–45 | Controlled speedups off the bounce | Mechanic | 15 |
| 4 | 45–60 | Center versus outside dinks | Tactic | 15 |
| | 60–150 | Rec play | Point play | 90 |

## Getting started

- **Groups.** Four players per court, all active. We will assign groups and courts between blocks. Within each block, use the switches below, no need to stay with a previous partner.
- **One ball or two?** Two up-the-line balls for drills 1 and 3 and one ball with all four players for drills 2 and 4.
- **Practice, then evaluate.** These are all unscored drills (although you might like to track how many speedups you can keep in. Use friendly feeds and replay unusable ones. Judge the decision separately from the execution.

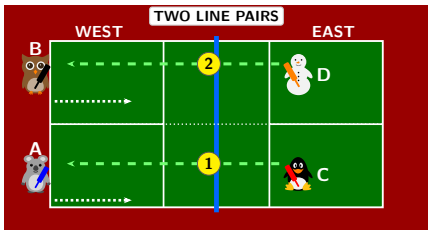
## In rec play

Choose one pattern with your partner before each rally and watch whether the opponents actually move before speeding up recover your paddle for the counter.



## 1. One step at a time 00–15 min

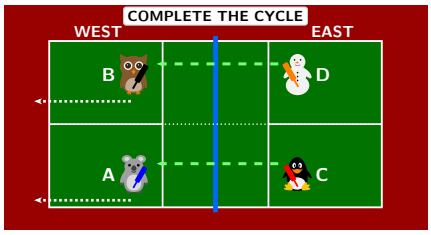
**Key idea.** Focus on appropriate targets based on vertical position.




**1.** A/B advance one step after each hit. C/D feed gently toward their feet.




**2.** When A/B reach the kitchen, C/D retreat to baseline, then return.




**3.** Once C/D return, A/B retreat. Both have gone up and back.

**Set up.** Two balls, up-the-line pairs A/C and B/D. A/B start at their baseline while C/D at the kitchen line. The kitchen player begins with a gentle feed toward the baseline player's feet.

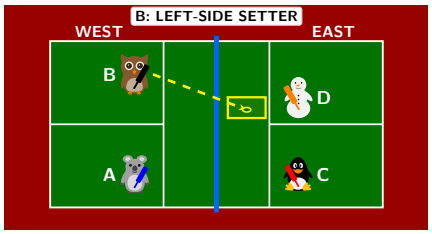
**Drill notes.**

1. A approaches one step **after each of A's contacts**, settling before the next ball. C stays at the kitchen and sends controlled balls toward A's feet. A returns softly toward C. B/D do the same independently.
2. When A reaches the kitchen line, C retreats one step after each of C's contacts. A now supplies the gentle feet balls. At the baseline, C starts approaching again. When C reaches the kitchen, A retreats to the baseline.
3. That completes one full cycle: **A up, C back, C up, A back**. Keep going and count complete cycles without a miss. On a miss, that pair returns to its assigned starting spots and restarts at zero. Keep the pace cooperative.

**Timing and switches.** One-minute demo then practice to minute 7 before switching sides (keep your same hitting partner).

## 2. Middle, wide, then putaway 15–30 min

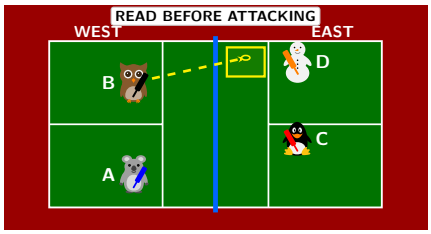
**Key idea.** Create an opening with dinks but only speed up if it stays open.




**1.** After D's soft feed, B dinks to D's inside foot. D returns to B.




**2.** B dinks wide to D, then recovers. C closes the middle as D moves out.




**3.** After D's reply, covered middle means another wide dink. Speed up only into an open gap.

**Set up.** One ball, all four at the kitchen. B is the left-side setter while D is up the line and C is D's partner. D feeds a soft dink to B. A stays involved in coverage and the live rally.

**Drill notes.**

1. B dinks to D's inside foot near the middle. D returns to B and then B then dinks wide to D. D returns to B again. These are B's first two shots, not two consecutive rally contacts.
2. C closes the middle as D moves wide. If C covers the center, B stays soft and dinks wide to move the defenders again. If C is lazy and B gets a good ball, B speeds up off the bounce into that gap attempting to keep it controlled (and in).
3. After B's decision, all four play the rally out. Restart the pattern with D's feed after a miss or rally end. For the first minute of each turn rehearse C closing and B choosing wide. For the next two minutes defend naturally as B reads the actual coverage.

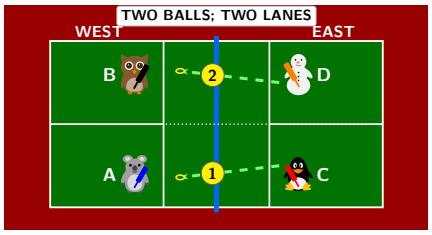
**Timing and switches.** One-minute demo, then rotate every five balls that are played out.



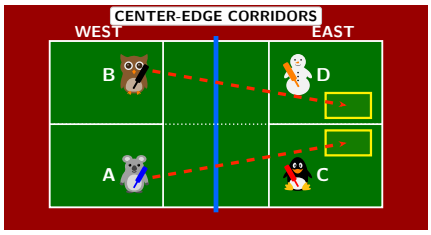
## 3. Controlled speedups off the bounce

**30–45 min**

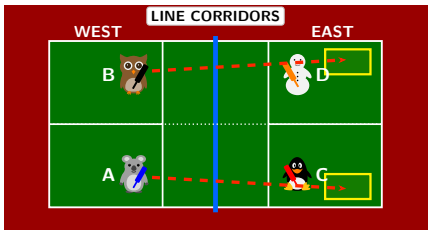
**Key idea.** A compact stroke and useful placement are more important than more speed.




**1.** C/D feed dead dinks. A/B let them bounce and prepare a compact swing.




**2.** Controlled speedups toward each lane's center edge. Keep both balls in their own half.




**3.** Change direction to the line corridors. Aim with control and recover the paddle.

**Set up.** Two balls, up-the-line pairs A/C and B/D at the kitchen. C/D feed dead dinks that bounce comfortably in front of A/B. Mark broad yellow direction targets beyond the receiving kitchen with one toward the line, one toward the center edge of each pair's own half, both with margin from the side lines and baseline.

**Drill notes.**

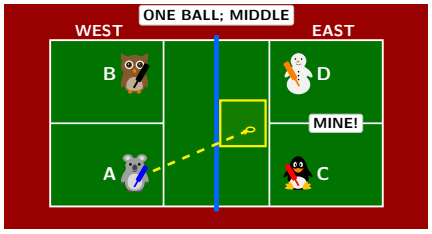
- Let the feed bounce, then use a short swing to send a controlled speedup to the called target. Work through five center attempts, then five line attempts, repeating as time allows. Replay bad feeds.
- Hit from a balanced base with contact in front. Use enough lift to clear the net, then bring the paddle back ready. A speedup only helps if the ball stays in and leaves you ready for the reply if your opponents get to it.
- The feeder may block softly for control but don't continue the point or turn it into a hands battle.

**Timing and switches.** One-minute demo, then alternate roles and positions every 10 balls (5 to each target).

## 4. Center versus outside dinks

**45–60 min**

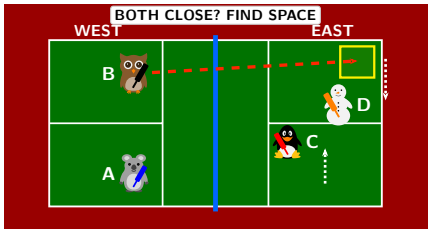
**Key idea.** Make the defenders move and communicate while attacking the space they leave.




**1.** A/B dink middle. C/D call who takes the ball and where the reply will go.




**2.** C/D aim their dinks outside. Call the target, then recover together.




**3.** If C/D both crowd the middle, B looks for the open outside lane. Keep the attack in.

**Set up.** One ball, everyone at the kitchen. A/B try to send their dinks to a broad center band while C/D try send theirs toward either outside sideline, with margin. The current center team alternates feeders, starting each rally with a gentle center feed.

**Drill notes.**

- **Center team:** keep asking the opponents to decide who takes the middle. If both crowd or commit to it, look for the exposed line/outside lane. Speed up only from a usable ball and in particular don't force it into the covered middle.
- **Outside team:** call "mine" or "yours" early for middle balls, and communicate the next outside target (line or crosscourt). This is especially useful with stacking partnerships. You should agree on coverage rather than assuming who will take every middle ball.
- Keep the target constraints while dinking. Either team may attack a good opening and after the first speedup, play the rally freely. Then restart the assigned dink patterns. Both partners stay connected and recover between shots.

**Timing and switches.** One-minute demo, then alternate roles every 5 points. Swap center/outside jobs in place after the second round.

