

BOSTON RACQUET COMPANY

STRINGING INFORMATION AND FAQ'S

PLAYABILITY

It's very difficult to obtain consensus on what makes a string playable. Some players like a crisp, firm playing string while others equate playability with softness and comfort. Generally, a playable string is resilient, which means it snaps back quickly upon ball impact. The material, construction, and thickness of a string will all affect the playability of a string. The most resilient (playable) string at this time is still natural gut. This is the only string made from a natural product - beef intestines. It is the oldest tennis string made and remains the benchmark for playability. Some of the most popular playability strings include: **Babolat Synthetic Gut**, **Gamma Pro**, and **Wilson Sensation NXT**.

DURABILITY

Thicker gauges and abrasion resistant materials will be more durable, but they are less elastic and resilient than their thinner, nylon-based counterparts. If a player is breaking a 16 gauge nylon string (synthetic gut), we might suggest they switch to a nylon durability string, such as **RPM Blast**. After that, we recommend trying a polyester string, such as **Luxilon** strings.

TENSION

Lower tensions provide more power, tighter tensions provide more control. This is a very general rule of thumb. Advanced players who swing fast and hit hard usually need more control and will, therefore, benefit from tighter tensions. There are, of course, always exceptions but these generalizations apply to the majority of players.

Each racquet has a recommended tension range. This range has been determined by the manufacturer as a result of extensive playtesting by real players. If a player doesn't have a specific need (more power, arm problems, etc.), he should start at mid-range and make any adjustments from there.

Otherwise, here are some specific guidelines for selecting a string tension.

String Tension	Power	Control	Durability	Feel	Comfort
softer	more	less	less	more	more
tighter	less	more	more	less	less

TENSIONS FOR CONDITIONS

- **Court Surfaces:** On hard surfaces, the ball tends to move faster because less energy is absorbed from the ball by the court. On soft surfaces, the ball moves slower. Players have more control and more time to react. Drop tension (2-5 pounds) for clay court players to add power and depth to their shots.
- **Injury:** Arm or wrist troubles may require a reduced tension to get depth and power without as hard a swing. Also suggest as large a grip as your customer can comfortably hold. Temporarily switching to a thinner and/or more elastic string will also help. If the player's budget allows, recommend natural gut, which offers the most comfort and power
- **Baseliner or Volleyer:** Type of play can dictate tension preference as well. Baseliners want a lower tension to give them more power to hit deeper shots. Serve and volley players may want higher tensions for control and accuracy in their net game.

POWER

As we stated above, if a player is seeking more power they should try dropping tension a few pounds. The stringbed will deflect more, returning greater energy to the ball.

Control - a tighter stringbed deflects less and deforms the ball more, providing less energy than looser strings. This means the ball won't fly as far when you hit it. Intermediate and advanced players who are hitting a lot of long balls will be able to reduce the depth of their shots without changing their swing. It is also generally accepted that spin potential is enhanced with higher tensions, which provides even more control for topspin and slice players.

Arm Injuries - lower tensions result in a softer stringbed and a larger sweetspot, reducing the amount of shock and vibration transmitted to the hand and elbow.

STRING GAUGE

Generally speaking, thinner strings offer improved playability while thicker strings offer enhanced durability. Tennis string gauges range from 15 (thickest) to 19 (thinnest).

String Gauge	Elasticity	Durability	Spin	Feel	Comfort
thinner	more	less	more	more	more
thicker	less	more	less	less	less

MATERIALS

Natural Gut: Most common among pro players and club level players, downsides include high price and being weather sensitive. The ultimate in playability and feel. Often overlooked due to it's cost, natural gut is the best choice for players with arm problems or those who simply want the best. Now used more in hybrids, combining polyester mains with natural gut crosses. **Ex:** Babolat VS Natural Gut

Multifilament Synthetic Gut-Multifilament is a coreless string with multiple synthetic fibers twisted together similar to natural gut. Advantages include increased playability and feel over a monofilament string. **Ex:** Wilson NXT

Monofilament Synthetic Gut-The most popular synthetic on the market, they derive durability and tension retention properties from their solid center cores. An outer wrap of smaller filaments or fibers assist in retaining tension and protect the core from small nicks and abrasions. The number & construction of wrapped filaments, diameters, and blends vary from string to string. **Ex:** Babolat Synthetic Gut, Prince Synthetic Gut Original

Polyester: A very durable string designed for string breakers-not much power or feel. Often used in hybrids, combining polyester mains with softer synthetic or natural gut mains. This offers the durability benefits of polyester, while reducing the stiff, dead feel. Also easier to string than 100% polyester. Not recommended for beginning players or players with arm injuries.

- Side note **Hybrids:** Hybrid strings consist usually of a durable string in the mains (poly) and highly elastic synthetic strings or natural gut strings are used to provide comfort and feel in the crosses. Hybrids provide good playing characteristics while a poly/multi hybrid often lasts longer than a pure

FAQs

Q. How can I determine what is the correct grip size for me?

A. Players should use whichever grip size feels most comfortable. A small handle allows you to manage the racquet easily. Common wisdom was that players should use a larger grip because it was less stressful to the arm; I think that the opposite is true and that it is easier to maintain a relaxed grip with a smaller handle size.

Q. What effect will the summer heat and winter cold have on my rackets? What is the best way to protect them?

A. Changes in temperature can affect the strings and string tensions. Cold weather can make them harder and more brittle while hot weather can make them softer and more elastic. You should always keep your racquets in a climate controlled location.

Q. What is lead tape?

A. Players should use the heaviest racquet possible which does not compromise swing speed or comfort. If the player can handle the weight, it is easier on the arm because there is less vibration and produces greater force with the same effort.

Q. When should I restring my racquet?

A. Restring your racquets as often per year as you play per week.

Q. I have been using polyester strings for a while now and am starting to feel frequent pains in my forearm after playing, not elbow. Does the pain have to do with the strings?

A. Polyester strings are less forgiving than other synthetics. However, they do last longer and, for some, the playability is better. So you can either loosen the tension or change to a synthetic, softer string.

Q: What is a hybrid?

A: A hybrid is a combination of 2 different strings. One string on the cross and the other string on the mains. You can hybrid a synthetic and a poly to get a great combination of power, control and playability.

Q. I am recovering from having tennis elbow and am getting back on court, do you have any tips?

A. You should restring your racquet 5-10 pounds lighter in tension than normal. You might also adjust the size of your grip. Generally, the larger the handle, the less stress to your wrist and forearm.

You should warm up your arm thoroughly before starting and then specifically ice your elbow after you are finished.