

DOUBLES: 5 Easy Questions to Ask Your Serving Partner (When They Prefer to Stay Back)

by Brent Abel - WebTennis.com

Great doubles partners ask questions.

They never make demands about shot choices or specific playing styles.

When your partner likes to stay back after their serve, and you prefer to play up at the net, the worst thing you can do is try to force them into a more aggressive style.

That almost always creates tension, low confidence, and resentment.

Not a great recipe for forging a winning partnership.

A much better approach is to ask simple questions that let them feel in control of their own game ... while still allowing you to play your style with confidence inside a strong blended partnership.

Here are five easy partnership cementing questions you can ask your serving partner at the beginning of the match and/or during anytime during the match ... that work really well if they prefer to stay back.

1. “What’s your favorite serve right now?”

Especially on important points, I like to ask my partner at let’s say an ad-in point at 4-all in any set. There could be some added pressure at that moment, and your job is to minimize that stress.

Instead of telling them where to serve or what type of serve to hit that will enable you to be in charge of a possible poach, allow them the freedom to be in charge of choosing the type (or direction) of the serve ... they feel most confident with on that day and at that moment.

Once they answer, simply add: “Got it. Perfect. I’ll definitely work with that.”

This small exchange immediately lowers the pressure on them and shows you’re adapting to *their* strengths.

2. “Hey, what about hand signals? Want me to signal your serve direction and whether I’ll poach or fake? If you’d rather just freelance without signals, I’m totally good with that too.”

Many stay-back players dislike signals that force them into having to perform something specific that they're not confident with.

By offering signals as an option (and clearly giving them permission to decline), you remove any sense that you're making them do something that might create stress and a fear of failing you.

Most partners appreciate the flexibility. Some will say yes to signals, others will prefer to keep it simple. Either answer is fine — the important part is that *they* get to decide.

3. “Do you want me to start in the middle of the service box, up tight on the net, or farther back in the box so I can better cover lobs?”

This question shows you're thinking about court coverage in a way that supports their preferred style.

When a partner stays back, they often worry about being exposed to lobs or hard returns down the line.

By asking where they want you to start, you give them a sense of security and demonstrate that you're willing to adjust your positioning for the team.

4. “Is it OK if I freelance fake poaching a lot to try and distract the returner? I won't do it if you feel that might throw you off.”

Fake poaching can be a very effective tactic, but only if your partner is comfortable with it. Some partners will be. Some partners won't be. And that's OK.

Some servers get distracted or feel rushed when they see movement in front of them. Asking permission first (and giving them an easy out) protects their comfort in shot choice and visual ball-tracking ... while still opening the door for you to create pressure on the returner.

5. “When they return your serve back to you, and you play your next shot cross-court at their feet, OK if I pinch the middle and look to intercept something close to me or poach?”

This is one of the most useful partnership building questions you can ask.

It lets your partner keep their preferred pattern (staying back and hitting cross-court) while giving you a clear green light to move a step closer to pinch the middle and even poach on the next ball.

You're not demanding they come in or change their style — you're simply asking how you can attack off the ball *they* like to hit.

These five questions do something most doubles players never do:
They make your partner feel you totally support and trust their preferred style of play ... instead of being told what to do or worse ... corrected.

Great doubles partners ask questions. They don't make demands.

When a stay-back partner feels you're genuinely trying to help them succeed with *their* game, trust rises quickly. And when trust rises, both of you are going to consistently play up to your best stuff.

NEXT: Want the complete Play For Your Partner Playbook?

I recently put together a new 6 page PDF **Play for Your Partner Playbook** (that comes with 3 Bonus doubles specific videos) that shows you exactly how to handle different styles, rough patches, and the most common partner frustrations so you become the doubles partner everyone wants to play with.

It's how to become a GREAT doubles **player** ... by becoming a GREAT doubles **partner**.

Normally the PDF and 3 Bonus videos retail for \$308.

But right now for a limited time ... it's being offered at an introductory price of just \$17 for the entire bundle.

You can get more details about what's in the bundle to see if this is a good fit for your doubles game ... and pick it up here ...

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Keep workin' ...

Brent

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