

Series Preface

The Steps to Success Activity Series is a breakthrough in skill instruction through the development of complete learning progressions—the *steps to success*. These *steps* help individuals quickly perform basic skills successfully and prepare them to acquire more advanced skills readily. At each step, individuals are encouraged to learn at their own pace and to integrate their new skills into the total action of the activity.

The unique features of the Steps to Success Activity Series are the result of comprehensive development—through analyzing existing activity books, incorporating the latest research from the sport sciences and consulting with students, instructors, teacher educators, and administrators. This groundwork pointed up the need for three different types of books—for participants, instructors, and teacher educators—which we have created and together comprise the Steps to Success Activity Series.

This participant's book, *Table Tennis: Steps to Success*, is a self-paced, step-by-step guide that you can use as an instructional tool. The unique features of this participant's book include

- sequential illustrations that clearly show proper technique,
- helpful suggestions for detecting and correcting errors,
- excellent practice progressions with accompanying *Success Goals* for measuring performance, and
- checklists for rating technique.

Many of the activities in the Steps to Success Activity Series also have a comprehensive instructor's guide. However, one has not been developed for table tennis.

The series textbook, *Instructional Design for Teaching Physical Activities* (Vickers, 1990), explains the

steps to success model, which is the basis for the Steps to Success Activity Series. Teacher educators can use the series textbook in their professional preparation classes to help future teachers and coaches learn how to design effective physical activity programs in school, recreation, or community teaching and coaching settings.

After identifying the need for various texts, we refined the *steps to success* instructional design model and developed prototypes. Once these prototypes were fine-tuned, we carefully selected authors for the activities who were not only thoroughly familiar with their sports but also had years of experience in teaching them. Each author had to be known as a gifted instructor who understands the teaching of sport so thoroughly that he or she could readily apply the *steps to success* model.

Next, all of the manuscripts were carefully developed to meet the guidelines of the *steps to success* model. Then our production team, along with outstanding artists, created a highly visual, user-friendly series of books.

The result: The Steps to Success Activity Series is the premier sports instructional series available today.

This series would not have been possible without the contributions of the following:

- Dr. Rainer Martens, Publisher,
- Dr. Joan Vickers, instructional design expert,
- the staff of Human Kinetics Publishers, and
- the *many* students, teachers, coaches, consultants, teacher educators, specialists, and administrators who shared their ideas—and dreams.

Judy Patterson Wright
Series Editor

Preface

This book is for beginning, intermediate, and advanced table tennis players. It is for those who have that deep-down desire to be a champion and those who are in it mostly for fun. Above all, this book is intended to help you make the most of your abilities, whatever your skill level. In short, this book is for you.

In these pages you'll find the many steps it takes to become a good table tennis player. Some of the steps are easy, some are hard, but all will help you in some way.

This book has allowed me to get down on paper all the playing techniques I've learned over the years. Much of the content comes from years of observing and teaching at the Olympic Training Center, and at the National Table Tennis Center with my fellow coaches Cheng Yinghua and Jack Huang. Still more has come from long discussions and even heated debates among top coaches and players I have worked with, especially Sean O'Neill and Dan Seemiller (who've won 10 U.S. men's singles titles between them), who both greatly helped in the presentation of the finer points of the game.

The techniques taught in this book are not the final word in table tennis. There are always differences of opinions among coaches in any sport, even among the best coaches in the world. This book is one correct and highly successful set of techniques, the most commonly taught ones. What makes this book unique is the way they are taught.

This book takes the reader on a table tennis journey that has been many years in the planning. In general, the progression goes from introductory principles (e.g., grip, spin, and serves), to positioning and footwork, to the shots themselves, and finally to the strategies involved. There is a logical progression of shots, starting with the simple and working up to the difficult. Each step shows how its material can be used in a real match situation. Each step integrates what is being taught with what has already been taught. Each step includes drills to practice what you've learned.

This book has many unique aspects. It stresses the importance of footwork right from the start, and it teaches both two-step and crossover footwork; it teaches the finer points of the grip, as well as covering the Seemiller grip and the Korean and Chinese penhold grips; it covers advanced serves and their techniques; it covers the return of serve, including flipping and short pushes. Each stroke description (and everything else in the book) was reviewed and

approved by an editorial board of seven top coaches. It's the first book to cover strategy extensively, a real lack in many books. Finally, each step of the way you will be learning the many drills you should do to become a top player. More than 120 drills are taught in this book.

A revolutionary approach to footwork is taken in this book. In most books on table tennis, footwork is taught at the very end, almost as an afterthought. Here, footwork is taught as it should be, as close to the beginning as possible. How can you hit a shot properly until you've learned to move into position?

Many have commented favorably on the strategy chapters taught here. There have been other books on table tennis, but none have adequately covered this subject. I've never understood why this was so, since strategy is so much a part of the game—more so than in almost any other sport. The hard part was limiting myself to just two chapters, plus many tactical suggestions in other sections. Someday I hope to write an entire book on tactics. As it is, the strategy sections are longer than some entire books on table tennis!

The section on advanced serves is, as far as I know, the first real description of advanced serves in print. Return of serve is covered extensively, from beginning to more advanced shots like the flip and short push.

Throughout this book, techniques are taught for right-handers. If you're left-handed, merely reverse accordingly, and please accept my apologies for not addressing you directly.

I would like to thank Human Kinetics (especially Dr. Judy Patterson Wright, my developmental editor, and Brian Holding, who helped get the whole thing started) for the help and advice they gave me. Without their help this book would not exist. I would like to thank Perry Malouf, Elaine Hodges, Dr. Lin, and Donna Sakai for taking the photos that the drawings are based on, and Sean O'Neill, Laura Lin, and Jennifer Newell, who served as the models for many of the photos. I would also like to thank Sean for the extensive editing and critiquing he did in the book's early drafts. I would like to thank Butterfly Table Tennis for their support of this project. And I would like to thank USA Table Tennis and President Dan Seemiller for all their help and support, and especially the USATT editorial board, which reviewed and made recommendations for the book.

Larry Hodges

USATT Editorial Board

- **George Braithwaite**, former U.S. team member, many-time U.S. Senior Champion, member of USATT Hall of Fame
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- **Dan Seemiller**, five-time USA Men's Singles National Champion, USA men's team head coach, member of USATT Hall of Fame

The Steps to Success Staircase

Get ready to climb a staircase—one that will lead you to be a great table tennis player. You can't leap to the top; you get there one step at a time.

Each of the 15 steps you'll take is an easy transition from the one before. The first few steps of the staircase provide a solid foundation of basic skills and concepts. As you progress further, you'll learn how to connect groups of those seemingly isolated skills. Practicing combinations of table tennis skills will give you the experience you need to make natural and accurate decisions at the table. You'll learn to choose the proper stroke to match your particular table tennis needs—whether for quickness, power, deception, or just fun. As you near the top of the staircase, the climb will ease, and you'll find that you have developed a sense of confidence in your table tennis abilities that makes further progress a real joy.

To prepare to become a good climber, familiarize yourself with this and the following sections: "Table Tennis Today," "Table Tennis Equipment," and "Warming Up for Success." They'll orient you and show you how to set up your practice sessions.

Follow the same sequence each step of the way:

1. Read the explanations of what is covered in the step, why the step is important, and how to execute or perform the step's focus, which may be a basic skill, concept, or tactic, or combination of the three.
2. Follow the numbered illustrations showing exactly how to position your body to execute each basic skill. There are three gen-

eral parts to each skill: preparation (getting into a starting position), execution (performing the skill), and follow-through (recovering to starting position). These are your "Keys to Success."

3. Look over the descriptions of common errors that may occur and the recommendations for how to correct them.
4. Read the directions and the Success Goal for each drill. Practice accordingly, record your score, and compare your score with the Success Goal. You should meet the Success Goal of each drill before moving on to the next, because the drills progress from easy to difficult. This sequence is designed to help you improve your skills through repetition and purposeful practice.
5. As soon as you reach all the Success Goals for one step, you are ready for a qualified observer—such as your teacher, coach, or training partner—to evaluate your basic skill technique by comparing them to the Keys to Success for each technique. This is a qualitative, or subjective, evaluation of your basic technique or form. Remember, using correct form will enhance your performance.
6. Go through these procedures for each of the 15 Steps to Success. Then rate yourself according to the directions for "Rating Your Total Progress."

Good luck in your step-by-step journey. You'll develop your table tennis skills, build confidence, be successful, and have fun!

