

Special Olympics Coaching Guide

TENNIS

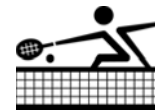


Special Olympics



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TENNIS COACHING GUIDE



Benefits of Tennis

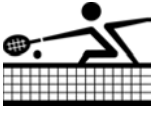
Tennis is a popular sport played at all levels of skill and by players of all ages. It emphasizes values, such as fair play, sportsmanship and respect for fellow competitors. Tennis is not only fun to play, but it is a lifetime sport activity that is fun to practice and fun to learn.

You do not need to be an expert to begin coaching, only enthusiasm and a commitment to learn the basics. With guidance, anyone with time and interest can become a successful Special Olympics tennis coach and help athletes with intellectual disabilities join the worldwide tennis family.

Tennis Events Offered

Tennis competition is based on athlete ability level.

- ♦ For athletes with lower ability and limited court mobility, competition is offered in individual skills competition.
- ♦ For athletes transitioning from individual skills to traditional match play, competition is offered in Short Court Tennis.
- ♦ For athletes with higher physical ability, competition is offered in traditional match play (singles and doubles) and Unified Sports[®] doubles.
- ♦ For the actual tennis events offered, see the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis.



Acknowledgements

The Special Olympics movement is profoundly grateful for the support of the Annenberg Foundation which has underwritten the production of this guide and resource, supporting our global goals for coaches' excellence.



Advancing the public well-being through improved communication

Special Olympics would also like to thank the professionals, volunteers, coaches and athletes who helped in the production of the *Tennis Coaching Guide*. They have helped fulfill the mission of Special Olympics: to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people 8 years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

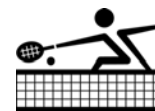
Special Olympics welcomes your ideas and comments for future revisions of this guide. We apologize if, for any reason, an acknowledgement has been inadvertently omitted.

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TENNIS COACHING GUIDE

Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

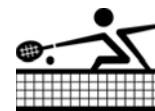
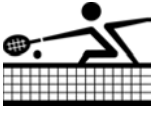


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Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Setting Goals

Realistic, yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation.

Elements of Setting Goals

Setting goals is a joint effort with the athlete and coach. The main features of goal setting include the following.

Structured into short-term, intermediate and long-term

- ♦ Stepping stones to success
- ♦ Must be accepted by the athlete
- ♦ Vary in difficulty - easily attainable to challenging
- ♦ Must be measurable

Short-Term Objective

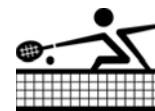
Learning tennis in a fun environment.

Long-Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic tennis skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in tennis competitions.

Benefits

- ♦ Increases athlete's level of physical fitness.
- ♦ Teaches self-discipline
- ♦ Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
- ♦ Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction



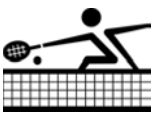
Essential Components of Planning a Tennis Training Session

Each training session needs to contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the goal of the training session, the time of season the session is in and the amount of time available for a particular session. The following elements need to be included in an athlete's daily training program. Please refer to the noted sections in each area for more in-depth information and guidance on these topics.

- ☐ Warm-ups
- ☐ Previously taught skills
- ☐ New skills
- ☐ Competition experience
- ☐ Feedback on performance

The final step in planning a training session is designing what the athlete is actually going to do. Remember when creating a training session using the key components of a training session, the progression through the session allows for a gradual build-up of physical activity.

1. Easy to difficult
2. Slow to fast
3. Known to unknown
4. General to specific
5. Start to finish

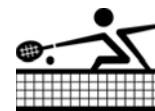


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Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Principles of Effective Training Sessions

Keep all athletes active	Athletes need to be active listeners.
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them.
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction. Have consistent stop and listen signal
Record progress	Chart progress together with your athlete.
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well.
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom.
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun. Help keep it this way for you and your athletes.
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully♦ Simple to complex – seeing that “I can do it”♦ General to specific – “this is why I am working so hard”
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively.
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities.

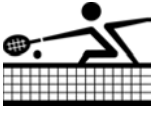


Coaches' Top 10 Principles of Effective Planning

1. Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance to your training plan.
2. When possible, have all equipment and courts prepared before the athletes arrive. Walk the court area and remove unsafe objects.
3. Provide positive reinforcement and “make it fun.”
4. Safety: Each athlete should (1) find their own personal space, (2) hug racquets against chest when listening to instructions from the coach, and (3) hit only on a cue from the coach.



5. Alter the plan according to weather and the facility in order to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
6. Change activities before the athlete becomes bored or loses interest, keeping all players involved.
7. Devote the end of the practice to a fun, group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun and provide athletes with something to look forward to at the end of each practice. This will also assist with assessing the players' progress.
8. Coaches should maintain a command of the court through voice, direction or delegation.
9. Summarize the session, and announce arrangements for the next session.
10. Recognize your volunteers.



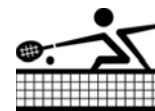
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Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of tennis. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Tennis is not a dangerous sport, but accidents do occur when coaches forget to take safety precautions. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

- ☐ Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them. Some examples are:
 - ☐ Keep your hands to yourself.
 - ☐ Listen to the coach.
 - ☐ When you hear the whistle, "Stop, Look, and Listen."
 - ☐ Ask the coach before you leave the field of play.
- ☐ When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from inclement weather.
- ☐ Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
- ☐ Check your first-aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
- ☐ Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
- ☐ Choose a safe field area. Do not practice in areas with rocks or holes that could cause injury. Simply telling players to avoid obstacles is not enough.
- ☐ Walk the court area and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that a player might run in to.
- ☐ Review your first-aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first aid and CPR on or very near to the field during practice and games.
- ☐ Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each practice to prevent muscle injuries.



Tennis Practice Competitions

The more athletes compete, the better they get. Part of the strategic plan for Special Olympics tennis is to drive more sport development at the local levels. Competition motivates athletes, coaches and the entire sport management team. Expand or add to your schedule as many competition opportunities as possible. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Schedule matches with nearby local Special Olympics Programs.
2. Ask the local high school if your athletes can practice with the team and play practice matches.
3. Join the local community tennis club and/or associations.
4. Host weekly matches.
5. Create a tennis league or club in your community.
6. Incorporate competition components at the end of every training session.

Selecting Team Members

The key to the successful development of a traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports team is the proper selection of team members.

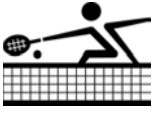
Ability Grouping for Unified Sports Doubles or Doubles

Unified Sports teams work best when all team members have similar sports skills. Partners with abilities that are far superior to other teammates will either control competition or accommodate others by not competing to their potential. In both situations, the goals of interaction and teamwork are diminished and a true competitive experience is not achieved. For example, in tennis, an 8-year-old should not be competing against or with a 30-year-old athlete.

Age Grouping

All team members should be closely matched in age.

- ♦ Within 3-5 years of age for athletes 21 years of age and under
- ♦ Within 10-15 years for athletes 22 years of age and over



Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

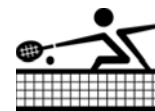
Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. When selecting your Unified Sports team you want to achieve meaningful involvement throughout your sport season. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for all athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- ◆ Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- ◆ Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- ◆ Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- ◆ Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser abilities.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

- ◆ Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- ◆ Act as on-field coaches, rather than teammates.
- ◆ Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- ◆ Do not train or practice regularly, and only show up on the day of competition.
- ◆ Lower their level of ability dramatically, so they do not hurt others or control the entire game.



Special Olympics Tennis Rating System

The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is a systematic method to determine the skill ability of an athlete. The system is designed to assist coaches in determining an athlete's ability level in tennis before they begin participation. The rating is also used in preliminary divisioning of athletes for competition. Coaches will find the rating system a useful tool for several reasons:

1. Helps the coach and athlete determine in which events he/she will compete.
2. Establishes the baseline training areas of the athlete.
3. Assists coaches in grouping athletes of similar ability into training teams.
4. Measures the athlete's progression.
5. Helps determine the athlete's daily training schedule.

Before administering the rating system, coaches need to perform the following analysis while observing the athlete:

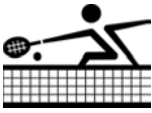
- ♦ Become familiar with each of the tennis skills.
- ♦ Have an accurate visual picture of each skill.
- ♦ Have previously observed a skilled performer executing the skill.

In preparing for Special Olympics tennis competitions, it is recommended that the coach complete the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System Sheet and submit it to the Tournament Committee with registration materials. The Tournament Committee should then conduct a separate on-court rating during a preliminary divisioning round. The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is modeled after the USTA National Tennis Rating Program. It is a subjective evaluation and it is recommended that raters be familiar with the USTA National Tennis Rating Program or other systems of evaluating tennis playing ability. To use the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, the rater should observe the following: stroke production, preparation, movement, recovery, placement, control, power and strategy, during simulated play situations of participating athletes. This could involve:

- ♦ Athletes hitting with raters, or
- ♦ Athletes playing mini-matches with other athletes, or
- ♦ Athletes practicing with other athletes.
- ♦ Athletes participate in ITN session (<http://www.onscourassessment.com>)

When administering the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, coaches should strive to observe the best performance by the athlete. Always begin by explaining the skill you would like to observe and demonstrate the skill when possible.

The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System categorizes playing ability into eight levels. Athlete skill is rated on seven basic tennis skills: forehand, backhand, movement, first serve, second serve, return of serve and volleys. The rater should observe the athlete and indicate playing ability by rating the athlete from one to eight on each of the basic skills. The rating form task analyzes each basic skill into levels of ability. A total score is determined for all seven skills and an average rating calculated (for example, 2.5 or 3.8). The athlete's overall rating is used to division the athlete with other athletes of equal playing ability.



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Special Olympics Tennis Rating Sheet

Athlete's Name: _____

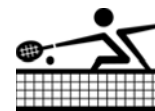
Delegation: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Level 1 (athlete's at this level should complete the ISC Skills Testing)	Level	E. Second Serve	Level
Player just starting to play tennis		Double faults are common	2
Section A through G do not need to be completed		Pushes 2nd serves	4
A. Forehand	Level	Hits 2nd serves with control	6
Hits inconsistent weak FH shots	2	Hits 2nd serves with control and depth	7
Hits FH shots with little directional control	3	Hits 2nd serves with spin, control and depth	8
FH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	F. Return of Serve	Level
FH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	Has difficulty returning serve	2
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	Returns serve occasionally	3
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Returns 2nd serve consistently	4
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Returns some 1st serves, returns 2nd serves consistently	5
B. Backhand	Level	Returns 1st and 2nd serves consistently	6
Hits inconsistent weak BH shots	2	Aggressive return of 2nd serve and consistent return of 1st serve	7
Hits BH shots with little directional control	3	Aggressive return of 1st and 2nd serves	8
BH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	G. Volleys	Level
BH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	Hits inconsistent volleys; avoids net	3
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	Hits consistent FH volleys; BH volley is inconsistent	4
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Hits consistent volleys; has problems approaching the net	5
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Has ability to approach the net and hits consistent volleys	6
C. Movement	Level	Comfortable moving to net, moves laterally well for both FH and BH volleys	7
Stationary position; does not move to ball to hit shots	2	Hits aggressive FH and BH volleys	8
Moves only 1-2 steps toward ball to hit shots	3	Section	Category
Moves toward ball; but court coverage is poor	4	A	Forehand
Movement allows sufficient court coverage of most shots	5	B	Backhand
Has good court coverage, reacts well enough to sustain a short rally	6	C	Movement
Reacts quickly to the ball and has very good court coverage	7	D	First Serve
Exceptional court coverage, reacts quickly to the ball and recovers after each shot	8	E	Second Serve
D. First Serve	Level	F	Return of Serve
1st serve is weak	2	G	Volleys
Hits 1st serves in at a slower pace	4	Total of Sections A through G	
Hits 1st serves with pace	6	divided by 7	
Hits 1st serves with pace and control	8	FINAL RATING	

Rater's Name: _____

Date: _____ Event: _____

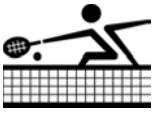


Suggested Competition Levels

Tennis Rating of 1.0 – 1.9	Athletes should compete in	Level 1 – Individual Skills Competition
Tennis Rating of 2.0 – 2.9	Athletes should compete in	Level 2 – 42' Court – Red foam ball
Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 3.9	Athletes should compete in	Level 3 – 60' Court – Orange ball
Tennis Rating of 4.0 – 4.9	Athletes should compete in	Level 4 – 78' Court – Green ball
Tennis Rating of 5.0 – 8.0	Athletes should compete in	Level 5 – 78' Court – Yellow ball

Assessing Player Readiness

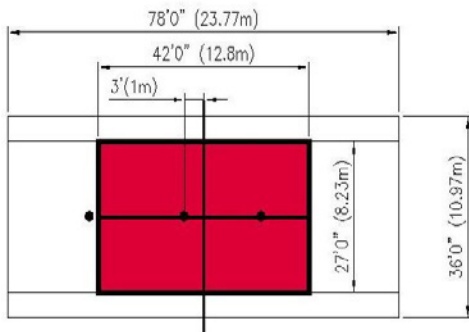
Beginners have difficulty in controlling their racquets in relation to the approaching ball. A beginner often swats at the ball instead of controlling the racquet. Intermediate players have developed control of the racquet to a level where they rarely miss contacting the ball. Strokes are relatively smooth and in control.



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Suggested Competition Levels

The levels below are suggested as a guide for use in competition, to assist the athletes in their transition from ISC to traditional matchplay. The choice of level offered in a competition will depend on the ability levels of athletes entering. Consideration must also be given to whether the athlete's training has included these balls and court sizes.



Level 1 (ISC)

Court Dimensions: 42' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Red Foam Ball



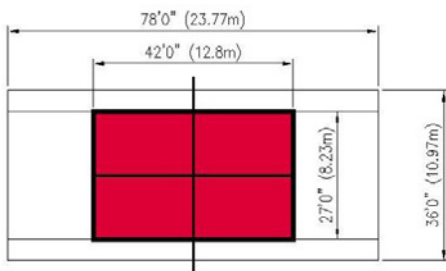
Level 1 is suggested for athletes rated between 1.0 & 1.9.

It is intended to be an introduction to short court matchplay in Level 2.

ISC scoring for level 1 will consist of 5 points for each volley and groundstroke landing within the service boxes and 10 points for each correct serve.

Full court ISC may still be conducted, if more suitable to the ability level of the athletes.

Court Positioning F: Feeder for groundstrokes & volleys **AG:** Athlete for groundstrokes & serves **AV:** Athlete for volleys



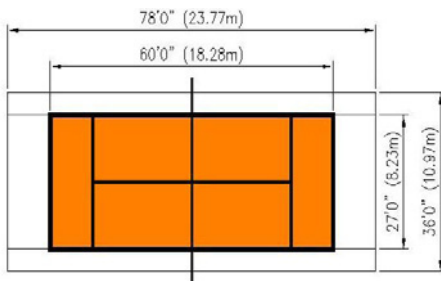
Level 2 – Short Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 42' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Red Foam Ball



Level 2 is suggested for athletes rated between 2.0 & 2.9.



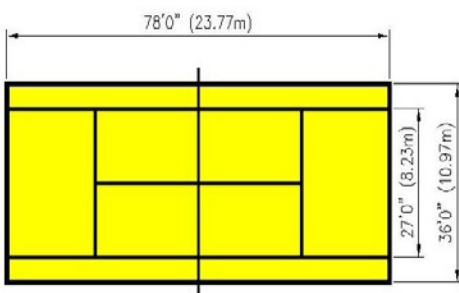
Level 3 – Intermediate Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 60' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Orange Ball



Level 3 is suggested for athletes rated between 3.0 & 3.9



Levels 4 & 5 – Traditional Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 78' x 27' for singles

Court Dimensions: 78' x 36' for doubles

Ball: ITF approved green ball (level 4)

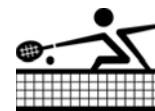


Level 4 is suggested for athletes rated between 4.0 & 4.9

ITF approved Yellow Ball (level 5)



Level 5 is suggested for athletes rated between 5.0 & 8.0.



Tennis Levels

Young Athletes :

- ♦ Athletes: ages 3-7 years old.
- ♦ Goals: Age appropriate activities and equipment help prepare future tennis players using fun game based activities.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop balance, hand-eye coordination, throwing, catching, tracking skills.
 - ♦ Athletes will have fun in a positive atmosphere.
 - ♦ Athletes will train for culminating activity.

Lesson concentrations:

- ♦ Balance, hand-eye,
- ♦ Non-locomotor activities; bending, stretching, twisting, turning, swinging, pushing, pulling, dodging swaying,
- ♦ Locomotor activities; running, skipping, jumping, hopping, leaping, sliding, galloping.

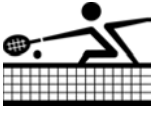
Levels 1-5 are designed for athlete success in the sport of tennis, with the addition of activities for Young Athlete Tennis. Each level corresponds to the tennis ability of each athlete by offering different court sizes, tennis ball size and composition, goals and lesson concentrations.

Level 1: 42' court with red foam ball

- ♦ Beginner : Individual Skills
- ♦ Goals: Introduce athletes to the sport of tennis.
 - ♦ Teach athletes 7 tennis strokes
 - ♦ Strokes are taught using the game based approach.
 - ♦ Placement and control drills
 - ♦ End product – prepare athlete for competition on a 42 foot court
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Balance, hand-eye coordination, racquet control, stroke production

Level 2: 42' court with red foam ball

- ♦ Beginner: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Athletes will learn to put ISC skills into match play.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of rules, scoring and sportsmanship.
 - ♦ Athletes will expand static strokes into movement before and after each shot.
 - ♦ Athletes will learn simple doubles positioning and tactics
 - ♦ Strokes and movement will be taught in the context of match play using the game based approach.
 - ♦ Providing meaningful matchplay tennis competition for athletes with limited mobility and tracking
 - ♦ End product – prepare athlete for competition on a 42 foot court
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Movement, Racquet Control, Tracking. Rules and Etiquette



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Level 3: 60' court with orange ball (low compression)

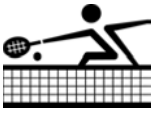
- ♦ Advanced beginner: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition for athletes successful in level 2 and ready for the challenge of a slightly larger court and smaller ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will successfully transition to 60' court with Orange Ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop racquet control skills while using smaller ball
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of readiness, preparation and recovery.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of: Best of 3 short set match and Match Tie Break.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Sending and Receiving Skills, Preparation, Rules and Etiquette

Level 4: 78' court with green ball (low compression)

- ♦ Intermediate; Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition for athletes with ability for full court coverage with a slower paced ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop knowledge of shot selection.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop ball placement and racquet control with movement.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain basic knowledge of full court singles and doubles strategy.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Recovery, Advanced strokes: Overhead, drop shot, lob and approach shot, Placement, Doubles communication, Tennis etiquette and strategy

Level 5: 78' court with traditional yellow ball

- ♦ Advanced intermediate-Advanced: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition and experience for athletes with the ability for full court matchplay with a traditional ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop spins, shot sequencing, and power strokes.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop control, power and placement with traditional yellow ball.
 - ♦ Athletes at this level are able to transition into community play.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop a match warm-up routine.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Speed, endurance and core training, Spins, Stroke sequencing for game strategy and power with placement.



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Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Tennis Attire

Appropriate tennis attire is required for all competitors. As coach, discuss the types of tennis clothing that is acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. For example, long pants or jeans and blue jean shorts are not proper tennis attire for any event. Inappropriate clothing can hinder a player's performance and be a safety hazard. Shirts and shorts should be loose fitting to allow for free movement. Take athletes to high school or college training or competitions and point out the attire being worn. You should set the example by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions. Do not reward athletes who do not come properly dressed to train and/or compete.

Tennis Male Attire



Shirt and Shorts

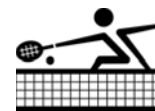
T-shirts are the most comfortable and practical tops for practice and training. Traditionally, tennis competitions are played in collared shirts that are tucked into shorts.

Tennis Female Attire



Tennis dress or top with skirt/shorts

During practice, athletes should wear loose fitting gym shorts or conventional tennis shorts. During competition, a traditional tennis short or skirt is preferable. Wearing proper tennis attire for competition can build an athlete's excitement for the competition.



Shoes and Socks



Shoes should be traditional tennis shoes with proper ankle, arch and heel support. Running shoes are inappropriate for tennis because they do not support the ankle. Be cautious of black-soled shoes as they mark the courts. Socks should be of an absorbent cloth to prevent blisters. If an athlete is prone to blisters, two pairs of socks can be worn.

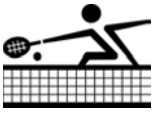
Warm-ups



Cotton materials are good for tennis players. They should be worn before and after practice and competitions. Athletes should not wear sweat suits during play unless it is an extremely cold day.

Other items that might help a player's performance:

- ♦ Hats or sunglasses keep sun and wind out of the eyes.
- ♦ Sweatbands and headbands keep moisture off the racquet hand and out of the eyes.
- ♦ Sunscreen can keep athletes from being overexposed to the sun.



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

Tennis Equipment

The sport of tennis requires the type of equipment noted below. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment impacts their performance. Have athletes name each piece of equipment as you demonstrate its use. Coaches and athletes should work together to select the proper equipment for each athlete.

Tennis Racquets

Tennis racquets have changed dramatically in the past few years. Space-age materials have made racquets lightweight and very durable. Athletes should select a racquet that "feels good" and is not too heavy or too light. Grip size is important for good technique. Have the athlete grip the racquet comfortably. There should not be more than a finger width between the base of the thumb and the fingertips. If the fingers are touching the base of the hand, the grip is too small. Younger athletes may benefit from junior-sized racquets which are lighter and shorter. Broken strings and unraveling grips should be replaced as soon as possible. Coaches should teach athletes proper care of their racquets and all equipment.

Young Athletes : A 17-19" racquet is recommended ages 3-7.

Level 1 & 2 - 42' Court: A 21 - 23-inch racquet is recommended and for athletes' 8-10 years of age.

Level 3 – 60' Court: A 25- or 26-inch racquet is recommended and for athletes 10-12 years of age.

Level 4-5 – 78' Court: A 27-inch racquet is recommended and for player age 13 and above.



Tennis balls

An abundance of tennis balls is important for a successful practice. Ideally, each court would have a separate hopper (teaching cart) of balls. Practice balls can be obtained from tennis clubs (ask a teaching professional for his/her old tennis balls), high schools and colleges. Mini-nets turns any space into a tennis court.



Teaching aids distributors can be found online.

1. Notebook for recording attendance, telephone numbers, student comments and progress reports, and medical needs for special athletes.
2. Targets of any shape, size and color can help athletes aim for a specific spot (examples are a pyramid of tennis balls, cones, hula hoops, chalk circles and rope).
3. Red foam balls (ex. Dunlop Speedball)
4. Koosh balls
5. Low compression orange and green balls
6. Balloons to practice hand-eye coordination drills.
7. Ball machine for athletes to practice a variety of skills.
8. Ball containers as targets in games.
9. Radio or music box to increase attention and enjoyment.





***Special
Olympics***

TENNIS COACHING GUIDE

Teaching Tennis Skills

Levels 1-5
Young Athletes

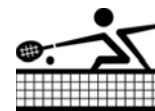
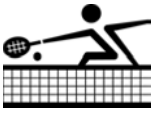


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Warm-Up

A warm-up period should be the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. When possible, with a group of four or more, form a circle on the court and have players face each other with plenty of space for free movement. Warm-ups are much more likely to be effective in a group setting. Players make each other accountable, and communication in the circle builds team spirit. The warm-up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, the warm-up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm-up prior to exercise cannot be overstated. This is true even for a sport like tennis. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and the cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warming Up:

- ♦ Raises body temperature;
- ♦ Increases metabolic rate;
- ♦ Increases heart and respiratory rate; and
- ♦ Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise.

The warm-up should include tennis-specific activities, such as short sprints, footwork skills and short court drills. Footwork warm-up may include side-to-side skipping in a similar way to the way one moves horizontally across the court during a game. Follow the leader in a group – be creative with stepping and skipping. Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The warm-up period should last 5-10 minutes and precedes training or competition. The warm-up is a part of a balanced training program to include the following basic sequence and components.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Warm-Up	Heat muscles	5 minutes
Stretching	Increase range of movement	10 minutes
Event-Specific Drills	Coordination preparation for training/competition	40 minutes
Cool-Down	Reduces heat in muscles	5 minutes

Stretching

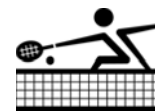
Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up and an athlete's performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the Stretching section for more in-depth information.

Flexibility is a major element in an athlete's optimal performance in both training and competition. Stretching follows tennis-specific activities, such as short sprints, footwork skills and short court drills.

Event-Specific Drills

Drills are activities designed to teach tennis skills. Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level and, finally, reach a high ability level. Each athlete should be encouraged to advance to his or her highest possible ability level. Drills can be combined with the warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he/she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.



Cool-Down

The cool-down is as important as the warm-up, however it is sometimes ignored. It may prevent cramps, soreness and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool-down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. After playing, practicality or time constraints may prevent systematized cool-down exercises. ‘Walking it off’ is much better than sitting and stiffening up. The cool-down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the training session or competition. Note that cool-down is also a good time to do additional stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements which promote increased flexibility.

Stretching

Stretching prevents injury by increasing the range of motion for joints and muscles. Athletes should be monitored closely during stretching exercises to make sure they are doing them properly. Instruction should involve demonstration by the coach.

Stretches should be done without bouncing and free from pain. Athletes should begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension and hold this position for a vocal count of 10 led by the coach. Each stretch should be repeated on both sides of the body. Athletes should be reminded to breathe while stretching by inhaling when leaning into the stretch, then exhaling. Once the stretching point is reached, the athlete should keep inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch.

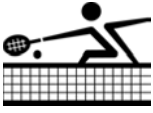
The stretches listed below are guidelines; coaches should tailor the stretching routine to suit the group of athletes that they are working with. All the major muscle groups should be stretched, with emphasis on the shoulders, trunk and legs. In a ten minute period, do about three stretching exercises from the lower body group and three stretching exercises from the upper body group, alternating activities on successive workout days. On training days when drills dominate the activity, all these stretches may be used in a single workout session.

Lower Body

- ♦ prone quad stretch
- ♦ hamstring stretch
- ♦ seated straddle stretch
- ♦ groin stretch
- ♦ hip roll
- ♦ calf stretch
- ♦ ankle stretch

Upper Body

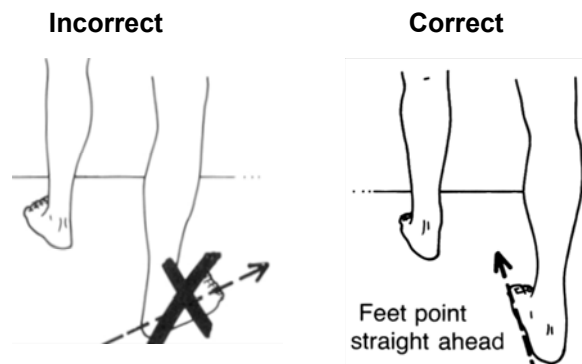
- ♦ shoulder stretch
- ♦ triceps stretch
- ♦ chest stretch
- ♦ side stretch
- ♦ side arm stretch
- ♦ arm circles
- ♦ forearm and wrist stretch
- ♦ neck stretch



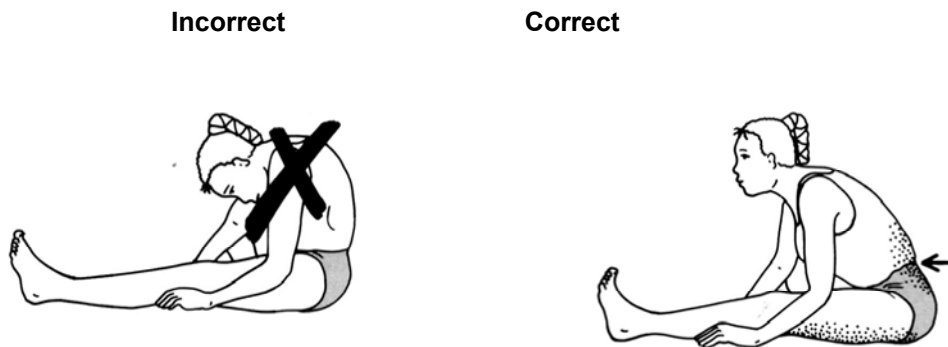
Some athletes, like those with Down syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful these athletes do not stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes, and should never be part of a safe stretching program. These unsafe stretches include the following:

- ♦ Neck Backward Bending
- ♦ Trunk Backward Bending
- ♦ Spinal Roll

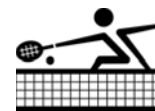
Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. Take the calf stretch, for example. Many athletes do not keep the feet pointing forward, in the direction that they are running.



Another common fault in stretching is bending the back in an attempt to get a better stretch from the hips. An example is a simple sitting forward leg stretch.

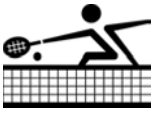


In this guide, we will focus on basic stretches for major muscle groups. Along the way we will also point out some common faults, illustrate corrections and identify stretches that are more event-specific. We will start with the lower body and work toward the upper body.



Coaching Tips

- ☐ Practices should have a low player/coach ratio.
- ☐ It is important that coaches and assistants make sure that stretches are being done effectively and are not harmful to the athlete. To do this may require direct, individual physical assistance, particularly with lower-ability players.
- ☐ Some stretches require a good sense of balance. If balance is a problem, use stretches that can be done while in a sitting or prone position.
- ☐ Current elite tennis training models promote using dynamic (moving) stretching activities. These activities are appropriate for Special Olympics tennis players, but coaches should be careful when using with athletes who have poor balance.
- ☐ Coaches should attend to athletes doing the exercises improperly, as well as provide personal attention and reinforcement to those doing them effectively.
- ☐ Use stretching as a “teachable moment” with your athletes. Explain the importance of each stretching exercise and which muscle group is being stretched. Later, ask the athletes why each stretching exercise is important.



Lower Body Stretches

Prone Quad Stretch



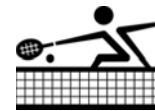
- ♦ Lie on side
- ♦ Bend knee toward buttock while grasping foot or ankle with hand
- ♦ Pull foot directly toward buttock
- ♦ Do not twist knee
- ♦ Keep hip on ground

Standing Quad Stretch



- ♦ Stand with foot flat on ground
- ♦ Bend knee towards buttock while grasping ankle with hand
- ♦ Pull foot directly toward buttock
- ♦ Do not twist knee
- ♦ Stretch can be done standing alone or balancing with partner or fence/ wall





Hamstring Stretch



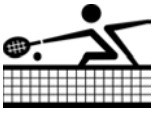
- ♦ Legs straight out and together
- ♦ Legs are not locked
- ♦ Bend at hips, reach toward ankles
- ♦ As flexibility increases, reach for feet
- ♦ Push out through the heels, forcing toes to the sky

Seated Straddle Stretch



- ♦ Legs straddled, bend at hips
- ♦ Reach out toward the middle
- ♦ Keep back straight





Butterfly Groin Stretch



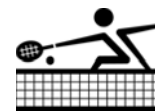
- ♦ Sit with bottoms of feet touching
- ♦ Hold feet/ankles
- ♦ Bend forward from hips
- ♦ Ensure that the athlete is pulling up in his/her lower back

Standing Groin Stretch



- ♦ Stand with feet flat on the ground
- ♦ Lean body to one side, bending knee slightly
- ♦ Keep opposite leg straight
- ♦ Repeat with other leg





Calf Stretch



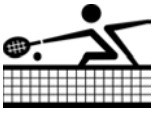
- ♦ Bend forward leg slightly
- ♦ Bend ankle of back leg
- ♦ Athlete may also stand facing a wall/fence

Calf Stretch w/Bent Knee



- ♦ Bend both knees to ease strain





Hip Rolls



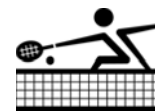
- ♦ Lie on back, arms at sides with shoulders down
- ♦ Roll to right side, keeping right leg straight while flexing the knee of the left leg
- ♦ Bring left leg across the body, exhale and hold the stretch
- ♦ Lie flat on back, inhale and repeat on opposite side
- ♦ Work on keeping the hips on the ground to get the full stretch through the buttocks

Ankle Rolls



- ♦ Stand or lay on back
- ♦ Raise foot off ground
- ♦ Point toes and move in a figure-eight motion
- ♦ Repeat with other foot





Upper Body Stretches

Chest Stretch



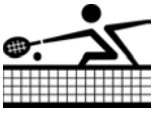
- ♦ Clasp hands behind back
- ♦ Palms facing in
- ♦ Push hands towards sky

Arm Circles



- ♦ Swing arms forward in large circles
- ♦ Repeat going forward and backward





Triceps Stretch



- ♦ Raise both arms over head
- ♦ Bend right arm, bring hand to back
- ♦ Grasp elbow of bent arm and pull gently toward the middle of the back
- ♦ Repeat with other arm

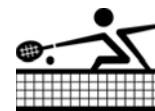


Shoulder Stretch



- ♦ Take elbow into hand
- ♦ Pull to opposite shoulder
- ♦ Arm may be straight or bent
- ♦ Repeat with other arm



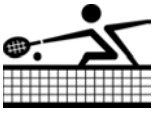


Side Stretch



- ♦ Bend to one side with or without hand over head
- ♦ Feel stretch in side
- ♦ Repeat on other side





Forearm and Wrist Stretch

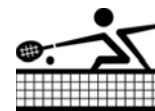


- ♦ Extend arm with wrist flexed down with assistance of opposite hand until a stretch is felt on top of the forearm



- ♦ Reverse wrist so hand points up and a stretch is felt on bottom of forearm
- ♦ Make sure you stretch both directions with both hands





Neck Stretch

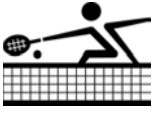


Roll the neck from shoulder to shoulder with chin touching body at all times

Do not perform full circles as they may hyperextend the neck

Tell athlete to roll neck to right, center and left. Never have the athlete roll neck backwards.





Stretching - Quick Reference Guidelines

Start Relaxed

Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm.

Be Systematic

Start at the top of the body and work toward the legs or alternate between upper and lower body.

Progress from General to Specific

Start general, then move into event-specific exercises.

Easy Stretching before Developmental Stretches

Athletes should perform slow, progressive stretches, without bouncing or bobbing.

Use Variety

Make it fun. Use different exercises to work the same muscles.

Breathe Naturally

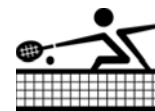
Athletes should stay calm and relaxed and not hold their breath.

Allow for Individual Differences

Athletes start and progress at different levels.

Stretch Regularly

Always include time for warm-up and cool-down. Encourage athletes to stretch at home as well.



Levels: Young Athletes

Activities, drills & techniques can be learned by attending an ITF coaches workshop, USTA Recreational Coach Workshop, USTA 10 and Under Coach Workshop, PTR coaches' training or USPTA coaches' workshops along with their publications. All are held throughout the year. Check web sites for details. www.itftennis.com/coaching, www.USTA.com, www.ptrtennis.org, www.uspta.com

I. Young Athletes

17" - 19" racquets recommended

Goals:

- ♦ Training sessions length: 30-45 minutes
- ♦ Planned activity - Pick an activity from each section when planning your training session.

Suggested Equipment:

- ♦ Variety of tennis balls (Red foam balls, orange, green and yellow), balloons, variety of bean bags, beach balls, play ground balls, sand pails, poly rings, poly spots, koosh balls, segmented color hula hoops, Frisbees, foam footballs, juggling scarves, yellow mesh jersey, music, whistle, foam paddles, 6" cones and 9" cones.

A. Balance

1. Funny Bones – Body parts on lines :

To get children moving, balancing and learning the lines of the court, have them move to the lines called out by the coach and balance on the line with the instructed number of body parts. The coach will give two commands: One will be for the line and the second for the number of body parts to put on the line. For example, the coach could say "Skip to the baseline and balance on three body parts" (as in two feet and one hand) or "March to the center service line and balance on two body parts, but you can only use one foot."

2. Flamingo

Have the children move around the court like an animal the coach chooses. When the coach calls out "Flamingo," the players stop the animal imitation and balance on one foot with their arms out and eyes looking straight ahead. Repeat several times, choosing a different animal to imitate. You can let the children make the animal noise. Good examples are a kangaroo, monkey, horse, frog, bear and elephant

3. Pac Man

Coach chooses 1 child to be Pac Man. Pac Man wears a yellow jersey. All other children spread out on court Lines. Coach blows a whistle or starts music and all children walk on court lines. Pac Man tries to tag children. If a child is tagged, runs or moves off line, they step off the line and jump up and down 5 times then return to walking on lines. After 1 minute, blow whistle or stop music and choose another Pac Man.

4. Lily Pads

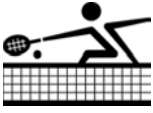
Have children on four teams in lines so they can do this activity continuously. Place a series of five spots in front of each line at varying distances apart. Each player must jump and land on the spots (lily pads), and hold for a moment to maintain balance. After completing jumps to five spots, they get back in line and repeat.

5. High circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as high as you can over your head; Stand on two feet, then try standing on one foot and switch feet.

6. Low circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as low as you can to the ground.



B. Hand Eye:

1. Keep it up

Each child has a balloon (works best indoors). Tell children to use their hands to keep the balloon eye-high. Play music for 1 minute. After 1 minute, tell children to use a elbow, head, knee or foot to keep the balloon up. Start music and repeat every minute.

2. Help Me Fly

Each child has a juggling scarf. When the music starts, children toss up the scarves as high as they can and try to catch it eye-high. Continue for one minute. Repeat with children using their opposite hand.

3. Catch Me If You Can

Each child has a ball and tosses it in the air at least head high, lets the ball bounce and catches it. Add variation with two or three bounces before catching. Start with play ground ball, then foam tennis ball, then orange tennis ball, followed by green and finally yellow.

4. Applause

The player will toss a foam ball up in the air, clap and catch it after the bounce. Add two bounces, then three before the catch. See if they can toss, clap and catch before the ball bounces.

5. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player with the ball tosses it up and calls out the partner's name. The partner has to turn around and catch the ball after one bounce. Start with beach ball, then playground ball, then red foam tennis ball.

6. Hula Hoop roll

Children form 2 lines at the baseline facing the net. Each line has a color segmented hula hoop. The first person in each line picks a color of the hula hoop. The coach then rolls the hula hoop toward the net. The child tries to catch the hoop on the color segment called before hoop falls flat on the court.

The hoop is brought back to the coach and handed to him/her.

7. Elevator

While balancing the bean bag on the racquet, child will hold the racquet high on the "top floor" command, waist height for the "middle floor" command and low for the "bottom floor" command

C. Throwing/Catching/Tracking

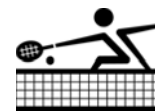
1. Messy Court

Divide class in half and have them stand on opposite sides of the net. Give them red foam tennis balls on each side (1 or 2 per child). When the music starts or whistle blows, children overhand throw balls over the net. Goal is to have the least amount of balls on your side after 1 minute. Signal stop, count balls on each side, and then award 1 point to the winner. Game goes to 7 points (as in a tie break)

No throwing after the stop signal. Throwing consequence – other team gets the point.

2. Bombs Away

Set up empty tennis ball cans on opposite side of net. Divide children into 4 teams. Place poly spots for the launch site in the middle of the service box and in front of each line. The first child in each line moves to their launch site. The rest of the children remain in their 4 lines behind the service line. Each child gets 2 throws at the targets. Use red foam tennis balls. After throw, the child returns to the back of their line and the next child moves to the launch site. A point is given for each can knocked down. Game goes to 7 points.



3. Oscar's Can

Set up laundry baskets or sand pails on opposite side of net. On signal, children overhand throw red foam tennis balls aiming for the basket/pails. One point is awarded for each ball that land in the basket/pail without bouncing on the floor first. Start close to the net and challenge the children to move back. Goal is to throw from the service line.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce

One child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out “one” or “two.” The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it and tossing it back, also calling out a number. Start with small beach balls or playground balls and progress to red foam balls.

5. Falling apples

Children are on two teams. There is a catching side and a throwing side. The first two children from each team stand just behind the service line on the opposite side of the net with small baskets. The remaining team form a single file line behind the opposite diagonal service line. On the throwing side, the first child in each line, has 2 attempts to throw overhand diagonally over the net. The catching team member catches the ball in the basket after the ball bounces once in the service box. After 2 attempts, the thrower goes to the end of the throwing line. The catcher becomes a thrower once each thrower has had 2 attempts. Game is won when one team has 4 catches in the basket.

6. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row? Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

7. Bulls eye

2 single file lines of children stand facing each other about 6 feet apart. The coach stands in the middle, holding a hula hoop. Using soft footballs or red foam tennis balls, the first person in 1 line tries to throw the ball through the hoop to the 1st person in the line facing them. After throwing, the child goes to the end of their line. The coach can change height of hoop before the throw.

8. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player with the ball tosses it up and calls out the partner's name. The partner has to turn around and catch the ball after one bounce.

9. Roll ball with hands

Using a playground or beach ball, have the children stand 4-5 feet apart and have them roll the ball back and forth over a line to their partner or coach. Have them catch the rolling ball with two hands directly in front of their body. Players can challenge each other by rolling the ball to either side of their partner.

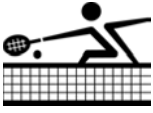
D. Movement:

1. Tunnel ball

Two players stand across from each other about 4 or 5 feet apart with one foam ball per pair. One player rolls the ball to her partner, who moves so the ball will roll through her legs without touching her feet.

2. Ball Chase

Both players are close together, one with the ball, and the other player with her back to her partner. The player with the ball rolls it through the legs of the player in front, who runs after the ball and stops it before it stops rolling. Switch roles and repeat.



3. Sharks and Minnows

One child is chosen to be the Shark. The rest of the children (Minnows) stand in the Ad court alley. The shark says go and the Minnows need to run across the court to the opposite alley. If tagged, the minnows become sharks. Play continues until there is only 1 minnow.

4. Midnight

Pick one time keeper. All children with their backs to the net, including the time keeper, facing the baseline. The time keeper calls out the time (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock). All children except the time keeper take that many steps toward the baseline. When the time keeper calls "Midnight", children turn and run toward the time keeper to touch his/her outstretched hand. Whoever touches first becomes the next time keeper.

5. "What time is it Mr. Bear"

One child is chosen to be Mr. Bear and stand by the net at the center strap. The rest of the children stand on the baseline. The baseliners ask; What time is it Mr. Bear? Mr. Bear says an hour (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock) The baselines take that many steps toward the net.

Mr. Bear may call "Dinner Time" at any time. At that, all baseliners turn and run back to the baseline while Mr. Bear chases the baseliners trying to tag one child. If tagged that child becomes Mr. Bear and if not, Mr. Bear returns to the net to start again.

6. Jog-Jog-Jump

Children line up on service line, facing the net. Children jog in place for a count of four then jump in place. Continue for 1 minute.

7. Line Jump

Place poly strips varying distances apart. When the music starts have children jump from one line to another.

E. Manipulatives

1. Train crash

Two players stand 4-5 feet apart, each with a ball. Players roll the balls back and forth with their racquets at the same time, trying to "crash" the balls between the two players.

Progression: Stand close then move back.

Roll ball with hands then add racquet.

2. Splat

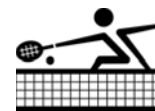
Two players each with a racquet and a ball pyramid made of four balls (three for the base and one on top). One player taps the ball up to about head-level height, trying to hit the ball pyramid to make it "splat."

3. Bungee Jump

The player has a ball that is balanced on the strings. They walk around the court, playground or driveway. When they get to a spot marked by tape or chalk, the player lets the ball drop off the racquet, lets it bounce and then catches the ball back on the racquet. They may have to use their non-racquet hand to trap the ball on the strings, but with practice they can just use the racquet face.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce with racquet

Using red foam balls, one child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out "one" or "two." The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it with their racquet and hand. The catcher may have the hand on the throat of the racquet to start. Place the caught balls in a basket. After 1 minute, switch roles. The goal would be to move the racquet hand to the grip.



5. Half-pound lobster trap

One player has a racquet and the other player has a ball. The player with the ball will underhand toss to the player with the racquet. The player with the racquet will trap the ball on her strings with her hand after one bounce from the toss. Start with a beach ball and foam paddles, then work up to racquets and red foam balls.

6. Lobster Trap

Children stand 6 to 8 feet apart, with one child holding two racquets, one in each hand, and the partner with one ball. The player with the ball makes an easy underhand toss and the player with the racquets (the lobster) catches the ball after the bounce by trapping the ball between both racquets. After trapping the ball, the player drops the ball from the racquets and rolls the ball back to the tosser. Start with a beach ball and foam paddles, then work up to racquets and red foam balls.

7. Rolly Polly

Children stand across from each other on either side of the doubles alley. Children have a racquet and should position themselves sideways to the ball as they might be positioned for a forehand, with the edge of the racquet on the ground behind the ball and the strings touching the ball. Using the racquet, the child with the ball rolls it to his partner who stops the ball with his foot and rolls it back. After five successful attempts, the two players roll the ball, and stop it, with the racquet before rolling the ball back.

F. Culminating Activities

At the end of the a training session, a activity day for athletes demonstrate their skills is enjoyed by parents and athletes.

1. Roll Ball with partner

See how many times two players can roll a ball back and forth without a miss. Increase distance to make this more challenging.

2. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row?

Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

3. Forehand Drop-Hit and Catch

Partners stand about six feet apart from each other. One player drop-hits a forehand to their partner who catches it and rolls it back to the hitter. Switch hitters and catchers after three successful hits and catches.

4. Rally with partner over a line

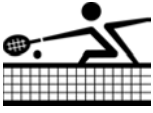
Have partners rally over a line and see how many consecutive rallies that can make. Switch partners and try to beat your previous score.

5. Alligator River – Use the forehand side of the racquet

The players line up on either side of the doubles alley, each with a racquet and with a ball for each pair. The coach or one of the players is the “alligator” and is going to walk down the “river” – the alley. As the coach walks down the alley, the players roll the ball to their partner trying to hit the alligator’s feet.

6. Roll around the head

Have students roll the ball around the head of the racquet as many times as they can in for one minute. Have them keep track of their number of complete rolls without the ball falling off the racquet. Have them repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.

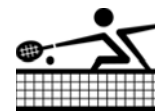


7. Bounce down

Have students bounce the ball down at about waist level height as many times as they can in one minute. Have them keep track of their number. Repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.

Coaches Tip:

- ☐ Young children develop from the head to toes, core to out extremities and gross motor movements to fine motor.
- ☐ If children are not successful at a task, dissect the task and begin at the child's developmental level to bring success.



II. Level 1 – Tennis Individual Skills

- ♦ 42' Court with Red Foam Ball
- ♦ 21"- 23" racquet recommended

Equipment:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| ♦ Red foam balls balloons | ♦ Frisbees |
| ♦ variety of bean bags | ♦ Foam footballs |
| ♦ 21" racquets, beach balls | ♦ Juggling scarves |
| ♦ play ground balls | ♦ Yellow mesh jersey |
| ♦ sand pails | ♦ Music |
| ♦ poly rings | ♦ Whistle |
| ♦ poly spots | ♦ Foam paddles |
| ♦ koosh balls | ♦ 16" cones |
| ♦ segmented color hula hoops | ♦ Balance lessons by warmup, lesson focus , drill, game and wrap up. |

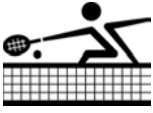
A. Warm-ups

Non-static warm-up is recommended. Movements to be used in lesson should be incorporated into warm-up. Creative, engaging warm-ups set dynamics of the lesson.

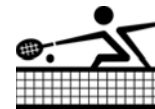
Suggested lesson activities:

1. Kirk-O-Rama activities. *Thanks to Kirk Anderson, USTA, for his contribution.*

- ♦ Dribbles (keep the ball waist high)
 - ♦ With their hand for 30 seconds then switch hands
 - ♦ With their racquet, holding it by the throat for 30 seconds with dominate hand.
 - ♦ With their racquet, holding on the grip for 30 seconds with dominate hand
- ♦ Self rally using a forehand
 - ♦ The player taps the ball up to about head level high, lets the ball bounce and hits it up again. Use only forehands
- ♦ Self rally using forehands and backhands
 - ♦ Same as above but the player hits the ball up first on the forehand side then alternates to the backhand side of the racquet. Continue hitting up to head level alternating between forehand and backhand
- ♦ Ups (keep the ball eye high)
 - ♦ Players dribble the ball in the air without having the ball bounce on the floor for 30 sec.
 - ♦ Start with balloon/beach-ball and hand - palm up
 - ♦ With racquet and balloon/beach-ball, holding racquet throat, repeat holding grip.
 - ♦ With racquet and red foam ball, holding at throat



- ♦ **Flip Flops**
 - ♦ The player hits the ball up continuously alternating between the forehand and backhand side of the racquet. Use different types of balls to help player be successful
- ♦ **Flip Flops and up on the edge**
 - ♦ This is the same as flip flops but this time tap the ball up on the edge of the racquet in between hitting on the forehand and backhand sides of the racquet.
- ♦ **Hopping on one foot while tapping the ball up**
 - ♦ Hop on one foot while keeping the ball bouncing up off your strings.
- ♦ **Hopping on one foot while bouncing the ball down**
 - ♦ Hop on one foot while dribbling the ball down off the strings.
- ♦ **Circle around the body**
 - ♦ The player bounces the ball down while standing in one place but the ball is bounced in a circle around the body.
- ♦ **Figure 8's around the leg**
 - ♦ This activity is similar to around the body but this time you must choke up on your racquet and dribble the ball in a figure 8 pattern around your legs.
- ♦ **Hitting up with racquet between your legs**
 - ♦ Begin with knees bent and the racquet between your legs so the strings face the sky.
 - ♦ Try to tap a ball up continuously while with the racquet between your legs and in front of your body.
- ♦ **Jacks**
 - ♦ 1 racquet and ball person
 - ♦ Onsies – tap up 1x , ball bounces on ground and catch with string
 - ♦ Twosies – Tap up 2x, ball bounces and catch with string
 - ♦ Continue adding one number.
 - ♦ See how far each person can get in 1 minute, then 2 minutes.
- ♦ **Target Hitting**
 - ♦ Players practice drop hitting or serving balls to target areas (banners, hoops, etc.) attached to walls or fences



Hand-Eye Coordination

Hand-eye coordination is the foundation for striking the tennis ball. Without developing this skill, the athlete will become frustrated by not making contact with the ball.

Safety Concerns

Each athlete should establish his/her own personal space and should remain in that space at all times. A good safe position for each athlete is to hug the racquet to his/her chest. In a group setting, ask athletes to place racquets against the fence when not in use. During group activity, athletes should identify their own space by holding their outstretched racquets so they do not touch other athletes. There should be enough space so racquets do not touch one another.

Teaching the Skill

1. Utilize different size “balls” such as balloons, foam balls, transition balls (low compression) and SpeedBalls, as well as traditional tennis balls. SpeedBalls are specially designed soft balls available through the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR), the *Official Training Partner of Special Olympics Tennis*.
2. To develop hand-eye coordination, the beginning player should begin by practicing with a tennis ball and his/her hand (no racquet).
3. Encourage athletes to watch the ball.
4. Encourage athletes to keep their heads still when making contact.



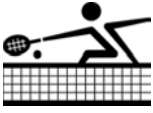
Drills for Eye-Hand Coordination

Hand Bounce Drill

The athlete performs the following progression:

- ♦ Gently toss a foam ball from left hand to right hand.
- ♦ Place the ball in the left hand, bounce on the ground and catch with the right hand.
- ♦ Find a partner and gently toss the ball toward the partner with the ball bouncing before it is caught.
- ♦ Gently bounce a large foam ball tennis ball with the palm of the racquet hand, eventually progressing to the transition ball and then the traditional tennis ball (“hit gently”).
- ♦ Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled fashion for 15 seconds (“stay in your place”).

The coach can utilize targets and lines on the court (hoops, poly spots, etc.) to make the hand bounce drill more advanced.



Cup/Cone Catches

- ♦ Athlete holds a large cup or cone in his/her dominant hand and catches a tossed ball in the cup or cone and tosses back to his/her partner (“watch the ball”).



Key Words

- ♦ "Watch the ball."
- ♦ "Hit gently."
- ♦ "Stay in your place."

Racquet Control

Controlling the racquet is an important building block to learning tennis skills. Coaches should consider the size of the racquet and racquet grip for their players.

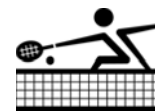
Assessing Player Readiness

Beginners have difficulty in controlling their racquets in relation to the approaching ball. A beginner often swats at the ball instead of controlling the racquet. Intermediate players have developed control of the racquet to a level where they rarely miss contacting the ball. Strokes are relatively smooth and in control.

Teaching the Skill

Although tennis players hold the racquet (grip) in many ways to execute different strokes, Special Olympics recommends using the eastern grip for athletes beginning to play tennis. View the video for further information on teaching correct grips.

- ♦ Use of foam balls is recommended when athletes are beginning the skill progressions.
- ♦ Athletes should be taught the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip, where the athlete:
 - ♦ Stands with feet slightly apart with the racquet in the non-racquet hand.
 - ♦ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slide the racquet hand down the racquet until the hand reaches the grip.
 - ♦ Wraps fingers around the handle comfortably and "shakes hands."
- ♦ Using this grip, have athletes practice drills that increase their ability to control the racquet head.



Drills for Racquet Handling

Racquet Balance

- ♦ Athletes hold the racquet head on the ground with one hand on the grip, then let go of the racquet, but catch it before it falls.
- ♦ Drills can be made more difficult by having athletes touch a body part (head, shoulder, knee, etc.) before catching the racquet.



Walk the Dog (Follow the Lines)

- ♦ With the racquet touching the ground, the athlete rolls the ball on the ground with the racquet by following the lines around the court, trying to maintain control of the ball.
- ♦ Like walking a dog on a leash, the athlete attempts to keep the ball beside the racquet.



Pass the Ball

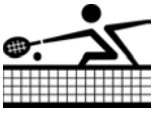
- ♦ With a partner, athletes pass the ball from the middle of their strings to the middle of their partner's strings without using their hands.
- ♦ The ball is passed gently “gentle” back and forth in a down-the-line exercise (can be used as a team game).
- ♦ With their racquets, athletes line up on the baseline and place a ball on the racquet strings. Athletes walk or run to the net trying to keep the ball on the strings. If the ball drops, athletes pick up the ball and continue.



Ups

- ♦ Using the forehand grip “fingernails up,” the athlete holds the racquet at waist level.
- ♦ Athlete drops a ball onto the strings with the non-racquet hand. “Hit the ball in the middle of the strings.”
- ♦ Athlete performs as many “ups” as possible in 30 seconds.





Downs

- ♦ Using the forehand grip “fingernails down,” the athlete holds the racquet at waist level.
- ♦ Athlete gently bounces “gentle” the ball downward with the strings of the racquet.
- ♦ Athlete performs as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds.
- ♦ As players advance, have them hit “edgies,” dribbling the ball using the side of their racquet.



Forehand Bumps

- ♦ Remind athletes to bump up, rather than down at the target.
- ♦ Partners stand about 5-10 feet away from each other with a target in between them and bump “bump” the ball with a gentle forehand motion, trying to hit the target.
- ♦ Emphasis is on control in this drill “control the ball.”



Backhand Bumps

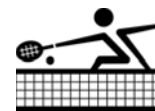
- ♦ Partners stand about 5-10 feet away from each other with a target in between them and bump the ball with a gentle backhand motion, trying to hit the target.
- ♦ Remind athletes to bump up, rather than down at target.
- ♦ Emphasis is on control in this drill “control the ball.”



Toss-Bump-Catch Game

- ♦ Partners stand 10-15 feet apart. One partner gently tosses a ball so the partner can bump it back.
- ♦ Athletes complete 10 successful bumps and catches, then switch roles





Racquet Rolls

- ♦ Athlete rolls the ball around the racquet in a clockwise direction.
- ♦ Direction is reversed.



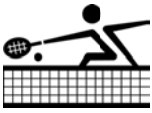
Emphasis on control and improvement should be implemented whether or not this is a game or progression. Intermediate players can play the drills in the form of relay races. The drills can be played for time with the number of successful attempts being recorded.

Key Words

- ♦ "Shake hands with the racquet"
- ♦ Shake hands"
- ♦ "Watch the ball"
- ♦ "Gentle"
- ♦ "Fingernails up" and "Fingernails down"
- ♦ "Hit the ball in the middle of the strings"
- ♦ "Control the ball"
- ♦ "Bump"

Coaching Tips

- ☐ Emphasize control and gentle bumps of the ball. This is a difficult concept for some Special Olympics athletes.
- ☐ Instruct athletes to watch the strings and try to contact the ball in the center of the racquet (sweet spot).
- ☐ It is important that the athlete is using the appropriate racquet size, length and weight.
- ☐ With lower ability levels it may be useful to use partners as coaches.
- ☐ Have athletes practice swinging the racquet while balancing a penny on the edge of the racquet. This teaches athletes to swing under control and to keep the racquet at a right angle to the ground.



Skill 1: Groundstrokes

The groundstrokes are the basic rallying strokes in tennis. A groundstroke is any ball that is played off the bounce and is usually hit while standing close to the baseline. Coaches should incorporate mobility drills in the practice plan as footwork is an essential part of good stroke production. It is recommended to begin with static teaching and progression drills involving footwork. Note: It is recommended that a coach focus on one stroke within each lesson plan.

Forehand Ground Stroke “Grips, Preparation and Swing Path” Courtesy of USTA



Preparation



Unit turn



Loading



Hitting



Contact



Extension

Eastern Forehand Grip

Grip

The player should use a grip close to the Eastern forehand grip when learning the forehand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Grip during the unit-turn using the non-dominant hand.

Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet. The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. The racquet begins to move back from the ready position as the hips and shoulders turn to the side (unit turn). The racquet will continue to stay above the hand as it moves into position.



Athletic ready position



Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand

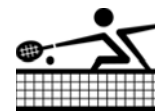
Swing Path

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side.

The racquet head then drops below the ball and accelerates through the so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net. The follow-through will finish from between the waist to over the shoulder.



The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension



Forehand

Teaching the Skill Tips

Coaches are encouraged to use demonstration throughout each progression. When teaching a skill there are four basic components: grip, ready position, stroke and follow-through. It is best to begin new athletes in the Level 1 format (playing at the service line area or inside the service box). This will allow for greater success and less intimidation than on a full court.

Forehand Grip

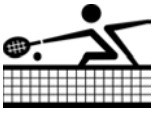
- ♦ Have athletes learn the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip (eastern forehand grip), where the athlete:
- ♦ Stands with the feet slightly apart and holds the racquet with the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slides the racquet hand down the racquet until the hand reaches the grip.
- ♦ Wraps the fingers around the handle comfortably and "shake hands."
- ♦ The grip should not be held too tight ("not too tight, not too loose").



Ready Position

- ♦ Athletes face forward with knees slightly flexed, feet shoulder width apart and heels up off the ground.
- ♦ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level.
- ♦ Use the key words "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready."





Forehand Stroke

- ♦ Preparation – Ready position
- ♦ Unit Turn: Athletes turn shoulders and hips to face sideways to the net (racquet is in a volley position with the strings facing the net). Use the key words, "stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer" or "turn your shoulders."
- ♦ Loading : Athletes take the racquet back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface). The shape of the swing, when put together as one motion, will be a "C" loop.
- ♦ Step : Before initiating the swing, the athlete takes a few adjusting steps towards the ball.
- ♦ Contact: Demonstrate the contact point position (freeze this position and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted).
- ♦ Extension/FollowthroughThe stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through as athletes will put it all together when actually striking a ball), racquet pointing up and toward the net (like "shaking hands with a giant").



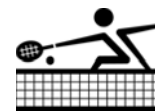
Follow-through

- ♦ The swing is completed with a follow-through that finishes with the racquet pointing to the opposite side of the net "finish the stroke," "point the racquet at your opponent."
- ♦ The follow-through should be high above the head, swinging from low to high "swing low to high."



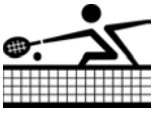
Key Words

- ♦ "Shake hands"
- ♦ "Not too tight, not too loose"
- ♦ "Eyes on the ball"
- ♦ "Relax and be ready"
- ♦ "Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ "Finish the stroke"
- ♦ "Shaking hands with a giant"
- ♦ "Point the racquet at your opponent"
- ♦ "Swing low to high"
- ♦ "Turn, step, hit"



Coaching Tips

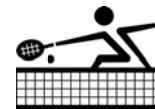
- ☐ The contact point is the most important part of the forehand. Emphasize contact at the front foot with a perpendicular racquet head.
- ☐ Begin with the contact point and follow-through for the first 50 balls the athlete hits. Working from the contact point will provide the best control once the stroke begins to take shape. Add the backswing once the athlete has demonstrated a balanced contact and follow-through position.
- ☐ Encourage the athlete to hit the forehand gently and stress that tennis is a game of control. Hitting the ball over the fence is not a home run in tennis!



Faults & Fixes – Forehand

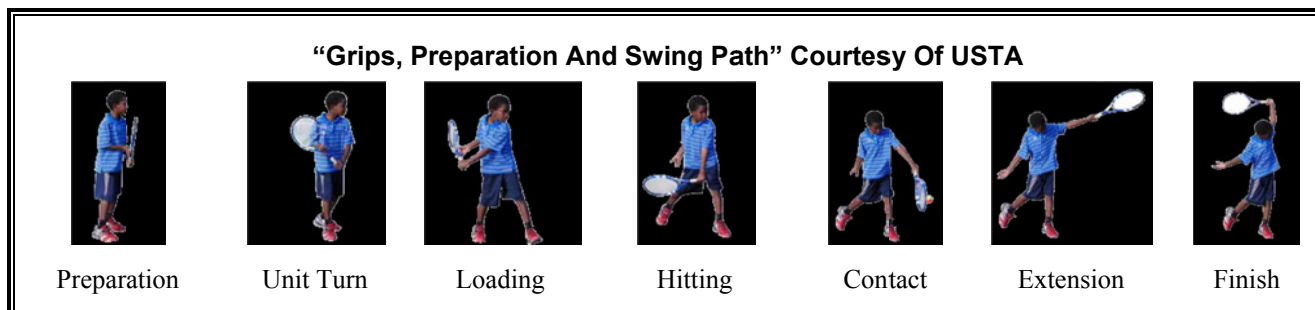
Error	Correction
Incorrect grip	Mark the racquet handle for a visual reminder.
Improper point of contact or misjudges the ball	Ask the athlete (without racquet in hand) to catch the ball at the proper contact position. Do this with a ball tossed directly to the athlete, progressing to a ball tossed a slight distance from the player, requiring more footwork.
Wrist break on backswing (too large a backswing)	With the player turned and the racquet head up, have the athlete place the palm of the non-hitting hand on the strings (side of the racquet facing the player) and complete the stroke from this position. Placing the hand on the strings will prevent the racquet from taking a big backswing.
Racquet rolls on follow-through	Ask the athlete to roll the racquet over the shoulder. The resulting higher follow-through will improve the stroke.
Slicing the ball (chopping)	<p>The slice is a quality stroke to develop. Ask the player to reach for a long follow-through. The shape is a banana on its back.</p> <p>Adding topspin for this player is done easier with an old racquet and asking the athlete to touch the ground before contacting the ball.</p>
Wristy at point of contact	Have the athlete choke up on the grip. The athlete will feel the grip on their arm.
Hits off back foot	Have the player stomp the front foot in the proper position. This will allow them to hear and feel the step.
Not enough shoulder turn on backswing	Have the player turn completely to the side before feeding a ball.
Steps in with wrong foot	Use chalk to trace the feet in the proper footwork sequence.





Skill 2: Backhand Ground Stroke, One-Handed

The backhand is hit on the opposite side of the body as the forehand. It is perfectly acceptable to hit the backhand with two hands. A two-handed backhand helps the athlete control the backswing. Remember that some athletes may have difficulty with this and may want to hit two forehands. It is important to explore the backhand but be prepared to work with two forehands, if needed.



(Pictures – For Left Handed Player)

Eastern Backhand Grip

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominate shoulder to target on turn

Grip

The player should use an Eastern backhand grip for a one- handed backhand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Backhand grip during the unit-turn using the non dominant hand at the throat

Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet. The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.



Athletic ready position



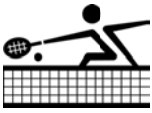
Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand Right handed players point right shoulder to target

Swing Path

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension



Groundstrokes : Two Handed Backhand

“Grips, Preparation And Swing Path” Courtesy Of Usta



Preparation



Unit Turn



Loading



Hitting



Contact



Extension



Finish

(Pictures – For Left Handed Player)

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominate shoulder to target on turn.

Grip

The player should use a grip close to Eastern for the top hand and a grip close to Continental on the bottom hand. The non dominant hand on the throat of the racquet is also used to change the grip from the forehand to backhand during play.



Player has taken Eastern Grip on top, Continental on Bottom, the right hand off the throat and has both backhand grips set as he begins the unit turn



Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet. The racquet is held in front of the body

with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.



Athletic ready position



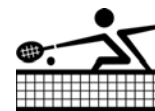
Preparation with a square Stance and racquet head above the hand

Swing Path

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension



Teaching the Skill

Grip

Athletes perform the backhand grip using the following tips (these tips are used for the dominant hand for the two-handed play)

- ♦ Hold the racquet with the forehand grip.
- ♦ Turn the hand until the first knuckle of the index finger is on top of the grip (1/4 turn).
- ♦ Another way to find this grip is to put the racquet under the left armpit and grab the racquet as if unsheathing a sword.

For a two-handed grip, the dominant hand should be in the continental grip (same as the serve) and the non-dominant hand is placed in an eastern forehand grip. For a right-handed player, the non-dominant hand is a forehand grip for a left-handed player and this is reversed in teaching a left-handed dominant player.



Preparation Ready Position

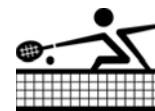
- ♦ The athlete faces forward with knees slightly flexed and feet shoulder width apart.
- ♦ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level, weight leaning forward on the toes.
- ♦ Use key words: "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready"



Backhand Stroke

- ♦ Loading: The racquet is taken back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface), with a continuous swing. This allows the student to have a loop "C" shaped swing.
- ♦ A few adjusting steps are taken towards the ball.
- ♦ Contact: The coach should demonstrate the contact point position. Freeze at the progression and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted. Use the key words "hit off your front foot"; "turn, step, hit."





Keep in mind that a one-handed backhand contact point will be out in front of the forward foot, whereas a two-handed backhand contact point will be near the front foot position. Use the key words "hit off your front foot" or "turn, step, hit."

Extension/Finish Follow-through

- ♦ The stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (one-handed).
- ♦ Be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through, as the athlete will put it all together when actually striking a ball.
- ♦ The racquet will finish pointing up and toward the net like "shaking hands with a giant."
- ♦ The two-handed follow-through will wrap around the opposite shoulder in a full swing pattern.

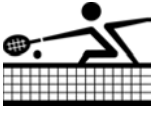


Key Words

- ♦ "Eyes on the ball"
- ♦ "Relax and be ready"
- ♦ "Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ "Change your grip"
- ♦ "Hit off your front foot"
- ♦ "Shaking hands with a giant"

Coaching Tips

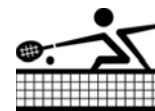
- ☐ Many Special Olympics tennis players like to hit two forehands, a left-handed and a right-handed one. It is important that coaches have athletes learn the backhand stroke.
- ☐ The backhand requires more strength and control and it is quite acceptable to use two hands.



Faults & Fixes – Backhand

Error	Correction
Incorrect grip	Mark the racquet handle for a visual reminder.
Improper point of contact or misjudges the ball	Toss the athlete a few balls and ask him/her to freeze the racquet at the point of contact.
Wrist break on backswing (one-handed backhand)	Have the athlete use the non-hitting palm and place it on the strings or on the racquet. This will prevent a large backswing or a break in the wrist.
Racquet rolls on follow-through	Have the athlete stop at the point of contact and then add the follow-through.
Slicing the ball	Have the athlete touch the racquet to the ground before swinging forward. Drop a ball and have the player brush up the back of it to simulate the feeling of topspin.
Hits off back foot	Feed balls from behind the player. Allow the ball to bounce so the athlete can step and hit. The player should start in a side to the net position.
Excessive hip and shoulder rotation (one-handed backhand)	Ask athletes to imagine they are a baseball umpire making a safe sign motion.





Drills for Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

The following drills are presented in a progression from basic to advanced skill level. Some Special Olympics athletes will be able to move quickly through the progression and others may stay at certain levels for a prolonged time. Be flexible and monitor athlete success in these drills. Be cautious of using athletes as training partners, as delivering the ball to each other may be difficult, hampering their success.

Shadow Drills

These drills are done without a ball and are an excellent way to monitor proper stroke production. Examples of common game formats include the following.

- ♦ Follow the leader: athlete or coach leads the group and coach checks technique.
- ♦ Simon Says: athletes follow the leader's instructions only when he says "Simon Says, hit a forehand."
- ♦ Freeze: the coach calls out a command for forehand or backhand and then calls out "freeze." Check for proper grips and technique at this point.

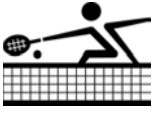


Self-Drop Forehand and Backhand Drills

These drills can be also be modified to become a relay race. Each team has 20 balls to hit over the net. Start with a drop hit groundstroke. If the ball lands within the court the athlete repeats the skill; with a maximum of 3 balls per athlete and then switch. If a mistake is made, the next person in line takes a turn. The first team to hit all the balls is the winner. An adaptation is to have the coach stand to the side of the athlete and drop the ball.

The athlete should:

- ♦ Hold the racquet with the proper grip and stand sideways to the net, with the racquet pointing toward the back fence.
- ♦ Drop a ball from the non-racquet hand, in front and to the side of the body.
- ♦ Step toward the ball with the front foot and stroke the ball over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Record the number of successful drop hits and monitor improvement as the season progresses.



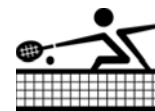
Alley Rally

- ♦ The athlete stands on the singles sideline facing a coach or partner on the doubles sideline 3 feet away.
- ♦ Place one tennis ball on the singles sideline and another one on the doubles sideline.
- ♦ Have athletes stand just behind the targets and, using the proper grip, gently bump the ball the partner's target.
- ♦ Partners rally back and forth.
- ♦ Monitor how many times the target is hit.
- ♦ To increase or decrease difficulty, use smaller or larger targets.



Tossed Ball Drills

- ♦ A partner or coach tosses tennis balls to the forehand and backhand sides.
- ♦ Athletes contact the ball after the first bounce and bump it over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Use targets, count consecutive hits and keep score between players. Be creative and keep athletes interested.
- ♦ Have a line of athletes “shadow” the hitter. The hitter stands at the service line and athletes follow the movements of the hitter.



Basket Feeding Drills

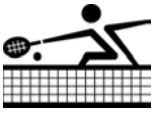
- ♦ Coach feeds balls from a hopper to students.
- ♦ Students form one or two lines on one side of court (depending on the number of athletes).
- ♦ The coach gently hits balls to the forehand or backhand side.
- ♦ Athletes hit a designated number of shots and return to the back of the line.
- ♦ Coaches can make the feeds easy or more difficult.
- ♦ Keep score, aim for targets or have "fielders" who try to catch hit balls. If a ball is caught by a fielder, they become a hitter.
- ♦ Have an athlete on the same side of the net as the coach and play out the point.
- ♦ Be creative and create different combinations of forehands and backhands.
- ♦ Let athletes help create games.



Ground Stroke Rallying with a Partner or Coach

- ♦ As players progress, they can rally the ball consecutively over the net.
- ♦ Start at the service line and complete 10 consecutive hits. After successfully completing 10 hits, athletes move to the mid-court area and then to the baseline area.
- ♦ Rally using a variety of balls and targets. For example: forehand to forehand cross courts; backhand to backhand cross courts; down the line shots; or all shots must land beyond the service line.
- ♦ Rally a number of consecutive hits. Set realistic goals!





Ground Stroke Points

- ♦ Athletes play points (no serve) using ground strokes.
- ♦ Play a game to a designated number of points (first to win 6 points, 11 points or 21 points) depending upon skill level.
- ♦ Have athletes play as a team. If they win a point the athlete stays in the game; if they lose the point a teammate takes their place.

Around the World (requires rallying skills)

- ♦ This is a large group drill with a minimum of 4 athletes per side.
- ♦ Two lines of athletes stand at opposite ends of the court.
- ♦ A drop hit starts the point and the rally begins.
- ♦ Each player hits one ball and runs to the end of the line at the opposite side of the court. The next player in line keeps the rally going.
- ♦ When a ball is missed, the player is out.
- ♦ The last two players play out the point, but do not have to run to the other side of the net.
- ♦ For lower skills players, the coach feeds most of the balls.
- ♦ Variation: Play as a team. After the team returns a ball, each player returns to the end of their respective line. The team with the last remaining player wins.



Around the World: Forgot My Racquet Variation

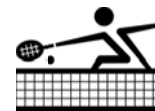
- ♦ Athletes play Around the World (above), but all team members share one tennis racquet. This drill requires athletes to pay attention to the game.



King (or Queen) of the Court; (three to six players) if more players use two courts

The king or queen returns the serve or a drop-hit serve from a member of the group. The players in the group alternate points until someone wins two points in a row and becomes the king or queen. The new king or queen replaces the old king or queen on his/her side of the court. This game is immensely popular and can be played for a long time.





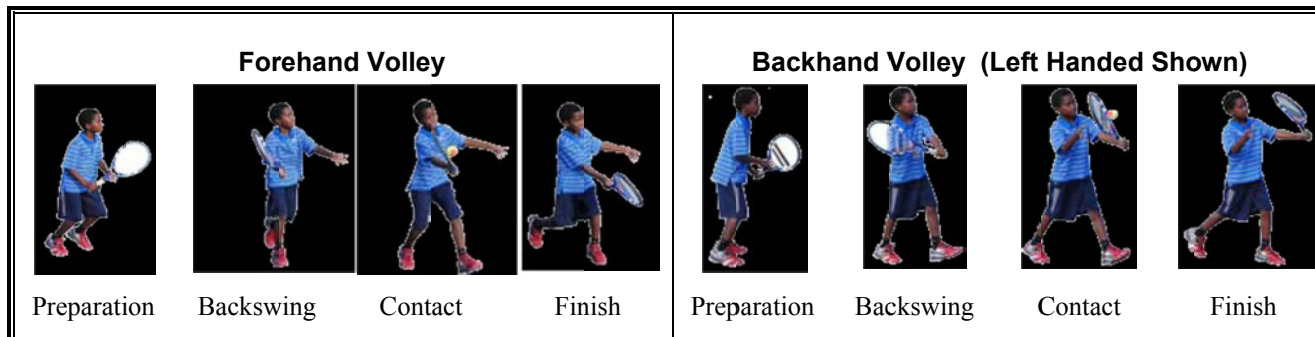
Skill 3 & 4: Volley

A volley is a stroke that is played before the ball bounces. It is normally hit when the player is inside the service line.

Assessing Player Readiness

Beginners are sometimes more successful with hitting the volley because it does not require the eye-hand coordination of playing the ball off the bounce. Common mistakes made by beginning and intermediate players are taking too big a swing or swinging down on the ball. Players should be reminded to focus on control rather than speed and power.

Teaching the Skill



Grip

The Continental grip should be used for both the forehand and backhand volley. This grip is half way between the Eastern forehand and Eastern backhand grip. This grip can also be used for the overhead.



Continental Grip

Preparation

Preparation at the net begins with an athletic ready position with eyes forward, racquet in front at eye level, knees flexed, weight forward and feet slightly wider than shoulder width. A split step is made as the opponent contacts the ball and the body and racquet move together as a unit sideways so that the strings of the racquet face the ball. The non-dominant hand helps set the racquet face behind the ball on the backhand side.



Athletic ready position



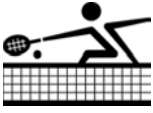
Unit turn with non-dominant hand on the throat for the backhand volley

Swing Path

The swing path moves in a straight line from slightly above the contact point to a position above the net. The racquet face is slightly open when contact is made from below the top of the net



The swing path is linear starting just above the point of contact and finishing at net level



Grip

The same grips used for the forehand and backhand are used for the volley. The eastern forehand and the eastern backhand should be used for both beginning and intermediate players. The volley grip for an advanced player is positioned between the forehand and the backhand groundstroke grips. The same grip is used for both the forehand and backhand volley.



Ready Position

The ready position is the same as for the forehand and backhand.

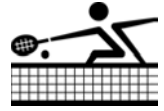
Volley Stroke

The volley progression includes the following steps:

- ♦ Begin with the athlete blocking the ball with his/her hand (hand up in the air as if giving a “high five”).
- ♦ Add the racquet, with the athlete holding the racquet near the throat, so that the fingers are behind the strings, making a “big hand.”
- ♦ Move the hand down the grip, eventually achieving an eastern grip position.
- ♦ The same progression is followed for the backhand, with a “big thumb” instead of a “big hand.”
- ♦ Athletes turn sideways to the approaching ball.
- ♦ There is no backswing in the volley stroke.
- ♦ The ball should be met in front of the body with a short motion.
- ♦ The wrist is kept firm.

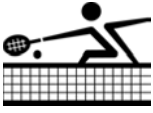


Once the athlete masters basic racquet work, the athlete can learn to step into the stroke. Athletes should work on properly executing the volley while maintaining balance.



Follow-through

- ♦ The racquet head should remain above the wrist throughout the volley.
- ♦ There is a short follow-through, finishing in the ready position for the next volley.
- ♦ Key words are "racquet head up" and "keep the racquet above the wrist."



Drills for Volleys

Volley Tap

- ♦ Athlete stands in the ready position and the coach tosses or hits a ball to him/her.
- ♦ Athlete steps in with a crossover step and bumps the ball with outstretched hand, simulating a forehand or backhand volley.
- ♦ Next, athletes catch the ball using proper footwork and toss it back to the partner. This drill could be repeated several times.



Cup/Cone Catches

- ♦ Using a large cup/ cone, have athletes catch a tossed ball.
- ♦ This emphasizes that athletes do not need to swing to hit a volley.

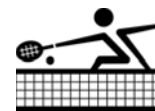


Volley Toss

- ♦ Coach or partner tosses a ball and players hit a forehand or backhand volley.
- ♦ Using proper volleying technique, players hit volleys to a partner.
- ♦ Count how many tosses and catches can be completed before a miss.

Volley Feeding Drills

Coach feeds balls from a hopper to a single-file line of players. Players hit a specified number of balls and return to the end of the line.



Criss-Cross Volley Drill

- ♦ Two lines of players start at the corner of the service box.
- ♦ Feed a forehand volley to the first person in the left line and then feed a backhand volley to the right line. Continue to feed volleys, alternating between the two lines.
- ♦ After volleying a designated number of balls, the player returns to the end of other line.



Alternating forehand and backhand volleys

- ♦ Coach feeds four balls, alternating forehand and backhand volleys.



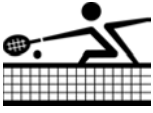
Corner Volley Drill

- ♦ Two lines are formed at the corners of the service boxes.
- ♦ Feed a ball so the athlete must move to hit the volley.
- ♦ After hitting the volley, the athlete touches the corner of the service box with the racquet and runs back to the net to play another volley.
- ♦ As the player is running to touch the corner, a ball is fed to player on the backhand corner side.

Approach and Volley (Forehand, Backhand and Same Side)

- ♦ Player hits an approach shot off a ball fed to the mid-court area.
- ♦ The second shot is a deep volley from a ball hit at the service line.
- ♦ The coach feeds several volleys, stressing forward movement between hits.





Rallying Drills

As players become more advanced, they can practice the volley in a rallying situation with a coach or partner.

Quick Volleys

- ♦ Two players stand at opposite service lines and volley with control back and forth to each other.
- ♦ Keep track of consecutive hits.

One Up – One Back

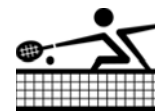
- ♦ Athlete volleys to a coach or partner who is rallying from the baseline.
- ♦ Aim for specific targets (example: forehand cross court rallies).
- ♦ Keep score or devise a game to make this situation competitive.

Key Words

- ♦ "Racquet head up"
- ♦ "Keep the racquet above the wrist"

Coaching Tips

- ☐ Emphasize that athletes should not swing at the volley, but instead "punch" or "catch" the ball. Have athletes hit and stop their racquet to avoid swinging. Ask them often if they can see their racquet. If they lose sight of the racquet they have taken it too far back.
- ☐ The racquet head should be above the wrist throughout the volley.
- ☐ Volleys are simple to teach and many Special Olympics tennis players are relatively successful with the stroke. But it is often difficult to make the transition from the baseline to the net in a game situation. Many athletes may only use the volley when in the net position in doubles. Even though they may not use it in their matches, encourage your athletes to practice their volleys.
- ☐ To be balanced properly after hitting the volley, it is necessary to use the correct footwork. On the forehand volley, step across with the left front foot and conversely on the backhand step across with the right front foot.
- ☐ When feeding balls, make sure balls are fed at different heights and speeds so athletes learn that not all balls approach at shoulder height. Initially, athletes should be given verbal cues such as forehand and/or backhand to help them react more quickly.



Skill 5 & 6: Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve.

Assessing Player Readiness

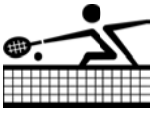
The serve can be the hardest part of tennis for beginners.

A suggested serving progression for success for Level 1 athletes.

- ♦ Athletes stand with non-dominate shoulder to the net.
- ♦ Athletes begin standing 2 steps behind the net.
- ♦ Allow the athlete to have 2 attempts on the serve.
- ♦ Throw the ball into the appropriate box (Crosscourt).
- ♦ Move 2 steps back and repeat.
- ♦ Continue moving 2 steps back to the service line.
- ♦ Add Racquet and begin 2 steps behind net.
- ♦ Racquet extended, ball is tossed then tapped to the correct service box.
- ♦ Repeat moving back to service line after 2 attempts.
- ♦ Return to the net add a snap and repeat progression to service line.

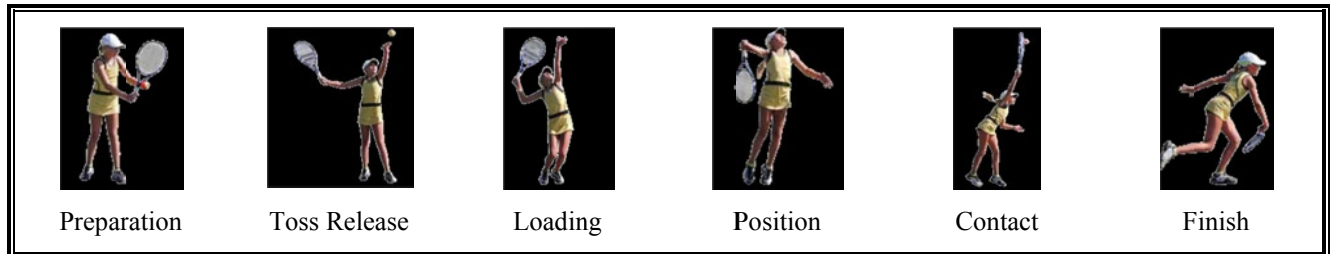
Intermediate players are more likely to complete a successful serve, but are still prone to double faults. They may struggle with placing the toss consistently and therefore have trouble serving consistently. The following modifications are appropriate for intermediate players.

- ♦ Hit an underhand serve (a forehand drop-hit with the ball hit in mid-air).
- ♦ Use an abbreviated service motion:
 - ♦ 1/2 serve is started with the racquet in the "back scratch position."
 - ♦ 3/4 serve is started with the racquet behind the body and pointing toward the ground.



Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve. The ball must be hit without bouncing on the court with either an overhead or underhand serve. The Serve is the most complicated stroke. Coaches who use a progressive training plan help athletes achieve success.



Grip

The player should use a Continental grip for the serve and overhead. This grip allows players to make contact with the ball at full extension, allows the wrist to relax and aids in creating spin.

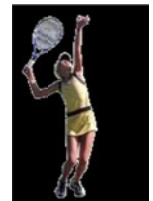


Preparation

The feet should be shoulder width apart with the front foot pointing toward the corresponding net post, right post for right-handers, left post for left-handers, and the back foot parallel with the baseline.

The racquet should be supported at the throat with the non-dominant hand and the dominant hand should be in a relaxed Continental grip.

The toss release should occur above the head and follow in line in front of the forward foot.



Preparation

Toss Release

Loading

Swing Path

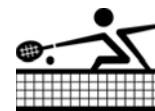
Both arms will drop down and swing up together. The non-dominant hand tosses the ball in position and the racquet head drops down to the hitting position where the tip of the racquet points toward the ground. The racquet arm elbow leads forward and up and the racquet follows, accelerating to the contact at full extension above and slightly in front of the body, finishing down and across the body.



Position

Contact

Finish



Teaching the Skill

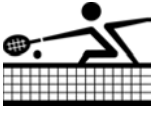
Grip

Beginners will normally resort to a "pancake" or "frying pan" grip. This grip is usually between the forehand grip and up to a half turn to the right of the forehand grip. The proper grip is a "continental grip" (between the forehand and the backhand), which is the same grip as the volley. Many athletes will struggle with this grip because it requires sufficient racquet head speed to be successful. The grip is a matter of comfort and coaches will have to make adaptations as necessary. It is recommended that coaches begin teaching the serve using a Level 1 format.



Preparation – Ready Position

- ♦ Stand sideways to the net, behind the baseline, with feet comfortably (shoulder width) apart.
- ♦ Hold the racquet in front of the body, with arms relaxed and a tennis ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Shoulders and hips should be aligned diagonally to aim toward the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Key words are "relax," "where are you aiming?" and "where are your feet pointed?"



Serve Stroke

Ball Toss Progression (for the right handed player)

- ♦ Athlete stands at back fence or court curtain.
- ♦ Racquet is extended up
- ♦ The left hand tosses (key words “lift and let go” or “place the ball on the second shelf”) Stress that the ball is placed, not thrown.
- ♦ Athlete traps ball with extended racquet against the fence or curtain. Repeat.
- ♦ Coaches can help the player by standing to the side of the athlete and tossing the ball.
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in back overhand throwing position.
- ♦ Move to court and begin with arm extended and tap the ball. Give 2 attempts. (Follow athlete assessment progression)
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in throwing position.
- ♦ When successful at racquet back overhand throwing position, assist athletes with a “down together, up together” arm motion until they get the idea of both arms working together
- ♦ The ball slightly in front and to the right of the server high enough so the ball can be contacted with an extended racquet.

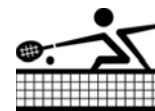


Serving Motion

- ♦ It is best to have athletes start with the racquet in the overhand throwing position resting on the shoulder (this will represent half of the full backswing). The athlete tosses and hits the ball from this position (emphasize the contact point).
- ♦ The full backswing can be added when athletes are able to get the contact point and toss to meet.
- ♦ To assist with teaching the full stroke, have the racquet and arm in the “down together, up together” motion. The racquet will swing across the top of the player’s feet, then toward the back fence and eventually reach the shoulder position.
- ♦ The racquet reaches up to contact the ball with an extended arm.

Follow Through

- ♦ After contact, the weight comes forward into the court and the racquet finishes across the body.



Overhand Throwing Position



Lefty Overhand Throwing Position

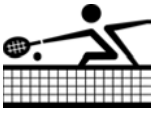


Drills for Serves

Throwing Drill

- ♦ Throw a ball over the net and into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Using an overhead throwing motion, throw a designated number of balls into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Athletes struggling to get the ball over the net can start at the service line and gradually work to the point of throwing from behind the baseline.
- ♦ Use various balls, such as footballs, foam balls, etc.





Toss Drill

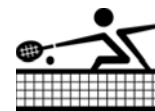
- ♦ Stand in the ready position with a ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Hold the ball with the fingertips and point the palm upward.
- ♦ With a straight arm, raise the ball upward and let go of the ball when the hand reaches its highest point.
- ♦ Allow the ball to drop back into the left hand while the right arm is outstretched.
- ♦ Count the number of successful tosses and catches.
- ♦ Variations:
 - ♦ Put the racquet on the ground to the right side of the server to act as a target.
 - ♦ Toss the ball as if to serve, but allow the ball to drop to ground.
 - ♦ Count the number of times the ball hits the racquet strings.
 - ♦ Toss the ball while standing alongside the fence. The ball should not touch the fence. This drill helps show the athlete if the toss is going straight up.



Arm Reach Drill

- ♦ Place the palm of the racquet hand against the back of the neck (back scratch position). Make sure the elbow is bent and pointing upwards.
- ♦ Extend the arm from behind the neck until it is straight and slightly in front of the shoulder.
- ♦ Now try the drill with a racquet in the hand “extend the arm.”





Catch a Ball from the Service Toss

- ♦ Start with a ball in the tossing hand and the serving arm in the back scratch position with palm against the back of the neck “scratch your back.”
- ♦ Toss the ball and extend the arm as in the Arm Reach Drill and catch the ball with the arm fully extended.

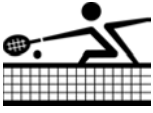


Serving practice

- ♦ With a bucket of balls at the baseline, practice serves from the deuce court and the ad court. Two athletes can practice serves at the same time.
- ♦ Aim for targets or count the consecutive number of successful serves.
- ♦ Play in teams and race to see which team can get 10 serves in the correct box first. When an athlete misses a serve, they go to end of line.

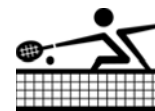
Key Words

- ♦ "Relax"
- ♦ "Where are you aiming?"
- ♦ "Where are your feet pointed?"
- ♦ “lift and let go”
- ♦ “Place the ball on the second shelf”
- ♦ “Down together, up together”
- ♦ "Scratch your back"
- ♦ "Hit only a good toss”
- ♦ "Extend the arm"



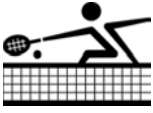
Coaching Tips

- ☐ Explain the boundaries and rules for the serve: (a) athletes must stand behind the baseline; (b) two attempts are allowed; (c) ball must be served diagonally; and (d) serve is replayed if it hits the net and lands in the correct service box (let).
- ☐ Stress the proper tactical priorities: (a) get the ball in play and (b) use a progression of placement, depth control, spin and pace.
- ☐ Start athletes near the service line when they are learning to serve. As they progress, move back and eventually serve from behind the baseline.
- ☐ Modify the serve by using a forehand stroke or a 1/2 or 3/4 serve. It is more fun to begin playing points rather than have a game of double faults.
- ☐ Provide athletes with corrections to missed serves.
- ☐ For corrections, consider that a ball in the net indicates the toss is probably too far in front or too low and the athlete is hitting down, rather than reaching up.
- ☐ A serve that goes long indicates the ball toss is too far behind the body. More extension of the hitting arm is needed.
- ☐ Stress the importance of an accurate toss. If the ball is not in the right place, it is difficult to control the serve. When there is a bad toss, encourage athletes to catch the toss and try again. There is no penalty for a bad toss ("hit only a good toss").
- ☐ Athletes should practice the serve in every practice. A point cannot be played without putting the serve in the correct service box.



Faults & Fixes – Serve

Error	Correction
Back foot slides up to the front foot before contact	Place an object on the foot or drag the back foot through the movement, as opposed to taking a step.
Front foot slides forward before contact (foot fault)	Place an object (ball/ racquet) in front of the front foot.
Improper stance	Imagine aiming a bow and arrow or use chalk to trace the feet of players.
Changes grip in backswing	Place colored dots on the grip for reference, where different colors represent grips for different strokes. Each dot should indicate where the index knuckle is placed.
Uses improper grip	Place colored dots on the grip for reference, where different colors represent grips for different strokes. Each dot should indicate where the index knuckle is placed.
Backswing is too short	Have athlete swing across the top of their shoe laces.
Backswing is too quick	Have the athlete serve in slow motion, increasing speed as they near completion.
Knees dip before toss	Bend the knees first, then complete the serve.
Straight arm serve	Serve by swinging across the shoe laces, then touch the back before contacting the ball and completing the motion.
Lack of continuity (hitch in swing)	Ask the player to toss the ball only two inches in height, making the player hurry through the stroke to achieve a contact point. The coach can also make the toss for the player.
Athlete drops elbow	Exaggerate a high toss, emphasizing reaching up to contact the ball.
Scissor toss	Place the tossing arm over the racquet arm.
Quick toss	Perform a slow motion serve or place the tossing hand under the racquet, allowing the racquet to begin the stroke before the toss has been made.
Weight shifts too soon	Have the athlete stand with a tennis ball under each foot (under toes, not heels), which starts the service motion from a leaning back position.
Improper point of contact	Coaches often do not teach the ball toss and rarely teach how to toss. Emphasize the point of contact by tapping the ball at the point of contact against the fence or backdrop.
Loss of balance	Have the student serve from a standing position with the legs crossed.



Return of Serve

After the serve, the return of serve is the most important shot in tennis. Successful tennis players have consistent returns.

Assessing Player Readiness

Special Olympics athletes must constantly be reminded to be ready and pay attention to the server. Teach players to watch the ball during the toss. This allows for immediate tracking skills to take place. It is often necessary for the athlete to move toward the ball for the return. These can be very difficult concepts to master, but are necessary for the athlete to progress.

Teaching the Skill

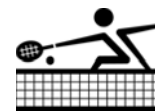
- ♦ The basic ready position (using a forehand grip), presented in the groundstroke lesson, is used in the return of serve. Use the key words “relax,” “look for the ball” and “be ready.”
- ♦ Athletes should begin near the baseline, close enough to touch the singles sideline. The position is the same for both singles and doubles play.

Return of Serve Stroke

- ♦ The return of serve is similar to the forehand and backhand, with a shorter backswing due to decreased time to react to the ball. Use the key words “turn,” “shorten your backswing” and “move your feet.”
- ♦ The student turns as if preparing for a volley and takes the racquet back as the body is turning. This helps teach a shorter backswing.
- ♦ Footwork is similar to groundstroke preparation. With limited reaction time, the athlete may take just one step toward the ball before contact. Be sure that the initial step or steps will achieve a suitable position, ‘split step’. A step in the wrong direction will tell the coach that more time is needed working on tracking skills.
- ♦ To practice return of serve, have the athlete track the oncoming serve and catch the ball in a short court format. Increase distance as skill progresses.
- ♦ NOTE: a tennis player should never have both heels on the ground at the same time. In getting ready to return serve, a player must be on the balls of their feet and split step and prepare just before returning the ball.

Key Words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Turn”
- ♦ “Shorten your backswing”
- ♦ “Move your feet”



Skill 7: Alternating Ground strokes

Athletes alternate between forehand and backhand ground strokes while adding movement to the ball. The key is for athlete to begin in ready position, early racquet preparation (racquet back with shoulder turn), take a few steps to the ball, stop, step in to contact ball, then recover by shuffling back to center mark and ready position and then repeat pattern on opposite side. Athletes change grips while in ready position.

Hitting with Movement

For many Special Olympics tennis players, moving to the ball and then executing a stroke can be very difficult. It is important for coaches to instruct athletes that in a match the ball is not going to come to them; they must move to the ball. Hitting with movement drills should be introduced in the early stages of skill development and should lead to practices that prepare athletes for match play.

Assessing Player Readiness

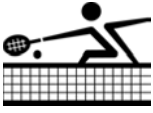
- ♦ Beginners typically do not like to run to the ball. They would rather reach from the waist, extend their arms and then flick their wrist at the ball rather than move their feet.
- ♦ Intermediate players will move more readily to the ball but will often get "jammed" with a ball that is too close or they will reach for a ball that is too far away.
- ♦ The best tennis players move to the ball quickly and get in position to execute their stroke effectively. They are rarely out of position and are balanced at the end of each stroke. They always seem to be in the right place.

Teaching the Skill

There are five steps to developing efficient movement around the court.

1. The athlete needs to determine the direction of the approaching ball. To practice, toss balls to the athlete positioned on the other side of the court. The athlete points in the direction of the approaching ball with the non-racquet hand before the ball reaches the net.
2. Make contact with the ball. The athlete runs toward the tossed ball and catches it after only one bounce. This can be progressed into a drill where the athlete next catches the ball on the strings.
3. Turn the shoulders and take the racquet back into the hitting position while running toward the ball.
4. Step forward with the front foot as contact is made with the ball. Asking the athlete to freeze at that point allows the coach to get a good view of the athlete's footwork.
5. After following-through, the athlete turns and takes a few running steps back to the center of the court. Getting back to a balance position toward the center of the court with a split step in preparation for the next shot. This split step is done at the opponents' forward swing at the ball.

Throughout the sequence, practice the split step to maintain balance. To execute the split step, as the opponent starts his/her swing, the athlete jumps on both feet. Use the key words "split step" or "take little steps." Be sure the athlete understands that the split step occurs all over the court and in between each contact or swing of the racquet.



Alternating Groundstroke Progression for success

- ♦ Practice movement without equipment.
- ♦ Incorporate movement into warm-ups.
- ♦ Athletes shadow coaches movements.
- ♦ After practicing movement, add ball.
- ♦ Athlete starts at T on service line.
- ♦ Athlete runs to tossed ball.
- ♦ Athlete stops and catches ball then throws balls over net.
- ♦ Athlete shuffles back to center.
- ♦ Next add racquet and repeat

Drills for Teaching Movement

- ♦ Demonstrate the correct way to move to the ball
- ♦ Exaggerate what happens if the athlete forgets to take the racquet back while running to the ball.
- ♦ Show the hesitation step to prevent running through the ball.

Shadow Drills

- ♦ Coach calls out "running forehand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary forehand and completes a forehand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.
- ♦ Coach calls out "running backhand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary backhand and completes a backhand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.

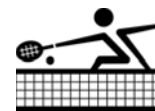


Tossing Drills

- ♦ Toss balls to alternating sides and have athletes hit and move.
- ♦ Toss balls progressively farther away from athletes.
- ♦ Toss balls without a pattern and have athletes hit and move.

Feeding Drills with a Basket

- ♦ Athletes stand in a line at the baseline.
- ♦ Players respond one at a time by hitting and moving to a ball fed by the coach.
- ♦ Athletes run side to side to hit a designated number of alternating forehands and backhands.



Five Ball Drill

- ♦ Coach feeds five balls in the following sequence: forehand, backhand, mid-court forehand, backhand volley, forehand volley.
- ♦ Athlete hits five balls and returns to the hitting line.



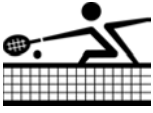
Agility Drills

- ♦ Shuttle Runs: The doubles sideline is the starting line. Run to the center service line and back to the doubles sideline. Then run to the singles sideline and back. Continue running to far service sideline and back. This can be done several times in a row or on several courts. With four or more players, make a relay race of this drill pitting two against two or three against three etc.
- ♦ Run the lines: Starting in the corner of the doubles sideline, run to the net and backpedal back to the corner. Shuffle over to the singles sideline and run to the net. Backpedal to the service line and shuffle to the center service line.
- ♦ Line jumps: Athletes stand on one side of any line on the court. As fast as possible they jump back and forth over the line for 30 seconds.
- ♦ Jump roping: A great way to increase agility. Do various skipping and hopping routines. Go for speed and endurance.



Key words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Split step”
- ♦ “Take little steps”

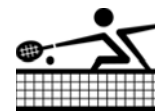


Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide

Teaching Tennis Skills – Level 1

Coaching Tips

- ☐ When waiting in line, athletes should be active by jogging or moving in place, rather than standing still.
- ☐ Balance is the key to moving well. Teach athletes how to be balanced when they hit the ball.
- ☐ Incorporate movement or agility drills at the end of each practice. These drills can be done following the lines of the court and run as relay races. Keep it fun!



III. Level 2 Matchplay

- ♦ 42' court with Red Foam Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 2.0-2.5 21-23" racquet recommend

Assessing Player Readiness

Level 2 is for Beginners who have been successful in Level 1 and ready to transition to matchplay. Level 2 athletes learn to combine strokes with movement. Athletes tend to need a slower ball and a smaller defined space. Common mistakes are over hitting, poor footwork, lack of court coverage, little preparation, and double service faults. Balance lessons by warmup, lesson focus, drill, game and wrap up..

Suggested lesson activities

A. Warm-up

3 ball line run

- ♦ Place 1 ball at the net in the ad alley, 1 ball at the net at the center line and 1 ball at the net in the deuce alley.
- ♦ Players form a single line at the baseline in the ad alley. Each player has 1 ball.
- ♦ 1st players runs toward the net with their ball, bends down and replaces ball at the net. Then runs backwards to the service line, shuffles to the center line, runs up and exchanges balls, runs backwards back to the service line, shuffles over to deuce alley, runs up and exchanges ball the runs backwards to the baseline and shuffles across to go to the end of the line.
- ♦ The 2nd player goes when the 1st player shuffles toward the center line.

Shuffle Watch

- ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net.
- ♦ The coach stands on the opposite side of the net. The coach points to either of the alleys. The players must shuffle in that direction until the coach points to other alley. The time between changing directions shortens. Athletes must keep their eyes on the coach at all time and their shoulders square to the net.

Run and Shuffle

2 cones for each player. Set one for each player on the deuce single sideline and one on the ad single side line.

- ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net. On signal, players run to the Deuce-Single sideline, touch the cone with their left hand and shuffle back to center.
- ♦ Players then run toward the Ad-Alley, touch the cone with right hand, then shuffle back to the center.

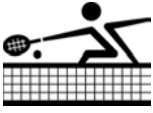
Agility – Racquet quickness

- ♦ Two players stand facing one another, each standing a racquet on the tip of the frame with the handle pointing up. At the count of three, the players will switch place and catch the other player's racquet without letting it drop. After several successful trials, move the children back a half step at a time and see how far they can go without letting the racquets drop.

Cone Topple

12 – 6" cones spread all over court. ½ are upright and the other ½ are on their side.

- ♦ Players form two teams. Each team has a specific job. 1st job is to tip over the cone that is upright with their hand. 2nd job is to set the cones upright. Play for 1 minute and see which team has the most. Then switch jobs.



B. Sending/Receiving/Rally/Movement

- ♦ **Koosh ball pass**

Use one Koosh ball or beanbag for each pair. Have the players begin by standing close together with their racquets, passing the Koosh ball back and forth from one racquet to another. After several successful trials, have them move back so they use a gentle toss to get the Koosh ball from one racquet to the other. Add a challenge by tossing the Koosh ball low, high, and even adding a creative catch, such as standing on one leg, between the legs, just above the ground, on one knee, etc.

- ♦ **Koosh ball step back**

This is similar to the above activity but kids move one step apart each time they toss and catch the Koosh ball. See how far apart the players can get without dropping the Koosh ball.

- ♦ **Rally Me**

Toss ball up, let bounce in ring, tap up, let bounce in ring, and repeat for 1 minute.

First use – Palm up tap, then palm down tap and finally alternate palm up /palm down.

- ♦ **Partner Rally**

Same as Rally Me but partners alternate tapping up after bounce in target ring.

Count to see how many they can do in 1 minute.

- ♦ **Toss and Tap – Players stand 6-8' part.**

One player tosses the ball to the other player who traps the ball against the racquet strings (1 bounce). The tosser tries to move their partner up and back and side to side. (When trapping, the racquet butt cap should be pressed up against the waist near the belt buckle and the ball should be caught (trapped) against the strings with non-dominate hand. The trapper rolls the ball back to the tosser.

- ♦ **Toss, Hit and Catch**

Players are 8-10 feet apart. One player tosses a ball underhand so it bounces once. The partner hits the ball with a forehand groundstroke back to the tossing partner who catches the ball and tosses it back. See how many times you can toss, hit and catch without a miss.

- ♦ 1st round – forehand ground stroke
- ♦ 2nd round – backhand ground stroke
- ♦ 3rd round – forehand volley
- ♦ 4th round – backhand volley

- ♦ **Feed and Trap**

Players are 8-10 feet apart Players take turns drop- hitting to each other and trapping the ball on their strings with their hand.

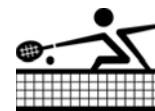
- ♦ **Feed-hit-Trap**

Player A feeds (drop hits) the ball to Player B. Player B hits the ball back to Player A (groundstroke or volley) Player A traps the ball on the strings and repeats the sequence.

- ♦ **Toss and Trap**

Player stands with non-dominate shoulder to fence, court curtain or wall.

With ball in non-dominate hand, palm up, player tosses the ball up and tries to trap it with racquet strings.



- ♦ **Serve and Trap**

Player serves to wall target and tries to trap the rebound with the racquet strings and non-dominate hand.

- ♦ **Serve, Return and Trap**

Player A serves to Player B, Player B returns to Player A; Player A traps the ball on the strings with hand. Then serves again. After 2 serves, switch.

- ♦ **Wall Rally**

Players attempt to rally the ball against a wall and set a personal best for longest rally. Players can be required to alternate hitting forehands and backhands. Note: Targets can be taped against the wall for players to aim toward. Players can also work together and alternate hits.

- ♦ **Rally poker**

1 person closet to coach runs and gets a card they must rally that number in a row over the net. Once done they can get another card. After 3 minutes make best poke hand.

- ♦ 1st round – forehand,
- ♦ 2nd round – backhand
- ♦ 3rd round alternate

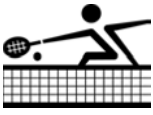
Tag singles

Players form 2 single file lines across the net from each other. The first person in each line starts on the service line and the others stand behind a safe distance. The player hits the ball and rotates to end of their line.

- ♦ 1st round – hit straight ahead both service boxes.
- ♦ 2nd round- hit straight ahead both service boxes using forehand only.
- ♦ 3rd round – hit straight ahead both service boxes using backhand only.
- ♦ 4th round – hit straight ahead both service boxes alternating forehand and backhand.
- ♦ 5th round – diagonal (Deuce service box to deuce service box) and continue.
- ♦ 6th round – diagonal (Ad service box to ad service box) and continue.

Round the World

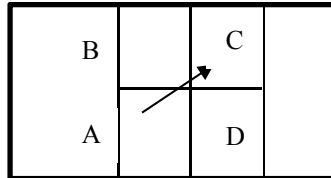
Players form 2 single file lines across the net from each other. The first person in each line starts on the service line and the others stand behind a safe distance. The player hits the ball and runs to their right, around the net and goes to the end of the opposite line. See how many consecutive hits can be done.



C. Lead Up Games – Red foam ball and 42' court (service boxes only)

Throw It – Doubles – Players A, B and Players C, D

- ♦ Players stand behind service line facing their opponents on opposite service line.
- ♦ Player A begins and has 2 attempts to throw the ball overhand over the net to the diagonal service box. (Deuce

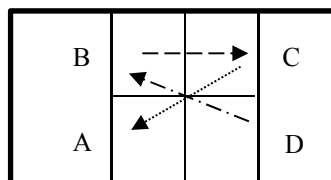


to deuce) If both attempts fail, Player B is next to throw and throws to Player D.

- Player C catches it after 1 bounce and throws it overhand over the net. The ball must bounce in either service box.
- ♦ Play continues until a mistake is made and point is awarded to the winner.
- ♦ Player B next to serve. Player B serves to Player D and play continues as before.
- ♦ Player C serves the 3rd point and Player D the 4th point.
- ♦ Play continues until one team has 4 points.

Figure 8 Rally

- ♦ Four players practice keeping one ball in play following a figure 8 pattern. After each successful four shot rally, player rotate.



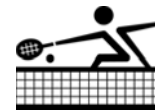
D. Tournament Warm - up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver, players warm up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 2 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys -1 minute (one at net-one service line and switch positions after 30 seconds)
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back

Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide

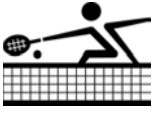
Teaching Tennis Skills – Level 2



Coaches Tip:

- ☐ Build up athletes' stamina for competition. Matches can last from 15 minutes to 90 minutes.
- ☐ Encourage them to drink plenty of water, choose nutritious food and develop an exercise plan.

Activities, drills & techniques can be learned by attending an ITF coaches workshop, USTA Recreational Coach Workshop, USTA 10 and Under Coach Workshop, PTR coaches' training or USPTA coaches' workshops along with their publications. All are held throughout the year. Check web sites for details. www.itftennis.com/coaching, www.USTA.com, www.ptrtennis.org, www.uspta.com



Teaching Drills

Drills for Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

The following drills are presented in a progression from basic to advanced skill level. Some Special Olympics athletes will be able to move quickly through the progression and others may stay at certain levels for a prolonged time. Be flexible and monitor athlete success in these drills. Be cautious of using athletes as training partners, as delivering the ball to each other may be difficult, hampering their success.

Shadow Drills

These drills are done without a ball and are an excellent way to monitor proper stroke production. Examples of common game formats include the following.

- ♦ Follow the leader: athlete or coach leads the group and coach checks technique.
- ♦ Simon Says: athletes follow the leader's instructions only when he says "Simon Says, hit a forehand."
- ♦ Freeze: the coach calls out a command for forehand or backhand and then calls out "freeze." Check for proper grips and technique at this point.

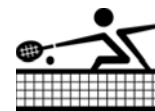


Self-Drop Forehand and Backhand Drills

These drills can be also be modified to become a relay race. Each team has 20 balls to hit over the net. Start with a drop hit groundstroke. If the ball lands within the court the athlete repeats the skill. If a mistake is made, the next person in line takes a turn. The first team to hit all the balls is the winner. An adaptation is to have the coach stand to the side of the athlete and drop the ball.

The athlete should:

- ♦ Hold the racquet with the proper grip and stand sideways to the net, with the racquet pointing toward the back fence.
- ♦ Drop a ball from the non-racquet hand, in front and to the side of the body.
- ♦ Step toward the ball with the front foot and stroke the ball over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Record the number of successful drop hits and monitor improvement as the season progresses.



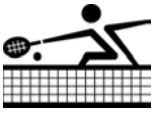
Alley Rally

- ♦ The athlete stands on the singles sideline facing a coach or partner on the doubles sideline 3 feet away.
- ♦ Place one tennis ball on the singles sideline and another one on the doubles sideline.
- ♦ Have athletes stand just behind the targets and, using the proper grip, gently bump the ball the partner's target.
- ♦ Partners rally back and forth.
- ♦ Monitor how many times the target is hit.
- ♦ To increase or decrease difficulty, use smaller or larger targets.



Tossed Ball Drills

- ♦ A partner or coach tosses tennis balls to the forehand and backhand sides.
- ♦ Athletes contact the ball after the first bounce and bump it over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Use targets, count consecutive hits and keep score between players. Be creative and keep athletes interested.
- ♦ Have a line of athletes “shadow” the hitter. The hitter stands at the service line and athletes follow the movements of the hitter



Teaching Drills Serves

Throwing Drill

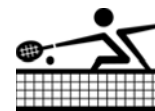
- ♦ Throw a ball over the net and into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Using an overhead throwing motion, throw a designated number of balls into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Athletes struggling to get the ball over the net can start at the service line and gradually work to the point of throwing from behind the baseline.
- ♦ Use various balls, such as footballs, foam balls, etc.



Toss Drill

- ♦ Stand in the ready position with a ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Hold the ball with the fingertips and point the palm upward.
- ♦ With a straight arm, raise the ball upward and let go of the ball when the hand reaches its highest point.
- ♦ Allow the ball to drop back into the left hand while the right arm is outstretched.
- ♦ Count the number of successful tosses and catches.
- ♦ Variations:
 - ♦ Put the racquet on the ground to the right side of the server to act as a target.
 - ♦ Toss the ball as if to serve, but allow the ball to drop to ground.
 - ♦ Count the number of times the ball hits the racquet strings.
 - ♦ Toss the ball while standing alongside the fence. The ball should not touch the fence. This drill helps show the athlete if the toss is going straight up.





Arm Reach Drill

- ♦ Position your feet as if you were serving into the court. Begin with your elbow pointing at the back fence with the upper arm forming a 90 degree angle so that it points up.
- ♦ Lead with the elbow toward the net and extend the arm until it is straight and slightly in front of the shoulder.
- ♦ Now try the drill with a racquet in the hand. The racquet will point up at the start. As the elbow leads, the racquet drops before it reaches up to a fully extended arm.



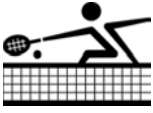
Catch a Ball from the Service Toss

- ♦ Start with a ball in the tossing hand and the serving arm in the back scratch position with palm against the back of the neck "scratch your back."
- ♦ Toss the ball and extend the arm as in the Arm Reach Drill and catch the ball with the arm fully extended.



Serving practice

- ♦ With a bucket of balls at the baseline, practice serves from the deuce court and the ad court. Two athletes can practice serves at the same time.
- ♦ Aim for targets or count the consecutive number of successful serves.
- ♦ Play in teams and race to see which team can get 10 serves in the correct box first. When an athlete misses a serve, they go to end of line.



Teaching Drills Return of Serve

After the serve, the return of serve is the most important shot in tennis. Successful tennis players have consistent returns.

Assessing Player Readiness

Special Olympics athletes must constantly be reminded to be ready and pay attention to the server. Teach players to watch the ball during the toss. This allows for immediate tracking skills to take place. It is often necessary for the athlete to move toward the ball for the return. These can be very difficult concepts to master, but are necessary for the athlete to progress.

Teaching the Skill

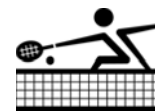
- ♦ The basic ready position (using a forehand grip), presented in the groundstroke lesson, is used in the return of serve. Use the key words “relax,” “look for the ball” and “be ready.”
- ♦ Athletes should begin near the baseline, close enough to touch the singles sideline. The position is the same for both singles and doubles play.

Return of Serve Stroke

- ♦ The return of serve is similar to the forehand and backhand, with a shorter backswing due to decreased time to react to the ball. Use the key words “turn,” “shorten your backswing” and “move to the ball.”
- ♦ The student turns as if preparing for a volley and takes the racquet back as the body is turning. This helps teach a shorter backswing.
- ♦ Footwork is similar to groundstroke preparation. With limited reaction time, the athlete may take just one step toward the ball before contact. Be sure that the initial step or steps will achieve a suitable position. A step in the wrong direction will tell the coach that more time is needed working on tracking skills.
- ♦ To practice return of serve, have the athlete track the oncoming serve and catch the ball in a short court format. Increase distance as skill progresses.

Key Words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Turn”
- ♦ “Shorten your backswing”
- ♦ “Move to the ball”



Teaching Drills Movement

- ♦ Demonstrate the correct way to move to the ball
- ♦ Exaggerate what happens if the athlete forgets to take the racquet back while running to the ball.
- ♦ Show the hesitation step to prevent running through the ball.

Shadow Drills

- ♦ Coach calls out "running forehand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary forehand and completes a forehand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.
- ♦ Coach calls out "running backhand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary backhand and completes a backhand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.



Tossing Drills – Hand feed with underhand toss.

- ♦ Toss balls to alternating sides and have athletes hit and move.
- ♦ Toss balls progressively farther away from athletes.
- ♦ Toss balls without a pattern and have athletes hit and move.

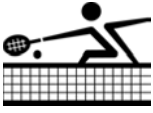
Feeding Drills with a Basket

- ♦ Athletes stand in a line at the baseline.
- ♦ Players respond one at a time by hitting and moving to a ball fed by the coach.
- ♦ Athletes run side to side to hit a designated number of alternating forehands and backhands.

Five Ball Drill

- ♦ Coach feeds five balls in the following sequence: forehand, backhand, mid-court forehand, backhand volley, forehand volley.
- ♦ Athlete hits five balls and returns to the hitting line.





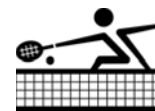
Agility Drills

- ♦ Shuttle Runs: The doubles sideline is the starting line. Run to the center service line and back to the doubles sideline. Then run to the singles sideline and back. Continue running to far service sideline and back. This can be done several times in a row or on several courts.
- ♦ Run the lines: Starting in the corner of the doubles sideline, run to the net and backpedal back to the corner. Shuffle over to the singles sideline and run to the net. Backpedal to the service line and shuffle to the center service line.
- ♦ Line jumps: Athletes stand on one side of any line on the court. As fast as possible they jump back and forth over the line for 30 seconds.
- ♦ Jump roping: A great way to increase agility. Do various skipping and hopping routines. Go for speed and endurance.



Key words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Split step”
- ♦ “Take little steps”



IV. Level 3 Matchplay

- ♦ 60' Court with Orange Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 3.0-3.9
- ♦ 23-25" racquet recommended

Assessing Player Readiness

For Advanced Beginners, who have been successful in Level 2 and ready to transition to a larger defined space and smaller, slower ball. Level 3 athletes are able to sustain a short rally with movement (3 hits in a row) and demonstrate basic strategy. Common mistakes are lack of depth, poor directional control, poor recovery and pushes serves.

A. Warm-ups: examples

Any previous level warm-ups

- ♦ High Knees:

With knees reaching waist height, athletes go from baseline to net.

- ♦ Line runs:
- ♦ Athletes stand on doubles sideline, perpendicular to net.
- ♦ Athletes run to singles sideline, bend knees, touch line with both hands and return to start.
- ♦ Repeat to center line, then opposite singles sideline and lastly opposite doubles sideline.
- ♦ Variation:
 - ♦ Athletes stand at center line in ready position.
 - ♦ Athletes turn and run to right (deuce) singles sideline and touch with racquet, then shuffle back to center in ready position.
 - ♦ Athletes repeat to left (ad) singles sideline.
 - ♦ Repeat again to right and left doubles sideline.

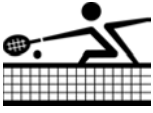
B. Readiness, preparation and recovery drills: examples

1. Ready

- ♦ Players jog in place while in ready position. When the whistle blows, players split step.
- ♦ Players jog in place, split step when coach drops ball.
- ♦ Players jog in place, split step when coach drops ball runs to sideline and complete imaginary swing and shuffle back to start.

2. Ready 2

- ♦ Players (A and B) partner up.
- ♦ Player A holds 1 ball in each hand with arms outstretched.
- ♦ Player B faces partner 3' away.
- ♦ Player A drops one ball.
- ♦ Player B steps forward and catches ball after one bounce.
- ♦ Repeat 4xs and switch positions.



3. Preparation and recovery 1

- ♦ Run and Shuffle - 2 cones for each player. Set one for each player on the deuce single sideline and one on the ad single side line.
 - ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net. On signal, players run to the Deuce-Single sideline, touch the cone with their left hand and shuffle back to center.
 - ♦ Players then run toward the Ad-Alley, touch the cone with right hand, then shuffle back to the center.

4. Preparation and recovery 2

- ♦ Players form single file line at 60' line.
- ♦ Coach stands on opposite side of net and underhand tosses ball to the right or left of 1st person in line.
- ♦ Player runs to the ball, stops, catches ball after one bounce, throws ball overhand over the net, then shuffles back to start.
- ♦ Repeat then go to end of line.

5. Preparation and recovery 3

- ♦ Players form 2 lines with racquets.
- ♦ Coach stands facing lines.
- ♦ Coach tosses a ball toward single sidelines to each line.
- ♦ 1st players in line start in ready position. Players run to the ball, stop and hit.
- ♦ Players shuffle back to start while facing the net and in ready position.
- ♦ Repeat then go to the end of the opposite line.

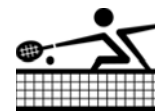
C. Rally Drills: examples

4 per court - Ground stroke or volleys

- ♦ Hit straight ahead – Goal 10 in a row. Increase as players are able. Rotate partners. (forehand only, backhand only, alternate, be creative)
- ♦ Hit cross court - Goal 10 in a row. Increase as players are able. Rotate partners. (forehand only, backhand only, alternate, be creative)

3 per court - Ground stroke or volleys

- ♦ Player A is singles player, Players B and C are on opposite side of net.
- ♦ Play may be ground strokes to ground strokes, volleys to volleys or ground strokes to volleys.
- ♦ Goal – 10 hits in a row



D. Lead up games: examples

- ✦ Champion of the Court
 - ♦ Singles game.
 - ♦ 1 King/Queen on opposite side of net and others line up in a single file line behind the 60' line.
 - ♦ First person in line serves to King and play out point.
 - ♦ If server wins, they have to the count of 5 to become King/Queen before the next person serves. The Ex-king returns to the end of the serving line.
- ♦ Add-um up
 - ♦ Divide class in half.
 - ♦ Form single file lines on opposite sides of net on 60' line.
 - ♦ With a drop hit, the 1st two play out singles point.
 - ♦ Winner stays on court and is joined the next team mate.
 - ♦ The loser, returns to the end of their line.
 - ♦ The goal is to win the point with all team members on the court.
 - ♦ The single player always starts the point.
 - ♦ If the single player wins, all players on the opposite side return to the end of their line.

E. Tournament Warm – up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period.

After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver

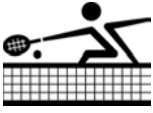
Players warm-up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back

Coaches Tip

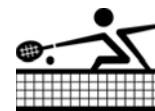
Intermediate players are more likely to complete a successful serve, but are still prone to double faults. They may struggle with placing the toss consistently and therefore have trouble serving consistently. The following modifications are appropriate for intermediate players.

- ☐ Hit an underhand serve (a forehand drop-hit with the ball hit in mid-air).
- ☐ Use an abbreviated service motion:
- ☐ 1/2 serve is started with the racquet in the "back scratch position."
- ☐ 3/4 serve is started with the racquet behind the body and pointing toward the ground.



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Teaching Tennis Skills – Level 3

Activities, drills techniques can be learned by attending an ITF coaches workshop, USTA Recreational Coach Workshop, USTA 10 and Under Coach Workshop, PTR coaches training or USPTA coaches workshops along with their publications. All are held throughout the year. Check web sites for details. www.itftennis.com/coaching, www.USTA.com, www.ptrtennis.org, www.uspta.com



V. Level 4 Matchplay

- ♦ 78' Court with Green Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 4.0-4.9 25-27" racquet recommended
- ♦ Level 4 players benefit from instruction from tennis professionals.

Assessing Player Readiness

Intermediate who have been successful in Level 3 and ready to transition to full court with low compression ball. Level 4 athletes are able to sustain a 4-5 hit rally with movement, moves to the ball and sequences 2 strokes. Common mistakes are poor ball placement, weak second serve, lacks depth and inconsistent backhand shots. Balance lessons by warmup, lesson focus, drill, game and wrap up.

A. Warm-ups –

Same as Level 5

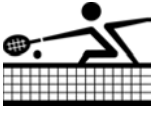
B. Specialty shots

Overhead:

- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players line up across net and stand perpendicular to net.
 - ♦ At signal, players shuffle toward service line, keeping perpendicular to net.
 - ♦ Players stop and reach up with racquet hand and step.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Same as 1 but add ball to catch with racquet hand.
- ♦ Drill 3
 - ♦ Same as 1 but form 1 line in alley with only one player at net.
 - ♦ Players have racquets. Players shuffle back with racquet raised.
 - ♦ Instead of catching the ball, player reaches up and hits ball with overhand throwing motion.

Lob:

- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players partner up and stand facing each other on opposite sides of net at the baseline.
 - ♦ Player on one side drop hit the ball, with big back swing, open racquet face and full follow through lift the ball up and set it over the net.
 - ♦ Receiving players catch the ball and lob it back.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Players form 2 lines on both sides of net.
 - ♦ One side lobs the ball and receivers hit overhead back to lobbers.



Drop Shot:

- ♦ Use Continental grip.
- ♦ Racquet path high to level (J motion with racquet –racquet face opens and the ball is brushed high to low)
- ♦ Touch shot with soft hands
- ♦ One use - when opponent is back deep in the court.
- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players line up in two lines at the service line.
 - ♦ Balls are fed to each player.
 - ♦ Players try to drop shot to a target (Baskets, hoops or towel) over the net.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Players A and B stand facing each other on opposite sides of net at service line.
 - ♦ Player A drop hits the ball to start.
 - ♦ Players rally easy and after 3 hits, Player A drop shots player B who
 - ♦ tries to return ball.
 - ♦ Player B starts the ball and will drop shot after 3 hits. Repeat alternating.
 - ♦ When successful, move back to baseline and repeat drill.

C. Doubles strategy:

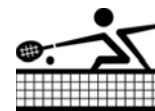
- ♦ Communication is key
- ♦ Partners move laterally (side by side) together.
- ♦ If a partner is pulled off court, other partner covers the middle and next shot.
- ♦ Place the ball between the opponents.

D. Tournament Warm –up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver, Players warm-up on *the side they will begin play on*.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back

Drills & techniques can be learned by attending an ITF coaches workshop, USTA Recreational Coach Workshop, USTA 10 and Under Coach Workshop, PTR coaches' training or USPTA coaches' workshops along with their publications. All are held throughout the year. Check web sites for details. www.itftennis.com/coaching, www.USTA.com, www.ptrtennis.org, www.uspta.com



VI. Level 5 Matchplay

- ♦ 78' Court with Yellow Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 5.0-8.0
- ♦ 25-27" racquet recommended
- ♦ Level 5 players benefit from instruction from tennis professionals.

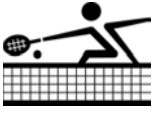
Assessing Player Readiness

Advanced Intermediate – Advanced players who have been successful in Level 4 and ready for traditional full court play. Level 5 athletes are able to sustain a 6-15 hit rally with movement, prepare and recover well, sequence a series of strokes, demonstrate strategy, control, power and placement. Level 5 athletes have skill and knowledge to compete in community tennis events. Level 5 athletes can sustain a 2 hour drill and play. Balance lessons by warmup, lesson focus, drill, game and wrap up.

A. Warm ups – Core strengthening, speed, agility

1. Core/Strength: Examples

- ♦ **Ball pushups**
 - ♦ Athletes begin in the prone position with abs on the exercise ball, hand flat on the floor in front and legs together and straight out, not touching floor. Contract abs and glutes.
 - ♦ Athlete does 3 reps of 12 push ups
 - ♦ Athlete attempts the same but with knees on ball
 - ♦ Athlete attempts the above but with ankles on the ball.
- ♦ **Partner Crunch**
 - ♦ Partners lie down, knees bent, feet flat with toes touching.
 - ♦ One partner has ball extended overhead on ground.
 - ♦ Both crunch up and exchange ball and return to lying position.
 - ♦ 3 sets of 12 reps
- ♦ **Planks**
 - ♦ Athlete assumes prone position on toes and elbows.
 - ♦ Contract abs and glutes
 - ♦ Hold for 30 sec.
- ♦ **Lunges with ball.**
 - ♦ Starting at baseline, step forward with a lunge, dipping back knee down, then reach sideways with a ball.
 - ♦ Repeat to the net then run back.



2. Speed/Agility: Examples

- ♦ Spider Drill
 - ♦ 8 cones spread out web formation.
 - ♦ Athlete starts at T
 - ♦ Always facing the net, 1 athlete at a time must touch each cone.
 - ♦ Run to the cone and shuffle back to T each time.
- ♦ 30 sec line drill: How many touches can be done in 30 sec?
 - ♦ Choose deuce or ad service box.
 - ♦ Athletes start 2 steps in front of service line and midway between singles sideline and center line.
 - ♦ Always face the net.
 - ♦ Cross over steps
 - ♦ Forehand touches center line and backhand touches singles sideline.

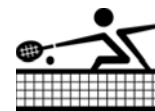
B. Power/Spins

- ♦ Power comes from legs and body rotation. Practice getting low to the ball and rotate shoulders.
- ♦ Spins vary the pace of the game
- ♦ Under-spin ball is struck with a high to level motion with continental grip. Under-spin ball bounces low and slow.
- ♦ Top-spin ball is struck with level to high motion with semi western grip. Topspin ball bounces high and fast.

C. Match play drills: Examples – Use drills that simulate play.

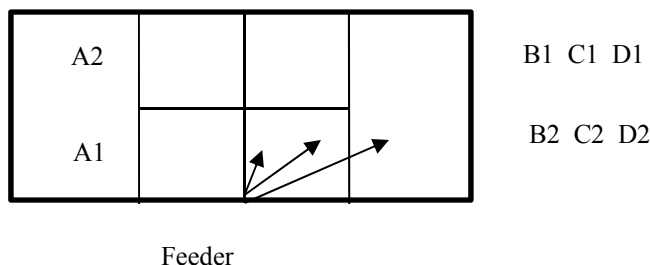
Singles

- ♦ Quick step
- ♦ Groups of 4 athletes line up on opposite deuce alleys at service line
- ♦ Ball is fed to the T position.
- ♦ 1st Athlete in each line runs out behind the ball and plays out point
- ♦ At end of point, athletes exit right and go to end of opposite line.
- ♦ Rally deep then move in, behind the center mark.
- ♦ Athletes start at baseline.
- ♦ Rally deep
- ♦ When ball lands short, move in and shorten backswing
- ♦ Play out point.



Doubles

- ♦ 3 ball challenge – Object to be the Champion doubles team.
- ♦ -Team A begins on opposite side of net at baseline as the Champions.
- ♦ -Rest of Doubles teams line up behind baseline. This side will be fed all 3 balls.
- ♦ -Feed ball to 1st baseline team (B) and play out point
- ♦ -If (B) wins, ball fed at service line and play out point. If lost 1st point return to end of line.
- ♦ Third ball is fed at the net if previous points have been won



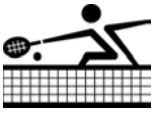
D. Strategy

- ♦ Hit to open court.
- ♦ Hit to person at baseline
- ♦ Hit down the middle in doubles
- ♦ Use short angles
- ♦ Move in on short ball.
- ♦ Make your opponent move
- ♦ Vary shot selection, high, low, slow fast
- ♦ Doubles team stay laterally (side by side) together and move to net

E. Tournament Warm-up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver or side, players warm-up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back



Teaching Strategies

A goal of practice time is to prepare athletes for match play competition. As a coach, it is easy to get caught up in stroke production and the technical aspects of the game. It is important to always remember the game itself. The serve starts play! Practicing the serve should be a part of each practice. Returning serve is the second most important stroke in a match. Practice during each training session. Tennis matches are won by the person who makes the fewest errors. Stress consistency in your drills. Practice keeping score and alternating side of courts during each practice session. Practice the positioning of athletes for doubles play.

Drills for Practicing Strategy

The best drill for competition is competition. Try to simulate the conditions in which your athletes will be playing matches. Devise fun games where players can practice keeping score. For example, play a few games of “shadow tennis” without a ball. Play a few games without racquets where athletes throw and catch the ball, using the rules of tennis.

Athletes of low ability level preparing for the individual skills competition should practice the skills competition. This will also help them master the basic strokes of the game. Have assistant coaches conduct the individual skills competition with athletes. Follow the rules and keep score.

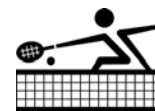
Intermediate-level athletes should play practice matches with their teammates, coaches and parents. The more they practice following the rules, switching sides of the court and keeping score, the more proficient they will become. Have a partner at courtside to help direct the athlete to appropriate positions and to help with scoring.

Advanced players should be able to play a regulation set with little outside supervision. Line calling and score keeping may still present some problems. Have a coach monitor a few courts where advanced athletes are playing practice matches.

Singles Strategy

- ♦ *Be consistent!* Most singles matches are won by the player who makes the fewest mistakes. Use high net clearance to eliminate net errors.
- ♦ Move your opponent around the court. This causes your opponent to miss balls because they are out of position and become tired.
- ♦ Serves and returns must be consistent. Many points are lost on missed serves and missed returns.
- ♦ Play aggressively. Put pressure on your opponent by taking advantage of weakly hit returns. Serve and volley, and rush the net after short balls.
- ♦ Special Olympics athletes do very well with routines. Teach them what to do in between points as well as what to do during the point. Between each point, the athlete should:
 - ♦ Transfer the racquet to the non-dominant hand.
 - ♦ Take a deep breath.
 - ♦ Walk to pick up stray balls. Make sure the head and shoulders are held up.
 - ♦ Walk to the correct position for the next point.
 - ♦ Call the score.





Coaching:

- ♦ Players may receive coaching from a designated coach when the player changes ends and on every change-over there after in the set.
- ♦ Coaching is not allowed during the tiebreak.
- ♦ Coaching is allowed during the 3 minute rest period between 2nd and 3rd set.

Balls:

- ♦ Three new balls will be used for all matches.
- ♦ ISC competition balls will be determined by the Sport Commissioner

Breaking Ties:

- ♦ When two or more athletes or teams have the same final point score, the tie shall be broken as follows:
 - ♦ • First: the fewest number of sets lost in all matches
 - ♦ • Second: the most games won in all matches
 - ♦ • Third: the fewest number of games lost in all matches
 - ♦ • Fourth: (other than for teams) head to head results

Officials:

- ♦ Matches will have a solo chair umpire, who will call all lines, service lets, foot faults, time violations, and code violations under the USTA Point Penalty System (PPS)
- ♦ Lateness for a match will be penalized in accordance with the PPS.
- ♦ A player/team will be defaulted if: 15 minutes after the match has been called the player/team is not on court, unless in the opinion of the Head Referee the lateness was caused by tournament conditions.

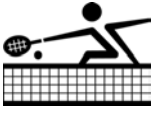
Medical Timeouts and Toilet Breaks:

- ♦ A medical timeout for each new medical condition or aggravation of a pre-existing condition may be taken during the warm-up or match for a treatable medical condition. Treatable medical conditions include, but not limited to injury, illness, heat related conditions and cramps.
- ♦ Once an umpire is notified and the coach or medical personnel has reached the court and made a diagnosis that the condition is treatable, the 3 minute treatment time begins.
- ♦ A player may request toilet breaks during the match. Coaching is not allowed during the medical breaks or toilet breaks. Players will be escorted during toilet breaks.

Miscellaneous:

No cell phones allowed on court. Spectators are requested to place phone on vibrate.

No flash photography when the ball is in play.



Tie Break

7 Point Set Tie Break

10 Point Match Tie Break

- ♦ A 7 point tie-break is played when games are at:
 - ♦ Level 2: At 6 games all in a 1 No-Ad set match.
 - ♦ Level 3-5: At 4 games all in the first and/or second set in the best 2 of 3 short set match.
 - ♦ Level 5 : At 6 games all in the first and/or second set in the best 2 of 3 full set match.
- ♦ A 10 point tie-break is played when sets are split in the best 2 of 3 short set match or best 2 of 3 full set match.
 - ♦ In lieu of 3rd set when the players have split sets.
- ♦ The first server in the set tie-break is the person next to receive in match rotation.
- ♦ The first server serves one (1) point from the Deuce (right) side. Servers always receive 2 attempts to get the serve in. (1st serve and 2nd serve) If a server tosses the ball, swings and misses the ball, it is counted as an attempt. If the server tosses the ball and lets the ball drop without swinging, the server shall repeat that attempt.
- ♦ After the first point, the servers shall serve two points, beginning on the Ad (left) side and then the deuce side.
- ♦ When the score equals 6 or a multiple of 6 (12, 18, 24, etc) the players change ends but the server shall serve from the deuce court after the change.
- ♦ In a 7 point tie break for the set, the tie-break is won when a player attains 7 points with a margin of two points. (7-5) Play continues until one player achieves the two point lead.
- ♦ In a 10 point tie break for the match, the tie-break is won when a player attains 10 points with a margin of two points (10-8). Play continues until one player achieves the two point lead. There will be a 3 minute rest period between end of second set and the start of the 10 pt. match tie-break. Coaching is permitted during rest period.
- ♦ After a tie break for a set, the score shall be reported as 5-4.
- ♦ After the Match tie break, the score for the deciding 3rd set shall be recorded as 1.
- ♦ There is NO COACHING during the tie-break.

Unified Sports® Rules

There are few differences in the rules for Unified Sports doubles competition as stipulated in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and modifications outlined in the rules book. The additions are highlighted below.

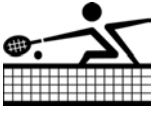
- ♦ Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one athlete and one partner.
- ♦ Each team shall determine its own order of service and selection of courts (ad or deuce). It is suggested that when the score is 40 -40 (deuce), the server must serve to their opposition counterpart and to the court the counterpart has been playing, (Athlete serves to athlete and partner serves to partner). The server serves from either the ad or deuce side, depending on the part of the court the receiver has been playing.
- ♦ The selection of athletes and partners of similar age and ability is essential for Unified Sports doubles competition. Though rule modifications have been implemented to minimize differences between athletes and partners, inappropriate competition experiences and a higher risk of injury result from teams where athletes and partners are poorly matched.



Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition. The role of the Competition Management Team is to enforce the rules. As coach, your duty to your athletes is to protest an action or event that violates the Official Tennis Rules. Protests should be filed to correct a specific rules violation. Making a protest is a serious matter that impacts the competition schedule. Check with the Competition Management Team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.

The diagram illustrates the layout of a tennis court with the following dimensions and features:

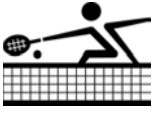
- Overall Dimensions:** The court is 78' long and 36' wide.
- Baseline:** Located at the top and bottom of the court.
- Center Mark:** Located on the baseline at the center.
- Service Line:** Located 21' from the baseline.
- Sideline:** Located on the left and right sides of the court.
- Center Service Line:** Located in the center of the court, dividing the doubles and singles courts.
- Court Types:**
 - Doubles:** The outer courts, each 18' wide.
 - Singles:** The inner courts, each 10' wide.
 - The Alley:** The area between the singles and doubles courts, each 4' wide.
- Net:** Located in the center of the court, 21' from the baseline.
- Ad Court:** The court used for Adrenaline (Ad) games, located in the singles courts.
- Deuce Court:** The court used for Deuce games, located in the doubles courts.



Tennis Protocol

Coaches and athletes should refer to the National Governing Body Code of Conduct in tennis for their respective country. An excellent resource in the United States is the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Code of Conduct, which may be found in the USTA publication *Friend at Court*. General conduct may include the following:

- ♦ Courtesy is expected. Tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy.
- ♦ Players make calls on their own side of the net. A player calls all shots landing on or aimed at the player's side of the net.
- ♦ Single players should not talk while ball is in play. Doubles partners may not talk while ball is moving toward their opponent's court.
- ♦ A ball touching any part of the line is good.
- ♦ A player should not enlist the aid of a spectator in making a call.
- ♦ When a ball from an adjacent court enters the playing area, any player may call a let, as soon as the player becomes aware of the ball.
- ♦ The server shall announce the game score before the first point of the game and the point score before each subsequent point of the game.
- ♦ Athletes and coaches need to be aware of disruptive noises on and off the court.
- ♦ Be respectful to matches in play. Outside spectators should not be on the court.
- ♦ Cell phones should be off or on vibrate when on court.



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below are highlighted a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to athletes. Coaches should lead by example.

Tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy from all participants. Make tennis a fun game by praising your opponent's good shots and by not exhibiting the following behaviours as noted in the *USTA Friend at Court*.

- ♦ Making loud noises after points.
- ♦ Complaining about shots, like lobs and drops shots.
- ♦ Embarrassing a weak opponent by being overly gracious or condescending.
- ♦ Losing your temper, using foul language, throwing your racquet or slamming a ball in anger.
- ♦ Sulking when you are losing.

Competitive Effort

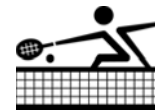
- ♦ Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- ♦ Practice with the same intensity as you would perform in competition.
- ♦ Always finish the event. Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- ♦ Always comply with the rules.
- ♦ Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- ♦ Respect the decision of officials at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

1. Always set a good example for participants and fans to follow.
2. Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics a top priority.
3. Respect the judgment of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
4. Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
5. Shake hands with officials and the opposing coach in public.
6. Develop and enforce penalties for participants who do not abide by the highest sportsmanship standards.

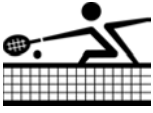


Expectations of Athletes and Partners in Unified Sports

1. Treat teammates with respect.
2. Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
3. Treat opponents with respect. Shake hands prior to and after contests.
4. Respect the judgment of officials, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
5. Cooperate with officials, coaches or directors and fellow participants to conduct a fair contest.
6. Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if other athletes demonstrate poor behavior.
7. Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
8. Define winning as doing your personal best.
9. Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.

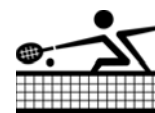
Remember

- ♦ Sportsmanship is an attitude that is shown by how you and your athletes act on and off the field of play.
- ♦ Be positive about competing.
- ♦ Respect your opponents and yourself.
- ♦ Always stay under control, even when you are feeling mad or angry.

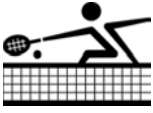


Tennis Glossary

Term	Definition
Ace	Ball served so well that the opponent fails to touch it with his/her racquet.
Ad	Short for advantage in traditional scoring. It is the first point scored after deuce. Not used in the no-ad scoring system used for Special Olympics tennis competition.
Ad Court	Left service court.
Alley	The area between the singles sideline and the doubles sideline.
Approach	The shot hit from mid-court range that allows the player to come to the net to volley.
ATP	Association of Tennis Professionals; the organization for men's professional tennis.
Backcourt	Area between the service line and the baseline.
Backhand	The stroke that is used to return balls hit on the left side of a right-handed player and right side of a left-handed player. It can be hit with one or two hands. Note: Athletes should learn to hit a proper backhand not a right-handed forehand and a left-handed one.
Center Strap	Strap in the center of the net, anchored to the ground to hold the net secure.
Cross Court Shot	A shot in which the ball travels diagonally across the net from one corner to the other.
Deuce	A score of 40-40 in traditional scoring. Not used in the no-ad scoring system used for Special Olympics tennis competition.
Deuce Court	The right court, so called because the deuce point is played on that side.
Double Fault	The server loses the point if both of the two services attempts fail to cross the net and land in the appropriate service box.
Doubles	A match played by teams of two players. The court is extended to the doubles sidelines (after the serve).
Down the Line	A ball hit in a straight line near the sideline.
Draw	Procedure established to determine the position of each player in a tournament.
Drop shot	A touch shot that is hit softly over the net to force the opponent to run forward.
Etiquette	Rules of behavior on the tennis court.
Fault	A served ball that does not fall into the service box or goes into the net.
Fifteen	First point won by a player.
Foot Fault	An illegal serve caused by the server stepping on or over the baseline before hitting the ball.
Forehand	The stroke used to return balls hit to the right side of a right-handed player or the left side of a left-handed player.
Forty	Player's score after winning three points.
Game	The part of a set that is completed when one player or team wins four points. In no-ad tennis the scoring is 1, 2, 3, "game."



Term	Definition
Good	A ball that lands inside the court or on the line forming the boundary of the court.
Grip	Bottom part of the racquet that is used to grasp the racquet.
Groundstrokes	Strokes played after the ball has bounced. Forehands and backhands are called groundstrokes.
Half Volley	Ball hit immediately following the bounce of the ball on the court.
In	A ball which lands within the boundaries of the court. Balls that hit any portion of the line are good in tennis.
ITF	International Tennis Federation.
Let	A point replayed because of interference; such as a ball rolling onto the court during play. This point would be replayed with two serves.
Let Serve	A serve that hits the top of the net and lands in the appropriate service box is replayed.
Lob	A stroke hit high in the air with the intent of being hit over a net playing opponent.
Love	A score of zero.
Match	A Special Olympics tennis match consists of one no-ad set. Traditional tennis matches are best 2 out of 3, or best 3 out of 5 sets.
Mixed Doubles	Doubles play in which a male and female team up to oppose another male and female team.
Net	The 3-foot barrier which divides the two sides of the court. To “play the net” means to attack your opponent by positioning yourself close to the net and hitting the ball before it bounces.
No-ad Scoring	The scoring system used in Special Olympics tennis in which the first player to win 4 points wins the game. If the point score reaches 3-3, the next point decides the game. The receiver has the choice of sides at 3-3.
Out	A ball is “out” if it lands outside of the boundaries of the court.
Overhead	An aggressive stroke played normally at the net when the ball is above the head.
Point	The smallest unit of score, awarded to a player when the opponent does not return a ball in play.
Racquet	An implement used to strike the tennis ball.
Rally	A series of good shots exchanged between players. Also a term used for the type of practice where players intentionally hit balls back and forth to each other.
Receiver	The player who receives the service.
Referee	The official in charge of a tournament.
Serve	Short for service. It is the stroke used to put the ball into play. A server gets two chances to put the ball in play diagonally into the service box. The serve must be struck from a tossed ball (not off of a bounced ball).
Server	Player who serves the ball.
Service Box	Court area where a serve should be played. Deuce court or Advantage court.



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Tennis Glossary

Term	Definition
Set	The scoring unit that is awarded to the player or team that has won 6 games by a margin of at least 2 games. Examples: 6-2, 6-4 or 7-5. If the game score reaches 6-6 a tie-breaker is played.
Short Court	Short court is a transitional game utilizing the service box area only.
Singles	A match played by two players.
Tie-break – 7 point	A system used to decide a set when the score is 4 – all (4-4) or 6-all (6-6).
Match Tie-break – 10 point	A system used to decide the match in lieu of a 3 rd set in the best of 2 of 3 set match. When 1 st 2 sets are split.
Thirty	Score which indicates a player has won 2 points.
Umpire	The person who officiates at a match.
Unified Sports Doubles	A Special Olympics event played with a doubles team, consisting of a Special Olympics tennis player and a peer tennis partner. Ideally, teammates would be of similar ages and ability levels.
Volley	A stroke made by hitting a ball before it has touched the ground. Normally done inside the service line.
WTA	Women’s Tennis Association; the organization for women’s professional tennis.



Special Olympics Coaching Quick Start Guide

TENNIS



Special Olympics

March 2006



***Special
Olympics***

TENNIS QUICK START GUIDE

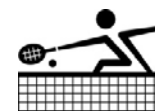


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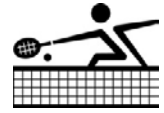
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***Special
Olympics***

TENNIS QUICK START GUIDE

Section 1: Program Information



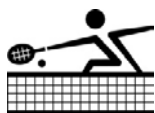
Essential Components of Planning a Tennis Training Session

Each training session needs to contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the goal of the training session, the time of season the session is in and the amount of time available for a particular session. The following elements need to be included in an athlete's daily training program. Please refer to the noted sections in each area for more in-depth information and guidance on these topics.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Warm-ups<input type="checkbox"/> Previously taught skills<input type="checkbox"/> New skills<input type="checkbox"/> Competition experience<input type="checkbox"/> Feedback on performance |
|--|

The final step in planning a training session is designing what the athlete is actually going to do. Remember when creating a training session using the **key components** of a training session, the progression through the session allows for a gradual build-up of physical activity.

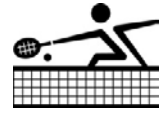
1. Easy to difficult
2. Slow to fast
3. Known to unknown
4. General to specific
5. Start to finish



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Program Information

Principles of Effective Training Sessions

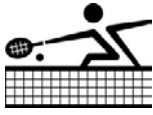
Keep all athletes active	Athletes need to be active listeners.
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them.
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction. Have a consistent stop and listen signal.
Record progress	Chart progress together with your athlete.
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well.
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom.
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun. Help keep it this way for you and your athletes. One good way is to reinforce and repeat the topics. Athletes perform better when they are comfortable with the activity. An example would be a story, book or video for children. They are not bored with the same story over and over again, even though adults want more variety.
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully Simple to complex – seeing that “I can do it” General to specific – “this is why I am working so hard”
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively.
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities.



Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of tennis. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Tennis is not a dangerous sport, but accidents do occur when coaches forget to take safety precautions. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them. Some examples are:
 - ☐ Keep your hands to yourself.
 - ☐ Listen to the coach.
 - ☐ When you hear the whistle, "Stop, Look, and Listen."
 - ☐ Ask the coach before you leave the court.
2. When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from inclement weather.
3. Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
4. Check your first-aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
5. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
6. Choose a safe court area. Do not practice in areas with rocks, cracks or wet spots that could cause injury. Simply telling players to avoid obstacles is not enough.
7. Walk the court area and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that a player might run in to.
8. Review your first-aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first aid and CPR on or very near to the field during practice and games.
9. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each practice to prevent muscle injuries.



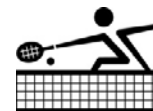
Tennis Practice Competitions

The more athletes compete, the better they get. Part of the strategic plan for Special Olympics tennis is to drive more sport development at the local levels. Competition motivates athletes, coaches and the entire sport management team. Expand or add to your schedule as many competition opportunities as possible. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Schedule matches with nearby local Special Olympics Programs.
2. Ask the local high school if your athletes can practice with the team and play practice matches.
3. Join the local community tennis club and/or associations.
4. Host weekly matches.
5. Create a tennis league or club in your community.
6. Incorporate competition components at the end of every training session.

Keys to Practice Success

- ♦ Make training fun
- ♦ Keep directions simple, clear and consistent.
- ♦ Use verbiage athletes understand.
- ♦ Have a consistent signal to stop and listen.
- ♦ Progressions
 - ♦ Start basic.
 - ♦ Stationary
 - ♦ Add equipment
 - ♦ Add movement



Tennis Attire

Appropriate tennis attire is required for all competitors. As coach, discuss the types of tennis clothing that is acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. For example, long pants or jeans and blue jean shorts are not proper tennis attire for any event. Inappropriate clothing can hinder a player's performance and be a safety hazard. Shirts and shorts should be loose fitting to allow for free movement. Take athletes to high school or college training or competitions and point out the attire being worn. You should set the example by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions. Do not reward athletes who do not come properly dressed to train and/or compete.

Tennis Male Attire



Shirt and shorts

Tennis Female Attire



Tennis dress or top and skirt/shorts



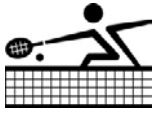
Shoes and Socks



Warm Up

Tennis Practice Attire

T-shirts are the most comfortable and practical tops for practice and training. Athletes should wear loose fitting gym shorts or conventional tennis shorts. Shoes should be traditional tennis shoes with proper ankle, arch and heel support. Running shoes are inappropriate for tennis because they do not support the ankle. Be cautious of black soled shoes, as they mark the courts. Socks should be of an absorbent cloth to prevent blisters. If an athlete is prone to blisters, two pairs of socks can be worn.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Program Information

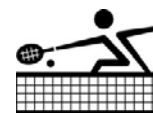
Competition

During competition, a traditional tennis short or skirt is preferable. Doubles and Unified Doubles partners should wear matching attire.

Wearing proper tennis attire for competition can build an athlete's excitement for the competition.

Other items that might help a player's performance.

- ♦ Hat or sunglasses keep the sun and wind out of the eyes
- ♦ Sweatbands and headbands keep moisture off the racquet hand and out of eyes.
- ♦ Sunscreen helps to prevent overexposure to the sun.



Tennis Equipment

The sport of tennis requires the type of equipment noted below. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment impacts their performance. Have athletes name each piece of equipment as you demonstrate its use. Coaches and athletes should work together to select the proper equipment for each athlete.

Tennis Racquets

Tennis racquets have changed dramatically in the past few years. Space-age materials have made racquets lightweight and very durable. Athletes should select a racquet that "feels good" and is not too heavy or too light. Grip size is important for good technique. Have the athlete grip the racquet comfortably. There should not be more than a finger width between the base of the thumb and the fingertips. If the fingers are touching the base of the hand, the grip is too small.

Broken strings and unraveling grips should be replaced as soon as possible. Coaches should teach athletes proper care of their racquets and all equipment.

Coaches will find the following racquets sizes:

Young Athletes: A 17-19" racquet is recommended ages 3-7.

Level 2 - 42' Court: A 21 - 23-inch racquet is recommended and for athletes' 8-10 years of age.

Level 3 – 60' Court: A 25- or 26-inch racquet is recommended and for athletes 10-12 years of age

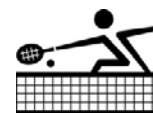
Level 4-5 – 78' Court: A 27-inch racquet is recommended and for player age 13 and above.

These are general guidelines as size of athlete, strength, and grip size are factors in determining the ideal racquet to use.



Racquet Control

Controlling the racquet is an important building block to learning tennis skills. Coaches should consider the size of the racquet and racquet grip for their players. Athletes training in Level 1 and Level 2 have greater success with a shorter racquet. A shorter racquet will offer more control and less power. More control and less power are integral in the early stages of learning on the modified court.



Tennis Levels

Levels 1-5 are designed for athlete success in the sport of tennis, with the addition of activities for Young Athlete Tennis. Each level corresponds to the tennis ability of each athlete by offering different court sizes, tennis ball size and composition, goals and lesson concentrations.

Level 1: 42' court with red foam ball

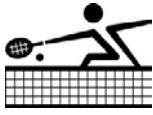
- ♦ Beginner : Individual Skills
- ♦ Goals: Introduce athletes to the sport of tennis.
 - ♦ Teach athletes 7 tennis strokes
 - ♦ Strokes are taught using the game based approach.
 - ♦ Placement and control drills
 - ♦ End product – prepare athlete for competition on a 42 foot court
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Balance, hand-eye coordination, racquet control, stroke production

Level 2: 42' court with red foam ball

- ♦ Beginner: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Athletes will learn to put ISC skills into match play.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of rules, scoring and sportsmanship.
 - ♦ Athletes will expand static strokes into movement before and after each shot.
 - ♦ Athletes will learn simple doubles positioning and tactics
 - ♦ Strokes and movement will be taught in the context of match play using the game based approach.
 - ♦ Providing meaningful matchplay tennis competition for athletes with limited mobility and tracking
 - ♦ End product – prepare athlete for competition on a 42 foot court
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Movement, Racquet Control, Tracking. Rules and Etiquette

Level 3: 60' court with orange ball (low compression)

- ♦ Advanced beginner: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition for athletes successful in level 2 and ready for the challenge of a slightly larger court and smaller ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will successfully transition to 60' court with Orange Ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop racquet control skills while using smaller ball
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of readiness, preparation and recovery.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain knowledge of: Best of 3 short set match and Match Tie Break.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Sending and Receiving Skills, Preparation, Rules and Etiquette



Level 4: 78' court with green ball (low compression)

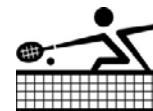
- ♦ Intermediate; Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition for athletes with ability for full court coverage with a slower paced ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop knowledge of shot selection.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop ball placement and racquet control with movement.
 - ♦ Athletes will gain basic knowledge of full court singles and doubles strategy.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Recovery, Advanced strokes: Overhead, drop shot, lob and approach shot, Placement, Doubles communication, Tennis etiquette and strategy

Level 5: 78' court with traditional yellow ball

- ♦ Advanced intermediate-Advanced: Matchplay; Singles, Doubles and Unified
- ♦ Goals: Provides meaningful tennis competition and experience for athletes with the ability for full court matchplay with a traditional ball.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop spins, shot sequencing, and power strokes.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop control, power and placement with traditional yellow ball.
 - ♦ Athletes at this level are able to transition into community play.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop a match warm-up routine.
- ♦ Lesson Concentration: Speed, endurance and core training, Spins, Stroke sequencing for game strategy and power with placement.

Young Athletes

- ♦ Athletes: Ages 3-7 years old.
- ♦ Goals: Age appropriate activities and equipment help prepare future tennis players using fun game based activities.
 - ♦ Athletes will develop balance, hand-eye coordination, throwing, catching, and tracking skills.
 - ♦ Athletes will have fun in a positive atmosphere.
 - ♦ Athletes will train for culminating activity.
- ♦ Lesson concentrations:
 - ♦ Balance, hand-eye,
 - ♦ Non-locomotor activities; bending, stretching, twisting, turning, swinging, pushing, pulling, dodging swaying,
 - ♦ Locomotor activities; running, skipping, jumping, hopping, leaping, sliding galloping.



Special Olympics Tennis Rating System

The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is a systematic method to determine the skill ability of an athlete. The system is designed to assist coaches in determining an athlete's ability level in tennis before they begin participation. The rating is also used in preliminary divisioning of athletes for competition. Coaches will find the rating system a useful tool for several reasons:

1. Helps the coach and athlete determine in which events he/she will compete.
2. Establishes the baseline training areas of the athlete.
3. Assists coaches in grouping athletes of similar ability into training teams.
4. Measures the athlete's progression.
5. Helps determine the athlete's daily training schedule.

Before administering the rating system, coaches need to perform the following analysis while observing the athlete:

- ♦ Become familiar with each of the tennis skills.
- ♦ Have an accurate visual picture of each skill.
- ♦ Have previously observed a skilled performer executing the skill.

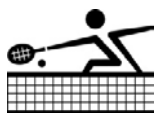
In preparing for Special Olympics tennis competitions, the coach completes the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System Sheet and submits it to the Tournament Committee with registration materials. The Tournament Committee should then conduct a separate on-court rating during a preliminary divisioning round. The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is modeled after the USTA National Tennis Rating Program. It is a subjective evaluation and it is recommended that raters be familiar with the USTA National Tennis Rating Program or other systems of evaluating tennis playing ability. To use the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, the rater should observe the following: stroke production, preparation, movement, recovery, placement, control, power and strategy, during simulated play situations of participating athletes. This could involve:

- ♦ Athletes hitting with raters, or
- ♦ Athletes playing mini-matches with other athletes, or
- ♦ Athletes practicing with other athletes, or

Athletes participate in ITN session. (<http://www.onscourassessment.com>)

When administering the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, coaches should strive to observe the best performance by the athlete. Always begin by explaining the skill you would like to observe and demonstrate the skill when possible.

The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System categorizes playing ability into eight levels. Athlete skill is rated on seven basic tennis skills: forehand, backhand, movement, first serve, second serve, return of serve and volleys. The rater should observe the athlete and indicate playing ability by rating the athlete from one to eight on each of the basic skills. The rating form task analyzes each basic skill into levels of ability. A total score is determined for all seven skills and an average rating calculated (for example, 2.5 or 3.8). An athlete's overall rating is used to division the athlete with other athletes of equal playing ability.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Program Information

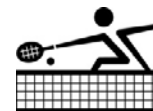
Special Olympics Tennis Rating Sheet

Athlete's Name: _____ Delegation: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____

Level 1 (athlete's at this level should complete the ISC Skills Testing)	Level	E. Second Serve	Level
Player just starting to play tennis		Double faults are common	2
Section A through G do not need to be completed		Pushes 2nd serves	4
A. Forehand	Level	Hits 2nd serves with control	6
Hits inconsistent weak FH shots	2	Hits 2nd serves with control and depth	7
Hits FH shots with little directional control	3	Hits 2nd serves with spin, control and depth	8
FH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	F. Return of Serve	Level
FH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	Has difficulty returning serve	2
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	Returns serve occasionally	3
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Returns 2nd serve consistently	4
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Returns some 1st serves, returns 2nd serves consistently	5
B. Backhand	Level	Returns 1st and 2nd serves consistently	6
Hits inconsistent weak BH shots	2	Aggressive return of 2nd serve and consistent return of 1st serve	7
Hits BH shots with little directional control	3	Aggressive return of 1st and 2nd serves	8
BH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	G. Volleys	Level
BH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	Hits inconsistent volleys; avoids net	3
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	Hits consistent FH volleys; BH volley is inconsistent	4
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Hits consistent volleys; has problems approaching the net	5
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Has ability to approach the net and hits consistent volleys	6
C. Movement	Level	Comfortable moving to net, moves laterally well for both FH and BH volleys	7
Stationary position; does not move to ball to hit shots	2	Hits aggressive FH and BH volleys	8
Moves only 1-2 steps toward ball to hit shots	3	Section	Category
Moves toward ball; but court coverage is poor	4	A	Forehand
Movement allows sufficient court coverage of most shots	5	B	Backhand
Has good court coverage, reacts well enough to sustain a short rally	6	C	Movement
Reacts quickly to the ball and has very good court coverage	7	D	First Serve
Exceptional court coverage, reacts quickly to the ball and recovers after each shot	8	E	Second Serve
D. First Serve	Level	F	Return of Serve
1st serve is weak	2	G	Volleys
Hits 1st serves in at a slower pace	4	Total of Sections A through G	
Hits 1st serves with pace	6	divided by 7	
Hits 1st serves with pace and control	8	FINAL RATING	

Rater's Name: _____

Date: _____ Event: _____



Suggested Competition Levels

Tennis Rating of 1.0 – 1.9 Athletes should compete in

Tennis Rating of 2.0 – 2.9 Athletes should compete in

Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 3.9 Athletes should compete in

Tennis Rating of 4.0 – 4.9 Athletes should compete in

Tennis Rating of 5.0 – 8.0 Athletes should compete in

Level 1 – Individual Skills Competition

Level 2 – 42' Court – Red foam ball

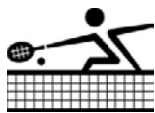
Level 3 – 60' Court – Orange ball

Level 4 – 78' Court – Green ball

Level 5 – 78' Court – Yellow ball

Assessing Player Readiness

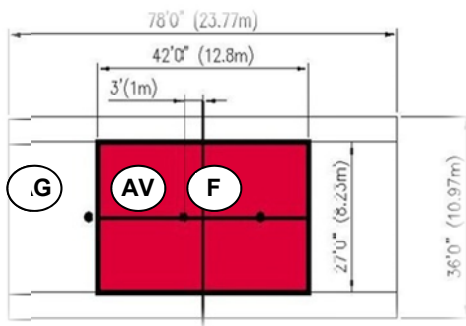
Beginners have difficulty in controlling their racquets in relation to the approaching ball. A beginner often swats at the ball instead of controlling the racquet. Intermediate players have developed control of the racquet to a level where they rarely miss contacting the ball. Strokes are relatively smooth and in control.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Program Information

Suggested Competition Levels

The levels below are suggested as a guide for use in competition, to assist the athletes in their transition from ISC to traditional matchplay. The choice of level offered in a competition will depend on the ability levels of athletes entering. Consideration must also be given to whether the athlete's training has included these balls and court sizes.



Level 1 - (ISC)

Court Dimensions: 42' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Red Foam Ball



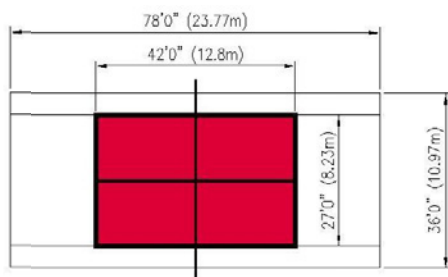
Level 1 is suggested for athletes rated between 1.0 & 1.9.

It is intended to be an introduction to short court matchplay in Level 2

ISC scoring for level 1 will consist of 5 points for each volley and groundstroke landing within the service boxes and 10 points for each correct serve.

Full court ISC may still be conducted, if more suitable to the ability level of the athletes.

Court Positioning F: Feeder for groundstrokes & volleys **AG:** Athlete for groundstrokes & serves **AV:** Athlete for volleys



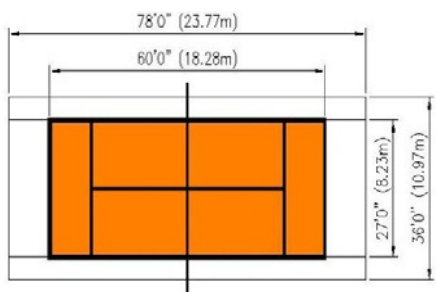
Level 2 – Short Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 42' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Red Foam Ball



Level 2 is suggested for athletes rated between 2.0 & 2.9.



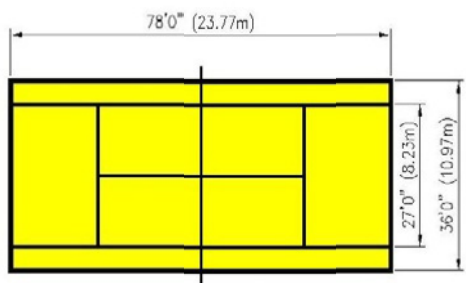
Level 3 – Intermediate Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 60' x 27'

Ball: ITF approved Orange Ball



Level 3 is suggested for athletes rated between 3.0 & 3.9



Levels 4 & 5 – Traditional Court Matchplay

Court Dimensions: 78' x 27' for singles

Court Dimensions: 78' x 36' for doubles

Ball: ITF approved green ball (level 4)

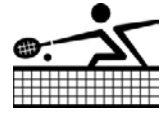


Level 4 is suggested for athletes rated between 4.0 & 4.9

ITF approved Yellow Ball (level 5)



Level 5 is suggested for athletes rated between 5.0 & 8.0.



Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. When selecting your Unified Sports team you want to achieve meaningful involvement throughout your sport season. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for all athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- ♦ Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- ♦ Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- ♦ Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- ♦ Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser abilities.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

- ♦ Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- ♦ Act as on-field coaches, rather than teammates.
- ♦ Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- ♦ Do not train or practice regularly, and only show up on the day of competition.
- ♦ Lower their level of ability dramatically, so they do not hurt others or control the entire game.

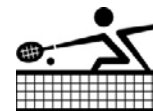


TENNIS QUICK START GUIDE

Section 2: On-Court Training Activities
Levels: Young Athletes, Level 1 – Level 5

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Young Athletes



Activities, drills & techniques can be learned by attending an ITF coaches workshop, USTA Recreational Coach Workshop, USTA 10 and Under Coach Workshop, PTR coaches' training or USPTA coaches' workshops along with their publications. All are held throughout the year. Check web sites for details. www.itftennis.com/coaching, www.USTA.com, www.ptrtennis.org, www.uspta.com

A special thanks to Kirk Anderson, USTA Director, Coach Education and Development for his contribution.

I. Young Athletes Activities

17" - 19" racquets recommended

Goals

- ♦ Training sessions length: 30-45 minutes
- ♦ Planned activity - Pick an activity from each section when planning your training session.

Suggested Equipment:

- ♦ Variety of tennis balls (Red foam balls, orange, green and yellow), balloons, variety of bean bags, beach balls, play ground balls, sand pails, poly rings, poly spots, koosh balls, segmented color hula hoops, Frisbees, foam footballs, juggling scarves, yellow mesh jersey, music, whistle, foam paddles, 6" cones and 9" cones.

A. Balance

1. Funny Bones – Body parts on lines

To get children moving, balancing and learning the lines of the court, have them move to the lines called out by the coach and balance on the line with the instructed number of body parts. The coach will give two commands: One will be for the line and the second for the number of body parts to put on the line. For example, the coach could say "Skip to the baseline and balance on three body parts" (as in two feet and one hand) or "March to the center service line and balance on two body parts, but you can only use one foot."

2. Flamingo

Have the children move around the court like an animal the coach chooses. When the coach calls out "Flamingo," the players stop the animal imitation and balance on one foot with their arms out and eyes looking straight ahead. Repeat several times, choosing a different animal to imitate. You can let the children make the animal noise. Good examples are a kangaroo, monkey, horse, frog, bear and elephant

3. Pac Man

Coach chooses 1 child to be Pac Man. Pac Man wears a yellow jersey. All other children spread out on court lines. Coach blows a whistle or starts music and all children walk on court lines. Pac Man tries to tag children. If a child is tagged, runs or moves off line, they step off the line and jump up and down 5 times then return to walking on lines. After 1 minute, blow whistle ~or stop music and choose another Pac Man.

4. Lily Pads

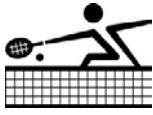
Have children on four teams in lines so they can do this activity continuously. Place a series of five spots in front of each line at varying distances apart. Each player must jump and land on the spots (lily pads), and hold for a moment to maintain balance. After completing jumps to five spots, they get back in line and repeat.

5. High circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as high as you can over your head; Stand on two feet, then try standing on one foot and switch feet.

6. Low circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as low as you can to the ground.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Young Athletes

B. Hand Eye:

1. Keep it up

Each child has a balloon (works best indoors). Tell children to use their hands to keep the balloon eye-high. Play music for 1 minute. After 1 minute, tell children to use an elbow, head, knee or foot to keep the balloon up. Start music and repeat every minute.

2. Help Me Fly

Each child has a juggling scarf. When the music starts, children toss up the scarves as high as they can and try to catch it eye-high. Continue for one minute. Repeat with children using their opposite hand.

3. Catch Me If You Can

Each child has a ball and tosses it in the air at least head high, lets the ball bounce and catches it. Add variation with two or three bounces before catching. Start with play ground ball, then foam tennis ball, then orange tennis ball, followed by green and finally yellow.

4. Applause

The player will toss a foam ball up in the air, clap and catch it after the bounce. Add two bounces, then three before the catch. See if they can toss, clap and catch before the ball bounces.

5. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player with the ball tosses it up and calls out the partner's name. The partner has to turn around and catch the ball after one bounce. Start with beach ball, then playground ball, then red foam tennis ball.

6. Hula Hoop roll

Children form 2 lines at the baseline facing the net. Each line has a color segmented hula hoop. The first person in each line picks a color of the hula hoop. The coach then rolls the hula hoop toward the net. The child tries to catch the hoop on the color segment called before hoop falls flat on the court.

The hoop is brought back to the coach and handed to him/her.

7. Elevator

While balancing the bean bag on the racquet, child will hold the racquet high on the "top floor" command, waist height for the "middle floor" command and low for the "bottom floor" command

C. Throwing/Catching/Tracking

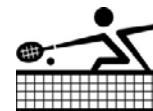
1. Messy Court

Divide class in half and have them stand on opposite sides of the net. Give them red foam tennis balls on each side (1 or 2 per child). When the music starts or whistle blows, children overhand throw balls over the net. Goal is to have the least amount of balls on your side after 1 minute. Signal stop, count balls on each side, and then award 1 point to the winner. Game goes to 7 points (as in a tie break)

No throwing after the stop signal. Throwing consequence – other team gets the point.

2. Bombs Away

Set up empty tennis ball cans on opposite side of net. Divide children into 4 teams. Place poly spots for the launch site in the middle of the service box and in front of each line. The first child in each line moves to their launch site. The rest of the children remain in their 4 lines behind the service line. Each child gets 2 throws at the targets. Use red foam tennis balls. After throw, the child returns to the back of their line and the next child moves to the launch site. A point is given for each can knocked down. Game goes to 7 points.



3. Oscar's Can

Set up laundry baskets or sand pails on opposite side of net. On signal, children overhand throw red foam tennis balls aiming for the basket/pails. One point is awarded for each ball that land in the basket/pail without bouncing on the floor first. Start close to the net and challenge the children to move back. Goal is to throw from the service line.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce

One child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out “one” or “two.” The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it and tossing it back, also calling out a number. Start with small beach balls or playground balls and progress to red foam balls.

5. Falling apples

Children are on two teams. There is a catching side and a throwing side. The first two children from each team stand just behind the service line on the opposite side of the net with small baskets. The remaining team forms a single file line behind the opposite diagonal service line. On the throwing side, the first child in each line has 2 attempts to throw overhand diagonally over the net. The catching team member catches the ball in the basket after the ball bounces once in the service box. After 2 attempts, the thrower goes to the end of the throwing line. The catcher becomes a thrower once each thrower has had 2 attempts. Game is won when one team has 4 catches in the basket.

6. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row? Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

7. Bulls eye

2 single file lines of children stand facing each other about 6 feet apart. The coach stands in the middle, holding a hula hoop. Using soft footballs or red foam tennis balls, the first person in 1 line tries to throw the ball through the hoop to the 1st person in the line facing them. After throwing, the child goes to the end of their line. The coach can change height of hoop before the throw.

8. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player with the ball tosses it up and calls out the partner's name. The partner has to turn around and catch the ball after one bounce.

9. Roll ball with hands

Using a playground or beach ball, have the children stand 4-5 feet apart and have them roll the ball back and forth over a line to their partner or coach. Have them catch the rolling ball with two hands directly in front of their body. Players can challenge each other by rolling the ball to either side of their partner.

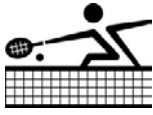
D. Movement

1. Tunnel ball

Two players stand across from each other about 4 or 5 feet apart with one foam ball per pair. One player rolls the ball to her partner, who moves so the ball will roll through her legs without touching her feet.

2. Ball Chase

Both players are close together, one with the ball, and the other player with her back to her partner. The player with the ball rolls it through the legs of the player in front, who runs after the ball and stops it before it stops rolling. Switch roles and repeat.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Young Athletes

3. Sharks and Minnows

One child is chosen to be the Shark. The rest of the children (Minnows) stand in the Ad court alley. The shark says go and the Minnows need to run across the court to the opposite alley. If tagged, the minnows become sharks. Play continues until there is only 1 minnow.

4. Midnight

Pick one time keeper. All children with their backs to the net, including the time keeper, facing the baseline. The time keeper calls out the time (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock). All children except the time keeper take that many steps toward the baseline. When the time keeper calls "Midnight", children turn and run toward the time keeper to touch his/her outstretched hand. Whoever touches first becomes the next time keeper.

5. "What time is it Mr. Bear"

One child is chosen to be Mr. Bear and stand by the net at the center strap. The rest of the children stand on the baseline. The baseliners ask; What time is it Mr. Bear? Mr. Bear says an hour (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock) The baselines take that many steps toward the net.

Mr. Bear may call "Dinner Time" at any time. At that, all baseliners turn and run back to the baseline while Mr. Bear chases the baseliners trying to tag one child. If tagged that child becomes Mr. Bear and if not, Mr. Bear returns to the net to start again.

6. Jog-Jog-Jump

Children line up on service line, facing the net. Children jog in place for a count of four then jump in place. Continue for 1 minute.

7. Line Jump

Place poly strips varying distances apart. When the music starts have children jump from one line to another.

E. Manipulatives

1. Train crash

Two players stand 4-5 feet apart, each with a ball. Players roll the balls back and forth with their racquets at the same time, trying to "crash" the balls between the two players.

Progression: Stand close then move back.

Roll ball with hands then add racquet.

2. Splat

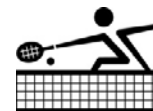
Two players each with a racquet and a ball pyramid made of four balls (three for the base and one on top). One player taps the ball up to about head-level height, trying to hit the ball pyramid to make it "splat."

3. Bungee Jump

The player has a ball that is balanced on the strings. They walk around the court, playground or driveway. When they get to a spot marked by tape or chalk, the player let's the ball drop off the racquet, lets it bounce and then catches the ball back on the racquet. They may have to use their non-racquet hand to trap the ball on the strings, but with practice they can just use the racquet face.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce with racquet

Using red foam balls, one child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out "one" or "two." The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it with their racquet and hand. The catcher may have the hand on the throat of the racquet to start. Place the caught balls in a basket. After 1 minute, switch roles. The goal would be to move the racquet hand to the grip.



5. Half-pound lobster trap

One player has a racquet and the other player has a ball. The player with the ball will underhand toss to the player with the racquet. The player with the racquet will trap the ball on her strings with her hand after one bounce from the toss. Start with a beach ball and foam paddles, then work up to racquets and red foam balls.

6. Lobster Trap

Children stand 6 to 8 feet apart, with one child holding two racquets, one in each hand, and the partner with one ball. The player with the ball makes an easy underhand toss and the player with the racquets (the lobster) catches the ball after the bounce by trapping the ball between both racquets. After trapping the ball, the player drops the ball from the racquets and rolls the ball back to the tosser. Start with a beach ball and foam paddles, then work up to racquets and red foam balls.

7. Rolly Polly

Children stand across from each other on either side of the doubles alley. Children have a racquet and should position themselves sideways to the ball as they might be positioned for a forehand, with the edge of the racquet on the ground behind the ball and the strings touching the ball. Using the racquet, the child with the ball rolls it to his partner who stops the ball with his foot and rolls it back. After five successful attempts, the two players roll the ball, and stop it, with the racquet before rolling the ball back.

F. Culminating Activities

At the end of the training session, an activity day for athletes demonstrate their skills are enjoyed by parents and athletes.

1. Roll Ball with partner

See how many times two players can roll a ball back and forth without a miss. Increase distance to make this more challenging.

2. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row?

Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

3. Forehand Drop-Hit and Catch

Partners stand about six feet apart from each other. One player drop-hits a forehand to their partner who catches it and rolls it back to the hitter. Switch hitters and catchers after three successful hits and catches.

4. Rally with partner over a line

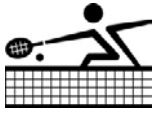
Have partners rally over a line and see how many consecutive rallies that can make. Switch partners and try to beat your previous score.

5. Alligator River – Use the forehand side of the racquet

The players line up on either side of the doubles alley, each with a racquet and with a ball for each pair. The coach or one of the players is the “alligator” and is going to walk down the “river” – the alley. As the coach walks down the alley, the players roll the ball to their partner trying to hit the alligator’s feet.

6. Roll around the head

Have students roll the ball around the head of the racquet as many times as they can in for one minute. Have them keep track of their number of complete rolls without the ball falling off the racquet. Have them repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.



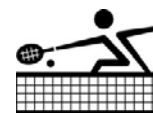
Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Young Athletes

7. Bounce down

Have students bounce the ball down at about waist level height as many times as they can in one minute. Have them keep track of their number. Repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.

Coaching Tips

- ☐ Young children develop from the head to toes, core to out extremities and gross motor movements to fine motor.
- ☐ If children are not successful at a task, dissect the task and begin at the child's developmental level to bring success.



II. Level 1 – Tennis Individual Skills

42' Court with Red Foam Ball, 21"- 23" racquet recommended

Equipment

- ♦ Red foam balls balloons
- ♦ Variety of bean bags
- ♦ 21" racquets, beach balls
- ♦ Play ground balls
- ♦ Sand pails
- ♦ Poly rings
- ♦ Poly spots
- ♦ Koosh balls
- ♦ Segmented color hula hoops
- ♦ Frisbees
- ♦ Foam footballs
- ♦ Juggling scarves
- ♦ Yellow mesh jersey
- ♦ Music
- ♦ Whistle
- ♦ Foam paddles
- ♦ 16" cones.

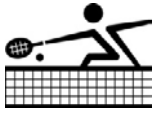
A. Warm-ups

Non-static warm-up is recommended. Movements to be used in lesson should be incorporated into warm-up; creative, engaging warm-ups set dynamics of the lesson.

Suggested lesson activities

1. Kirk-O-Rama activities. *Thanks to Kirk Anderson, USTA, for his contribution.*

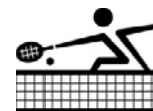
- ♦ Dribbles (keep the ball waist high)
 - ♦ With their hand for 30 seconds then switch hands
 - ♦ With their racquet, holding it by the throat for 30 seconds with dominate hand.
 - ♦ With their racquet, holding on the grip for 30 seconds with dominate hand
- ♦ Self rally using a forehand
 - ♦ The player taps the ball up to about head level high, lets the ball bounce and hits it up again. Use only forehands
- ♦ Self rally using forehands and backhands
 - ♦ Same as above but the player hits the ball up first on the forehand side then alternates to the backhand side of the racquet. Continue hitting up to head level alternating between forehand and backhand
- ♦ Ups (keep the ball eye high)
 - ♦ Players dribble the ball in the air without having the ball bounce on the floor for 30 sec.
 - ♦ Start with balloon/beach-ball and hand - palm up
 - ♦ With racquet and balloon/beach-ball, holding racquet throat, repeat holding grip.
 - ♦ With racquet and red foam ball, holding at throat



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

- ♦ **Flip Flops**
 - ♦ The player hits the ball up continuously alternating between the forehand and backhand side of the racquet. Use different types of balls to help player be successful
- ♦ **Flip Flops and up on the edge**
 - ♦ This is the same as flip flops but this time taps the ball up on the edge of the racquet in between hitting on the forehand and backhand sides of the racquet.
- ♦ **Hopping on one foot while tapping the ball up**
 - ♦ Hop on one foot while keeping the ball bouncing up off your strings.
- ♦ **Hopping on one foot while bouncing the ball down**
 - ♦ Hop on one foot while dribbling the ball down off the strings.
- ♦ **Circle around the body**
 - ♦ The player bounces the ball down while standing in one place but the ball is bounced in a circle around the body.
- ♦ **Figure 8's around the leg**
 - ♦ This activity is similar to around the body but this time you must choke up on your racquet and dribble the ball in a figure 8 pattern around your legs.
- ♦ **Hitting up with racquet between your legs**
 - ♦ Begin with knees bent and the racquet between your legs so the strings face the sky.
 - ♦ Try to tap a ball up continuously while with the racquet between your legs and in front of your body.
- ♦ **Jacks**
 - ♦ 1 racquet and ball person
 - ♦ Onsies – tap up 1x , ball bounces on ground and catch with string
 - ♦ Twosies – Tap up 2x, ball bounces and catch with string
 - ♦ Continue adding one number.
 - ♦ See how far each person can get in 1 minute, then 2 minutes.
- ♦ **Target Hitting**
 - ♦ Players practice drop hitting or serving balls to target areas (banners, hoops, etc) attached to walls or fences



B. Teaching the Skill – Strokes

Groundstrokes

Groundstrokes are the basic rallying strokes in tennis. A groundstroke is any ball that is played off the bounce and is usually hit while standing close to the baseline. Coaches should incorporate mobility drills in the practice plan as footwork is an essential part of good stroke production. It is recommended to begin with static teaching and progression drills involving footwork.

Note: It is recommended that a coach focus on one stroke within each lesson plan.

Forehand Ground Stroke “Grips, Preparation And Swing Path” Courtesy of USTA



Preparation



Unit Turn



Loading



Hitting



Contact



Extension



Finish

Eastern Forehand Grip

Grip

The player should use a grip close to the Eastern forehand grip when learning the forehand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the **GRIP** backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Grip during the unit-turn using the non- dominant hand.

Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet.

The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. The racquet begins to move back from the ready position as the hips and shoulders turn to the side (unit turn). The racquet will continue to stay above the hand as it moves into position.



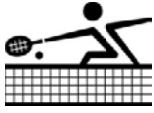
Athletic ready position



Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand

Swing Path

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

The racquet head then drops below the ball and accelerates through the so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net. The follow-through will finish from between the waist to over the shoulder.



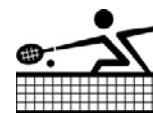
The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension

Key Words

- ♦ " Shake Hands",
- ♦ " Not to tight, not too loose"
- ♦ "Turn, step hit",
- ♦ "Eyes on ball"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ "Swing low to high"
- ♦ "Finish with a hug".

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1



Forehand

Coaches are encouraged to use demonstration throughout each progression. When teaching a skill there are four basic components: grip, ready position, stroke and follow-through. It is best to begin new athletes in **Level 1**. This will allow for greater success.

Forehand Grip

- ♦ Have athletes learn the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip (eastern forehand grip), where the athlete:
 - ♦ Stands with the feet slightly apart and holds the racquet with the non-racquet hand.
 - ♦ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slides the racquet hand down the racquet until the hand reaches the grip.
 - ♦ Wraps the fingers around the handle comfortably and "shake hands."
 - ♦ The grip should not be held too tight ("not too tight, not too loose").



Ready Position

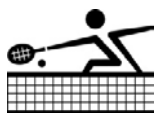


- ♦ Athletes face forward with knees slightly flexed, feet shoulder width apart and heels up off the ground.
- ♦ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level.
- ♦ Use the key words "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready."



Forehand Stroke

- ♦ Athletes turn shoulders and hips to face sideways to the net (racquet is in a volley position with the strings facing the net). Use the key words, "stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer" or "turn your shoulders."
- ♦ Athletes take the racquet back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface). The shape of the swing, when put together as one motion, will be a "C" loop.
- ♦ Before initiating the swing, the athlete takes a few adjusting steps towards the ball.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

- ♦ Demonstrate the contact point position (freeze this position and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted).

The stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through as athletes will put it all together when actually striking a ball), racquet pointing up and toward the net (like “shaking hands with a giant”).



Follow-through

- ♦ The swing is completed with a follow-through that finishes with the racquet pointing to the opposite side of the net "finish the stroke," "point the racquet at your opponent, "turn, step, hit."
- ♦ The follow-through should be high above the head, swinging from low to high “swing low to high.”

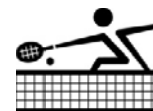


Key Words

- ♦ Shake hands”
- ♦ “Not too tight, not too loose”
- ♦ “Eyes on the ball”
- ♦ “Relax and be ready”
- ♦ “Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer”
- ♦ “Turn your shoulders”
- ♦ “Finish the stroke”
- ♦ “Shaking hands with a giant”
- ♦ “Point the racquet at your opponent”
- ♦ “Swing low to high”
- ♦ “Turn, step, hit”

Coaching Tips

- ❑ The contact point is the most important part of the forehand. Emphasize contact at the front foot with a perpendicular racquet head.
- ❑ Begin with the contact point and follow-through for the first 50 balls the athlete hits. Working from the contact point will provide the best control once the stroke begins to take shape. Add the backswing once the athlete has demonstrated a balanced contact and follow-through position.
- ❑ Encourage the athlete to hit the forehand gently and stress that tennis is a game of control. Hitting the ball over the fence is not a home run in tennis!



Groundstrokes: One Handed Backhand

Backhand Ground Stroke “Grips, Preparation And Swing Path” Courtesy Of USTA



Preparation

Unit Turn

Loading

Hitting

Contact

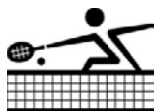
Extension

Finish

Pictures: For Left Handed Player

Eastern Backhand Grip

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominate shoulder to target on turn.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Grip

The player should use an Eastern backhand grip for a one-handed backhand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Backhand grip during the unit-turn using the non-dominant hand at the throat

Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet. The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.



Athletic ready position



Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand Right handed players point right shoulder to target

Swing Path

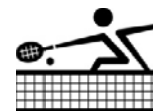
The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension

Coaching Tips

- ❑ Many Special Olympics tennis players like to hit two forehands, a left-handed and a right-handed one. It is important that coaches have athletes learn the backhand stroke. The backhand requires more strength and control and it is quite acceptable to use two hand



Groundstrokes: Two Handed Backhand

Groundstrokes: Two Handed Backhand “Grips, Preparation and Swing Path” Courtesy of USTA



Preparation



Unit Turn



Loading



Hitting



Contact



Extension



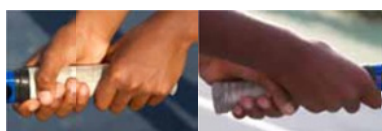
Finish

Pictures for left handed player

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominate shoulder to target on turn.

Grip

The player should use a grip close to Eastern for the top hand and a grip close to Continental on the bottom hand. The non dominant hand on the throat of the racquet is also used to change the grip from the forehand to backhand during play.



Eastern Grip on top Continental on Bottom



Player has taken the right hand off the throat and has both backhand grips set as he begins the unit turn

Preparation

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet. The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.



Athletic ready position



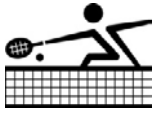
Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand

Swing Path

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



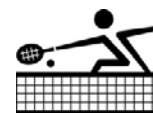
The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Coaching Tips

- ☐ Emphasize control and gentle bumps of the ball. This is a difficult concept for some Special Olympics athletes.
- ☐ Instruct athletes to watch the strings and try to contact the ball in the center of the racquet (sweet spot).
- ☐ It is important that the athlete is using the appropriate racquet size, length and weight.
- ☐ With lower ability levels it may be useful to use partners as coaches.
- ☐ Swing under control and to keep the racquet at a right angle to the ground.



Backhand

In the backhand stroke the shoulders and hips are turned so the athlete is standing sideways (racquet is in a volley position with the strings facing the net). Use the key words, "stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer" or "turn your shoulders." The athlete should use the forehand grip in the ready position. It will be necessary to practice the grip change to the backhand. The coach should be observant, making sure this is happening. Use the key words "change your grip."

Grip

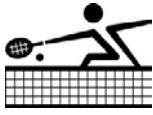
- ♦ Athletes perform the backhand grip using the following tips (these tips are used for the dominant hand for the two-handed player).
- ♦ Hold the racquet with the forehand grip.
- ♦ Turn the hand until the first knuckle of the index finger is on top of the grip (1/4 turn).
- ♦ Another way to find this grip is to put the racquet under the left armpit and grab the racquet as if unsheathing a sword.
- ♦ For a two-handed grip, the dominant hand should be in the continental grip (same as the serve) and the non-dominant hand is placed in an eastern forehand grip. For a right-handed player, the non-dominant hand is a forehand grip for a left-handed player and this is reversed in teaching a left-handed dominant player.



Ready Position

- ♦ Athletes face forward with knees slightly flexed, feet shoulder width apart and heels up off the ground.
- ♦ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level.
- ♦ Use the key words "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready."





Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Backhand Stroke

- ♦ The racquet is taken back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface), with a continuous swing. This allows the student to have a loop “C” shaped swing.
- ♦ A few small adjusting steps are taken towards the ball.
- ♦ The coach should demonstrate the contact point position. Freeze at the progression and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted. Use the key words "hit off your front foot"; "turn, step, hit."



Keep in mind that a one-handed backhand contact point will be out in front of the forward foot, whereas a two-handed backhand contact point will be near the front foot position. Use the key words "hit off your front foot" or "turn, step, hit."

Follow-through

- ♦ The stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (one-handed).
- ♦ Be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through, as the athlete will put it all together when actually striking a ball.
- ♦ The racquet will finish pointing up and toward the net like “shaking hands with a giant.”
- ♦ The two-handed follow-through will wrap around the opposite shoulder in a full swing pattern.

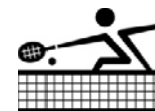


Key Words

- ♦ Eyes on the ball"
- ♦ "Relax and be ready"
- ♦ "Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ “Change your grip”
- ♦ "Hit off your front foot”
- ♦ “Shaking hands with a giant”

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1



Volley

A volley is a stroke that is played before the ball bounces. It is normally hit when the player is inside the service line.

Assessing Player Readiness

Beginners are sometimes more successful with hitting the volley because it does not require the eye-hand coordination of playing the ball off the bounce. Common mistakes made by beginning and intermediate players are taking too big a swing or swinging down on the ball. Players should be reminded to focus on control rather than speed and power

“Grips, Preparation and Swing Path” Courtesy Of USTA

Forehand Volley



Preparation



Backswing



Contact



Finish

Backhand Volley (left handed shown)



Preparation



Backswing



Contact



Finish

Grip

The Continental grip should be used for both the forehand and backhand volley. This grip is half way between the Eastern forehand and Eastern backhand grip. This grip can also be used for the overhead.



Continental Grip



Athletic ready position



Unit turn with non-dominant hand on the throat for the backhand volley

Preparation

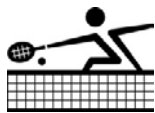
Preparation at the net begins with an athletic ready position with eyes forward, racquet in front at eye level, knees flexed, weight forward and feet slightly wider than shoulder width. A split step is made as the opponent contacts the ball and the body and racquet move together as a unit sideways so that the strings of the racquet face the ball. The non-dominant hand helps set the racquet face behind the ball on the backhand side.

Swing Path

The swing path moves in a straight line from slightly above the contact point to a position above the net. The racquet face is slightly open when contact is made from below the top of the net.



The swing path is linear starting just above the point of contact and finishing at net level



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Coaching Tips

☐ Ready Position

The ready position is the same as for the forehand and backhand.

☐ Volley Stroke

The volley progression includes the following steps:

1. Begin with the athlete blocking the ball with his/her hand (hand up in the air as if giving a “high five”).
2. Add the racquet, with the athlete holding the racquet near the throat, so that the fingers are behind the strings, making a “big hand.”
3. The same progression is followed for the backhand, with a “big thumb” instead of a “big hand.”
4. Athletes turn sideways to the approaching ball.
5. There is no backswing in the volley stroke.
6. The ball should be met in front of the body with a short motion.
7. The wrist is kept firm.

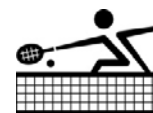


☐ Follow-Through

1. The racquet head should remain above the wrist throughout the volley.
2. There is a short follow-through, finishing in the ready position for the next volley

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1



Teaching the Skills Tips

Volleys

Athlete stands anywhere from in front of service line to net. The athlete may not touch the net or contact the ball on the opponent's side of the net. Racquet is held higher in Ready Position, the closer the athlete stands to the net. Shoulder turn is a key component of preparation prior to contacting the ball.

Progressions

Progressions are key in stroke development.

1. Easy to difficult	(Hand to Racquet)
2. Slow to fast	(Balloon to Red Foam ball)
3. Known to unknown	(Hold racquet to Continental Grip)
4. General to specific	(Volley over the net to Volley to a target)
5. Start to finish	(Ready position, shoulder turn, step, tap, ready position)

Volley Tap – Level 1

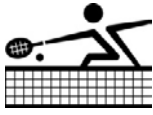
- Athlete stands in the ready position and the coach tosses or hits a balloon or red foam ball to him/her.
- Athlete turns shoulder, steps in with a crossover step and taps the ball with outstretched hand, simulating a forehand or backhand volley. Repeat several times.
- Athlete holds the racquet by the throat and repeats the above drill.
- Athlete holds the racquet by the grip with continental grip and repeats the above drill.
- Repeat drill sequence with partner on other side of net.
- In forehand volley position, tap balloons back and forth with hands then add racquets
- From Ready Position, shoulder turn step and repeat above.



Cup/Cone Catches

- Using a large cup/ cone or fishing net, have athletes catch a tossed ball.
- This emphasizes that athletes do not need to swing to hit a volley.





Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Volley Toss

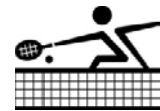
- ♦ Coach or partner tosses a ball and players hit a forehand or backhand volley.
- ♦ Using proper volleying technique, players hit volleys to a partner.
- ♦ Count how many tosses and catches can be completed before a miss.

Volley Feeding Drills

- ♦ Coach feeds balls from a hopper to a single-file line of players.
- ♦ Players hit a specified number of balls and return to the end of the line.
- ♦ Targets are used for placement.

Coaching Tips

- ❑ If an athlete has trouble stepping forward to contact the ball with the correct foot, remove the athlete's shoe from the stepping foot. The athlete then steps forward with their sock foot.
- ❑ Athletes must return to Ready Position quickly to prepare for the next shot.



Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve. The ball must be hit without bouncing on the court with either an overhead or underhand serve. The Serve is the most complicated stroke. Coaches who use a progressive training plan help athletes achieve success.

“Grips, Preparation and Swing Path” Courtesy Of USTA



Preparation



Toss Release



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Position



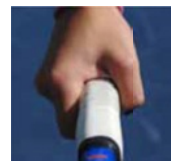
Contact



Finish

Grip

The player should use a Continental grip for the serve and overhead. This grip allows players to make contact with the ball at full extension, allows the wrist to relax and aids in creating spin.



Preparation

The feet should be shoulder width apart with the front foot pointing toward the corresponding net post, right post for right-handers, left post for left-handers, and the back foot parallel with the baseline.

The racquet should be supported at the throat with the non-dominant hand and the dominant hand should be in a relaxed Continental grip.

The toss release should occur above the head and follow in line in front of the forward foot.



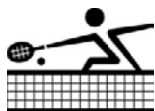
Preparation



Toss Release



Loading



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Swing path

Both arms will drop down and swing up together. The non-dominant hand tosses the ball in position and the racquet head drops down to the hitting position where the tip of the racquet points toward the ground.

The racquet arm elbow leads forward and up and the racquet follows, accelerating to the contact at full extension above and slightly in front of the body, finishing down and across the body.



Position



Contact



Finish

Teaching the Skill Tips

Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve. The serve may be hit overhand or underhand but the ball may not bounce before striking.

Assessing Player Readiness

The serve can be the hardest part of tennis for beginners. Beginners should follow a serving progression for success.

- ♦ Athletes stand (Wheelchair athletes non-dominate shoulder to net)
- ♦ Athletes begin standing 2 steps behind the net.
- ♦ Allow the athlete to have 2 attempts on the serve.
- ♦ Throw the ball into the appropriate box (Crosscourt).
- ♦ Move 2 steps back and repeat.
- ♦ Continue moving 2 steps back to the service line.
- ♦ Add Racquet and begin 2 steps behind net.
- ♦ Racquet extended, ball is tossed then tapped to the correct service box.
- ♦ Repeat moving back to service line after 2 attempts.

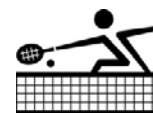
Grip

Beginners will normally resort to a "pancake" or "frying pan" grip. This grip is usually between the forehand grip and up to a half turn to the right of the forehand grip. The proper grip is a "continental grip" (between the forehand and the backhand), which is the same grip as the volley. Many athletes will struggle with this grip because it requires sufficient racquet head speed to be successful. The grip is a matter of comfort and coaches will have to make adaptations as necessary.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 1



Ready Position

- ♦ Stand sideways to the net, behind the baseline, with feet comfortably (shoulder width) apart.
- ♦ Hold the racquet in front of the body, with arms relaxed and a tennis ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Shoulders and hips should be aligned diagonally to aim toward the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Key words are "relax," "where are you aiming?" and "where are your feet pointed?"

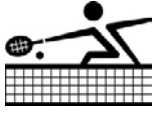
Ball Toss Progression (for the right handed player)

- ♦ Athlete stands at back fence or court curtain.
- ♦ Racquet is extended up
- ♦ The left hand tosses (key words “lift and let go” or “place the ball on the second shelf”) Stress that the ball is placed, not thrown.
- ♦ Athlete traps ball with extended racquet against the fence or curtain. Repeat.
- ♦ Coaches can help the player by standing to the side of the athlete and tossing the ball.
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in back overhand throwing position.
- ♦ Move to court and begin with arm extended and tap the ball. Give 2 attempts. (Follow athlete assessment progression)
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in throwing position.
- ♦ When successful at racquet back overhand throwing position, assist athletes with a “down together, up together” arm motion until they get the idea of both arms working together
- ♦ The ball slightly in front and to the right of the server high enough so the ball can be contacted with an extended racquet.



Overhand Throwing Position





Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

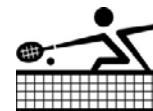
On-Court Training Activities – Level 1

Serving Motion

- ♦ It is best to have athletes start with the racquet in the backscratch position resting on the shoulder (this will represent half of the full backswing). The athlete tosses and hits the ball from this position (emphasize the contact point).
- ♦ The full backswing can be added when athletes are able to get the contact point and toss to meet.
- ♦ To assist with teaching the full stroke, have the racquet and arm in the “down together, up together” motion. The racquet will swing across the top of the player’s feet, then toward the back fence and eventually reach the shoulder position.
- ♦ The racquet reaches up to contact the ball with an extended arm.

Follow Through

- ♦ After contact, the weight comes forward into the court and the racquet finishes across the body



Alternating Ground strokes

Athletes alternate between forehand and backhand ground strokes while adding movement to the ball. The key is for athlete to begin in ready position, early racquet preparation (racquet back with shoulder turn), take a few steps to the ball, stop, step in to contact ball, then recover by shuffling back to center mark and ready position and then repeat pattern on opposite side. Athletes change grips while in ready position.

Hitting with Movement

For many Special Olympics tennis players, moving to the ball and then executing a stroke can be very difficult. It is important for coaches to instruct athletes that in a match the ball is not going to come to them; they must move to the ball. Hitting with movement drills should be introduced in the early stages of skill development and should lead to practices that prepare athletes for match play.

- ♦ There are five steps to developing efficient movement around the court.
 1. The athlete needs to determine the direction of the approaching ball. To practice, toss balls to the athlete positioned on the other side of the court. The athlete points in the direction of the approaching ball with the non-racquet hand before the ball reaches the net.
 2. Make contact with the ball. The athlete runs toward the tossed ball and catches it after only one bounce. This can be progressed into a drill where the athlete next catches the ball on the strings.
 3. Turn the shoulders and take the racquet back into the hitting position while running toward the ball.
 4. Step forward with the front foot as contact is made with the ball. Asking the athlete to freeze at that point allows the coach to get a good view of the athlete's footwork.
 5. After following-through, the athlete turns and takes a few running steps back to the center of the court.

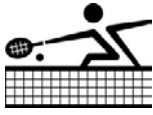
Throughout the sequence, practice the split step to maintain balance. To execute the split step, as the opponent starts his/her swing, the athlete jumps on both feet. Use the key words "split step" or "take little steps." Be sure the athlete understands that the split step occurs all over the court and in between each contact or swing of the racquet

Assessing Player Readiness

- ♦ Beginners typically do not like to run to the ball. They would rather reach from the waist, extend their arms and then flick their wrist at the ball rather than move their feet.
- ♦ Intermediate players will move more readily to the ball but will often get "jammed" with a ball that is too close or they will reach for a ball that is too far away.
- ♦ The best tennis players move to the ball quickly and get in position to execute their stroke effectively. They are rarely out of position and are balanced at the end of each stroke. They always seem to be in the right place.

Coaching Tips

- ☐ Practice movement without equipment.
- ☐ Incorporate movement into warm-ups.
- ☐ Athletes shadow coaches movements.
- ☐ After practicing movement, add ball.
 - ☐ Athlete starts at T on service line.
 - ☐ Athlete runs to tossed ball.
 - ☐ Athlete stops and catches ball then throws balls over net.
 - ☐ Athlete shuffles back to center.
- ☐ Next add racquet



III. Level 2 Matchplay

- ♦ 42' court with Red Foam Ball.
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 2.0 - 2.5.
- ♦ 21-23" racquet recommended

Assessing Player Readiness

Level 2 is for Beginners who have been successful in Level 1 and ready to transition to matchplay. Level 2 athletes learn to combine strokes with movement. Athletes tend to need a slower ball and a smaller defined space. Common mistakes are over hitting, poor footwork, lack of court coverage, little preparation, and double service faults.

Suggested lesson activities

A. Warm-up

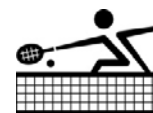
- ♦ 3 ball line run
 - ♦ Place 1 ball at the net in the ad alley, 1 ball at the net at the center line and 1 ball at the net in the deuce alley.
 - ♦ Players form a single line at the baseline in the ad alley. Each player has 1 ball, 1st player runs toward the net with their ball, bends down and replaces ball at the net. Then runs backwards to the service line, shuffles to the center line, runs up and exchanges balls, runs backwards back to the service line, shuffles over to deuce alley, runs up and exchanges ball the runs backwards to the baseline and shuffles across to go to the end of the line.
 - ♦ The 2nd player goes when the 1st player shuffles toward the center line.
- ♦ Shuffle Watch
 - ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net.
 - ♦ The coach stands on the opposite side of the net. The coach points to either of the alleys. The players must shuffle in that direction until the coach points to other alley. The time between changing directions shortens. Athletes must keep their eyes on the coach at all time and their shoulders square to the net.
- ♦ Run and Shuffle

2 cones for each player. Set one for each player on the deuce single sideline and one on the ad single side line.

 - ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net. On signal, players run to the Deuce-Single sideline, touch the cone with their left hand and shuffle back to center.
 - ♦ Players then run toward the Ad-Alley, touch the cone with right hand, then shuffle back to the center.
- ♦ Agility – Racquet quickness
 - ♦ Two players stand facing one another, each standing a racquet on the tip of the frame with the handle pointing up. At the count of three, the players will switch place and catch the other player's racquet without letting it drop. After several successful trials, move the children back a half step at a time and see how far they can go without letting the racquets drop.
- ♦ Cone Topleft

12 – 6" cones spread all over court. ½ are upright and the other ½ are on their side.

 - ♦ Players form two teams. Each team has a specific job. 1st job is to tip over the cone that is upright with their hand. 2nd job is to set the cones upright. Play for 1 minute and see which team has the most. Then switch jobs.



B. Sending/Receiving/Rally/ Movement

- ♦ **Koosh ball pass**

Use one Koosh ball or beanbag for each pair. Have the players begin by standing close together with their racquets, passing the Koosh ball back and forth from one racquet to another. After several successful trials, have them move back so they use a gentle toss to get the Koosh ball from one racquet to the other. Add a challenge by tossing the Koosh ball low, high, and even adding a creative catch, such as standing on one leg, between the legs, just above the ground, on one knee, etc.

- ♦ **Koosh ball step back**

This is similar to the above activity but kids move one step apart each time they toss and catch the Koosh ball. See how far apart the players can get without dropping the Koosh ball.

- ♦ **Rally Me**

Toss ball up, let bounce in ring, tap up, let bounce in ring, and repeat for 1 minute First use – Palm up tap, then palm down tap and finally alternate palm up /palm down.

- ♦ **Partner Rally**

Same as Rally Me but partners alternate tapping up after bounce in target ring. Count to see how many they can do in 1 minute.

- ♦ **Toss and Tap – Players stand 6-8' part.**

One player tosses the ball to the other player who traps the ball against the racquet strings (1 bounce). The tosser tries to move their partner up and back and side to side. (When trapping, the racquet butt cap should be pressed up against the waist near the belt buckle and the ball should be caught (trapped) against the strings with non-dominate hand. The trapper rolls the ball back to the tosser.

- ♦ **Toss, Hit and Catch**

Players are 8-10 feet apart. One player tosses a ball underhand so it bounces once. The partner hits the ball with a forehand groundstroke back to the tossing partner who catches the ball and tosses it back. See how many times you can toss, hit and catch without a miss.

- ♦ 1st round – forehand ground stroke
- ♦ 2nd round – backhand ground stroke
- ♦ 3rd round – forehand volley
- ♦ 4th round – backhand volley

- ♦ **Feed and Trap**

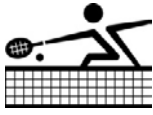
Players are 8-10 feet apart Players take turns drop- hitting to each other and trapping the ball on their strings with their hand.

- ♦ **Feed-hit-Trap**

Player A feeds (drop hits) the ball to Player B. Player B hits the ball back to Player A (groundstroke or volley) Player A traps the ball on the strings and repeats the sequence.

- ♦ **Toss and Trap**

Player stands with non-dominate shoulder to fence, court curtain or wall. With ball in non-dominate hand, palm up, player tosses the ball up and tries to trap it with racquet strings.



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- ♦ **Serve and Trap**

Player serves to wall target and tries to trap the rebound with the racquet strings and non-dominate hand.

- ♦ **Serve, Return and Trap**

Player A serves to Player B, Player B returns to Player A; Player A traps the ball on the strings with hand. Then serves again. After 2 serves, switch.

- ♦ **Wall Rally**

Players attempt to rally the ball against a wall and set a personal best for longest rally. Players can be required to alternate hitting forehands and backhands. Note: Targets can be taped against the wall for players to aim toward. Players can also work together and alternate hits.

- ♦ **Rally poker**

1 person closet to coach runs and gets a card they must rally that number in a row over the net. Once done they can get another card. After 3 minutes make best poke hand.

- ♦ 1st round – forehand,
- ♦ 2nd round – backhand
- ♦ 3rd round alternate

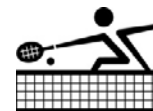
- ♦ **Tag singles**

Players form 2 single file lines across the net from each other. The first person in each line starts on the service line and the others stand behind a safe distance. The player hits the ball and rotates to end of their line.

- ♦ 1st round – hit straight ahead both service boxes.
- ♦ 2nd round- hit straight ahead both service boxes using forehand only.
- ♦ 3rd round – hit straight ahead both service boxes using backhand only.
- ♦ 4th round – hit straight ahead both service boxes alternating forehand and backhand.
- ♦ 5th round – diagonal (Deuce service box to deuce service box) and continue.
- ♦ 6th round – diagonal (Ad service box to ad service box) and continue.

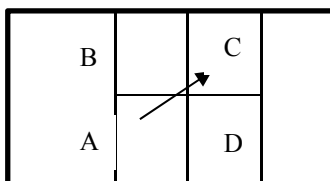
- ♦ **Round the World**

Players form 2 single file lines across the net from each other. The first person in each line starts on the service line and the others stand behind a safe distance. The player hits the ball and runs to their right, around the net and goes to the end of the opposite line. See how many consecutive hits can be done.

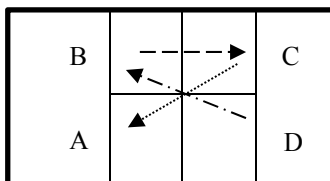


C. Lead Up Games – Red foam ball and 42' court (service boxes only)

- ♦ Throw It – Doubles – Players A, B and Players C, D
 - ♦ Players stand behind service line facing their opponents on opposite service line.
 - ♦ Player A begins and has 2 attempts to throw the ball overhand over the net to the diagonal service box. (Deuce to deuce) *If both attempts fail, Player B is next to throw and throws to Player D.*



- ♦ Player C catches it after 1 bounce and throws it overhand over the net. The ball must bounce in either service box.
- ♦ Play continues until a mistake is made and point is awarded to the winner.
- ♦ Player B next to serve. Player B serves to Player D and play continues as before.
- ♦ Player C serves the 3rd point and Player D the 4th point.
- ♦ Play continues until one team has 4 points.
- ♦ Figure 8 Rally
 - ♦ Four players practice keeping one ball in play following a figure 8 pattern. After each successful four shot rally, player rotates.



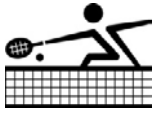
D. Tournament Warm-up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver, players warm up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 2 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys -1 minute (one at net-one service line and switch positions after 30 seconds)
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back

Coaching Tips

- ❑ Build up athletes' stamina for competition. Matches can last from 15 minutes to 90 minutes.
- ❑ Encourage them to drink plenty of water, choose nutritious food and develop an exercise plan.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 2

Teaching Drills

Drills for Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

The following drills are presented in a progression from basic to advanced skill level. Some Special Olympics athletes will be able to move quickly through the progression and others may stay at certain levels for a prolonged time. Be flexible and monitor athlete success in these drills. Be cautious of using athletes as training partners, as delivering the ball to each other may be difficult, hampering their success.

Shadow Drills

These drills are done without a ball and are an excellent way to monitor proper stroke production. Examples of common game formats include the following.

- ♦ Follow the leader: athlete or coach leads the group and coach checks technique.
- ♦ Simon Says: athletes follow the leader's instructions only when he says "Simon Says, hit a forehand."
- ♦ Freeze: the coach calls out a command for forehand or backhand and then calls out "freeze." Check for proper grips and technique at this point.



Self-Drop Forehand and Backhand Drills

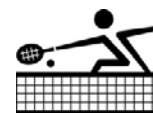
These drills can be also be modified to become a relay race. Each team has 20 balls to hit over the net. Start with a drop hit groundstroke. If the ball lands within the court the athlete repeats the skill. If a mistake is made, the next person in line takes a turn. The first team to hit all the balls is the winner. An adaptation is to have the coach stand to the side of the athlete and drop the ball.

The athlete should:

- ♦ Hold the racquet with the proper grip and stand sideways to the net, with the racquet pointing toward the back fence.
- ♦ Drop a ball from the non-racquet hand, in front and to the side of the body.
- ♦ Step toward the ball with the front foot and stroke the ball over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Record the number of successful drop hits and monitor improvement as the season progresses.

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Alley Rally

- ♦ The athlete stands on the singles sideline facing a coach or partner on the doubles sideline 3 feet away.
- ♦ Place one tennis ball on the singles sideline and another one on the doubles sideline.
- ♦ Have athletes stand just behind the targets and, using the proper grip, gently bump the ball the partner's target.
- ♦ Partners rally back and forth.
- ♦ Monitor how many times the target is hit.
- ♦ To increase or decrease difficulty, use smaller or larger targets.



Tossed Ball Drills

- ♦ A partner or coach tosses tennis balls to the forehand and backhand sides.
- ♦ Athletes contact the ball after the first bounce and bump it over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Use targets, count consecutive hits and keep score between players. Be creative and keep athletes interested.
- ♦ Have a line of athletes “shadow” the hitter. The hitter stands at the service line and athletes follow the movements of the hitter.

Serves

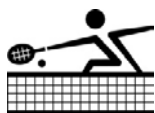
Throwing Drill

- ♦ Throw a ball over the net and into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Using an overhead throwing motion, throw a designated number of balls into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Athletes struggling to get the ball over the net can start at the service line and gradually work to the point of throwing from behind the baseline.
- ♦ Use various balls, such as footballs, foam balls, etc.



Toss Drill

- ♦ Stand in the ready position with a ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Hold the ball with the fingertips and point the palm upward.
- ♦ With a straight arm, raise the ball upward and let go of the ball when the hand reaches its highest point.
- ♦ Allow the ball to drop back into the left hand while the right arm is outstretched.
- ♦ Count the number of successful tosses and catches.



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- ♦ Variations:
 - ♦ Put the racquet on the ground to the right side of the server to act as a target.
 - ♦ Toss the ball as if to serve, but allow the ball to drop to ground.
 - ♦ Count the number of times the ball hits the racquet strings.
 - ♦ Toss the ball while standing alongside the fence. The ball should not touch the fence. This drill helps show the athlete if the toss is going straight up.



Arm Reach Drill

- ♦ Position your feet as if you were serving into the court. Begin with your elbow pointing at the back fence with the upper arm forming a 90 degree angle so that it points up.
- ♦ Lead with the elbow toward the net and extend the arm until it is straight and slightly in front of the shoulder.
- ♦ Now try the drill with a racquet in the hand. The racquet will point up at the start. As the elbow leads, the racquet drops before it reaches up to a fully extended arm.



Catch a Ball from the Service Toss

- ♦ Start with a ball in the tossing hand and the serving arm in the back scratch position with palm against the back of the neck "scratch your back."
- ♦ Toss the ball and extend the arm as in the Arm Reach Drill and catch the ball with the arm fully extended.

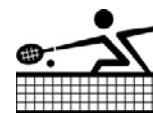


Serving practice

- ♦ With a bucket of balls at the baseline, practice serves from the deuce court and the ad court. Two athletes can practice serves at the same time.
- ♦ Aim for targets or count the consecutive number of successful serves.
- ♦ Play in teams and race to see which team can get 10 serves in the correct box first. When an athlete misses a serve, they go to end of line.

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 2



Return of Serve

After the serve, the return of serve is the most important shot in tennis. Successful tennis players have consistent returns.

Assessing Player Readiness

Special Olympics athletes must constantly be reminded to be ready and pay attention to the server. Teach players to watch the ball during the toss. This allows for immediate tracking skills to take place. It is often necessary for the athlete to move toward the ball for the return. These can be very difficult concepts to master, but are necessary for the athlete to progress.

Teaching the Skill

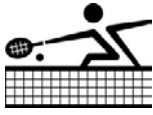
- ♦ The basic ready position (using a forehand grip), presented in the groundstroke lesson, is used in the return of serve. Use the key words “relax,” “look for the ball” and “be ready.”
- ♦ Athletes should begin near the baseline, close enough to touch the singles sideline. The position is the same for both singles and doubles play.

Return of Serve Stroke

- ♦ The return of serve is similar to the forehand and backhand, with a shorter backswing due to decreased time to react to the ball. Use the key words “turn,” “shorten your backswing” and “move to the ball.”
- ♦ The student turns as if preparing for a volley and takes the racquet back as the body is turning. This helps teach a shorter backswing.
- ♦ Footwork is similar to groundstroke preparation. With limited reaction time, the athlete may take just one step toward the ball before contact. Be sure that the initial step or steps will achieve a suitable position. A step in the wrong direction will tell the coach that more time is needed working on tracking skills.
- ♦ To practice return of serve, have the athlete track the oncoming serve and catch the ball in a short court format. Increase distance as skill progresses.

Key Words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Turn”
- ♦ “Shorten your backswing”
- ♦ “Move to the ball”



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 2

Movement

- ♦ Demonstrate the correct way to move to the ball
- ♦ Exaggerate what happens if the athlete forgets to take the racquet back while running to the ball.
- ♦ Show the hesitation step to prevent running through the ball.

Shadow Drills

- ♦ Coach calls out "running forehand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary forehand and completes a forehand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.
- ♦ Coach calls out "running backhand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary backhand and completes a backhand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.



Tossing Drills – Hand feed with underhand toss.

- ♦ Toss balls to alternating sides and have athletes hit and move.
- ♦ Toss balls progressively farther away from athletes.
- ♦ Toss balls without a pattern and have athletes hit and move.

Feeding Drills with a Basket

- ♦ Athletes stand in a line at the baseline.
- ♦ Players respond one at a time by hitting and moving to a ball fed by the coach.
- ♦ Athletes run side to side to hit a designated number of alternating forehands and backhands.

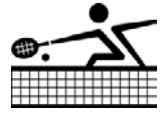
Five Ball Drill

- ♦ Coach feeds five balls in the following sequence: forehand, backhand, mid-court forehand, backhand volley, forehand volley.
- ♦ Athlete hits five balls and returns to the hitting line.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 2



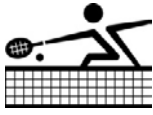
Agility Drills

- ♦ Shuttle Runs: The doubles sideline is the starting line. Run to the center service line and back to the doubles sideline. Then run to the singles sideline and back. Continue running to far service sideline and back. This can be done several times in a row or on several courts.
- ♦ Run the lines: Starting in the corner of the doubles sideline, run to the net and backpedal back to the corner. Shuffle over to the singles sideline and run to the net. Backpedal to the service line and shuffle to the center service line.
- ♦ Line jumps: Athletes stand on one side of any line on the court. As fast as possible they jump back and forth over the line for 30 seconds.
- ♦ Jump roping: A great way to increase agility. Do various skipping and hopping routines. Go for speed and endurance.



Key words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Split step”
- ♦ “Take little steps”



IV. Level 3 Matchplay

- ♦ 60' Court with Orange Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 3.0-3.9
- ♦ 23-25" racquet recommended

Assessing Player Readiness

For Advanced Beginners, who have been successful in Level 2 and ready to transition to a larger defined space and smaller, slower ball. Level 3 athletes are able to sustain a short rally with movement (3 hits in a row) and demonstrate basic strategy. Common mistakes are lack of depth, poor directional control, poor recovery and pushes serves.

A. Warm-ups: examples

Any previous level warm-ups

- ♦ High Knees

With knees reaching waist height, athletes go from baseline to net.

- ♦ Line runs:

- ♦ Athletes stand on doubles sideline, perpendicular to net.
- ♦ Athletes run to singles sideline, bend knees, touch line with both hands and return to start.
- ♦ Repeat to center line, then opposite singles sideline and lastly opposite doubles sideline.

Variation:

- ♦ Athletes stand at center line in ready position.
- ♦ Athletes turn and run to right (deuce) singles sideline and touch with racquet, then shuffle back to center in ready position.
- ♦ Athletes repeat to left (ad) singles sideline.
- ♦ Repeat again to right and left doubles sideline.

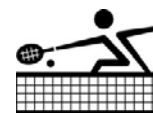
B. Readiness, preparation and recovery drills: examples

1. Ready

- ♦ Players jog in place while in ready position. When the whistle blows, players split step.
- ♦ Players jog in place, split step when coach drops ball.
- ♦ Players jog in place, split step when coach drops ball runs to sideline and complete imaginary swing and shuffle back to start.

2. Ready 2

- ♦ Players (A and B) partner up.
- ♦ Player A holds 1 ball in each hand with arms outstretched.
- ♦ Player B faces partner 3' away.
- ♦ Player A drops one ball.
- ♦ Player B steps forward and catches ball after one bounce.
- ♦ Repeat 4xs and switch positions.



3. Preparation and recovery 1

- ♦ Run and Shuffle - 2 cones for each player. Set one for each player on the deuce single sideline and one on the ad single side line.
- ♦ Players form a single file line, facing the net and the 1st person is 3 feet from the net. On signal, players run to the Deuce-Single sideline, touch the cone with their left hand and shuffle back to centre.
- ♦ Players then run toward the Ad-Alley, touch the cone with right hand, then shuffle back to the centre.

4. Preparation and recovery 2

- ♦ Players form single file line at 60' line.
- ♦ Coach stands on opposite side of net and underhand tosses ball to the right or left of 1st person in line.
- ♦ Player runs to the ball, stops, and catches ball after one bounce, throws ball overhand over the net, then shuffles back to start.
- ♦ Repeat then go to end of line.

5. Preparation and recovery 3

- ♦ Players form 2 lines with racquets.
- ♦ Coach stands facing lines.
- ♦ Coach tosses a ball toward single sidelines to each line.
- ♦ 1st players in line start in ready position. Players run to the ball, stop and hit.
- ♦ Players shuffle back to start while facing the net and in ready position.
- ♦ Repeat then go to the end of the opposite line.

C. Rally Drills: examples

4 per court - Ground stroke or volleys

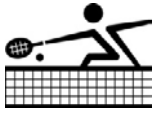
- ♦ Hit straight ahead – Goal 10 in a row. Increase as players are able. Rotate partners. (*forehand only, backhand only, alternate, be creative*)
- ♦ Hit cross court - Goal 10 in a row. Increase as players are able. Rotate partners. (*forehand only, backhand only, alternate, be creative*)

3 per court - Ground stroke or volleys

- ♦ Player A is singles player, Players B and C are on opposite side of net.
- ♦ Play may be ground strokes to ground strokes, volleys to volleys or ground strokes to volleys.
- ♦ Goal – 10 hits in a row

D. Lead up games: examples

- ♦ Champion of the Court
 - ♦ Singles game.
 - ♦ 1 King/Queen on opposite side of net and others line up in a single file line behind the 60' line.
 - ♦ First person in line serves to King and play out point.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 3

- ♦ If server wins, they have to the count of 5 to become King/Queen before the next person serves. The Ex-king returns to the end of the serving line.
- ♦ Add-um up
 - ♦ Divide class in half.
 - ♦ Form single file lines on opposite sides of net on 60' line.
 - ♦ With a drop hit, the 1st two play out singles point.
 - ♦ Winner stays on court and is joined the next team mate.
 - ♦ The loser, returns to the end of their line.
 - ♦ The goal is to win the point with all team members on the court.
 - ♦ The single player always starts the point.
 - ♦ If the single player wins, all players on the opposite side return to the end of their line.

E. Tournament Warm – up:

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period.

After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver

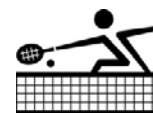
Players warm-up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back

Coaching Tips

Intermediate players are more likely to complete a successful serve, but are still prone to double faults. They may struggle with placing the toss consistently and therefore have trouble serving consistently. The following modifications are appropriate for intermediate players.

- ☐ Hit an underhand serve (a forehand drop-hit with the ball hit in mid-air).
- ☐ Use an abbreviated service motion:
- ☐ 1/2 serve is started with the racquet in the "back scratch position."
- ☐ 3/4 serve is started with the racquet behind the body and pointing toward the ground.



V. Level 4 Matchplay

- ♦ 78' Court with Green Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 4.0-4.9 25-27" racquet recommended
- ♦ Level 4 players benefit from instruction from tennis professionals.

Assessing Player Readiness

Intermediate who have been successful in Level 3 and ready to transition to full court with low compression ball. Level 4 athletes are able to sustain a 4-5 hit rally with movement, moves to the ball and sequences 2 strokes. Common mistakes are poor ball placement, weak second serve, lacks depth and inconsistent backhand shots.

A. Warm-ups

Same as Level 5

B. Specialty shots

Overhead

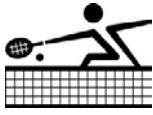
- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players line up across net and stand perpendicular to net.
 - ♦ At signal, players shuffle toward service line, keeping perpendicular to net.
 - ♦ Players stop and reach up with racquet hand and step.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Same as 1 but add ball to catch with racquet hand.
- ♦ Drill 3
 - ♦ Same as 1 but form 1 line in alley with only one player at net.
 - ♦ Players have racquets. Players shuffle back with racquet raised.
 - ♦ Instead of catching the ball, player reaches up and hits ball with overhand throwing motion.

Lob

- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players partner up and stand facing each other on opposite sides of net at the baseline.
 - ♦ Player on one side drop hit the ball, with big back swing, open racquet face and full follow through lift the ball up and set it over the net.
 - ♦ Receiving players catch the ball and lob it back.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Players form 2 lines on both sides of net.
 - ♦ One side lobs the ball and receivers hit overhead back to lobbers.

Drop Shot

- ♦ Use Continental grip.
- ♦ Racquet path high to level (J motion with racquet –racquet face opens and the ball is brushed high to low)



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 4

- ♦ Touch shot with soft hands
- ♦ One use – when opponent is back deep in the court.
- ♦ Drill 1
 - ♦ Players line up in two lines at the service line.
 - ♦ Balls are fed to each player. Players try to drop shot to a target (Baskets, hoops or towel) over the net.
- ♦ Drill 2
 - ♦ Players A and B stand facing each other on opposite sides of net at service line.
 - ♦ Player A drop hits the ball to start.
 - ♦ Players rally easy and after 3 hits, Player A drop shots player B who tries to return ball.
 - ♦ Player B starts the ball and will drop shot after 3 hits. Repeat alternating.
 - ♦ When successful, move back to baseline and repeat drill.

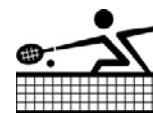
C. Doubles strategy

- ♦ Communication is key
- ♦ Partners move laterally (side by side) together.
- ♦ If a partner is pulled off court, other partner covers the middle and next shot.
- ♦ Place the ball between the opponents.

D. Tournament Warm-up

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver, Players warm-up on the side they will begin play on.

- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back



VI. Level 5 Matchplay

- ♦ 78' Court with Yellow Ball
- ♦ Suggested athlete rating: 5.0-8.0
- ♦ 25-27" racquet recommended
- ♦ Level 5 players benefit from instruction from tennis professionals.

Assessing Player Readiness

Advanced Intermediate – Advanced players who have been successful in Level 4 and ready for traditional full court play. Level 5 athletes are able to sustain a 6-15 hit rally with movement, prepare and recover well, sequence a series of strokes, demonstrate strategy, control, power and placement. Level 5 athletes have skill and knowledge to compete in community tennis events. Level 5 athletes can sustain a 2 hour drill and play.

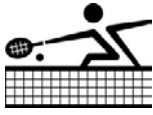
A. Warm ups – Core strengthening, speed, agility

1. Core/Strength: Examples

- ♦ **Ball pushups**
 - ♦ Athletes begin in the prone position with abs on the exercise ball, hand flat on the floor in front and legs together and straight out, not touching floor. Contract abs and glutes.
 - ♦ Athlete does 3 reps of 12 push ups
 - ♦ Athlete attempts the same but with knees on ball
 - ♦ Athlete attempts the above but with ankles on the ball.
- ♦ **Partner Crunch**
 - ♦ Partners lie down, knees bent, feet flat with toes touching.
 - ♦ One partner has ball extended overhead on ground.
 - ♦ Both crunch up and exchange ball and return to lying position.
 - ♦ 3 sets of 12 reps
- ♦ **Planks**
 - ♦ Athlete assumes prone position on toes and elbows.
 - ♦ Contract abs and glutes
 - ♦ Hold for 30 sec.
- ♦ **Lunges with ball.**
 - ♦ Starting at baseline, step forward with a lunge, dipping back knee down, then reach sideways with a ball.
 - ♦ Repeat to the net then run back.

2. Speed/Agility: Examples

- ♦ **Spider Drill**
 - ♦ 8 cones spread out web formation.
 - ♦ Athlete starts at T



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 5

- ♦ Always facing the net, 1 athlete at a time must touch each cone.
- ♦ Run to the cone and shuffle back to T each time.
- ♦ 30 sec line drill: How many touches can be done in 30 sec?
 - ♦ Choose deuce or ad service box.
 - ♦ Athletes start 2 steps in front of service line and midway between singles sideline and center line.
 - ♦ Always face the net.
 - ♦ Cross over steps
 - ♦ Forehand touches center line and backhand touches singles sideline.

B. Power/Spins

- ♦ Power comes from legs and body rotation. Practice getting low to the ball and rotate shoulders.
- ♦ Spins vary the pace of the game
- ♦ Under-spin ball is struck with a high to level motion with continental grip. Under-spin ball bounces low and slow.
- ♦ Top-spin ball is struck with level to high motion with semi western grip. Topspin ball bounces high and fast.

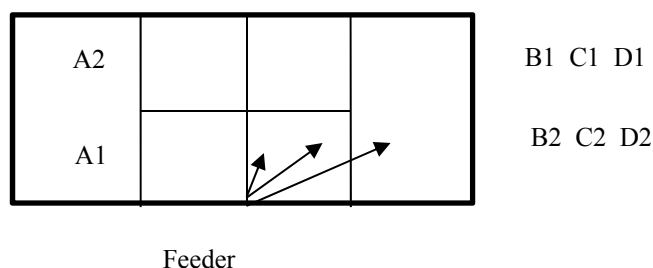
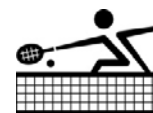
C. Match play drills: Examples – Use drills that simulate play.

Singles

- ♦ Quick step
 - ♦ Groups of 4 athletes line up on opposite deuce alleys at service line
 - ♦ Ball is fed to the T position.
 - ♦ 1st Athlete in each line runs out behind the ball and plays out point
 - ♦ At end of point, athletes exit right and go to end of opposite line.
- ♦ Rally deep then move in, behind the center mark.
 - ♦ Athletes start at baseline.
 - ♦ Rally deep
 - ♦ When ball lands short, move in and shorten backswing
 - ♦ Play out point.

Doubles

- ♦ 3 ball challenge – Object to be the Champion doubles team.
 - ♦ Team A begins on opposite side of net at baseline as the Champions.
 - ♦ Rest of Doubles teams line up behind baseline. This side will be fed all 3 balls.
 - ♦ Feed ball to 1st baseline team (B) and play out point
 - ♦ If (B) wins, ball fed at service line and play out point. If lost 1st point return to end of line.
 - ♦ Third ball is fed at the net if previous points have been won



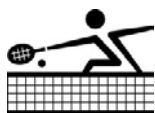
D. Strategy

- ♦ Hit to open court.
- ♦ Hit to person at baseline
- ♦ Hit down the middle in doubles
- ♦ Use short angles
- ♦ Move in on short ball.
- ♦ Make your opponent move
- ♦ Vary shot selection, high, low, slow fast
- ♦ Doubles team stay laterally (side by side) together and move to net

E. Tournament Warm-up

Each match has a 5 minute warm-up period. After the official has flipped the coin to decide server/receiver or side, players warm-up on the side they will begin play on.

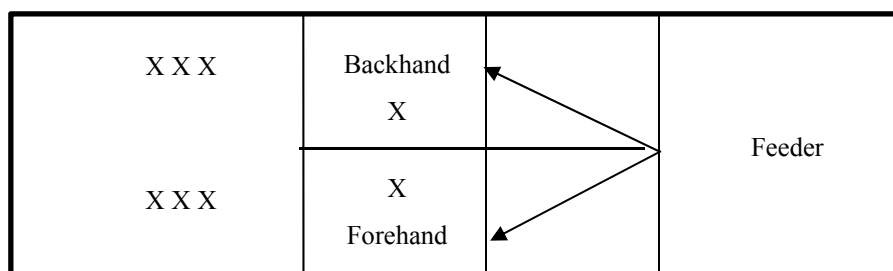
- ♦ Rally straight ahead – 1 minute
- ♦ Practice volleys, lobs and overheads -1 minute
- ♦ Practice serves 2 minutes
 - ♦ Use two balls.
 - ♦ Serve 2 and receiver catches each one.
 - ♦ Receiver becomes the server and serves 2 back



Teaching Drills Volleys

Criss-Cross Volley Drill

- ♦ Two lines of players, first person in each line starts inside service boxes.
- ♦ Racquet feed a forehand volley to the first person in the left line and then feed a backhand volley to the right line. Continue to feed volleys, alternating between the two lines.
- ♦ Use targets for varied placement (down the line, middle, cross court short/deep)
- ♦ After volleying a designated number of balls, the player returns to the end of other (opposite) line.

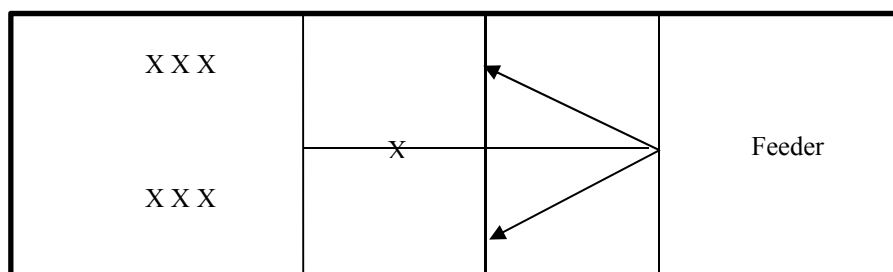


- ♦ Variation:
 - ♦ Have athletes practice volleying from service line.
 - ♦ Have athletes start at the (T) and move to the ball, volley and then return to end of opposite line



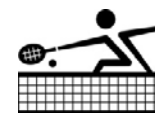
Alternating forehand and backhand volleys

- ♦ Coach feeds four balls, alternating forehand and backhand volleys.



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities – Level 5

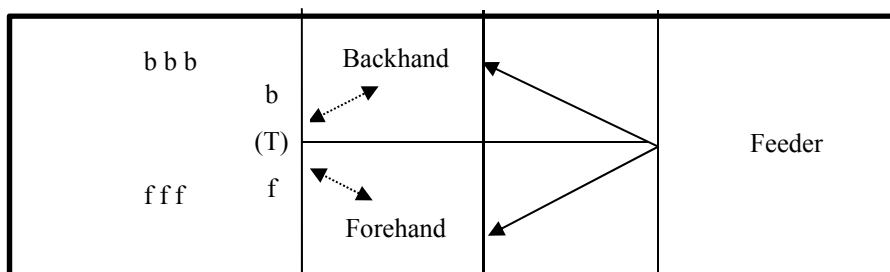


- Use targets for varied placement (down the line, middle, cross court short/deep).
- Variation:
 - Have athletes practice volleying from service line.
 - Widen feeds for athlete movement to ball.
 - Practice in doubles formation.



Corner Volley Drill

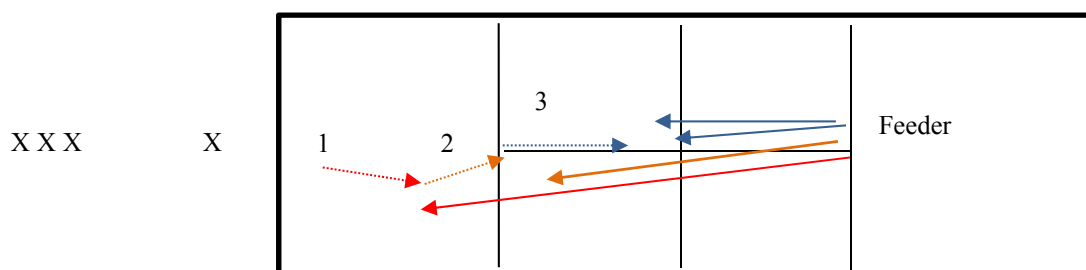
- Two lines are formed at the corners of the service boxes.



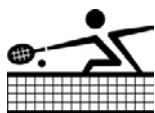
- Feed a ball so the athlete must move to hit the volley. Feed forehand (f) athlete first,
- After hitting the volley, the athlete touches the corner of the service box with the racquet and runs back to the net to play another volley.
- As the (f) player is running to touch the corner, a ball is fed to player on the backhand corner side.
- After volleying a designated number of balls, the player returns to the end of other (opposite) line.
- Use targets for varied placement (down the line, middle, cross court short/deep).

Approach and Volley (Forehand, Backhand and Same Side)

- Player hits an approach shot off a ball fed to the mid-court area.
- The second shot is a deep volley from a ball hit at the service line.
- The third shot is a short forehand volley from a ball hit at the net.
- The four shot is a short backhand volley from a ball hit at the net.
- The coach feeds several volleys, stressing forward movement between hits.



- Use targets for varied placement (down the line, middle, cross court short/deep).



Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities – Level 5

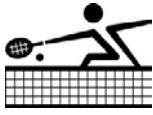




***Special
Olympics***

TENNIS QUICK START GUIDE

Section 3: Tournaments



Teaching Tennis Rules

The best time to teach the rules of tennis is during practice. The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics tennis competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Tennis Federation (ITF) Rules for tennis. ITF Rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall apply. Please refer to the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules Book for the complete listing of tennis rules.

Level 2 - Matchplay

Service

- ♦ The service motion may be underhand or overhand.
- ♦ The ball shall not bounce before being struck.

Scoring: Singles / Doubles / Unified

- ♦ Competition will be 1 No Ad Set. The first to 6 games by a margin of 2 games shall win. At 6 games all at 7 pt tie break shall be played to determine the winner.
- ♦ No-ad scoring shall be used for all match play
- ♦ The umpire will use traditional scoring of love, fifteen, thirty, etc. At deuce, the server serves into the side of the court chosen by the receiver. (Deciding point, receiver's choice).
- ♦ At the completion of the match, players come to the net and shake hands. The handshake symbolizes that both players agree on the winner and the score. Once the handshake has been done, the game and all points stand.
- ♦ At deciding point in Unified, athlete serves to athlete and partner serves to partner.

Continuous Play:

- ♦ 20 seconds between points.
- ♦ 90 seconds on change-over.
- ♦ No break after 1st game..

Warm-up

- ♦ 5 minutes prior start of match.
1st-3rd minute – Practice ground-strokes, volleys, overheads.
4th-5th minute – Practice serves. One athlete serves 2 and the other catches the 2 balls, then serves them back.

Coaching

- ♦ Play may receive coaching from a designated coach when the player changes ends after the 3rd game and on every change-over there after in the set.
- ♦ Coaching is not allowed during the tiebreak.
- ♦ Coaching is allowed during the 3 minute rest period between 2nd and 3rd set.

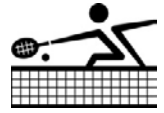
Balls

- ♦ Three new balls will be used for all matches.

Officials

- ♦ Matches will have a solo chair umpire, who will call all lines, service lets, foot faults, time violations, and code violations under the USTA Point Penalty System (PPS)

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Tournaments



- ♦ Lateness for a match will be penalized in accordance with the PPS.
- ♦ A player/team will be defaulted if: 15 minutes after the match has been called the player/team is not on court, unless in the opinion of the Head Referee the lateness was caused by tournament conditions.

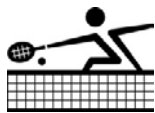
Medical Timeouts and Toilet Breaks

- ♦ A medical timeout for each new medical condition or aggravation of a pre-existing condition may be taken during the warm-up or match for a treatable medical condition. Treatable medical conditions include, but not limited to injury, illness, heat related conditions and cramps.
- ♦ Once an umpire is notified and the coach or medical personnel has reached the court and made a diagnosis that the condition is treatable, the 3 minute treatment time begins.
- ♦ A player may request toilet breaks during the match. Coaching is not allowed during the medical breaks or toilet breaks. Players will be escorted during toilet breaks.

Miscellaneous

No cell phones allowed on court. Spectators are requested to place phone on vibrate.

No flash photography when the ball is in play.



Levels 3-5 Matchplay

Service

- ♦ The service motion may be underhand or overhand.
- ♦ The ball shall not bounce before being struck.

Scoring: Singles / Doubles / Unified

- ♦ Competition will be best of 3 short sets. Short set to 4 games win by two games. At 4-4, a 7 point tiebreak is played. At split sets(1-1) a 10 point tie break game is played in lieu of the 3 set.
- ♦ No-ad scoring shall be used for all match play
- ♦ The umpire will use traditional scoring of love, fifteen, thirty, etc. At deuce, the server serves into the side of the court chosen by the receiver. (Deciding point, receiver's choice).
- ♦ At the completion of the match, players come to the net and shake hands. The handshake symbolizes that both players agree on the winner and the score. Once the handshake has been done, the game and all points stand.

Continuous Play

- ♦ 20 seconds between points.
- ♦ 90 seconds on change-over.
- ♦ No break after 1st game.
- ♦ 3 minutes after second set and before deciding tiebreak game.

Warm-up

- ♦ 5 minutes prior start of match.
1st-3rd minute – Practice ground-strokes, volleys, overheads.
4th-5th minute – Practice serves. One athlete serves 2 and the other catches the 2 balls, then serves them back.

Coaching

- ♦ Players may receive coaching from a designated coach when the player changes ends after the 3rd game and on every change-over there after in the set.
- ♦ Coaching is not allowed during the tiebreak.
- ♦ Coaching is allowed during the 3 minute rest period between 2nd and 3rd set.

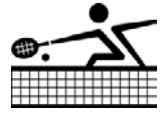
Balls

- ♦ Three new balls will be used for all matches.
- ♦ ISC competition balls will be determined by the Sport Commissioner

Officials

- ♦ Matches will have a solo chair umpire, who will call all lines, service lets, foot faults, time violations, and code violations under the USTA Point Penalty System (PPS)
- ♦ Lateness for a match will be penalized in accordance with the PPS.
- ♦ A player/team will be defaulted if: 15 minutes after the match has been called the player/team is not on court, unless in the opinion of the Head Referee the lateness was caused by tournament conditions.

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Tournaments



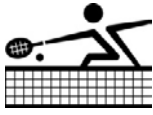
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- ♦ Once an umpire is notified and the coach or medical personnel has reached the court and made a diagnosis that the condition is treatable, the 3 minute treatment time begins.
- ♦ A player may request toilet breaks during the match. Coaching is not allowed during the medical breaks or toilet breaks. Players will be escorted during toilet breaks.

Miscellaneous

No cell phones allowed on court. Spectators are requested to place phone on vibrate.

No flash photography when the ball is in play.

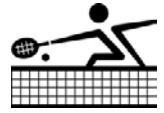


Tie Break

7 Point Set Tie Break

10 Point Match Tie Break

- ♦ A 7 point tie-break is played when games are at:
 - ♦ Level 2: At 6 games all in a 1 No-Ad set match.
 - ♦ Level 3-5: At 4 games all in the first and/or second set in the best 2 of 3 short set match.
- ♦ A 10 point tie-break is played when sets are split in the best 2 of 3 short set match.
 - ♦ In lieu of 3rd set when the players have split sets.
- ♦ The first server in the set tie-break is the person next to receive in match rotation.
- ♦ The first server serves one (1) point from the Deuce (right) side. Servers always receive 2 attempts to get the serve in. (1st serve and 2nd serve) If a server tosses the ball, swings and misses the ball, it is counted as an attempt. If the server tosses the ball and lets the ball drop without swinging, the server shall repeat that attempt.
- ♦ After the first point, the servers shall serve two points, beginning on the Ad (left) side and then the deuce side.
- ♦ When the score equals 6 or a multiple of 6 (12, 18, 24, etc.) the players change ends but the server shall serve from the deuce court after the change.
- ♦ In a 7 point tie break for the set, the tie-break is won when a player attains 7 points with a margin of two points. (7-5) Play continues until one player achieves the two point lead.
- ♦ In a 10 point tie break for the match, the tie-break is won when a player attains 10 points with a margin of two points (10-8). Play continues until one player achieves the two point lead. There will be a 3 minute rest period between end of second set and the start of the 10 pt. match tie-break. Coaching is permitted during rest period.
- ♦ After a tie break for a set, the score shall be reported as 5-4.
- ♦ After the Match tie break, the score for the deciding 3rd set shall be recorded as 1.
- ♦ There is NO COACHING during the tie-break.

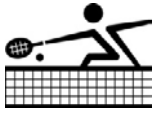


Unified Sports[®] Rules

There are few differences in the rules for Unified Sports doubles competition as stipulated in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and modifications outlined in the rules book. The additions are highlighted below.

- ♦ Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one athlete and one partner.
- ♦ Each team shall determine its own order of service and selection of courts (ad or deuce).
- ♦ When the score is 40 -40 (deuce), the server must serve to their opposition counterpart and to the court the counterpart has been playing, (Athlete serves to athlete and partner serves to partner). The server serves from either the ad or deuce side, depending on the part of the court the receiver has been playing.

The selection of athletes and partners of similar age and ability is essential for Unified Sports doubles competition. Though rule modifications have been implemented to minimize differences between athletes and partners, inappropriate competition experiences and a higher risk of injury result from teams where athletes and partners are poorly matched.



Traveling to Tournaments

Traveling to tournaments with athletes takes advanced planning, in order to insure a rewarding experience.

Preparations

- ♦ Fill out all registration forms in a timely manner
- ♦ Complete the rating form on each athlete.
- ♦ Check for updated medical applications for each athlete.
- ♦ All Unified Partners need an up-to-date Class A form, protective behaviors and unified partner form.
- ♦ All assistant coaches must have a current Class A, and protective behaviors form.
- ♦ Arrange for
 1. Uniforms: Doubles teams should have matching uniforms
 2. Packing lists (if traveling by commercial airlines, check airport security requirements)
 - ♦ Include general wear, toiletries, sleepwear, electronics if permitted, shoes, outerwear,
 3. Equipment: Racquets, shoes, Racquet bag, empty refillable water bottle, towel, hat, sunscreen
 4. Medications: List of prescribed and over the counter meds, dosage and schedule
 5. Transportation: Car, Bus, Airplane, to airport and home.
 6. Housing: If housing is not provided, book early.
 7. Meals: Include meals on travel days.
 8. Departure/arrival time.
 9. Emergency contact numbers: Include tournament directors contact number.
 10. Souvenir monies
- ♦ Communicate all arrangements with all parents/guardians.
- ♦ Discuss plans with athletes, go over travel and tournament expectations and consequences.
- ♦ Arrange downtime activities and sightseeing opportunities.

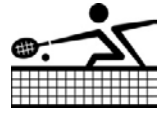
Coaches Racquet Bag

- ♦ Copy of medical applications
- ♦ A list of all athletes' meds and schedule.
- ♦ A list of over the counter meds or vitamins an athlete uses.
- ♦ Tournament schedule, rain plan and contact numbers
- ♦ Medical kit
- ♦ Extra grip tape, strings, racquet
- ♦ 3-5 Practice balls
- ♦ Rule book

Tournament Venue

- ♦ Arrange practice time.
- ♦ Secure additional practice balls.

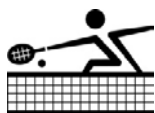
Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide Tournaments



-
- ♦ Attend coaches meeting
 - ♦ Attain athlete match check-in procedure.
 - ♦ Obtain water for athletes to take on court.
 - ♦ Sit on court during athletes match.
 - ♦ Coach on changeovers.

On court Coaching- during changeovers only

- ♦ Speak with positive tones and body language
- ♦ Encourage athletes
- ♦ Look for opponents weaknesses
- ♦ Help athletes with strategy
- ♦ Keep mindful of the score.
- ♦ Politely discuss any score discrepancies with the official



Tennis Protocol

Coaches and athletes should refer to the National Governing Body Code of Conduct in tennis for their respective country. An excellent resource in the United States is the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Code of Conduct, which may be found in the USTA publication *Friend at Court*. General conduct may include the following:

- ♦ Courtesy is expected. Tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy.
- ♦ Players make calls on their own side of the net. A player calls all shots landing on or aimed at the player's side of the net.
- ♦ Single players should not talk while ball is in play. Doubles partners may not talk while ball is moving toward their opponent's court.
- ♦ A ball touching any part of the line is good.
- ♦ A player should not enlist the aid of a spectator in making a call.
- ♦ When a ball from an adjacent court enters the playing area, any player may call a let, as soon as the player becomes aware of the ball.
- ♦ The server shall announce the game score before the first point of the game and the point score before each subsequent point of the game.
- ♦ Athletes and coaches need to be aware of disruptive noises on and off the court.
- ♦ Be respectful to matches in play. Outside spectators should not be on the court.
- ♦ Cell phones should be off or on vibrate when on court.

Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below are highlighted a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to athletes. Coaches should lead by example.

Tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy from all participants. Make tennis a fun game by praising your opponent's good shots and by not exhibiting the following behaviours as noted in the *USTA Friend at Court*.

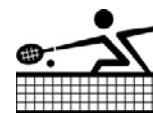
- ♦ Making loud noises after points.
- ♦ Complaining about shots, like lobs and drops shots.
- ♦ Embarrassing a weak opponent by being overly gracious or condescending.
- ♦ Losing your temper, using foul language, throwing your racquet or slamming a ball in anger.
- ♦ Sulking when you are losing.

Competitive Effort

- ♦ Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- ♦ Practice with the same intensity as you would perform in competition.
- ♦ Always finish the event. Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- ♦ Always comply with the rules.
- ♦ Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- ♦ Respect the decision of officials at all times.



Expectations of Coaches

1. Always set a good example for participants and fans to follow.
2. Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics a top priority.
3. Respect the judgment of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
4. Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
5. Shake hands with officials and the opposing coach in public.
6. Develop and enforce penalties for participants who do not abide by the highest sportsmanship standards.

Expectations of Athletes and Partners in Unified Sports

1. Treat teammates with respect.
2. Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
3. Treat opponents with respect. Shake hands prior to and after contests.
4. Respect the judgment of officials, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
5. Cooperate with officials, coaches or directors and fellow participants to conduct a fair contest.
6. Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if other athletes demonstrate poor behavior.
7. Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
8. Define winning as doing your personal best.
9. Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.

Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition. The role of the Competition Management Team is to enforce the rules. As coach, your duty to your athletes is to protest an action or event that violates the Official Tennis Rules. Protests should be filed to correct a specific rules violation. Making a protest is a serious matter that impacts the competition schedule. Check with the Competition Management Team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.



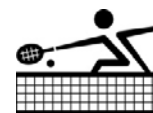
***Special
Olympics***

TENNIS QUICK START GUIDE

Section 4: Appendix

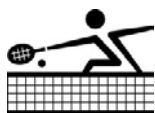
Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

Tennis Glossary



Tennis Glossary

Term	Definition
Ace	Ball served so well that the opponent fails to touch it with his/her racquet.
Ad	Short for advantage in traditional scoring. It is the first point scored after deuce. Not used in the no-ad scoring system used for Special Olympics tennis competition.
Ad Court	Left service court.
Alley	The area between the singles sideline and the doubles sideline.
Approach	The shot hit from mid-court range that allows the player to come to the net to volley.
ATP	Association of Tennis Professionals; the organization for men's professional tennis.
Backcourt	Area between the service line and the baseline.
Backhand	The stroke that is used to return balls hit on the left side of a right-handed player and right side of a left-handed player. It can be hit with one or two hands. Note: Athletes should learn to hit a proper backhand not a right-handed forehand and a left-handed one.
Center Strap	Strap in the center of the net, anchored to the ground to hold the net secure.
Cross Court Shot	A shot in which the ball travels diagonally across the net from one corner to the other.
Deuce	A score of 40-40 in traditional scoring. Not used in the no-ad scoring system used for Special Olympics tennis competition.
Deuce Court	The right court, so called because the deuce point is played on that side.
Double Fault	The server loses the point if both of the two services attempts fail to cross the net and land in the appropriate service box.
Doubles	A match played by teams of two players. The court is extended to the doubles sidelines (after the serve).
Down the Line	A ball hit in a straight line near the sideline.
Draw	Procedure established to determine the position of each player in a tournament.
Drop shot	A touch shot that is hit softly over the net to force the opponent to run forward.
Etiquette	Rules of behavior on the tennis court.
Fault	A served ball that does not fall into the service box or goes into the net.
Fifteen	First point won by a player.
Foot Fault	An illegal serve caused by the server stepping on or over the baseline before hitting the ball.
Forehand	The stroke used to return balls hit to the right side of a right-handed player or the left side of a left-handed player.
Forty	Player's score after winning three points.
Game	The part of a set that is completed when one player or team wins four points. In no-ad tennis the scoring is 1, 2, 3, "game."
Good	A ball that lands inside the court or on the line forming the boundary of the court.



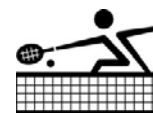
Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

Tennis Glossary

Term	Definition
Grip	Bottom part of the racquet that is used to grasp the racquet.
Groundstrokes	Strokes played after the ball has bounced. Forehands and backhands are called groundstrokes.
Half Volley	Ball hit immediately following the bounce of the ball on the court.
In	A ball which lands within the boundaries of the court. Balls that hit any portion of the line are good in tennis.
ITF	International Tennis Federation.
Let	A point replayed because of interference; such as a ball rolling onto the court during play. This point would be replayed with two serves.
Let Serve	A serve that hits the top of the net and lands in the appropriate service box is replayed.
Lob	A stroke hit high in the air with the intent of being hit over a net playing opponent.
Love	A score of zero.
Match	A Special Olympics tennis match consists of one no-ad set. Traditional tennis matches are best 2 out of 3, or best 3 out of 5 sets.
Mixed Doubles	Doubles play in which a male and female team up to oppose another male and female team.
Net	The 3-foot barrier which divides the two sides of the court. To “play the net” means to attack your opponent by positioning yourself close to the net and hitting the ball before it bounces.
No-ad Scoring	The scoring system used in Special Olympics tennis in which the first player to win 4 points wins the game. If the point score reaches 3-3, the next point decides the game. The receiver has the choice of sides at 3-3.
Out	A ball is “out” if it lands outside of the boundaries of the court.
Overhead	An aggressive stroke played normally at the net when the ball is above the head.
Point	The smallest unit of score, awarded to a player when the opponent does not return a ball in play.
Racquet	An implement used to strike the tennis ball.
Rally	A series of good shots exchanged between players. Also a term used for the type of practice where players intentionally hit balls back and forth to each other.
Receiver	The player who receives the service.
Referee	The official in charge of a tournament.
Serve	Short for service. It is the stroke used to put the ball into play. A server gets two chances to put the ball in play diagonally into the service box. The serve must be struck from a tossed ball (not off of a bounced ball).
Server	Player who serves the ball.
Service Box	Court area where a serve should be played. Deuce court or Advantage court.

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

Tennis Glossary



Term	Definition
Set	The scoring unit that is awarded to the player or team that has won 6 games by a margin of at least 2 games. Examples: 6-2, 6-4 or 7-5. If the game score reaches 6-6 a tie-breaker is played.
Singles	A match played by two players.
Tie-break – 7 point Match Tie-break – 10 point	A system used to decide a set when the score is 4 – all (4-4) or 6-all (6-6). A system used to decide the match in lieu of a 3 rd set in the best of 2 of 3 set match. When 1 st 2 sets are split.
Thirty	Score which indicates a player has won 2 points.
Umpire	The person who officiates at a match.
Unified Sports Doubles	A Special Olympics event played with a doubles team, consisting of a Special Olympics tennis player and a peer tennis partner. Ideally, teammates would be of similar ages and ability levels.
Volley	A stroke made by hitting a ball before it has touched the ground. Normally done inside the service line.
WTA	Women’s Tennis Association; the organization for women’s professional tennis.