



abilities tennis
association of
north carolina

Coaches Curriculum

LESSON 1 – FOREHAND GROUNDSTROKE

1.1. CIRCLE TIME: Always use this time to check in with all the athletes and give them a chance to share something about their week, or ask a simple question like, “What is your favorite animal?” Week after week this will allow the community to build. You can also focus on a Character Trait like loyalty, responsibility, good sportsmanship, etc.

1.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT of the Day – Responsibility: What does it mean to be responsible? How have you shown responsibility? Some athletes may need help answering or this may not be appropriate for some groups.

1.3. WARM-UP: Athletes can lead this once they become comfortable with the stretches.

- Walk or run in place.
- Swing arms in a semicircle.
- Walk or run around court perimeter and/or walk sideways along court lines.
- Do Jumping Jacks.
- Do hand-resistance exercises.
- Do arm extensions: arm circles, Row the Boat, and weightlifting motion.
- Do ankle rotations, knee hugs, and side to side.

1.4. BALL SKILLS – NO RACQUET – BEGINNERS:

- Beginners: each athlete has a ball and tosses the ball in the air and catches it (eye-hand-coordination). Progression: Toss higher. Progression: clap in between tosses. Next progression: walk and toss at the same time.
- Beginners: Now that we have tossed a bit independently, toss with a partner. Stand close at first with hands out front. Progression: stand further away. Progression: stand even further away, but have the athlete hold a cone and catch with the cone.
- Beginners: The athlete holds a cone. The volunteer bounces a ball toward the athlete, who has to catch the ball in the cone within one bounce. Progression: step further away and make the distance the greater. Next progression: have the athlete hold the racquet and catch the ball between their hand and the strings.

1.5. RACQUET SKILLS – BEGINNERS:

- Have each athlete put a ball on the strings and move to the net, holding ball on the strings. Regression: Athlete can use a finger to hold the ball in place. Fun game: Do this as a race with all athletes running to net while keeping ball on strings.
- Have each athlete put a ball on the ground and have them move the ball around the court with the racquet (Walk the dog). Progression: add cones and have the athlete move the ball between the cones.
- Pair one athlete with another athlete or volunteer, and have them stand about 20 feet apart. Put two cones between the two participants and separate the cones as if they are tennis net posts. The two participants roll the ball back and forth between the cones. Progression: have the players stand further apart and/or put the cones closer together.

1.6. RACQUET SKILLS – INTERMEDIATE:

- Place a few baskets of balls on the baseline. Each athlete grabs a ball and taps the ball up, let it bounce once, then taps again. Variation: tap-down (dribble) to the net. Progression: athletes do tap-ups to the net, and once they are inside the service line, they can hit the ball over the net. Return to the baseline and grab another ball to repeat the drill. Fun game: add cones to the other side of the

net, and if the athlete hits the cone with their ball, they get to use the hopper on the next ball pick up.

- Intermediate: Two partners stand across the net from each other—each at the service line—each with a racquet. Athletes on one side of the net have ball hoppers. Athletes grab a ball from the hopper and tap it over the net, and their partner catches it with their hand and racquet. Regression: catcher uses a cone instead of a racquet. Progression: stand further away from each other.

1.7. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – FOREHAND GROUND STROKE:

- A ground stroke is a stroke—either a forehand or backhand—used to return a ball after one bounce.
- Begin by asking the athlete to shake hands with the racquet; this will be their grip. To find a forehand grip, hold the racquet in your non-dominant hand, place the palm of your dominant hand on the strings, and track your hand down the racquet to the grip (shake hands with the grip).
- Introduce the forehand ground stroke: Have the athlete stand behind the service line. If right-handed, position your left leg out front on the line and hold the racquet straight out front of your body with the dominate hand. Preferably, have the athletes line up on the lines that run through the court: a doubles line, a singles line, and the center line. Line the racquet up with the line (this is a good visual). Have a volunteer drop a ball on the line in front of the racquet and have the athlete swing along the line to hit the ball. Arm stays straight. Can go straight up in the air (ie. No follow-through yet). Progression: Add a follow-through. Progression: stand further back in the court. Fun Game: Add cones along the lines on the opposite side of the net. If the athlete hits a cone, they can use the hopper on next pick-up.

1.8. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- Alley Rally. Have athletes stand inside the doubles alleys and tap the ball up 10 times, bouncing after each tap, but staying in the alley. Once the athlete gets to 10, then partner up with a buddy and do the same tap ups but stand on opposite sides of the net, tapping over the net.

1.9. ADDITIONAL GAMES AND DRILLS: (see list of games and descriptions at the end of the curriculum)

- Add Inchworm.
- Drop-Hit-Catch: Emphasize the importance of a gentle swing. Set a goal for successful Drop-Hit-Catch. Have partners switch roles.
- Alley Rally

1.10. WARM-DOWN AND STATIC STRETCHING:

- Repeat warm down as done in the beginning and stretches the class enjoys most (if time allows).
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”

LESSON 2 – BACKHAND GROUND STROKE

2.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is your favorite color?

2.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Effort: what does effort mean to you? How can you show good effort today?

2.3. WARM-UP: Ask if anyone is willing to step into the middle of the circle and share their favorite stretch.

- Try one new activity, such as moving side to side
- Arm circles
- Neck circles
- Toe touches
- Lunges

2.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING (Let a student lead this segment):

- Squats

- Jumping jacks
- Push-ups

2.5. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – BACKHAND GROUND STROKE:

- Introduce the backhand ground stroke: Have athlete behind service line. If right-handed, have right leg out front on the line and both hands on grip with racquet straight out front of body, head low, strings facing the net. Preferably, have athletes line up on the lines that run through the court: i.e. a doubles line, a singles line, the center line. Line the racquet up with the line (a helpful visual). Have a volunteer drop a ball on the line in front of the racquet and have the athlete swing along the line to hit the ball. Arms stay straight. Can go straight up in the air (ie. No follow-through yet).
- Progression: Add a follow-through. Progression: stand further back in the court. Progression: have athlete start with a unit turn....then drop the ball and have the athlete make contact out in front. Fun Game: Add cones along the lines on the opposite side of the net. If the athlete hits a cone, they can use the hopper on next pick-up.

2.6. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- Do relay races to encourage good footwork and cooperation.
- Do “bumping drills” to reemphasize “low to high” motion.
- Do a backhand shadow drill.
- Backhand Drop-Hit-Catch: Same as the drill used in the forehand, except the players hit a backhand.
- Backhand Toss-Hit-Catch: Gradually increase the distance between the tosser and the hitter, eventually ending with the tosser throwing the ball over the net with the athlete on the baseline.
- “Mini-Tennis”: Only the short part of the court is utilized during this drill. The service line is used in place of the baseline. All other standard rules of tennis apply. Alleys are out. The ball is put into play with an underhand serve; servers are given either one or two serve chances. All shots must be allowed to bounce before they are returned.

2.7. WARM-DOWN AND STATIC STRETCHING:

- Repeat warm-down exercises as done at the beginning of the class and stretches the class enjoys most.
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”.

LESSON 3 – FOREHAND VOLLEY

3.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is the best thing that happened this week?

3.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Listen: How can you show someone you are listening? We can show we are listening by using our eyes, mouths, ears and body.

3.3. WARM-UP: Let the athletes share their favorite stretches in circle time.

3.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING:

- Jumping jacks
- Monster walk
- Sit-ups
- Lunges
- Cross the midline (ball from one hand to the opposite hand)

3.4. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – FOREHAND VOLLEY:

- A volley is any shot hit before the ball bounces (except the serve), either forehand or backhand.
- Key Cues: tap, bump, push, block, bunt. From the opposite side of the net, toss balls gently (underhand) to players taking them through the following progressions: • Catch the ball with the dominant hand, reaching outward with fingers up. Hold the racquet like a Ping Pong paddle (hand at the top of the throat) and tap tossed ball on strings. Keep racquet head high, in front of the body, in a vertical position. Turn non-dominant shoulder to the net. Make contact with the ball in the air with a short, punch-like stroke, shifting body weight forward. Move the hand to the center of the

racquet throat. Move the hand to the grip.

3.5. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- Practice throw and catch and bounce and catch, in a circle. Beanie Babies and beanbags can be substituted for balls.
- Do Ball Roll on Racquet, Walk the Dog, and Downs.
- Do a Shadow Drill for the volley.
- Toss-Volley-Catch—Arrange players in pairs. One player tosses and catches, while the other one volleys. Set a goal for successful Toss-Volley-Catch (e.g., five consecutive cycles without the ball hitting the ground). Have partners switch roles.
- Set up cones at the corners of the service lines and ask athletes to try to hit the cones. They get 5 points for hitting a cone, 2 points for hitting it past the service line and 1 point for in the service box. Play to 10 points.

3.6. WARM-DOWN AND STATIC STRETCHING (OPTIONAL):

- Repeat warm-down exercises as done at the beginning of the class and stretches the class enjoys most.
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”.

LESSON 4 – BACKHAND VOLLEY

4.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is your favorite food?

4.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Respect: What does respect mean to you? Who are some of the people you respect?

4.3. WARM-UP – Have students find a partner and do “hand resistance” to strengthen the upper body, arm circles, cross one arm over chest with other arm push the elbow toward the body, switch arms.

4.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING:

- Jog around the courts 2x.
- Monster walk to the net to high five buddy.
- Skip to the net to high five buddy.

4.5. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – BACKHAND VOLLEY:

- A volley is any shot hit before the ball bounces (except the serve), either forehand or backhand. Key cues: tap, bump, push, block, bunt. Review previous lesson with soft feeds.
- Introduce the backhand volley: Demonstrate backhand grip by making a “V” formed between the thumb and forefinger of the dominant hand; should place on the side of the grip when the racquet is perpendicular to the ground, index knuckle up. For a two-handed grip, place hands together on the handle with the non-dominant hand above the dominant hand.
- *Set up cones at the corners of the service line and ask athletes to try to hit the cones. They get 5 points for hitting a cone, 2 points for hitting it past the service line and 1 point for in the service box. Play to 10 points.

4.6. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- Toss-Volley-Catch: Arrange players in pairs. One player tosses the ball, while the other volleys. Set a goal for successful Toss-Volley-Catch. Have players switch roles.
- Do relay races using Ball Roll on Racquet and Walk the Dog.
- Do the Sandwich Race to encourage conversation and cooperation.

4.7. WARM-UP AND STATIC STRETCHING:

- Repeat warm down as done in the beginning and stretches the class enjoys most. • Repeat warm-down exercises as done at the beginning of the class and stretches the class enjoys most.
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”.

LESSON 5 – THE SERVE

5.1. CIRCLE TIME:

5.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Sportsmanship: What does sportsmanship mean? What are ways you can show sportsmanship today?

5.3. WARM-UP: Do repetitive arm extensions and overhand throwing motions to prepare for the serve motion.

5.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING:

- Jumping jacks
- Sit ups
- Butt kicks
- High knees

5.5. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – THE SERVE:

- A serve is the stroke used to start a point.
- Overhand Throw: Have partners throw to each other with an overhand motion to prepare for serve motion.
- Toss Practice: Without their racquets, have the players practice tossing the ball. Players should hold the ball in their non-dominant hand like an “ice cream cone”. The toss should be performed with a stiff wrist and thrown approximately 4 feet above the thrower’s head and out slightly in front of the player’s body. Players should try to catch the ball with their tossing hand extended.
- Toss and Catch: Have the players toss the ball with their non-dominant hand in a ball-striking position. Have them reach and catch the ball with their non-dominant hand. For players who cannot coordinate the “toss and catch,” have the instructor or volunteer provide the toss.
- Toss and Touch: Have the players face a fence or wall. Using a forehand grip and with their racquets in their dominant hand, have them position their racquets behind their shoulder with their arm bent like a quarterback preparing to pass. Have players toss a ball up over their heads and slightly in front of their bodies and reach up with their racquets to gently touch the ball. The racquet should not proceed past the contact point (which is the fence or wall). Teaching Tips: Have the players stand close enough to the fence so they can hold the tossed ball against the fence with racquet extended. Players unable to toss the ball upward with their non-dominant hand can flip the ball up, off strings, with the dominant hand to create the toss. Toss, Touch, and Follow-Through: Proceed as in the previous step, but add a follow-through after contact. A follow-through is simply the racquet finishing across the player’s body with the head of the racquet sweeping past the knee. The ball should be tossed up high slightly in front of the body and the racquet needs to be raised high overhead so that the ball is hit at the height of the toss. If needed, the instructor or volunteer can provide the toss to start.
- Wind-up, Toss, Touch, and Follow-Through: Players add a wind-up (i.e., overhand throw motion) to the “Toss, Touch, and Follow-Through” progression.
- Have the players serve from half court. Have the players serve from three-quarters court.
- Have the players serve from full court if they can succeed from that distance. Stand mid-way between the center line and the singles line, behind the mid-court line, knees slightly bent, body loose, and non-dominant shoulder turned toward the net. (More skilled players can move back directly behind the baseline).

5.6. SERVE PRACTICE – BEGINNERS:

- Have the athletes stand at the service line, with their non-dominant foot forwards. Have them hold the racquet at about 90 degrees on front of them, with their elbows out front. They should be able to see through the backs of their strings. Have them keep their chin and eyes up. Toss the ball up high (as per the practice at the fence or wall) and their racquets move upward in an arc like a rainbow.
- Teaching tips: We want the athletes to get a feel for hitting up on the ball to clear that net. Have them keep their heads and their chins up.
- Progression: If the athletes hits the ball over from the service line, they can move back to the

blended line at the baseline. If the serve doesn't go over from there, then move back up.

5.7. TOSS PRACTICE:

- Have a ball in the non-dominant hand, and a cone in the racquet hand.
- Toss ball high and keep both arms straight up.
- Try to catch the ball in the cone.

5.8. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- Play Anything Goes. (we played at the training)
- Play "Tennis Baseball."
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell "tennis".

LESSON 6: REVIEW

6.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is your favorite stroke?

6.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Teamwork: What does it mean to be a team player? What are ways that you can be a good teammate?

6.3. WARM-UPS: Have athletes take turns sharing their favorite stretches.

6.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING:

- Have players use court lines to do a "fast walk."
- Do side-to-side exercises to prepare for better footwork.

6.5. GAMES AND DRILLS:

- In this drill, start by tossing the athlete a ball that doesn't require them to move too much. On the next toss, throw it a bit shorter, which forces them to move toward the ball and hit their shot. After each shot, the athlete should return to the service line. Next, you will toss a ball that forces the athlete to move back in order to hit the ball. During this drill, stress the importance of footwork. The next progression will be to feed the ball without telling the athlete if it will be a forehand or backhand.
- Play Hot Potato: Use half the court, divided vertically down the middle. Position two players on each side of the net, one at the net and one at the baseline. The object is for the two baseline players to lob the ball over the two net players. If a net player is able to hit the ball, the baseline player who hit the unsuccessful lob will replace the net player who successfully hit the ball.
- Yellow and Green Ball Games – King/Queen of the Court: Place one athlete on one side of the net. Make a line of athletes on the other side of the net. Feed the ball to this group. First one in line plays the point out. If he wins one point, or two points, or two out of three points (coach makes the rules) athlete takes the king/queen position.
- Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell "tennis".

LESSON 7 – INTRODUCE SCORING

7.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is something funny that happened this week?

7.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: Honesty – What does it mean to be honest? How can I be honest on the tennis court?

7.3. WARM-UPS: Again, let the athletes lead this session.

- Do side-to-side stepping exercises to prepare for better footwork.
- Cross the mid-line by passing the ball from one hand to the other hand.

7.4. DYNAMIC STRETCHING: Have players use court lines to do a "fast walk" following the lines. Use this time to teach the name of the lines.

7.5. RACQUET DRILLS:

- Have buddy roll the ball to the athlete and the athlete traps the ball on the ground with the

racquet and then rolls back with the racquet head. Progression will be to move further apart.

- Warm up forehands, backhands, volleys and serves with your buddy. Spend 2-3 minutes feeding for each stroke and then practicing the serve.

7.6. CONVENTIONAL SCORING: Abilities Tennis follows the scoring system that Special Olympics follows. Sets are 2 out of 3 with the third set being a 7-point tiebreak. Sets are the first to four games with no-ad scoring. If the score is three all, then a 7-point tiebreak is played. A volunteer should play unified doubles with an athlete and coach them through the scoring process. It is not going to be feasible for some athletes to keep score, but for those who can, we want to begin teaching so they are prepared for tournament play. 0 points = Love 1 point = 15 2 points = 30 3 points = 40 4 points = Game The winner of the first point gets “15.” The loser gets “0,” which in tennis is called “love.” Always say the server’s score first. If the server wins the first point, the score is “15-love.” If the server loses the first point, the score is “love-15.” If a player wins two points, he or she gets “30.” And so on. If the score reaches 40-40, it is called “deuce.” Teach how to spin the racquet to determine who scores. Also, teach the athletes to shake hands at the end of the match. See the attached scoring sheet used at tournaments, ScoreSheet.pdf (atanc.org).

If a player’s skill level is not conducive to playing, there is a skills court which allows the beginner to also compete. See the attached scoring sheet, SkillsWorksheet.pdf (atanc.org).

Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”.

LESSON 8:

8.1. CIRCLE TIME: What is your favorite thing about tennis clinics?

8.2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT – Leadership: What does it mean to be a leader? How can I be a leader on the court?

8.3. WARM UPS:

- Lunges
- Arm circles
- Jumping jacks
- Elbow bent behind head and press down with opposite hand, cross the midline drill
- Warm up forehands, backhands, volleys and serves with your buddy. Spend 2-3 minutes feeding for each stroke.

Today is the last clinic! Have fun with a unified doubles round-robin. The athletes will continue practicing keeping score with their partner. Volunteers will partner with the athletes to play on the appropriate court. They will play 4 game sets with no-ad scoring. At 3-3, a 7-point time break will take place. Play 2 out of 3 sets. Third set is also a 7-point tie break. This is the way Special Olympics scores for fall games and Abilities Tennis at all seven tournaments.

For those who cannot play a match, have a skills court and used the scoring sheet from last week. Racquets stacked on each other with balls on top racquet – toss in the air together as you all yell “tennis”.

Sample Games

The following is a list of games and drills that can be used to develop or improve any area of a player’s tennis game:

Alley Game

This game stresses control and placement because each ball struck must land within the 4 1/2-inch wide alley. A racquet is placed on the court to denote the service line. Players work as partners. There can be two groups working on the same court, one in each alley. Player A collects 10 balls and stands at the baseline. Player B’s job is to: (1) catch the 10 balls on one bounce and place them

in a pile; (2) act as a target for Player A; and (3) call the lines for Player A. Player A puts the ball in play with a forehand stroke, trying for accuracy and depth. Points are scored as follows: hit into alley between net and racquet=1 point; hit into alley and hit racquet=2 points; hit into alley between racquet and baseline=3 points. Hitting the ball elsewhere results in no points.

Alley Rally

This game is played in pairs and requires two racquets and three balls. Place two balls approximately 4-feet apart on the court. Each student stands next to a ball and faces his or her partner. The third ball is put into play gently with a bounce-hit. The object is to hit the partner's ball. 27 Key cues: "bump," "tap," or "just touch" the ball. Rules: No "spiking" or hitting down. The first shot (serve) does not count.

Approach Drill

This drill demonstrates the advantage of attacking the net. Players line up on opposite baselines and rally to one another. They must hit the ball between the service line and baseline. If the ball does not land that deep, the other player charges the net and stays there for the rest of the point.

Around the World

Players line up on opposite sides of the net. The first player puts the ball into play and runs to the opposite end of the court via the right side. Each subsequent person hits one shot and runs to the opposite end of the court. The team leader can call out shots for use: lobs, forehands, mixture, etc. This drill can be cooperative or competitive.

Ball-on-Racquet Relay

Divide players into two teams (Team A and Team B). Have Team A line up on one side of the net while Team B lines up on the opposite side. Have the first person in line on Team A approach the net, balancing the ball in the center of the racquet. The first person in line on Team B also approaches the net. The drill's object is for players to exchange balls at the net without it falling from their racquets. If the ball hits the ground, a miss is recorded. The player receiving the ball must relay it back to his line. Have players repeat the process. When players complete their tasks, the team sits down on the court. The team with the least number of misses wins. Caterpillar Have teams of four students stand side by side in a row. As soon as one has passed the ball to his or her teammate's racquet, he or she goes to the end of the line. See which team can complete a full turn. The game can become competitive in the form of a relay race. Place the first member of each team on a starting line. The object is to be the first team to arrive at a designated finish line in caterpillar fashion without dropping the ball. When the ball is dropped, the team must return to the starting line where the ball is put back into play. This game could also be lengthened by having teams reach a given point and then return to the starting line in caterpillar fashion.

Dribble Relay

Have each player dribble a ball with his or her racquet while running to a specified spot. Upon reaching the marked spot, he or she must turn around and run back to the relay's starting point while carrying the ball. Line up an equal number of players on both sides of the court. Have each team dribble the perimeter of one side of the court. Race teams against each other or try to beat the clock.

28 Drop and Hit

Extend the center service line to the baselines by using either a length of rope or drawing a chalk line. Have players concentrate on dropping and hitting the ball to one of the four designated target areas. Players must hit a good shot to each area before aiming at a different target. Both forehands and backhands are executed this way. A variation has players saying "yes" before they look up, if they think their shot hit a target. This encourages them to keep their heads down while executing the shot. Players waiting to hit can call out the target number where they think the ball will land.

Drop-Hit-Catch

Arrange players into pairs. Assign one player the role of “hitter” and the other the role of “catcher.” Have catchers stand against a fence. Have hitters stand about 15 to 20 feet away from the catcher. The hitter then drops the ball and gently hits it to the catcher. Key words: “bump,” “tap,” and “bunt.” Make the exercise into a game and see who can get 10 successful catches first. Have partners switch roles after five consecutive catches.

Dungeons or Escape

The instructor or one team player feeds the ball designating which stroke to use (e. g., forehand or backhand ground stroke or forehand volleys) to a single file line of participants. Each player gets one chance to hit a good shot over the net and in bounds. Should someone miss, they will go over to the other side of the net with the feeder where they must catch a ball either in the air or on the bounce to return to the line. The last one to miss is the winner.

Green Light, Red Light

Have players line up on the baseline with a ball resting on their racquets. Team leaders should stand at the net. When the team leader calls “green light,” players move forward as quickly as they can while keeping the ball balanced on their racquets. When the leader calls “red light,” players must stop with the ball resting on their racquet’s face. Players who drop the ball while moving or standing must start again from the baseline.

King or Queen of the Court

This drill requires four to six players on the court. One king or queen stands on one side of the court, while three to five challengers line up on the opposite side. The first challenger in line rallies with the king or queen. If the king or queen wins the rally, he or she stays to face the next challenger. The challenger who lost the point sprints to the net and back to the end of the challenger’s line. The next challenger then rallies with the king or queen. If the challenger wins the rally, he or she sprints to the opposite side of the net and replaces the king or queen. The dethroned king or queen sprints to the opposite side of the net and becomes a challenger at the back of the challenger’s line. Little Game of Tennis Have partners stand on opposite sides of the net in the service court area where they will rally gently to each other. The ball must bounce inside the service box area. See which players can sustain a rally longest. Tell players to hit the ball as gently as possible. Have them shoot for a goal of 10, 15, or 20 consecutive hits over the net. Keep score. One variation of the drill is to have each player bounce the ball on his or her racquet three times and to hit the ball over the net on the third bounce. Put five players on each side of net and have them alternate.

Mini-Tennis

Only the short part of the court is utilized during this drill. The service line is used in place of the baseline. All other standard rules of tennis apply. Alleys are out. The ball is put into play with an underhand serve; servers are given either one or two serve chances. All shots must be allowed to bounce before they are returned. Pass the Ball Relay Have teams line up single file. Have players that are first in line stand with a single ball balanced on their racquets. When the team leader calls “go,” the ball is passed from racquet to racquet until it reaches the last person in line. The contest can end there or the last person in line can run to the beginning of the line and continue the relay. If this variation is used, have students pass the ball until the original starter returns to the front of the line.

Pattern Roll

Have players roll the ball along specified lines on the playing surface or around various obstacles. Have players grip the racquets with their palms forward (forehand) and with the back of their hand pointing toward the ball (backhand). Later, have the students roll the ball along the top of a bench to encourage a more tennis-like grip.

Racquet Balance

Have players balance a ball on their racquet. The racquet should be held steady so that the ball does not move. **Racquet Roll** Have the players roll the ball around their racquet face. **Racquet Quickness Drill** Have players pair with a partner and stand in two lines so that they face each other. Have each player balance a racquet on the ground (racquet head down while holding the grip). When you yell “go,” players run to catch their partner’s racquet before it hits the ground. Gradually increase the distance between players.

Racquet Quickness

Circle Players stand in a circle and perform the “Racquet Quickness Drill,” with one exception: they must run to the left on the leader’s command. Variation: Run counterclockwise, or leaders can call “left” or “right” to see how well players follow directions.

30 Simon Says

If a team leader calls, “Simon says swing a forehand,” players should respond by swinging a forehand. If a team leader calls, “Swing a forehand,” players should stand still because the leader’s command was not prefaced with “Simon says.” Players following a command not preceded by “Simon says” are out of the game.

Target Hitting

Set up targets around one side of the court. Two teams will compete against each other. Each team member gets two balls. Beginning at half-court and progressing to full-court, each youngster drops a ball, hits it after it bounces so that it goes over the net, bounces once, and lands in one of the boxes. Variation: Have kids hit only forehands or only backhands or one of each. If they get really good, move the targets farther from the net.

Team Control Contest

Teams consist of three players: a tosser, a hitter, and a catcher. The tosser is positioned outside the court and near the net post. He or she tosses the ball to the hitter, who attempts to hit a controlled shot that the third player must catch from a sitting position. After a predetermined number of successful hit and catch sequences, players rotate positions. The first team finishing the cycle wins. Variations might allow the catcher to move as long as one foot is behind the service line. Other restrictions might have the catcher using two hands or only his right or left hand.

Team Singles

Use all available courts. On each court have an equal number of students face each other from behind the baseline. Players must line up single file against the back fence. In the absence of a wall or fence, line players up so that they can stop errant shots. The first person in line will initiate a game of tennis. Use the standard scoring method (Love-15-30-40-Game). Have two new players jump in after every point. Participants not involved in play will keep score and catch errant balls.

Tennis “21”

Players return one ball from three-quarter court or half-court and then run to the net to hit an easy volley. Two points are awarded for a successfully returned ground stroke; one point is given for a successful volley. After hitting, the player retrieves the ball and goes to end of the line. Play until one or more players earn “21” points.

Tennis Baseball

Divide the team into two equal halves. Have one team at bat, while another fields from across the net. The pitcher throws the ball underhanded to the batter’s forehand or backhand. The batter tries to hit the ball across the net and into certain parts of the court that are designated as a single, double, triple, or home run. The fielding team then tries to hit the ball back to the batter. If the ball is returned

into the singles court to the batter, the batter must try to return the ball again. A hit is registered when the 31 fielding team cannot return a shot to the batter. The last shot hit by a batter counts as a single, double, triple, or home run. When court space is limited, this game can be played in a field or playground.

Tennis “Horse”

The first player in line calls out “forehand” or “backhand” and then chooses aloud which target he or she is aiming at. If successful, the next player in line must hit the same stroke to the same area. Players continue hitting the same stroke to the same target until someone misses. The player who misses the target gets a letter “H.” The next player in line picks a new shot. Players who get the five letters “H-O-R-S-E” are eliminated.

Tennis Sandwich

Four or more players make a sandwich by starting with one player holding out a racquet with a ball on it, and having another player put a racquet on top of that ball. Eventually, four racquets will be on either side of three or more balls. Players then attempt to move to the net and back as a unit without dropping a ball.

Tennis Volleyball

Divide the team into two equal halves. The server, standing at the baseline, hits the ball over the net. Once the ball lands in the appropriate half of the court, anyone on the opposite team may hit the ball to a teammate or directly over the net. The ball can be hit any number of times on one side on any number of bounces. The ball is dead when it begins to roll. No boundaries make this an interesting and exciting game. Points can be scored on or off serve. The first team to score 21 points wins.

Toss-Hit-Catch

Arrange players into pairs. The first exercise is a quick game of catch, with players catching the ball on one bounce. After the first exercise is mastered, one player should use a racquet to “bump” or “tap” the ball into the hands of his or her partner. Toss and Catch O’s toss underhand to X’s (on the service line) positioned directly across from them. X’s hit back to tosser. The tosser attempts to catch the hit. If the catch is successful, X moves back to designated area or line (3/4 court). If the second shot is caught, the hitter moves to a third location (full court or baseline). The first pair that gets three in a row wins. Variation: Each time three consecutive catches are made, team gets a point. Highest total wins. Underhand Throw to Target Place a hoola-hoop on the ground. One player is on each side of the circle. One player attempts to toss the ball underhand into the hoop while the other player tries to catch the ball on one bounce and send it back. Variation: One player remains on one side and bounces the ball back continuously to a line of players. Players rotate to the back of the line after their turn.