

WARRIOR TENNIS CURRICULUM



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OVERVIEW

USTA

The United States Tennis Association, Incorporated (USTA) is the national governing body of tennis in the United States, perhaps best known for the US Open. However, the not-for-profit organization is much more than a single Grand Slam tennis tournament: It creates and sustains grassroots tennis programs across the country and grows the game from local public parks to the highest levels of professional tennis.

USTA FOUNDATION

USTA Foundation; the national charitable foundation of the United States Tennis Association, supports military service members, veterans, and their families through education and the game of tennis. USTA Foundation has provided investment to support tennis programs on military installations, deployed units overseas with care packages containing educational material and portable tennis equipment, and in creating a curriculum for therapists to administer tennis programs at VA Hospitals and Warrior Transition Units across the country. USTA Foundation is committed to supporting military service members, veterans and their families by linking these communities with recreational tennis infrastructure and educational programming.

MILITARY OUTREACH

The USTA's Military Outreach has extended to recreational tennis therapy for wounded service members and veterans, including tennis in sports rehab programs that restore, remediate, and rehabilitate the level of functioning and independence in life activities. Tennis also provides a bridge to the community a service member or veteran calls home.

TENNIS CURRICULUM

The *Warrior Tennis Curriculum* is meant to guide anyone—with or without prior tennis and/or rehabilitation experience—desiring to use the lifetime sport of tennis as a vehicle for assisting military service members in acclimating to civilian life, reintegrating with their family and community, and/or improving their physical and mental health.

This curriculum is designed to provide non-tennis people with easily understandable knowledge and techniques to assist service members and veterans—of all skills and abilities—in playing tennis, and to help those who are not familiar with military service injuries to adapt tennis programs to this important group of people.

Much like many other tennis programs, the goal of the Warrior Tennis Curriculum is to implement the great game of tennis as a vehicle in attaining a healthy, happy life.

BASIC EQUIPMENT NEEDS

To ensure players enjoy both challenges and success, several different tennis balls should be implemented and interchanged, based on the players' ability and mobility. Also, portable nets can be used to divide the court to help counter limited mobility issues and to accommodate larger numbers in the program. Finally, the lines on a regulation court can be used to adapt the size of the tennis-playing area into 36-foot and 60-foot courts as illustrated below.

The following are some basic equipment needs for the program.

BALLS: Be sure to utilize the appropriate balls to help players achieve success and have fun.

Red—ideal for play on 36-foot courts, and for learning to hit all shots with full strokes and proper technique. Also good for indoor use and restricted space.

Orange—ideal for play on 60-foot courts; bounce at 50 percent of the speed of yellow balls.

Green—ideal for slowing down full-court play for maximum improvement; bounce at 75 percent of the speed of yellow balls.

Yellow—ideal for playing on 78-foot court and for USTA regulation competitive matches

Variations for balls—balloons, beach balls, bean bags, yarn balls, Koosh balls, hacky sack

PORTABLE NET(S), BALL HOPPER(S), POLY SPOTS, CONES, LINES, CHALK, CAUTION TAPE

EXTRA RACQUETS OF VARIOUS SIZES:

Shorter-length racquets—easier to manage, as the closer the player's hand is to the racquet face, the easier it is to control the direction of the ball at contact.

Bigger racquet heads—enlarged “sweet spot” and enables easier contact with ball.

Lighter racquets—easier for players to maneuver.

SETTING UP COURTS FOR PLAY

Tennis can be played just about anywhere there is a flat surface. If regulation tennis courts are not available for the program, be imaginative about potential court space. There are many ways to set up and outline different courts in various locations. Fortunately, setting up a court is not difficult, and courts can be modified to fit the space available, such as parking lots, gymnasiums, and blacktopped surfaces. Lines can be drawn using sidewalk chalk or tape.

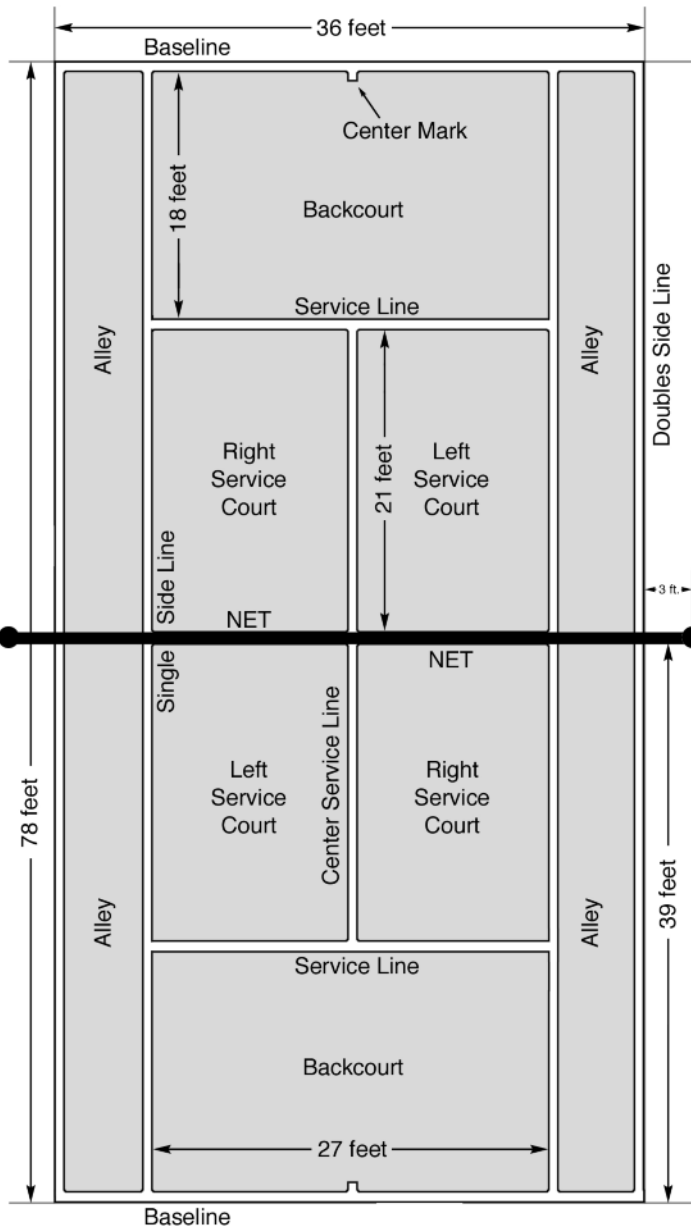
An engineer who is involved at your installation or VA hospital may be able to assist with painting permanent court lines within the allotted tennis space. Also, portable nets are available by contacting military@usta.com. See Community Tennis Resources in the Resources section of this manual.

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

The USTA offers a variety of opportunities for your organization to receive free or discounted equipment. For more information, please contact military@usta.com.

BASIC EQUIPMENT NEEDS (CONTINUED)

Regulation (Full Size) Tennis Court



Blended Lines on Full Size Tennis Court



36' Court on Blacktop



36' Court in Gym

PRACTICE SESSION 1



PRACTICE SESSION 1

FOREHAND AND RACQUET CONTROL

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn the basic racquet grip, contact point, and swing for hitting shots using the dominant (forehand) side of their body. Players will also learn basic racquet control to direct the ball's direction, height, speed, and depth. *NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.*

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

Have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Contact point—the spot where the racquet impacts the ball on a shot.

Forehand—a shot hit using the dominant side of the body. Right-handers hit a forehand with the right side of their body, and left-handers hit a forehand with the left side of their body.

Grip—the way the hitting hand is positioned on the racquet.

Racquet face—the flat hitting surface of the strings used to strike the ball.

Racquet handle, or racquet grip—the bottom part of the racquet that is held by the player.

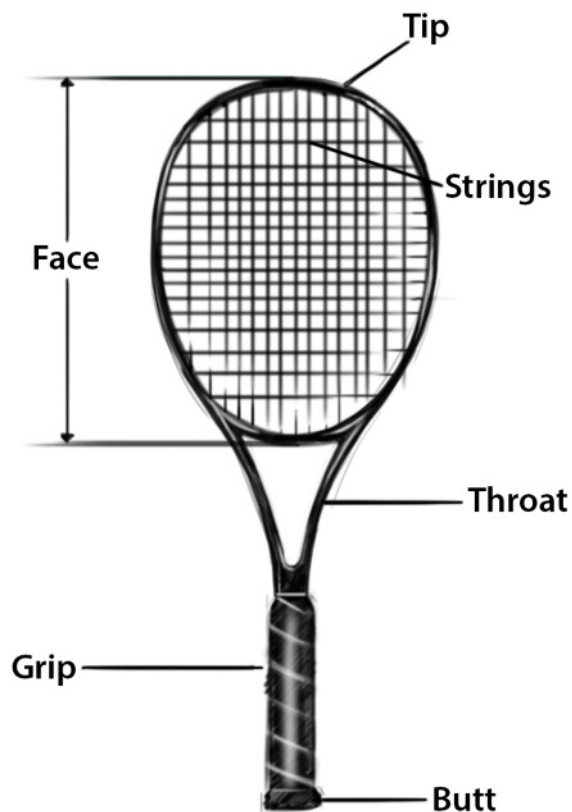
Racquet head—the area of the racquet holding the strings.

Ready position—the stance players assume in preparation for a shot. (Players' knees are slightly bent and body weight is leaning forward. The racquet is held up and in front of the body.)

NOTE: From the ready position, when players see the ball coming off an opponent's racquet, they should turn with their core as one unit to the appropriate forehand (or backhand) side.

Sweet spot—the center part of the face or strings, which is the ideal impact point between racquet and ball.

Throat of racquet—the piece that joins the racquet handle to the head.

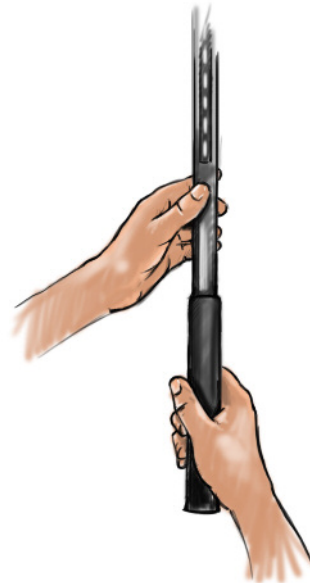


SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

Demonstrate the following basic forehand grip, called the Eastern forehand grip; Illustration which is like “shaking hands with the racquet.”

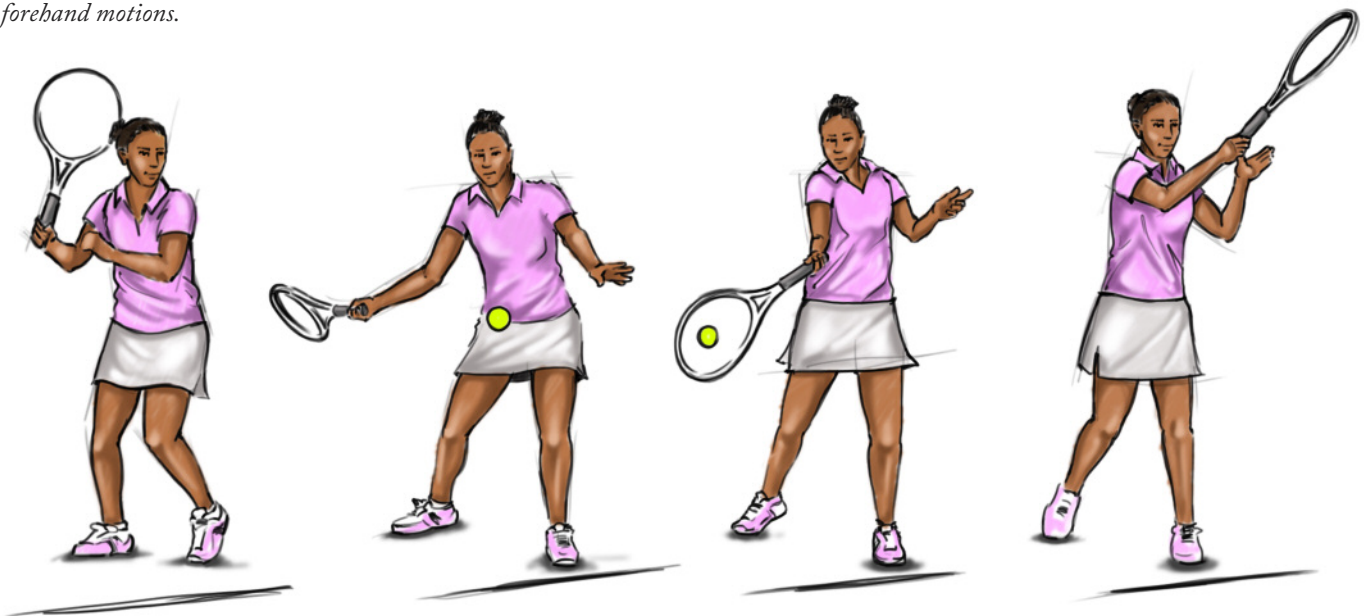
First, hold the throat of the racquet with non-dominant hand and with the racquet face perpendicular to the ground. Then, move the palm of dominant hand from the racquet face down to the handle to form the grip. The knuckle of the index finger should be on the flat side of the handle. For the Eastern Forehand grip, the hand is in the same plane as the racquet face. This means that the ball will be directed in whichever direction the palm of the hand is facing.



Demonstrate the basic forehand swing.

From the ready position, turn sideways so the dominant side of the body is in a hitting position and, using a unit turn with the body and racquet moving together, take the racquet back, keeping the racquet head above the hands. The racquet will drop below the contact point and swing forward and up to where a ball would be hit. The racquet face should be perpendicular to the court when the racquet face makes contact with the ball and then lifted to hit the ball over the net. At the point of contact, the racquet should be even with the front hip. *NOTE: Emphasize that in order to avoid injury, players should hit out in front of them and with their arm, rather than with their wrist. The forehand is finished with the racquet above the shoulder. Allow players to practice the forehand motions.*

Reinforce how the angle of the racquet controls the direction of the ball. The racquet also impacts the height and depth (or distance) of the ball. Demonstrate how an open racquet face (pointing toward the sky) will direct the ball higher, while a closed racquet face (pointing toward the ground) will direct the ball lower. Balls that are hit higher will also land farther back in the opposite court. The speed of the ball can be increased by lengthening the backswing, swinging the racquet faster, and/or transferring body weight forward.



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

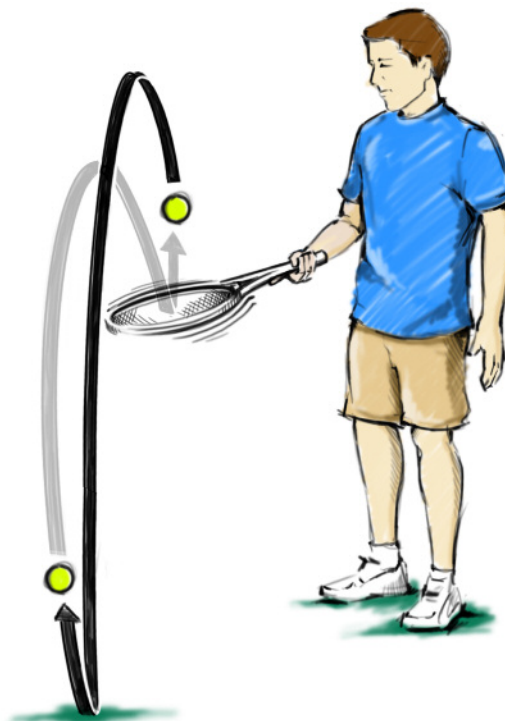
(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR BEGINNER PLAYERS

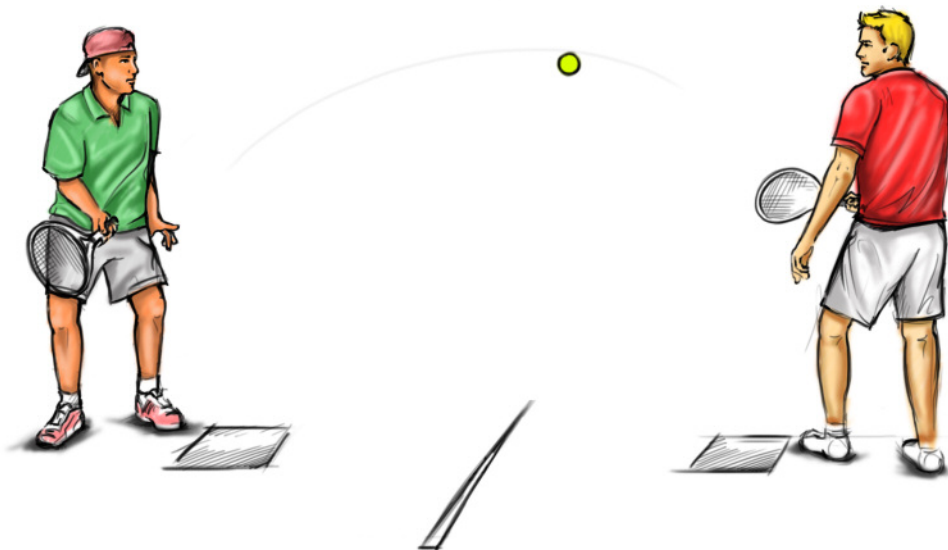
Ball Taps—Using a forehand grip on the racquet, players tap a ball up to eye-level height and then let it bounce on the ground and catch the ball. Players count the number of consecutive hit-bounce-catches, trying for as many as possible. Players then use forehand grip on racquet to tap a ball down to the ground and then tap it again after the bounce. Players count the number of consecutive hit-bounces.



Self Rally—Using a forehand grip on the racquet, players tap a ball up to eye-level height and let it bounce to the ground on or near a poly spot. After the bounce, players tap the ball up again and let it bounce. Players try for 10 consecutive hit-bounces.



Partner Rally to Target—Pair players and place a poly spot as a hitting target between them. Using a forehand grip on the racquet, one player starts by tapping the ball up to eye level and letting it bounce on or near the poly spot. After the bounce, the other player uses forehand grip on racquet to tap the ball up to eye level and lets it bounce. Players count the number of consecutive bounces they complete together.



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

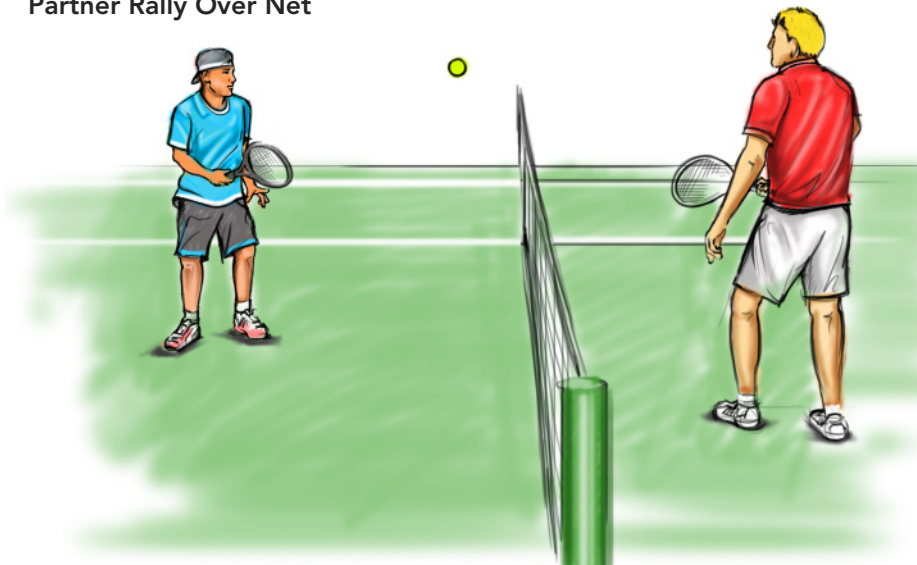
FOR MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS

Partner Rally Over Line—Pair players and have them start two feet behind a chalk line or line on the tennis court. Paired players use forehands to rally the tennis ball back and forth over the line. Use a poly spot as a target for where the ball should bounce. Paired players count consecutive rallies they complete together.

Move Back Rally—Pair players and position them as in Partner Rally Over Net. Each player moves two feet back from the net. Then paired players rally to achieve five consecutive forehand shots together. Each time five consecutive shots are achieved, the players move back two more feet from the net.

Partner Rally Over Net—Pair players and position them three to four feet on each side of the net. Players use forehands to rally over the line with their partner. Use a poly spot or chalked circle as a target for where the ball should bounce.

Partner Rally Over Net

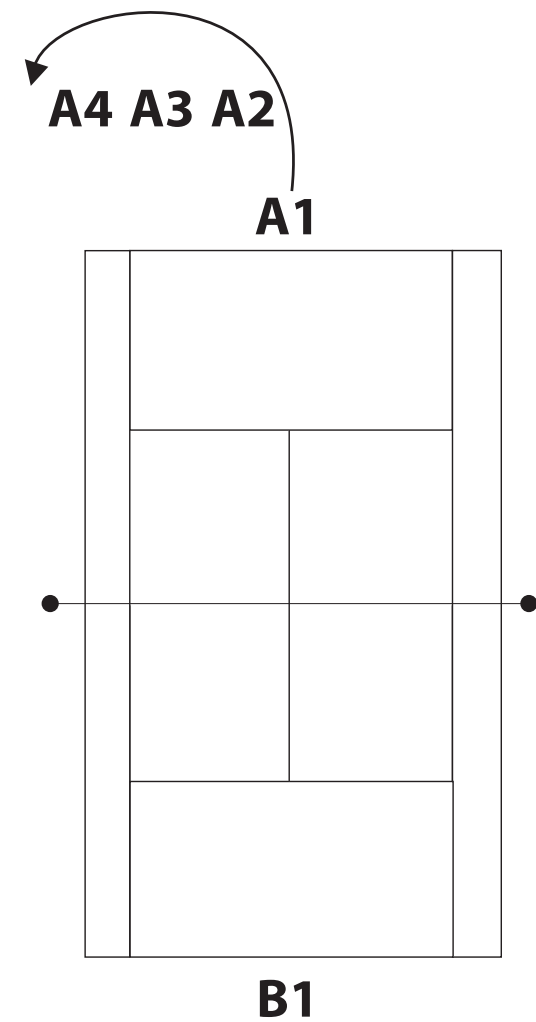



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

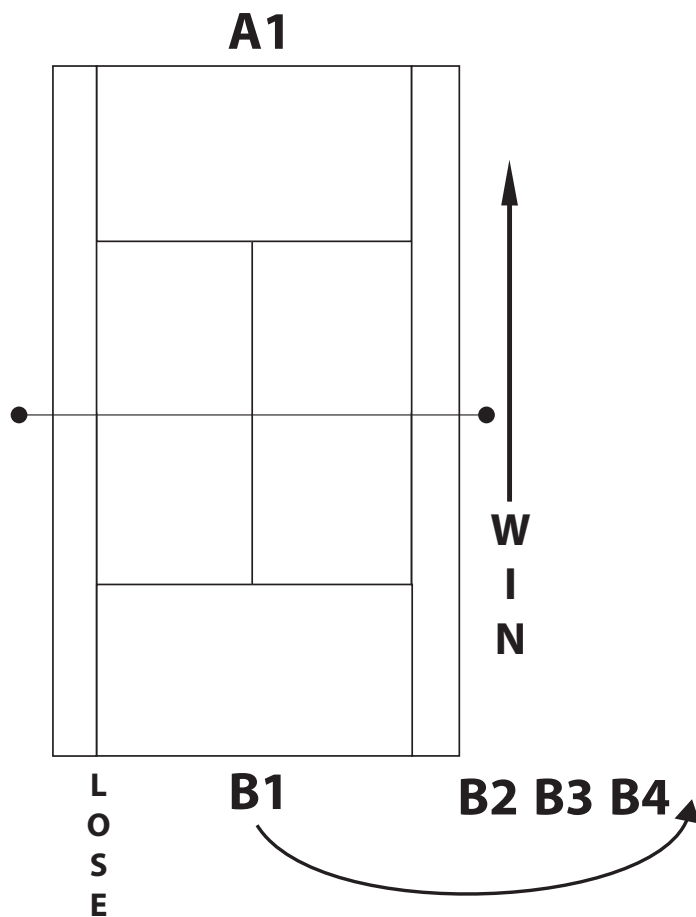
FOR GROUP

Tag Team Singles—Divide players into two teams on each side of the net. Each team forms a line behind the middle of the service line. The first player in each line prepares for play. One player starts the game by dropping and then hitting a ball across the net. After one hit, each player on each side returns to the end of the team line so that the next player in line can continue the rally. Each time a team hits 10 consecutive shots, players move two feet back toward the baseline.

Click the movie icon to see the Tag Team Singles drill in action!

Singles Champion of the Court (minimum 4 players)—One player is designated as “Champion” and positioned at the baseline on one side of the court. The other players are the “Challengers” and form a line to one side of the baseline on the opposite of the court from the “champion.” The first player in the Challenger line moves to the middle of the court at the baseline to drop and hit a ball to the Champion. The point is then played out using singles boundaries on the court. If the Champion wins, he or she remains on the champion side of the court, and the Challenger goes to the end of the challenger line. If the Challenger wins, he or she takes the place of the Champion, who goes to the end of the Challenger line. The player who remains the Champion for the longest time is the winner.




Click the movie icon to see the Champion of the Court drill in action!

PRACTICE PLAY (20–25 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair players of similar skills in order to play one-against-one or two-against-two games during which they can practice forehand shots and racquet control in order to win points. Points are started with a drop-and-hit shot. The score is kept by awarding

one point to each player or team whose shot is not returned back across the net and within court boundaries. Players may also rotate after several games in order to play against different opponents.

COOL-DOWN STATIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE (1–2 MINUTES)

Review key information of this Practice Session. Two tennis take-aways are: racquet control is important in hitting the ball, particularly in terms of direction, height, power, and depth; and the sweet spot of the racquet is the best contact point between the racquet and ball.

Encourage players to practice hitting the sweet spot at home. Suggest using their racquets to tap a tennis ball or ball variation up to eye level. If possible, encourage players to practice self-rallying or rallying with a partner.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

Traumatic Brain Injury—TBI injuries can cause visual disturbances and balance problems; to teach the forehand to players with such TBI injuries, use red balls and play on 36- or 60-foot courts.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD behaviors vary from isolation and trust issues to aggression and verbal outbursts. Ask whether players need assistance and would be comfortable if you helped them adjust their forehand grip or stroke.

Amputation/Prosthesis—Players with an upper extremity amputation need to spin the racquet in their hand to find a comfortable and effective forehand grip. Players with a lower extremity amputation may be more comfortable playing on 36-foot courts.

Spinal Cord Injury—Hitting a forehand in a wheelchair requires nearly the same technique as hitting a forehand while standing. Wheelchair players use their dominant side of the body

for forehands, and backswings are the same. However, wheelchair players need to pivot the wheelchair with their non-dominant hand to a 45-degree angle to the net. This move is equivalent to the hip and shoulder turn of an able-bodied player. Contact with the ball should be in front of the wheelchair near player's knees. The non-dominant hand is kept on the wheel throughout the shot for stability and mobility purposes.

Hub mobility is the key. Wheelchair players move at a 45-degree angle (ideally) toward the ball. When hitting the ball on the dominant side, wheelchair players execute an inside turn of the chair, recovering back to the hub (an area three to eight feet behind the baseline of the court) on a similar path used to approach the ball.

An inside turn occurs when the initial movement brings the chair forward into the court. For example, on the right side of the court, a left turn would be the inside turn. The inside turn is most commonly used when hitting forehands.

PRACTICE SESSION 2



PRACTICE SESSION 2

BACKHAND AND DIRECTIONAL CONTROL

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn the basic racquet grip, contact point, and swing for hitting shots using the non-dominant (backhand) side of their body. Players will also learn to hit with direction either diagonally across the court or straight ahead. *NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.*

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

If needed, have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Backhand—a shot hit on the non-dominant side of the body. Right-handers hit a backhand by turning to their left to hit the ball, and left-handers hit a backhand by turning to their right to hit the ball.

Cross-court shot—a ball that is hit diagonally across the court.

Down-the-line shot—a ball that is hit straight down the side of the court.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

- Review basic forehand skills from Practice Session 1.
- Demonstrate the **basic backhand grips**, called the Eastern backhand grips.

First, hold the throat of the racquet (see Tennis Terms in Practice Session 1) with non-dominant hand and with the

racquet face (see Tennis Terms in Practice Session 1) perpendicular to the ground. For a one-handed backhand grip, place the dominant hand on the top of the racquet handle. For a two-handed backhand grip, the dominant and non-dominant hands are placed on opposite sides of the handle so they are in the same plane as the racquet face.

One-handed
backhand grip



Two-handed
backhand grip



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

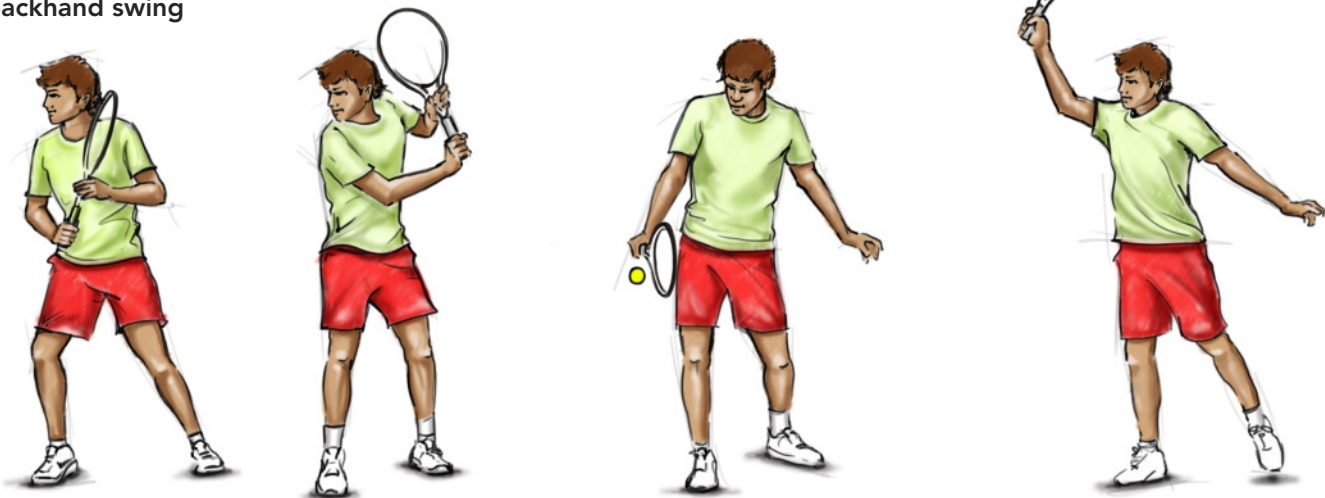
- Demonstrate the **basic backhand swing**.

From the ready position (see Tennis Terms in Practice Session 1), turn sideways with the body and racquet moving together, keeping the racquet head above the hands. The racquet will drop below the contact point. Swing forward and up to where a ball would be hit. The racquet face should be perpendicular to the court when the racquet face makes contact with the ball and then is lifted to hit the ball over the net. For a one-handed backhand grip, the racquet should be in front of the front foot at contact point, while for a two-handed backhand, the racquet

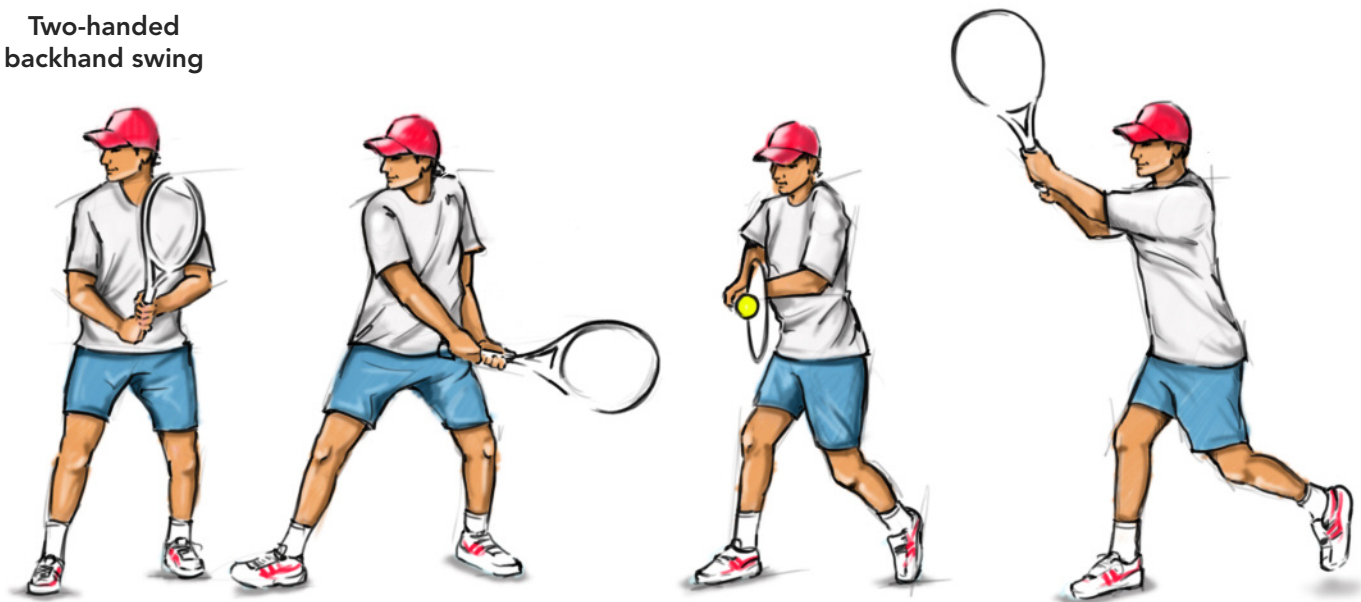
is even with the front hip at contact point. *NOTE: Emphasize that in order to avoid injury, players should hit out in front of them and with their arm, rather than with their wrist. The backhand is finished with the racquet above the shoulder. Allow players to practice the backhand motions.*

- Remind players that the racquet controls the direction of the ball. Demonstrate how balls hit way out in front of the body are directed diagonally across the court, while balls hit even or a bit behind the body are directed straight ahead, or down the line of the court.

One-handed backhand swing



Two-handed backhand swing



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR BEGINNER PLAYERS

- **Toss-Hit Backhand Over Line**—Pair players—one as the Tosser and one as the Hitter. The Tosser, using a high and soft underhand throw, tosses a tennis ball about two-thirds of the way to the Hitter (or at the Hitter’s waist level). The Hitter returns the ball with a one- or two-handed backhand. After 10 repetitions, change the Tosser and Hitter roles for another 10 repetitions.
- **Partner Rally Over Net**—Pair players and have them start three to four feet on each side of the net. Players use backhands to rally over the net with their partner. Use a poly spot or chalked circle as a target for where the ball should bounce.
- **Alternate Forehands and Backhands**—Pair players and have them start three to four feet on each side of the net. Players alternate forehand and backhand shots to each other so they are hitting a diagonal (cross-court) shot and then a straight ahead (down-the-line) shot.

FOR MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS

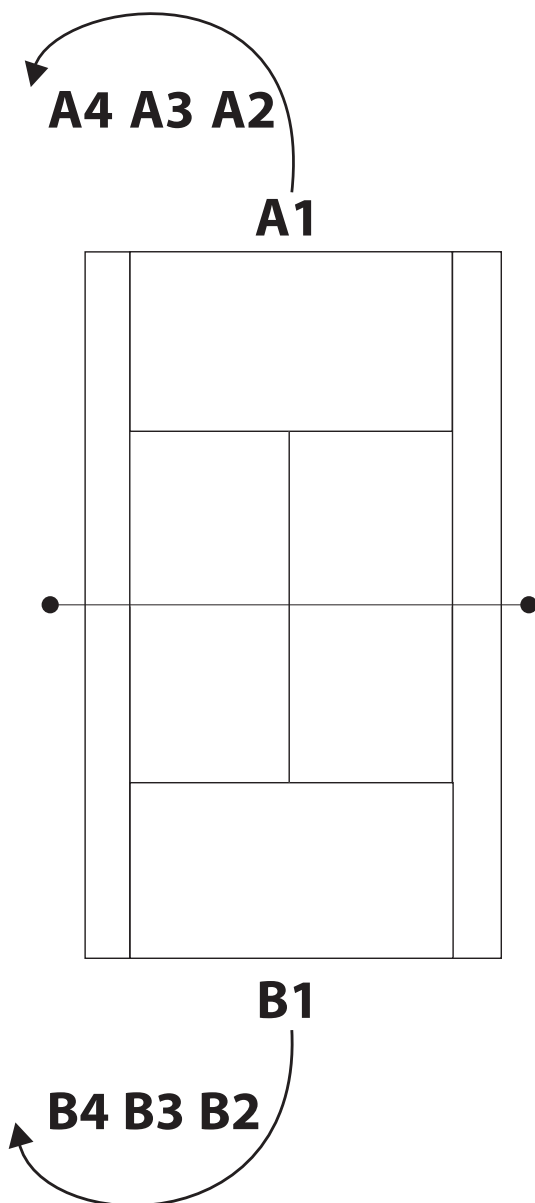
- **Partner Rally Over Net**—Pair players and have them start three to four feet on each side of the net. Players use non-dominant hands to rally over the line with their partner. Use a poly spot or chalked circle as a target for where the ball should bounce.
- **Move Back Rally**—Pair players and position them as in Partner Rally over Net. Each player moves back two feet from the net. Then paired players rally using only a backhand shot to achieve five consecutive hits together. Each time five consecutive shots are achieved, the players move back another two feet from the net.
- **Alternate Forehands and Backhands**—Pair players for rallying the length of the court. Players alternate forehand and backhand shots so they are hitting a diagonal (cross-court) shot and then a straight-ahead (down-the-line) shot.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

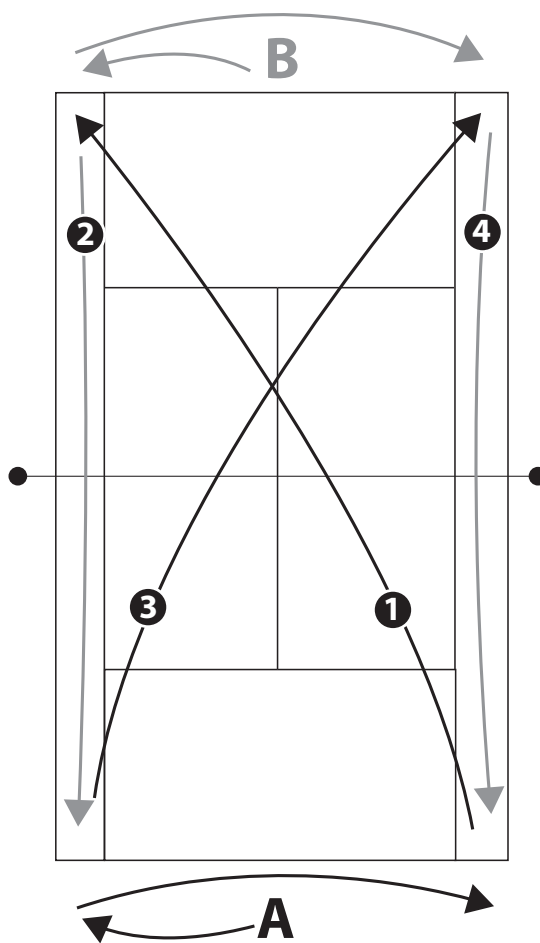
(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR GROUP

- **Tag Team Singles**—Divide players into two teams on each side of the net. Each team forms a line behind the middle of the baseline. The first player in each line prepares for play. One player starts the game by dropping and then hitting the ball across the net. After one hit, each player on each side returns to the end of the team line so that the next player in the front of the line can continue the rally. The teams try to hit 10 consecutive shots.



- **Cross-Court and Down-the-Line Mini Tennis**—Divide players into teams of four and place two players from each team at the service line on either side of the net. The service boxes are the play area. Using a red ball, the first player hits a cross-court shot to the player diagonally across the court. The second player then hits a down-the-line shot to the player directly across the court. Then the third player hits a cross-court to the player diagonally across the court. And finally the fourth player hits down the line to the first player. Each team counts how many four-ball sequences they can hit in 5 minutes. *NOTE: Be sure to use red balls with all players for this drill.*



Click the movie icon to see the Cross Court & Down-the-Line Mini Tennis drill in action!

PRACTICE PLAY (20–25 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair players of similar skills in order to play one-against-one or two-against-two games during which they can practice forehand and backhand shots in order to win points. Points are started with a drop-and-hit shot. The score is kept by

awarding one point to each player or team whose shot is not returned back across the net and within court boundaries. Players may also rotate every 5 minutes in order to play against different opponents.

COOL-DOWN STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE

Review key information of this Practice Session. One tennis take-away is: Reaching way out in front of the body to hit a ball makes it go cross-court, while hitting the ball farther back, even with the body, makes it go straight down the line.

If possible, encourage players to practice hitting backhands and forehands with a partner and to practice directing balls cross-court and down the line.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

- **Traumatic Brain Injury**—TBI injuries may cause slowed thinking and difficulty organizing thoughts. Be patient, and give players time to absorb information about one- versus two-handed backhands as well as time to ask questions.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**—PTSD may cause anxiety. Observe the players' body language to see which backhand grip is more comfortable for them. Do not force players into using one grip over the other.
- **Amputation/Prosthesis**—Players with an upper extremity amputation need to spin the racquet in their hand to find a comfortable and effective backhand grip. Players with a lower extremity amputation may be more comfortable playing on 36-foot courts.
- **Spinal Cord Injury**—Hitting a backhand in a wheelchair requires nearly the same technique as hitting a backhand while standing. Wheelchair players use their non-dominant side of the body for backhands and backswings are the same.

However, wheelchair players need to pivot the wheelchair with their non-dominant hand to a 45-degree angle to the net. This move is equivalent to the hip and shoulder turn of an able-bodied player. Contact with the ball should be just in front of the knees. The non-dominant hand is kept on the wheel throughout the shot for stability and mobility purposes.

Hub mobility is the key. Wheelchair players move at a 45-degree angle (ideally) toward the ball. When hitting the ball on the non-dominant side, players execute an **outside turn** of the chair, recovering back to the **hub** (an area three to eight feet behind the baseline of the court) on a similar path used to approach the ball.

An **outside turn** occurs when the initial movement brings the chair toward the back of the court behind the player. The outside turn is most commonly used when hitting backhands.

PRACTICE SESSION 3



PRACTICE SESSION 3

SERVE AND RETURN OF SERVE

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn the basic motion for hitting a serve as well as position and strategies for returning a serve. Players will also learn scorekeeping. *NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.*

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

If needed, have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Ad court—the side of the court in which the second point of each game begins. This side of the court is also called the backhand court.

Ad-in—a one-point difference in the score, which indicates that if the server wins the next point, the server or the server’s team will win the game.

Ad-out—a one-point difference in the score, which indicates that if the returner of the serve wins the next point, the returner or the returner’s team will win the game.

Continental grip—a hold on the racquet halfway between the Eastern forehand grip (see Practice Session 1) and the Eastern backhand grip (see Practice Session 2).

Deuce—a tied score and a player must win by two points.

Deuce court—the side of the court in which the first point of each game begins. This side of the court is also called the forehand court.

Fault—a serve that is not legal. (A legal serve is one hit over the net, without touching the net, and in the service box.)

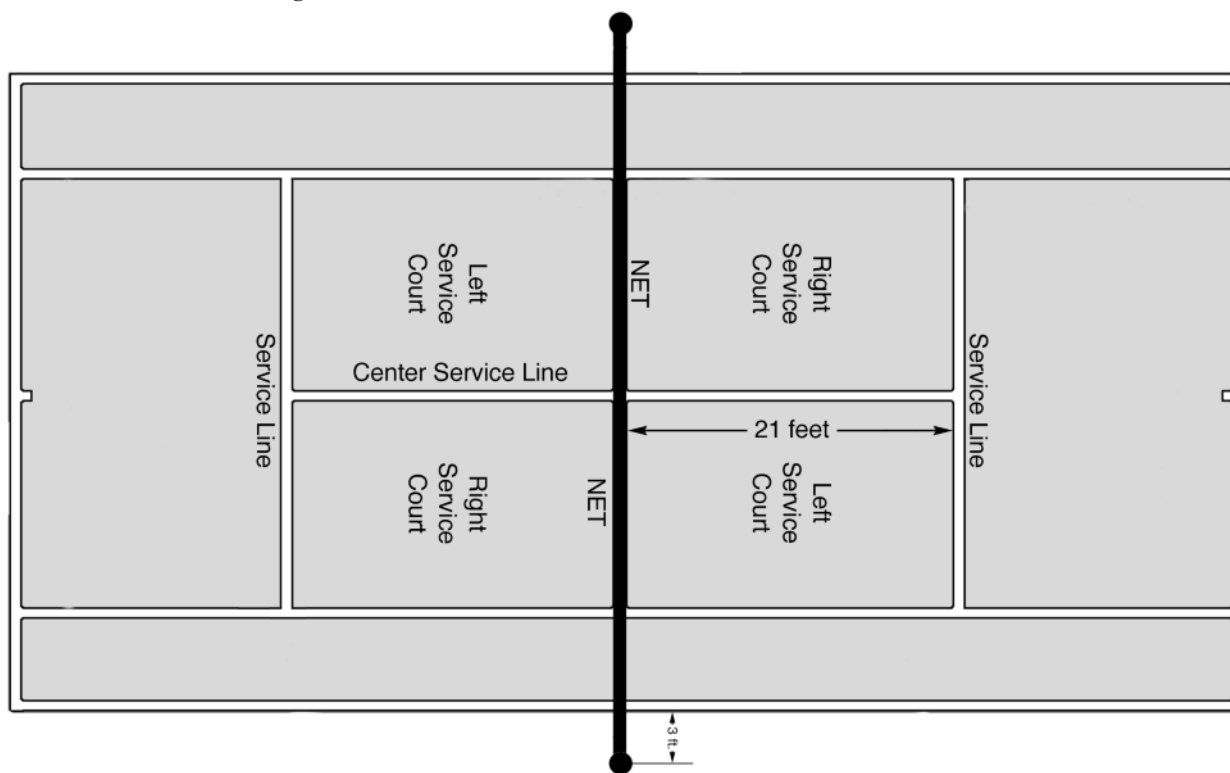
Let—when the ball hits the net during a serve, but otherwise is legal because it lands within the service box. On a let, players are allowed to attempt another serve.

Return of serve, or service return—the shot used to return the serve.

Serve, or service—the shot that starts each point; when initiating each point, servers are permitted two attempts to hit a legal serve.

Service box—the smaller square area across the net that is diagonal to the server, into which the server must hit the ball for a legal serve.

Service line—the perpendicular line from the net to the middle of the court, which separates the two service boxes on each side of the net.



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

- Review basic backhand skills from Practice Session 2.
- Demonstrate the **Continental grip**, which is like holding a hammer, for the serve.



First, hold the throat of the racquet with the non-dominant hand and with the racquet face perpendicular to the ground. Then, place the dominant hand on the racquet handle so that the bottom of the V between thumb and forefinger is on the top flat surface of the grip. The Continental grip allows players to hit both forehand and backhand volleys without changing grips. *NOTE: Many players are more comfortable using a forehand grip to serve. As they gain confidence, they can move to a Continental grip.*

- Demonstrate the **basic serve motion**.

Start at a 45-degree angle to the net or baseline with racquet out in front and non-dominant hand holding ball out in front. Gently toss the ball up in the air while bending the elbow of

the dominant arm behind the back like a quarterback about to throw a ball. Then extend the arm to contact the racquet with the ball, hitting it at the highest point. Hit out toward the service box and finish the stroke. Explain that the serve motion is similar to throwing a ball or racquet over the net. Allow players to practice the motion of the serve.

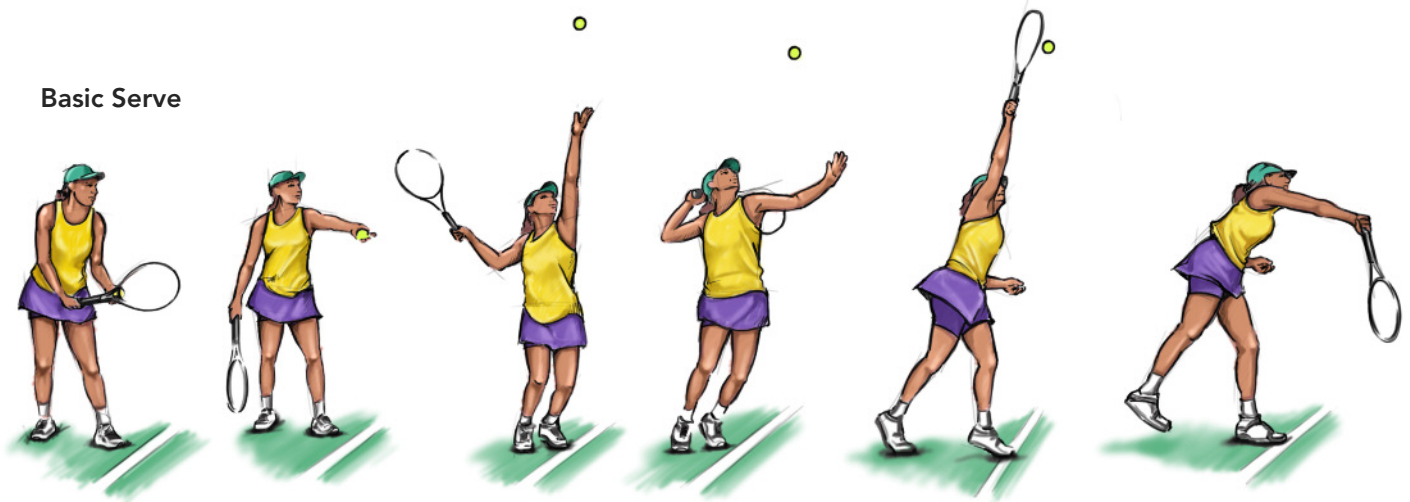
Explain that the ball toss is more of a placement than a throw. Hold the ball by the thumb and fingers of the non-dominant hand, with palm turned up. Using the thumb and index and middle fingers, gently toss the ball up high enough so that it can be hit by the racquet before beginning to drop.

- To establish a good position for the return of serve, players start just inside the baseline in the ready position, centering themselves on an imaginary line between the server and the middle of the service box. If the serve is hit hard, returners should move back farther from the service box and use a shorter backswing to allow for more time to contact the ball in front of body. If the serve is hit soft or short, returners should move in closer to the service box and move toward the ball as soon as it bounces.
- Explain scorekeeping in tennis. Each tennis game consists of earning four points, with players winning by two points:

Love—zero
15—first point • 30—second point
40—third point • Game—fourth point

The first serve of each game is hit to the deuce court, and the second serve is hit to the ad court. Serves continue to be alternated between the ad and deuce court until the end of that game. Players must win a game by two points. One set consists of the first player or team to win six games and be ahead by two games. Most matches are played as the best-of-three sets or the best-of-five sets.

Basic Serve

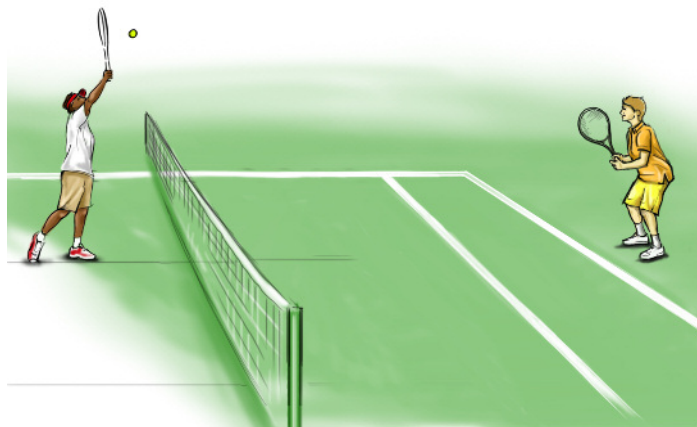


SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR BEGINNER PLAYERS

- **Throw Over Net**—Pair players and position them directly behind the service boxes. Using an overhand throwing motion, players throw a ball to their partner across the net. Partners catch the ball after one bounce and return the ball using an overhand throwing motion. Complete 10 repetitions for each player.
- **Toss in Air**—Players start at service line or baseline. Have players shadow their serve motion to determine the best spot to hit a ball. Then the players practice tossing the ball to that spot, trying to gain consistency. Complete 10 repetitions.
- **Toss, Touch, and Freeze**—Pair players and position one (the Server) at a 45-degree angle from the net and two feet back from it, and the other (the Returner) behind the service box across the net. Servers place their racquet back with the arm bent like a quarterback about to throw a ball. Using the non-dominant hand, Servers toss up a ball and extend their swing up to touch (not hit) the ball and freeze at the contact point, holding this position to verify that the racquet face is directed at the service court and that the ball bounces 3 or 4 times before reaching the service line. The Returners catch the ball, counting the number of bounces, and throw the ball back to the Server partner. After 10 repetitions, change Server and Returner roles for another 10 repetitions.



- **Move Back, Serve, and Trap**—Pair players and position as in Toss, Touch, and Freeze. Have one player toss, hit, and follow through on a ball, directing it to the partner across the net. After one bounce, the partner turns and traps the ball on the racquet with non-dominant hand. Then these players reverse roles, so the Returner becomes the Serve and serves the ball back to partner. This pattern continues, and after each successful consecutive serve and trap, players move back two feet from the net and repeat.

FOR MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS

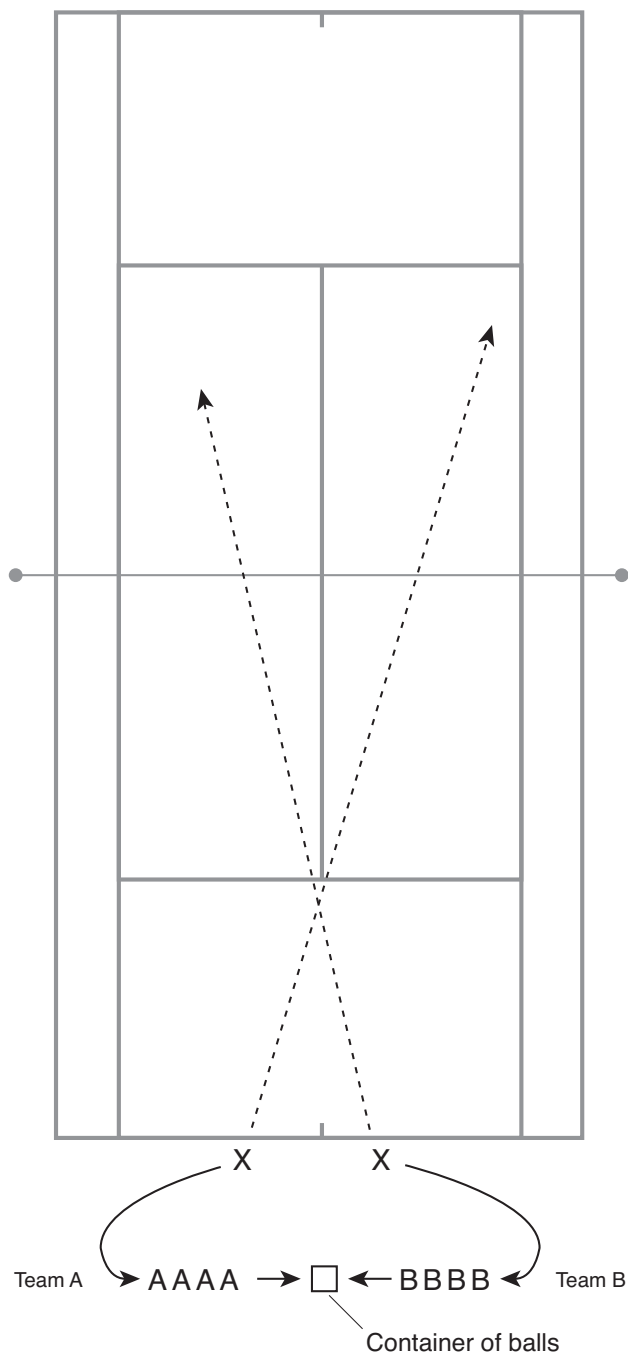
- **Practice Toss**—Players start at the baseline and shadow their serve motion to determine the best spot to hit a ball. Then players practice tossing the ball to that spot, trying to gain consistency. Complete 10 repetitions.
- **Target Serve**—Place poly spots in service boxes across the net. Players serve to each poly spot, counting how many they hit.
- **Serve and Return**—Pair players and position them as Servers and Returners on each side of the net. Servers serve to Returners, and Returners practice returning the serve with a backhand or forehand, directing the ball back to Servers. After 10 repetitions, switch Server and Returner roles.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR GROUP

- **Serve Relay**—Divide players into two teams and line them behind the baseline on one side of the net with a supply of balls behind the center of the baseline. The first player in each line serves the ball to the diagonal service box. If the serve is good, the player goes to the end of the team line. If the serve is a fault, the player retrieves another ball from the supply source and tries again. A maximum of three faults are allowed before the next team player in the team line takes over. The first team to hit 10 successful serves wins.



- **Servers and Returners**—Divide players into two teams that form a line on each side of the court behind the baseline. One side is designated “Servers” and the other is “Returners.” The first players in each line play out a point, with the winner of the point going to the end of the line on the Servers side and the loser of the point going to the end of the line on the Returners side. Players rotate through their line, with the Servers side always beginning the point with a serve (with two chances to get the ball in play).
- **Server Survivor**—This game requires two courts: a “Survivor” and a “Redemption Island” court. Taking turns, players attempt to serve toward a designated area or target. (NOTE: Begin with easy serving tasks and gradually make the goal more challenging. Also, start the game just behind the service line for beginner players and just behind the baseline for more advanced players.) If players are successful, they remain on the Survivor court. If they fail to complete the targeting task, they go to the Redemption Island court and practice. Once successfully completing the serving task on this court, they return to the Survivor court to continue competing to be the “Survivor.” As the serving tasks become more difficult, more players go to Redemption Island, and eventually only one player remains to be crowned “Sole Serving Survivor.”
- **Example serving tasks/targets:** Hit one of two serves into the deuce or ad side of the court, hit a serve into the deuce or ad side with one attempt, hit a serve into the middle of the deuce or ad side, and hit a serve to the designated target placed in the deuce or ad side.



Click the movie icon to see the Serve Relay drill in action!



Click the movie icon to see the Servers and Returners drill in action!



Click the movie icon to see the Server Survivor drill in action!

PRACTICE PLAY (20–25 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair players of similar skills for one-against-one or two-against-two games during which they can practice serve and return of serve as well as forehand and backhand skills. Points are started with a serve, and score is kept using 15, 30, 40, and Game points.

Encourage players to practice ball toss and motion of serve. They may also practice throwing a ball to imitate the service motion.

COOL-DOWN STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE

Review key information of this Practice Session. One tennis take-away is: Reaching up for the toss and hitting out helps direct the ball over the net and into the service box.

Encourage players to practice service motion at home. And, if possible, encourage players to practice hitting and returning serves with a partner.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

- **Traumatic Brain Injury**—Since TBI symptoms may include fatigue and confusion, keep explanations of serve motion as simple as possible and allow time for information to be absorbed.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**—Players with PTSD may exhibit impatience. If players are frustrated with the serve motion, be flexible about switching to returning serve or another activity that is more enjoyable.
- **Amputation/Prosthesis**—Players with an upper extremity amputation may serve by scooping up a ball with their racquet and tapping it up in the air. As the ball moves up, players swing the racquet back and then forward to hit the ball before it bounces. Players with a lower extremity amputation may elect to serve by dropping the ball and hitting it underhand into the service box across the net.

For a volley, as in other strokes, players with an upper extremity amputation should learn the Continental grip, as switching grips is more difficult for them.

- **Spinal Cord Injury**—The basic serve motion is the same without using legs. Three basic serving styles for wheelchair players are:

1. Toss, prepare racquet, grab wheel with non-dominant hand, pulling back to create rotation into the court (to keep body erect and stable), serve.
2. Toss, prepare racquet, lean forearm on non-dominant wheel, serve.
3. Toss, prepare racquet, keep non-dominant arm across chest, and serve (free-hand method without utilizing non-dominant hand on the wheel).

For the **return of serve**, wheelchair players should be just behind the baseline to allow for maximum time to attain an effective hitting position. To gain momentum, the player pushes forward into the court as opponent tosses the ball. It is important for wheelchair players to keep non-dominant hand on wheel while preparing and hitting the return of serve.

PRACTICE SESSION 4



PRACTICE SESSION 4

VOLLEY

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn to move forward to the net (approach shot) and return balls when close to the net (volley). NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

If needed, have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Approach shot—a shot hit deep into the opponent’s court to enable a player to move from the baseline to an offensive position at the net.

Split step—a ready position at the net, enabling players to quickly move to their right or left to hit a forehand or backhand volley.

Volley—a shot in which the ball is hit in the air before it bounces.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

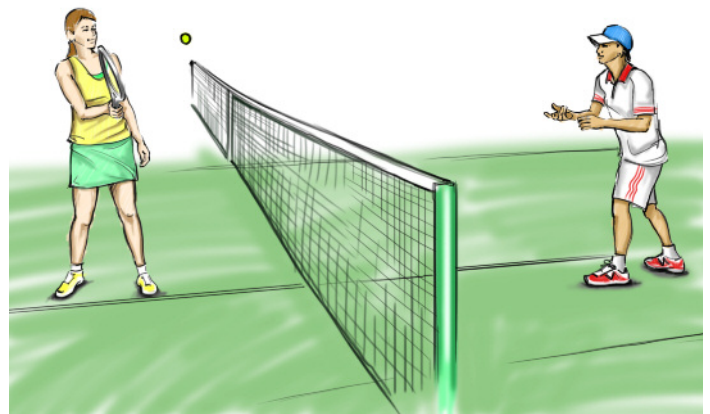
- Review basic serve and return of serve skills from Practice Session 3.
- Explain that the volley grip can be switched between a basic forehand grip (see Practice Session 1) and a basic backhand grip (see Practice Session 2). Or the volley grip can be a Continental grip (see Practice Session 3) used for both forehand and backhand volleys. With the forehand-backhand grip, players must switch grips quickly to prepare the racquet face for the volley.
- Demonstrate the **basic volley shot** for both the forehand and backhand.

In the ready position, hold the racquet chest-high. For a forehand volley, turn to the forehand side and move forward with the non-dominant leg to meet the ball. For a backhand volley, turn to the backhand side, and move forward with the dominant leg to meet the ball. The racquet should be held tightly in order to block the incoming ball or “punch” the ball into the opposite court. Emphasize that there is no backswing.

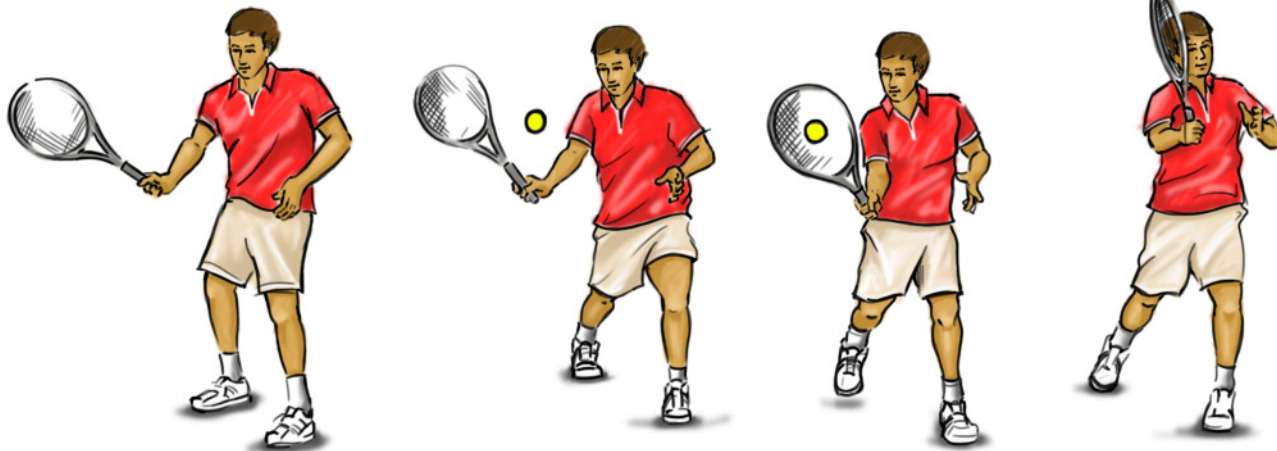
FOR BEGINNER PLAYERS

- **Forehand Volley Progression**—Pair players, one as the Tosser at the service line on one side of the net, and one as the Volleyer two feet back from the net on the other side. Using a high underhand throw, the Tossers toss the ball to the Volleyers, who, holding the racquet at its throat, bump the ball back to the Tosser. Complete 10 volleys and then switch the Tosser and Volleyer roles for 10 volleys. Next switch roles so the Volleyers hold the racquet at its handle and gently block or volley the ball back to the Tossers. After 10 completions, switch roles one last time.

Forehand Volley Progression



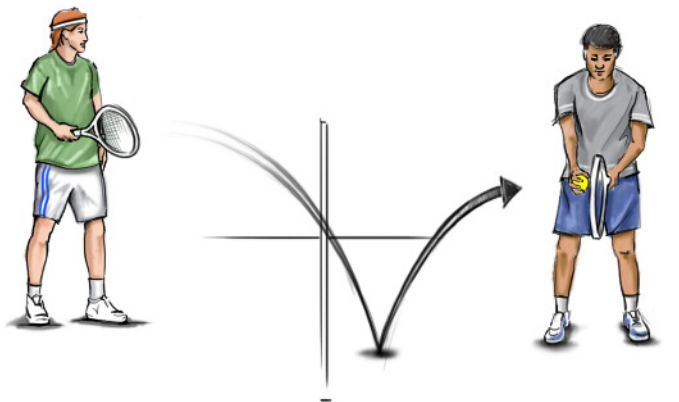
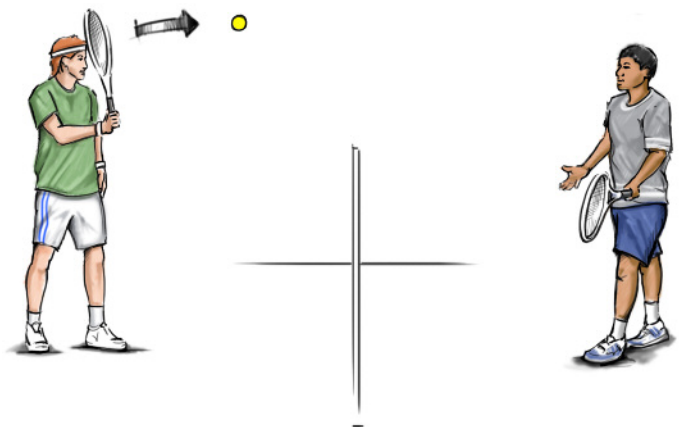
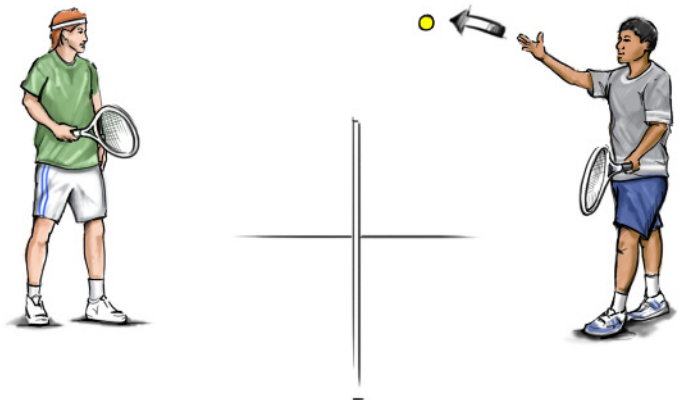
Forehand Volley



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

- **Forehand-Volley-Trap**—Pair players, one as the Trapper and one as the Volleyer, on each side of the net. From the service line, the Trapper drops and hits a high forehand to the Volleyer, who returns the ball with a volley. The Trapper traps the returned shot on the racquet face with the non-dominant hand. The forehand, volley, trap movements are repeated 10 times. Then switch the Volleyer and Trapper roles for 10 repetitions.
- **Approach on Short Ball**—Have players form one line at the baseline behind the service box to their right. Feed a short ball to each player to allow an approach shot to be hit down the right sideline of the opposite court. Use a poly spot to show players where they need to be by the time the ball bounces on the court.



Forehand-Volley-Trap

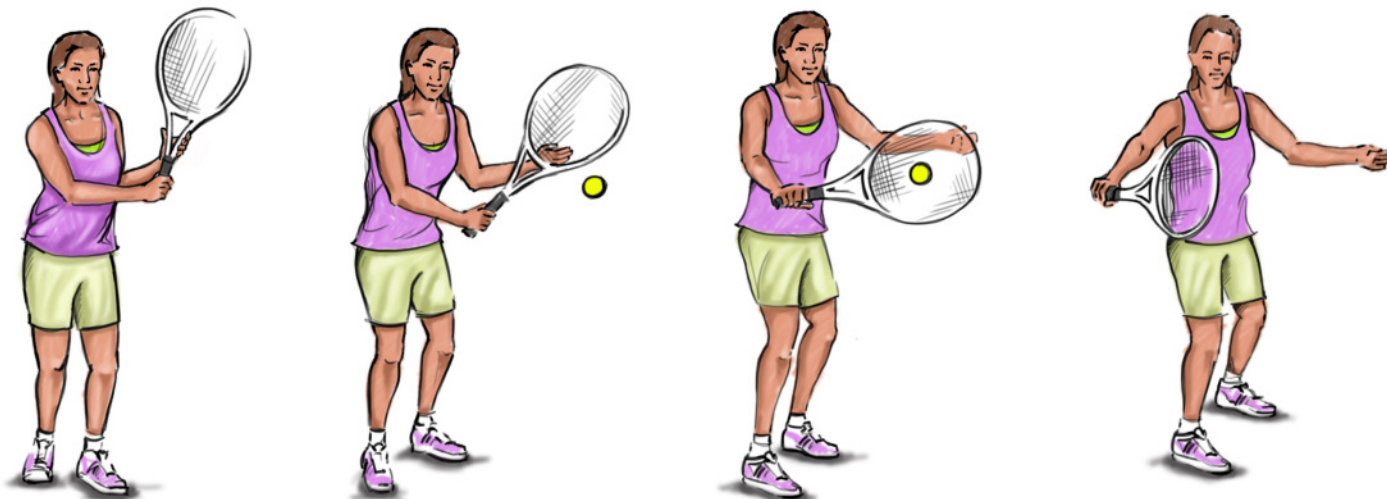
SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS

- **Forehand-Volley Combination**—Pair players and position one at the net and one at the service line across the net. Players at the service line drop a ball and hit a forehand to their partner at the net. Players at the net hit the ball back using the forehand volley. Players count the number of consecutive forehand-volleys they can complete together.
- **Backhand-Volley Combination**—Pair players and position one at the net and one at the service line across the net. Players at the service line drop a ball and hit a backhand to their partner at the net. Players at the net hit the ball back using the backhand volley. Players count the number of consecutive backhand-volleys they can complete together.
- **Net Attack**—Pair players to play out points during which each player tries to take the net position. Players count the number of successful volleys they hit.

Backhand Volley



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR GROUP

- **Volley Winners**—Divide players into two teams and have each form a line to the side of the baseline on either side of the net. Designate one team “Baseliners” and one side “Volleyers.” The first two players in each team line move into position to play out a point. The Baseliners start in the middle of the court at the baseline, while the Volleyers start in the middle of the court at the net. One Baseliner begins the point by dropping and hitting the ball to one Volleyer, who volleys the ball back to the one of the Baseliners. Then the Baseliners can hit the ball anywhere in the court to win a point. The Volleyers try to end the point with a volley that cannot be returned by the Baseliners. After each point, the two players return to the end of their team line and the next two players position themselves for play. The first team—Baseliners or Volleyers—to reach 10 points wins the game. Then teams can switch roles and play to another 10 points.
- **Up and Back**—Divide players into two teams and have each team form a line at the baseline on either side of the net. The first players in each team line prepare to play out a point. One player starts the point by dropping and hitting the ball deep to the other side of the court. During the point, each player works to be able to hit an approach shot that enables him or her to get to the net and win the point. A point for the team only counts if it is won at the net. The first team to earn 10 net points wins.



Click the movie icon to see the Volley Winners drill in action!



Click the movie icon to see the Up and Back drill in action!

PRACTICE PLAY (20–25 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair players with similar skills for one-against-one or two-against-two games during which they can practice approaching the net and volleying as well as other skills they have learned.

Points are started with a serve, and score is kept using 15, 30, 40, and Game points.

COOL-DOWN STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE

Review key information of this Practice Session. One tennis take-away is: Do not take a backswing when hitting a volley.

Encourage players to practice volley grip and motion at home. And, if possible, encourage players to practice hitting volleys with a partner.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

- **Traumatic Brain Injury**—Players diagnosed with TBI may have trouble making decisions such as when to go to the net on a short ball. Give players a simple rule for hitting an approach shot, such as move in on any ball that lands in the service box and hit an approach shot.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**—PTSD players may be emotionally detached from the activities. Players who are reluctant to participate in approach shots and volleying drills may observe activities until they are ready to join in.
- **Amputation/Prosthesis**—Moving toward the net is more challenging for players with a lower-extremity amputation. In approach shot drills, feeds should be softer and the player's starting point should be just behind the service box rather than at the baseline.
- **Spinal Cord Injury**—For a volley ready position, wheelchair players should face the net with both hands on wheels. A quick pivot and push in either direction to 45 degrees will put the player in proper position for the volley. The non-dominant hand remains on the wheel for balance and necessary quick adjustments. Also, wheelchair players should use the Continental grip on the volley, as they will not have time to change from the forehand to the backhand grip.
- **Circular mobility**—When a player's volley does not end a point, momentum must be re-created. This is executed by turning the chair so the player's back is facing the opponent(s), pushing back behind the service line, and turning back into the court so there is forward momentum to hit an incoming ball. Since this movement requires time, it is most often executed in doubles play.

For a volley, as in other strokes, players with an upper-extremity amputation should learn the Continental grip, as switching grips is more difficult for them.

PRACTICE SESSION 5



PRACTICE SESSION 5

OVERHEAD SMASH AND LOB

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn the basic method of returning shots hit high (overhead) over their head as well as lofting a ball high over their opponent positioned at net (lob). *NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.*

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

If needed, have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Lob—a high-arcing shot usually hit from behind the baseline.
Overhead smash—a shot hit above the head much like a serve, usually hit inside the service line.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

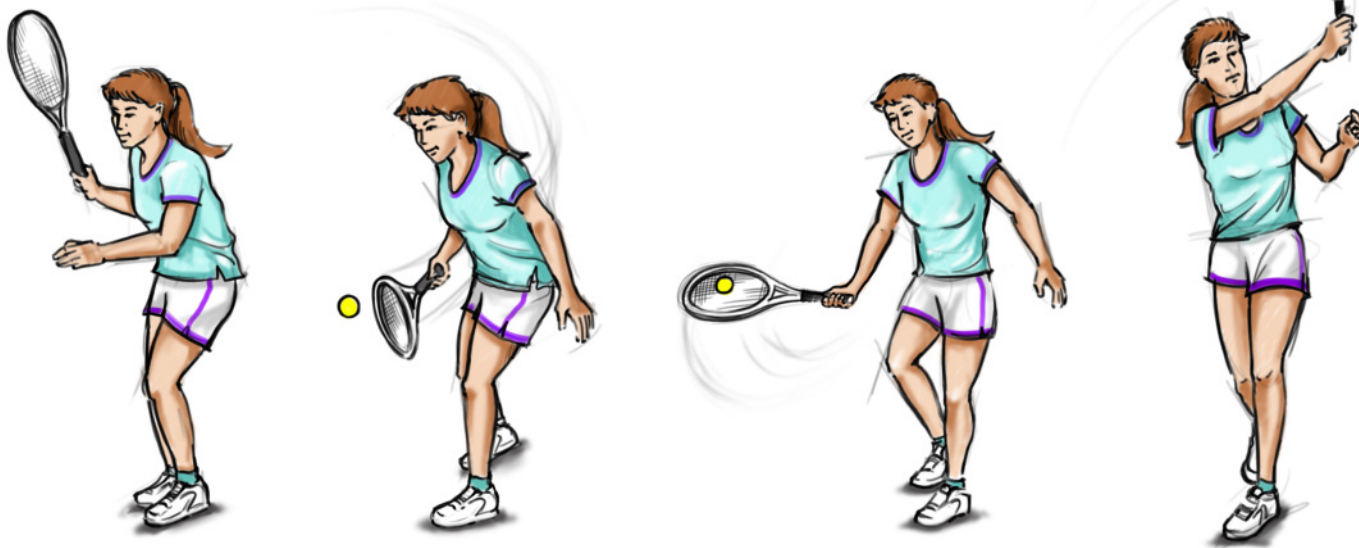
- Review the basic approach shot and volley skills from Practice Session 4.
- Demonstrate the **Lob**.

Drop a ball and hit up and out to arc it high over the net and into the back of the opposite court. Explain that the lob can be a strategic shot to move an opponent back from the net. Or it can be a defensive shot to allow more time, particularly if player is pulled way to the side or off of the court, to prepare for another shot.

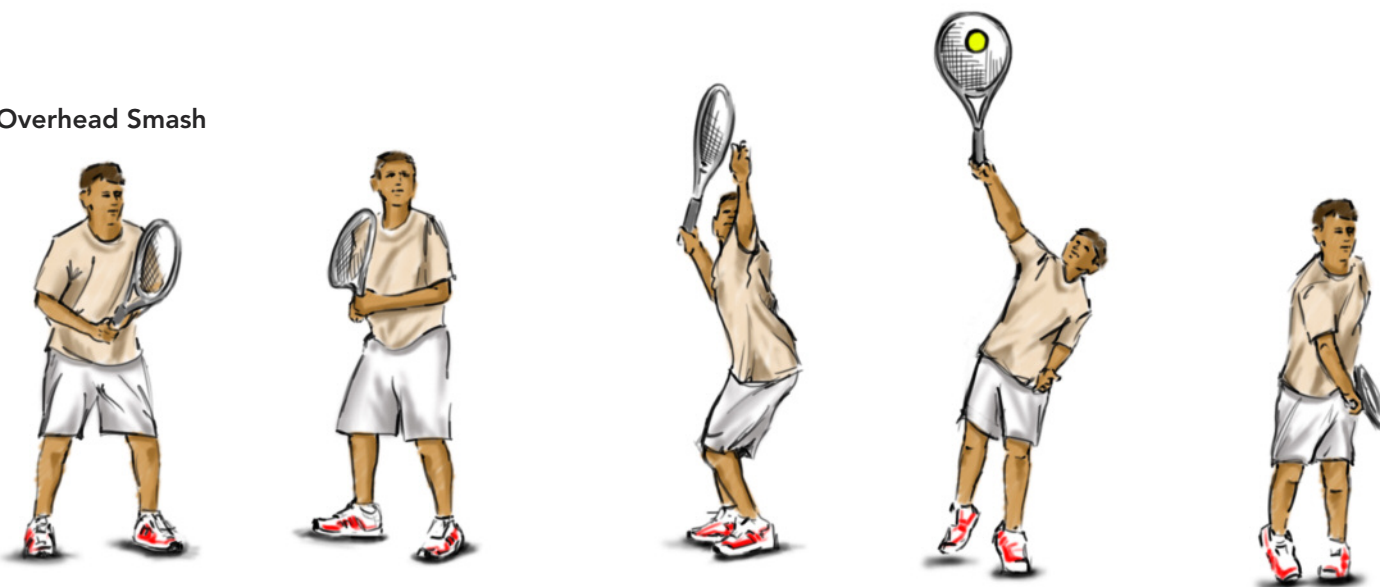
- Demonstrate the **Overhead Smash**.

Start at the ready position (see Tennis Terms in Practice Session 1) for a volley at the net and have someone hit a high short ball. Turn sideways and move to position the body for contact with the ball out in front, like on a serve. Reach up to hit the ball at the highest point. Follow through like on a serve. Note that if a ball is really high, it is best to let it bounce before hitting an overhead. Explain that the overhead smash is usually hit near the net as a return response to a lob. Note that if players need to back up to hit the overhead smash, they should turn and move sideways, not backward.

Lob Shot



Overhead Smash



SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY) (CONTINUED)

FOR BEGINNER PLAYERS

- **Drop-Hit Lob**—Position four players, holding two balls each, at the baseline. Players drop and hit lobs. After four players have hit two balls, they move to make space for other players to practice the lob. Players should hit 10 lobs each.
- **Overhead Feed**—Position three players (Smashers) at net, and three players (Tossers) across the net at the service line. Using a high underhand throw, Tossers toss a red ball so that Smashers *can hit soft overheads back to Tossers*. *NOTE: Be sure to use red balls with all players for this drill.*

FOR MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS

- **Lob and Overhead Mini-Tennis**—Pair players and position one partner at the net (Smasher) and the other at the service line (Lobber). Using red balls, Lobbers at the service line hit soft lobs to Smashers. Smashers return soft overheads back to Lobbers. *NOTE: Be sure to use red balls with all players for this drill. Both players work to keep one ball in play, and count the number of consecutive lob-overhead hits. Switch Smasher and Lobber roles after several minutes.*



Click the movie icon to see the Lob and Overhead drill in action!

FOR GROUP

- **Volleys, Lobs, and Overheads**—Divide players into two teams—Feeders and Hitters—forming a line behind the baseline on either side of the court. The first player on the Feeder team feeds a forehand volley and then a backhand volley to the first player on the Hitter team. After the second volley, the Feeder hits a lob so that the Hitter can execute an overhead smash. Teams earn 1 point for each successful shot. After rotating through the lines several times, tally team points, and then switch Feeder and Hitter roles.
- **Overhead Smash-Lob**—Position two players at the net and two players at the baseline on the opposite side of the net. The baseline team begins a point by dropping the ball and hitting a lob. The point is played with the baseline team hitting only lobs and the net team hitting only overheads. Keep track of the number of points earned by each team.



Click the movie icon to see the Volley, Lobs, and Overheads drill in action!



Click the movie icon to see the Overhead Smash-Lob drill in action!

PRACTICE PLAY (20–25 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair players with similar skills for one-against-one or two-against-two play games during which they can practice overheads and lobs as well as other skills they have learned.

Points are started with a serve, and score is kept using 15, 30, 40, and Game points.

COOL-DOWN STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE

Review key information of this Practice Session. Two tennis take-aways are: position for the overhead shot in order to hit the ball out in front of body is key; and the higher the ball is arced over an opponent, the higher it will bounce.

Encourage players to practice the overhead motion. If possible, encourage players to practice the overhead smash and lob shots, especially getting into position to hit the overhead, with a partner.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

- **Traumatic Brain Injury**—Visual disturbances may make tracking the ball on an overhead more challenging for players with TBI. Use red balls to help players track the ball, and lob the ball higher so players have time to get into position.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**—Aggression and impatience sometimes occurs in players with PTSD. Use red balls to be sure all players are safe, and allow appropriate space between players swinging a racquet.
- **Amputation/Prosthesis**—Getting into position for an overhead smash is more challenging for players with a lower-extremity amputation. In overhead smash drills, use soft feeds with red balls that do not force players to drastically move to hit the ball.
- **Spinal Cord Injury**—To hit an overhead smash, wheelchair players move forward, with the non-dominant hand on the wheelchair for stability and necessary quick adjustments. Once in position to hit an overhead, the fundamentals of the shot are executed just as with able-bodied players.

PRACTICE SESSION 6



PRACTICE SESSION 6

SINGLES AND DOUBLES MATCH PLAY

SKILLS OBJECTIVES

Players will learn basic strategies of the singles game (one-against-one play) versus the doubles game (two-against-two team play). NOTE: To make learning easier and more fun for players, be sure to utilize appropriate equipment.

Players may also enjoy a Family & Friends Tennis Celebration that allows players' supporters to join the fun as fans.

INTRODUCTIONS (2–5 MINUTES)

If needed, have players, coaches, therapists, and others introduce themselves and briefly share their tennis experience or expectations.

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMIC STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select appropriate movements from the Warm-Up Activities and Dynamic Stretches within this curriculum.

TENNIS TERMS

Doubles—a tennis match between two teams; each team consists of two players.

Singles—a tennis match between two players.

SKILLS PRACTICE GAMES AND DRILLS

(20–25 MINUTES OF COOPERATIVE PLAY)

- Review basic overhead and lob skills from Practice Session 5.
- Involve players to help demonstrate the starting positions in singles, with both the server and the returner diagonally across from each other at the baseline, and the server ready to hit to the serve into the deuce court.
- Involve players to help demonstrate the starting positions in doubles, with both the server and the returner of serve diagonally across from each other at the baseline, and the server ready to hit the serve into the deuce court. The server's partner is in the net position opposite the receiver's partner, who stands just behind the service line and three feet from the center service line.
- Discuss the following basic game strategies for singles and doubles.

SINGLES

- Keep the ball in play by hitting deep into the opposite court and in the middle of the court.
- Take advantage of a short ball and hit an approach shot down the line, move to the net, and end the point with a volley or overhead.
- Hit shots to the opponent's weakness (backhand, forehand, volley).

DOUBLES

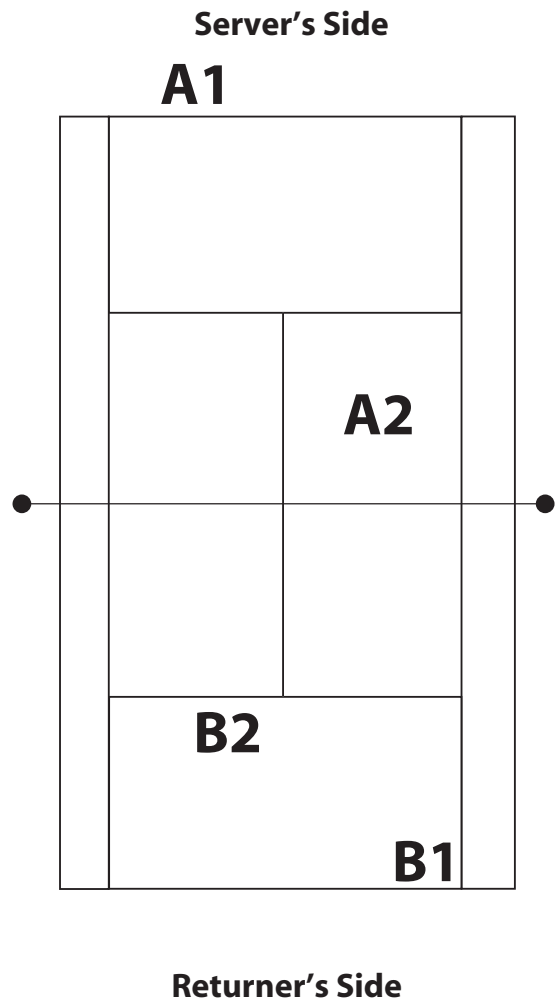
- Play position and cover the court area in that position.
- Switch positions, calling out "Switch," if one partner is in the position to cover a shot instead of the other partner.
- As a team, try to maintain a net position, as that is usually where points are won.
- Hit lobs to make opponents move back from the net.
- Hit to open spaces—spaces don't hit back!



Click the movie icon to see the All Positions Doubles drill in action!

FOR GROUP

- **Singles Strategy**—Pair players for singles play, and give each player a tactic to work on, such as hitting deep and recovering to the center of the court after each shot or moving the opponent from one side of the court to the other side. Offer feedback about the strategies being practiced and the points being played on each court.
- **All Positions Doubles**—Position four players in the four starting positions of doubles—Server, Server's Partner at service line, Returner, and Returner's Partner at the net. The Server will start the game with a serve. After the completion of one game, rotate players around the court so each has a chance to play the four positions. Offer feedback about the strategies being practiced and the points being played on each court.



NOTE: For either of these group activities, to help focus on strategy and positioning, players may toss balls rather than hitting balls with racquets.

MATCH PLAY (40–50 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE PLAY)

Pair partners with similar skills for singles and doubles matches during which they can practice skills they have learned. Points are started with a serve, and score is kept using 15, 30, 40, and

Game points. Family and friends can be invited ahead of time to support players and celebrate after the matches.

COOL-DOWN STRETCHES (3–5 MINUTES)

With the guidance of a therapist(s), select the appropriate movements from within the Static Stretches section starting on page 13.

TENNIS TAKE-AWAY AND HOME PRACTICE

Review the differences between the singles and doubles games.

Distribute community tennis resources so players have information on how to stay involved in tennis. Encourage players to keep playing, and perhaps, to help others learn to play.

ADAPTATIONS FOR INJURIES

- **Traumatic Brain Injury**—Players with TBI, who are experiencing fatigue, may play fewer games in a set or just one set to determine the winner.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**—Be sensitive to whether fan and other background noise are disturbing players with PTSD. Also, be sensitive to players who may have a fear of crowds.
- **Amputation/Prosthesis**—Players with a prosthetic device may play matches on 36- or 60-foot courts or 42-foot courts (service courts).
- **Spinal Cord Injury**—Wheelchair tennis allows for two bounces, including on the service return, instead of one bounce.

RESOURCES

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES



WARM-UP ACTIVITIES

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select any of the following Warm-Up Activities for use within the practice sessions within this curriculum.

- **Body rotation**—Players rotate their trunk to the left by grabbing the back of the chair with their left hand and the left wheel with their right hand. Repeat on opposite side.

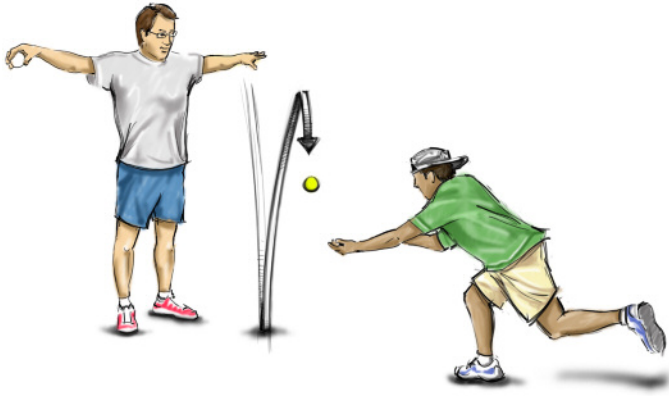


- **Tag**—Players line up outside doubles lines, which are the “Safe Areas.” A player is positioned within the doubles court, in which other players can be tagged as they move from one doubles sideline to the other. All tagged players become “Taggers” until all players are tagged and game is over.
- **Power Push**—Players push from sideline to center service line and back as many times as possible within 30 seconds. Repeat this sequence five times with 30-second rest intervals. The warm-up can be changed to increase the distance by pushing from sideline to sideline. Players use outside turns (See Practice Session 2) throughout the drill.



WARM-UP ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- **Ball Drops**—Coach stands at service line, holding a ball in each hand out to side. When ball is released, players push as fast as possible to reach and catch the ball with their racquet after just one bounce.



- **0–1–2 Timing**—Coach standing at net tosses a ball while calling out “Zero” (for no bounce), “One” (for one bounce), or “Two” (for two bounces). Players move to ball—either to catch or hit it with racquet—while adjusting mobility, timing, and judgment.
- **Side Shuffle**—Players shuffle their feet side to side a few times and then back to their starting position.
- **Jog in Place**—Players gently jog in place for 30 seconds.
- **Pass the Tennis Ball**—Players pass a tennis ball around their waist 10 times, then around their left leg 10 times, and finally around their right leg 10 times.

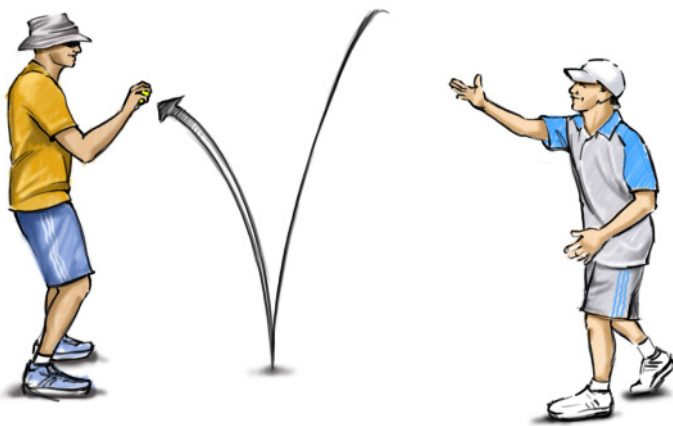
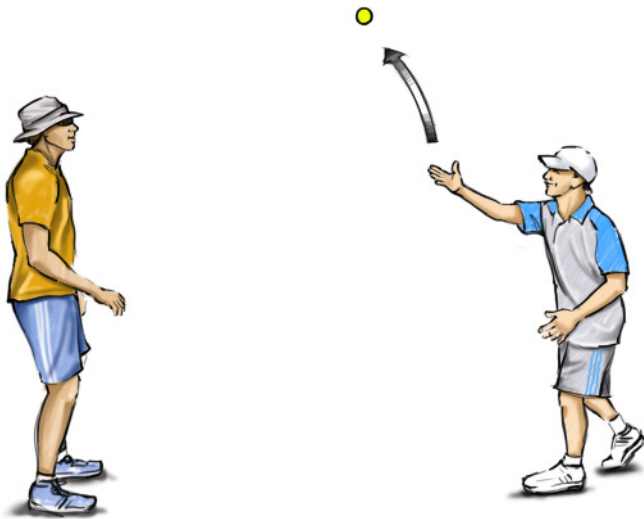


WARM-UP ACTIVITIES *(CONTINUED)*

MODERATELY RESTRICTED MOBILITY (AMPUTATION/PROSTHETIC DEVICE)

Some of the exercises above, plus...

- **Walk in Small Circle**—Players walk in a small circle where they are standing.
- **Toss and Catch**—Position two players a few feet from each other. One player tosses the ball underhand so it bounces on the ground; the other catches the ball with one hand, fingers pointing up. Complete at least 10 catches for each player.



RESOURCES

DYNAMIC STRETCHES



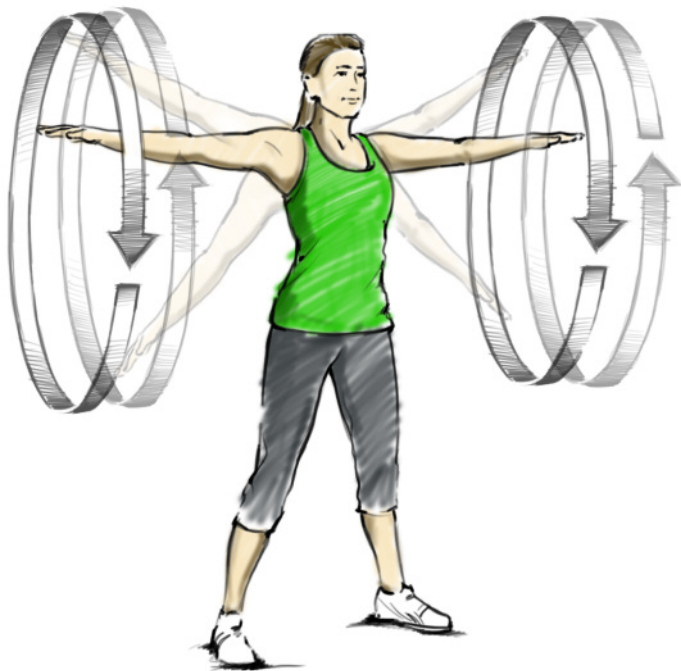
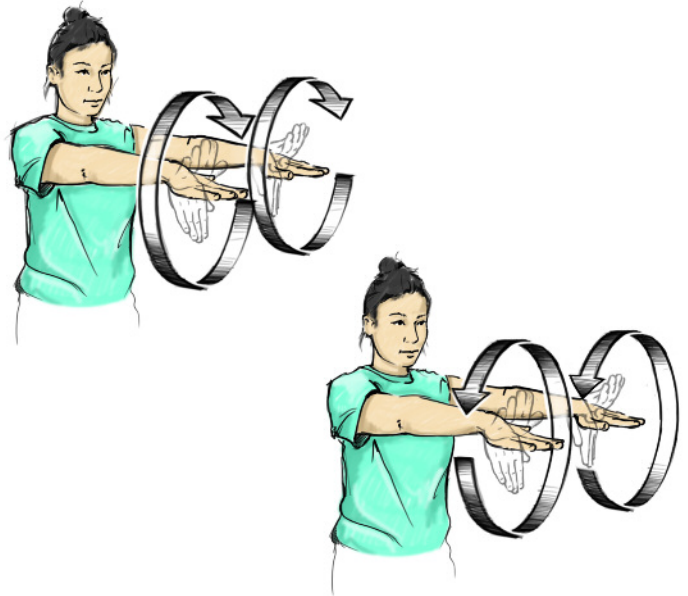
DYNAMIC STRETCHES

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select any of the following Dynamic Stretches for use within the practice sessions within this curriculum.

- **Arm Circles**—Players hold both arms, with palms facing down, out to their side at shoulder height. Rotate both arms in small forward circles 10 times. Players next rotate arms in small backward circles for 10 times.



- **Wrist Circles**—Players hold both arms, with palms facing down, out in front of their body at shoulder length. Rotate both wrists in clockwise circles, using full range of motion to feel a slight stretch in forearm muscles. Complete 10 clockwise circles, and then perform 10 counterclockwise circles.



RESOURCES

STATIC STRETCHES

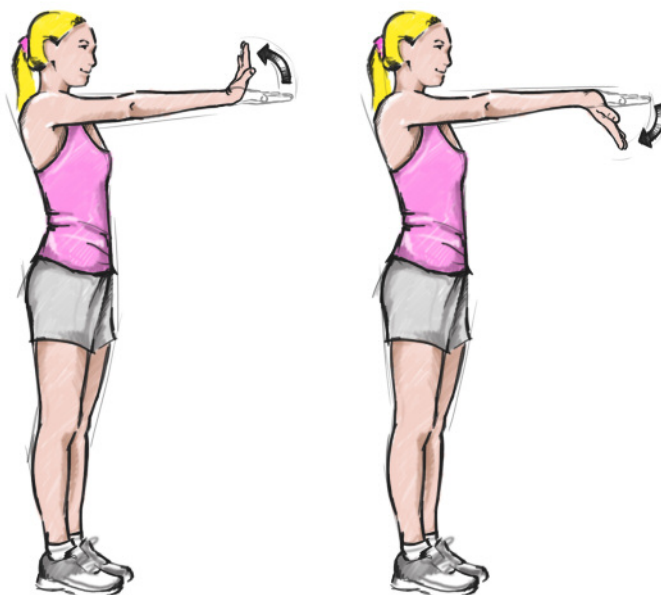
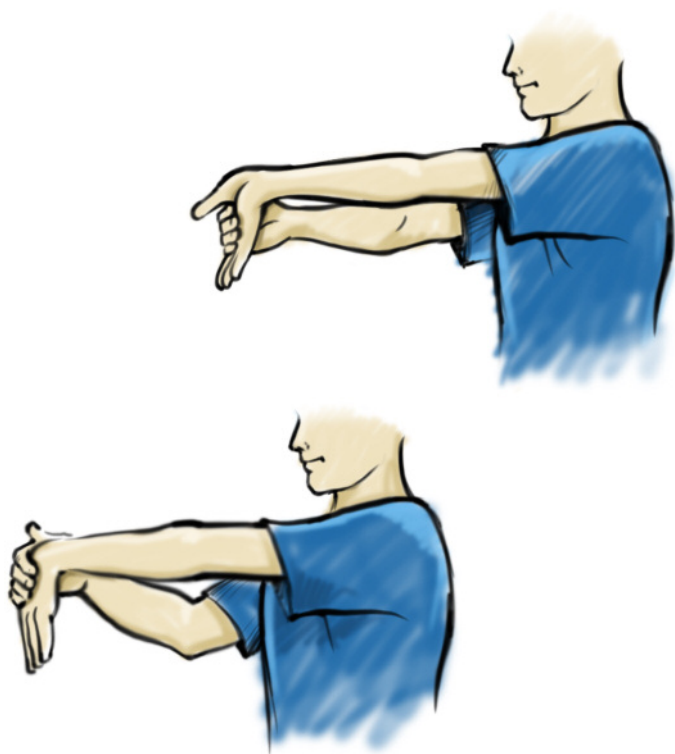


STATIC STRETCHES

With the guidance of a therapist(s), if needed, select any of the following Static Stretches for use within the practice sessions within this curriculum.

- **Forearm Stretch**—Players extend their left arm straight in front of them with palm up. Using their right hand, players gently stretch back their left wrist. Next, players turn their palm down and gently stretch their wrist downward. Complete 10 repetitions with left hand and then have players switch to right hand for 10 more stretching repetitions.

- **Wrist Flexion and Extension**—Players hold both arms, palms facing up, out in front of their body at shoulder length. Using complete range of motion, players flex wrists by bending the hands toward the body. Then extend wrists by bending hands away from the body. Complete 10 repetitions for flexing and extending wrists.

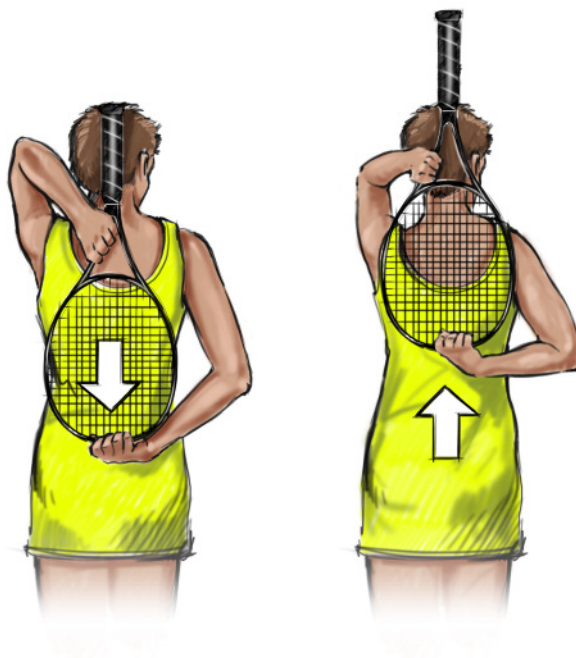


STATIC STRETCHES (CONTINUED)

- **Shoulder Stretch**—Players take their right arm and pull it across their body by crooking their left arm to hold it in place. The right hand is on the left side of the body. Repeat on opposite side.



- **Shoulder Stretch**—Using their left hand, players hold their racquet by the throat (see Skills Definitions in Practice Session 1) behind their back. The racquet head (see Skills Definitions in Practice Session 1) should point down. Players use their right hand to slowly pull the racquet head down, which brings their left elbow to their ear and pointing up. Then players slowly pull up with their left arm, pointing their right elbow down. Complete 10 repetitions of stretch.



STATIC STRETCHES *(CONTINUED)*

- **Calf Stretch**—Players extend their left leg behind them while keeping their right leg forward. The back leg should be kept straight with heel on the floor and foot pointing forward. Players first bend the knee of their front leg without arching their back. Players should hold this stretch for 20–30 seconds, then bend their back leg, keeping the weight of their body on their front leg and hold the stretch for 20–30 seconds. Complete 1 repetition of each stretch.



RESOURCES

USTA COMMUNITY TENNIS RESOURCES



USTA COMMUNITY TENNIS RESOURCES

USTA MILITARY OUTREACH

For more information about the USTA Military Outreach effort and programs, visit www.ustafoundation.com/military. For general questions or information, contact military@usta.com.

USTA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATIONS

A USTA Community Tennis Association (CTA) is a volunteer organization that supports or provides programs that promote and develop the growth of tennis in the community. CTAs offer a number of different ways for people to get out and play tennis, and have fun. There are approximately 1,200 CTAs throughout the country. To find an existing CTA in your area, visit <http://vpcweb.usta.com/ctanjtl/>. The locator is at the bottom of the Web page.

USTA WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

The USTA has a number of wheelchair tennis programs throughout the country. To find more information about Wheelchair Tennis or a program near you, e-mail wheelchairinfo@usta.com.

The USTA and its partners offer a variety of programs targeting all ages and skill levels. With our flagship programs, USTA League and USTA Jr. Team Tennis, in addition to competitive tournaments, and adaptive tennis programs for beginners and people with disabilities, there's something for everyone. Visit www.usta.com to learn more.

USTA FACILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

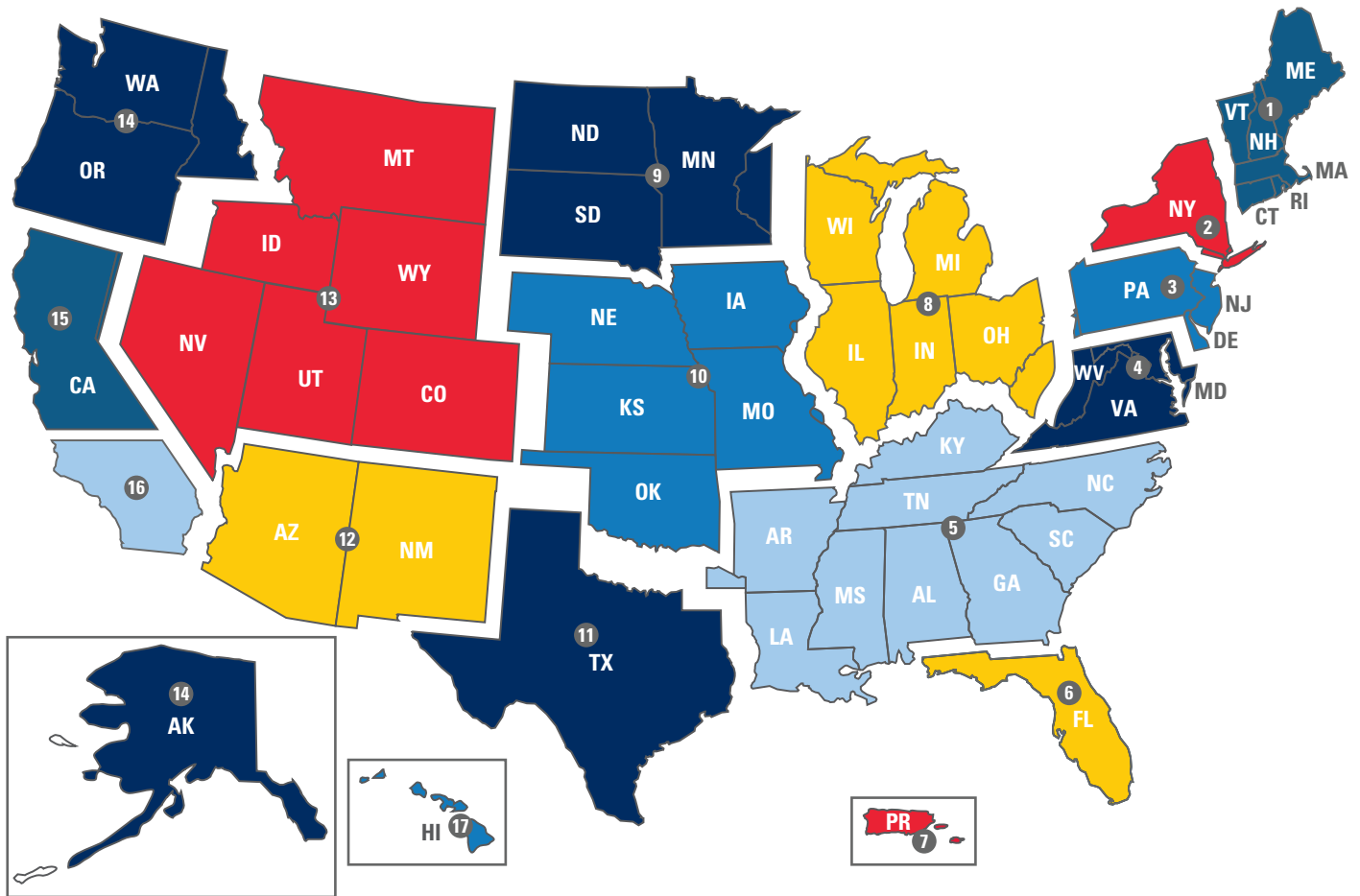
The USTA Facility Assistance Program offers a variety of tools to help a facility build new tennis courts or renovate existing courts. These tools include financial, technical, and advocacy assistance, which can mean anything from building new tennis courts, to repairing existing courts, or painting lines in gyms or on blacktop surfaces. To find out more about the USTA Facility Assistance Program, visit usta.com/facilities or e-mail facilities@usta.com.

RESOURCES

USTA SECTION OFFICES



USTA SECTION OFFICES



1 USTA NEW ENGLAND

newengland.usta.com
(508) 366-3450

2 USTA EASTERN

eastern.usta.com
(914) 697-2300

3 USTA MIDDLE STATES

middlestates.usta.com
(610) 935-5000

4 USTA MID-ATLANTIC

midatlantic.usta.com
(703) 556-6120

5 USTA SOUTHERN

southern.usta.com
(770) 368-8200

6 USTA FLORIDA

usatennisflorida.usta.com
(386) 671-8949

7 USTA CARIBBEAN

caribbean.usta.com
(787) 726-8782

8 USTA MIDWEST

midwest.usta.com
(317) 577-5130

9 USTA NORTHERN

northern.usta.com
(952) 887-5001

10 USTA MISSOURI VALLEY

missourivalley.usta.com
(913) 322-4800

11 USTA TEXAS

texas.usta.com
(512) 443-1334

12 USTA SOUTHWEST

southwest.usta.com
(480) 289-2351

13 USTA INTERMOUNTAIN

intermountain.usta.com
(303) 695-4117

14 USTA PACIFIC NORTHWEST

pnw.usta.com
(503) 520-1877

15 USTA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

norcal.usta.com
(510) 748-7373

16 USTA SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

scta.usta.com
(310) 208-3838

17 USTA HAWAII PACIFIC

hawaii.usta.com
(808) 585-9503

RESOURCES

HEALTH BENEFITS OF TENNIS & MILITARY TERMS AND TIPS



HEALTH BENEFITS OF TENNIS

For more than a century, tennis—the sport for a lifetime—has generated health benefits for a lifetime.

Physical health, including improving and/or maintaining:

- Balance
- Mobility
- Agility
- Flexibility
- Muscle strength
- Cardiovascular fitness
- Sleep facilitation
- Eye-hand coordination
- Weight shifting

Psychological health, including improving and/or maintaining:

- Stress management
- Self-confidence
- Depression management
- Anxiety management

Social health, including improving and/or maintaining:

- Quality of life
- Friendship
- Camaraderie
- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork
- Longevity
- Fun

MILITARY TERMS AND TIPS

ACTIVE DUTY—When being in the military is an individual's full-time job.

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE—An individual who has a regular civilian job but trains with his or her military unit one weekend a month, two weeks a year. When members of the National Guard or Reserve are activated, or mobilized, it means they are called up to active duty to serve.

VETERAN—Any individual who has served in uniform for the military and no longer does so is a veteran. People can have veteran status without having gone to war.

MILITARY BRANCHES—The U.S. Military has five branches: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Only members of the Army are called soldiers. The Navy uses the term sailors; the Marines, marines; the Air Force, airmen; and the Coast Guard, coast guardsmen. Be sure not to use soldier as a catchall for those who are serving or have served in the military.

INJURIES—Not everyone who is injured has been wounded in combat. In addition to combat injuries, veterans and service members may be ill with chronic diseases, have been injured in car accidents, or experienced overuse injuries in the military.

WAR EXPERIENCES—Do not ask veterans or service members if they have ever shot anyone or lost friends in a war. Let them initiate talk about their service.

RESOURCES

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Credit for material to come

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is being named the “signature injury” for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- TBI occurs when a person’s brain is physically injured, usually by a sudden force (i.e., concussive blast or explosion).
- TBI can also be caused by falls, motor vehicle accidents, assaults, or any sudden blow to the head.
- The injury is unique to the individual, much like one’s own signature.
- A concussion is considered a “mild TBI” or “mTBI.”
- A TBI is an “invisible wound”; it is not something seen, such as a scar.

MILD TBI SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Fatigue (mental and physical)
- Headaches (can be triggered by activity, altitude, light, etc.)
- Visual disturbances
- Short-term memory loss
- Poor attention and concentration
- Sleep disturbances
- Dizziness/loss of balance
- Vertigo
- Irritability, emotional disturbances such as outbursts of anger
- Feelings of depression
- Sensitivity to sounds and light (natural and artificial light as well as camera flashes)
- Becoming lost or confused
- Slowness in thinking
- Diminished judgment

MODERATE TBI SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Trouble organizing thoughts
- Easily confused
- Often forgetful
- Difficulty solving problems
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty planning
- Problems with judgment
- Decreased inhibition
- Inability to filter what they are thinking and what they say
- Difficulty describing situations or explaining things
- Speech problems (slow, slurred, difficult to understand)
- Difficulty finding words or forming sentences

SEVERE TBI SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Physical paralysis/spasticity, chronic pain, control of bowel and bladder
- Cognitive difficulties with attention, concentration, distractibility, memory, speed of processing, confusion, perseveration, impulsiveness
- Speech and language—not understanding the spoken word (receptive aphasia), difficulty speaking and being understood (expressive aphasia), slurred speech, speaking very fast or very slow, problems reading, problems writing

TBI ISSUES AND TENNIS PROGRAMS

Players with TBI may need additional adaptations, such as:

- Fatigue from chronic pain, sleep disturbances, and depression. Appropriately timed activities can help tremendously (for example, scheduling activities at certain times of the day or scheduling carefully timed bursts of aerobic activity).
- Slowed thinking; takes longer to process the information. Make sure to have a clear and concise breakdown of skills; don’t overwhelm the TBI player.
- Memory and initiation. Have a properly structured practice session, and implement repetition and review strategies.
- Medications. Ask participants if they have any restrictions regarding exposure to sunlight.
- Emotional behaviors—impulsivity, poor judgment, indecision, and irritability. Simply focus on the task or try redirecting the negative behavior.
- Loss of balance, decreased eye-hand control, feeling nauseated, vertigo, double vision, etc.

RESOURCES

UNDERSTANDING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)



UNDERSTANDING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events, such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults such as rape.

People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged. These symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life.

PTSD SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Inability to function in social or family life and in employment
- Isolation
- Depression
- Hyper-vigilance
- Impatience
- Anxiety/Fight-or-flight reaction
- Aggression/Anger/Outbursts
- Emotional detachment
- Lack of trust
- Sense of entitlement
- Fear of crowded areas
- Reaction to loud noises/Startle reflex
- Flashbacks/Night terrors
- Feelings of guilt/Survivor guilt
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Inability to enjoy activities they once enjoyed
- Failure to show up for activities

RESOURCES

COACHING TIPS
&
FAMILY & FRIENDS CELEBRATION



COACHING TIPS

DO:

- Be upbeat, fun, and positive—**the single most important element of the program is the enthusiasm and attitude of the therapist and/or tennis coach!**
- Build a genuine rapport with players; the success and fun of the program hinges on getting to know individual players, including their physical and mental thresholds.
- Learn and use players' names. Consider having everyone wear name tags for the first Practice Session or if new players/coaches/volunteers are continually joining the Practice Sessions.
- Be sure all new players, coaches, therapists, and volunteers are introduced. NOTE: When introducing people, stay away from mentioning ranks.
- Help players get to know each other by frequently rotating and mixing partners.
- Ask for the assistance of therapists and volunteers as needed.
- Work with a player's therapist to align rehabilitation goals.
- Listen to players and observe their behavior to read body language that gives information about their fatigue, discomfort, and anxiety levels.
- Be flexible regarding players' tennis skills, physical mobility, and mental attitude.
 - Use skill-appropriate equipment to ensure optimum success.
 - Use skill-appropriate drills to keep players engaged, not frustrated.
- Allow wheelchair players two bounces of the ball instead of one.
- Be sensitive to using directional terms such as “stand here” or “take three steps” when working with wheelchair players. Instead, use “start here” and measurements such as “three feet.”
- Be patient. Allow players time to think and process information by waiting 15 to 30 seconds before giving additional instructions. This can be very challenging; however, if players need extra time to think about what has been said, give them the time. Don't be afraid to be quiet while they are processing information.
- Address court/weather conditions.
 - Have water available and take breaks to allow players to hydrate.
 - Remember that warmer weather may cause changes to the fit of a player's prosthetic device; it's a good idea to have seating available for players who may need to make adjustments to their prosthetic.
 - Also be mindful that some amputees may overheat more quickly than other players.
 - Encourage the use of sunscreen, hats, and protective clothing.
 - Remind players with photosensitivity to wear sunglasses, even indoors.
- Involve players as much as possible when demonstrating skills and games.
- Provide positive feedback to players, including pointing out when players are doing something particularly well.
- Coach players while they are engaged in Skills Practice Games and Drills as well as Practice Play.
- Keep players' safety in mind—particularly by removing any balls rolling near players' feet or positions and by giving players enough room to swing their racquet without hitting anyone.
- Players with PTSD often know their triggers, so coaches may want to ask, “Is there anything you wish to share that will help me make the program more comfortable and fun for you?” Don't force them to play if they are not ready yet. Start them playing in a small group, ideally with people they know, in order to diminish stress and anxiety.
- Players with TBI and/or PTSD have difficulty tolerating loud noises, so it is best to not play music to liven up games and drills. However, if your program does not include players with these injuries, they may enjoy music during the session. Always carefully monitor the volume of the music and the players carefully. Keep instructions as simple as possible for players with TBI by giving one- or two-step commands.
 - One-step command: “Follow through.”
 - Two-step command: “Watch the ball. Follow through.”
- Because players with PTSD and TBI are often very sensitive to loud noises, before introducing the Practice Session skills, offer a “lay of the land” to acquaint players with their surroundings, such as a busy road nearby with loud traffic noise or ongoing construction near the tennis program site. This information will help to guard against any surprises or unexpected circumstances for players.
- Players with PTSD and TBI often have significant trust issues. Try to maintain the same coaches and volunteers during each Practice Session. This will help players to establish a rapport and to build trust. If the tennis program involves weekly changes in volunteers, be sure to make players aware that they will see new volunteer faces each week. If possible, try to link coaches and volunteers with the greatest continuity in the program with the PTSD and TBI players.
- Remember that adaptations for players with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder are more about adjustments to how information is presented, while adaptations for players with prosthetic devices or spinal cord injury are more about adjustments to tennis technique.
- Encourage family members and friends to become involved with the program as players and as practice partners between program sessions.

COACHING TIPS

DON'T:

- Overteach or use difficult and technical language when explaining skills—**the primary goal is for players to have fun!**
- Assume all games and drills are appropriate for all players.
- Allow players to feel demeaned using equipment adaptations. Be sensitive to the fact that some players may view red balls and shorter racquets and courts as solely for children.
- Suggest activities that players are not able to engage in.
- Ask questions about players' combat experience.
- Engage in inappropriate conversation with players, such as personal and political opinions.
- Take players' aggressive or rude behavior personally.
- Walk up behind players who are unaware of your presence.
- Put players in situations (such as playing loud music) that could trigger negative behavior.
- Persist in having players try an activity when they don't feel comfortable doing so.
- Assume you know what is best for players.
- Push players to interact socially with others.
- Say "I know how you feel" to players.
- Tell players to "be tough."
- Be afraid of a few moments of silence.

FAMILY & FRIENDS TENNIS CELEBRATION

The last session of the tennis program opens up another opportunity to involve players' families and friends in a fun celebration of activities and food. They can take part in tennis games or activities as well as cheer on players. This is also a great opportunity to showcase tennis as a fun and healthy sport.

Recruit volunteers, family members, and friends to bring some type of refreshment or lunch food as well as to help with the setup of activities and food area. Also, contact the local USTA Section Office or a nearby Community Tennis Association to see whether staff or volunteers can help with tennis activities, information, games, and/or prizes.