International Tennis Federation
Play Tennis Manual

PLAY+STAY

SERVE·RALLY·SCORE

Introduction

In modern day coaching one of the primary roles of the coach is to organise players to play tennis. In the case of starter players this means getting them to serve, rally and score from the first lesson. The coaches' ability to teach technique is not as important in starter tennis as their ability to communicate, to entertain and to organise the lesson. It is important that the coach uses the appropriate ball, racket and court size to set up activities and practices that ensure players are serving, rallying and scoring and having fun. In many cases this will involve coaches introducing tennis to children and adults using one of the slower red orange and green balls on a reduced court with smaller rackets for young children.

The first lesson should be both active and entertaining for the players and whilst teaching technique remains important, the ITF recommends that coaches focus first on getting players playing the game and give the necessary and relevant technical and tactical instructions to help the players to play the game even better.

This manual has been produced by the ITF Development Department, and is designed for coaches and teachers who are involved in introducing adults and children to tennis. It provides practical coaching information on how to effectively work with groups of starter players. A key objective of the International Tennis Federation and its "Marketing of the Game" project is to increase tennis participation and it is hoped that this information will help coaches worldwide to increase tennis participation in their respective countries.

This manual has been written for those who are or who would like to work with groups of starter players. Such players could be in Mini Tennis, junior or adult groups. The course and this manual is suitable for:
• Existing coaches who would like more ideas on how to organise and teach starter players using a game-based approach
• Teachers, assistants and volunteers who have little or no experience in coaching, but who would like to know how to introduce tennis to starter players in a stimulating way so that players are able to learn how to serve, rally and score

The manual has been designed to support the syllabus of the ITF 'Play Tennis' course and provides information on:
• Group organisation - How to set up creative and stimulating game-based practices which will help starter and recreational players to improve their ability whilst playing the game
• Communication skills
• Adapting exercises/tasks to ensure success
• Organising and running different types of competitions for starter players including how to use the ITF's International Tennis Number (ITN) and its on-court assessment to assess players as a means of encouraging them to play and compete more often at an appropriate level

The ITF Play Tennis course has been designed as a course which National Associations can use to help introduce ideas on how to use a game-based approach with starter players. It could be used in different ways:
• As an introductory course for those who would like to go on to attend an ITF or national Level 1 coaches course
• As a short course for teachers, assistants and volunteers who wish to gain ideas on how to introduce tennis to starter players
• As a short course for coaches who wish to gain ideas on how to use a game-based approach to help run stimulating lessons for starter players

We hope that the course and this accompanying manual will assist ITF member nations to educate more coaches and to provide these coaches with the skills necessary to effectively introduce and retain more players in this great game of tennis.

Serve, Rally and Score...and enjoy this "Play Tennis" manual.

Contents

Section 1 – THE SKILLS OF THE COACH

In this section, you will learn about:
• Why people play tennis
• The role of the coach
• Verbal and visual communication skills
• Varying communication styles for different players
• Different communication styles
• Effective questioning
• Organising groups of players, including ideas for rotations of different group sizes
• Feeding when working with groups of starter players

Why do people play tennis? (FFT, 2004)

1.1. Introduction

Tennis is one of the most popular sports worldwide. There are many reasons why people enjoy tennis:
• competition - many players enjoy tennis as a competitive sport, where they can enter tournaments to play matches. As soon as they can serve, rally and score they are ready to compete
• social - many players see tennis as a great way of meeting other people in a social environment.
• health and fitness - The need to exercise is becoming increasingly important to many people, and many people see tennis as a great way to stay fit and healthy. Once players can serve and rally, tennis provides an excellent workout for all ages.
• game improvement - many players want to improve their game, and will attend coaching lessons to help them to play more effectively
• tennis is great for all ages – people see tennis as a sport they can play whatever their age

Tennis continues to grow. However, in some of the major tennis-playing nations, the numbers of people who play tennis regularly is falling. There are many reasons for this:

• tennis is competing with many other new and exciting pastimes, many of which are easy to achieve success in
• many people find tennis a difficult game to learn, often because the balls used make the game too fast for the basic skills of a starter player. Players at starter level often find it difficult to control the ball, and therefore lack the consistency to develop rallying skills
• some coaches take a very technical approach to teaching tennis. This makes the game less interesting to learn, with players often standing around instead of playing. It also makes it less relevant to starter players who would rather learn to rally at a level that suits them, rather than to try to learn techniques which they may never master
• increasing numbers of people lead busy lives, where the time required to play tennis has to be squeezed into a hectic lifestyle. More work is needed to modify the way in which tennis is organised and promoted in order to suit busy lifestyles
• people who wish to develop their fitness and to lead a healthy lifestyle are often attracted to other activities and sports.

It is therefore clear that all players have their own needs and reasons for choosing to play tennis. However, it is vital that all coaches are aware of these needs. The ITF recognises that more needs to be done by coaches to make tennis attractive and accessible for all potential players, and that tennis has to adapt to suit the customer in the market both in terms of how it is introduced and in how new players are retained.

1.2. The role of the coach

In modern day coaching the job of the coach is to get the players to play tennis (serve, rally and score) as soon as possible. Once they are playing, relevant tactical and technical instruction can be given to help them to play the game better.

The coach has a key role to play in ensuring that all players continue to enjoy playing tennis, and to try to encourage more players to take up tennis as a sport. The coach is often responsible for setting up and running programmes for players.

The coach could therefore be required to perform a number of different roles, including:
- coaching players
- designing, advertising and promoting the programme, courses and events
- organising tournaments
- customer care - liaising with players or club members
- budgeting - managing the finances in a club

However, the role of coaching players is the primary responsibility of the coach, and here too, a wide range of skills is required. Successful coaches who keep players in the game and are able to encourage new players to take up tennis are:

- animators and entertainers, who can generate a sense of excitement and enjoyment in every tennis lesson
- good communicators, who can explain tasks and demonstrate specific aspects of the game in a simple, relevant and interesting way to players
- organisers, who can set up activities and practices, ensuring that everyone is active and that they understand what to do and how to do it. This will involve working with groups of players, where the ability to rotate players efficiently and to give them different tasks and challenges (often by using slower balls and smaller courts) becomes a key skill
- teachers, who understand how people learn, how to create a positive learning environment through a variety of different methods, and how to ensure that everyone feels a sense of achievement through playing tennis
- motivators/stimulators, who can give encouragement and stimulate players to continue to enjoy playing and learning

These skills used effectively will ensure that tennis is introduced more effectively and that starter players are 'playing tennis'….. serving, rallying and scoring from the first lesson.

1.3. Learning and coaching

Learning is the process of change of behaviour or increase in knowledge. In a more intense form, it is also the memorisation of information (Rogers, 2000). In a tennis context, this may mean memorising information (eg the rules of the game) but more importantly the memorisation of actions (eg technique of a low to high swing).

Coaches need to understand:
- how people learn
- how to communicate and create an environment where people can learn more easily
- how to vary communication to suit the different players and the different ways in which people learn

1.4. Learning 'laws' (Elderton, 2001)

i) There are three 'Learning laws' that every coach should know:

- students learn in different ways. Every individual learns in a unique way. We all take in, order and remember information differently.
- students learn at different speeds. Every individual also processes information at different speeds. Some assimilate new information quickly. Others understand right away but take time to coordinate movement. Understanding that all learners go through three different stages will help you speed students through the process to using their skills successfully in matchplay.
- students require a desire to learn. Each individual has their own reasons for participating in tennis. Sometimes, like in the case of junior lessons, a child may not even want to be there. Regardless of age, a coach should not expect commitment from the beginning. First, an environment must be created to stimulate and entice a student to participate. Next, the coach adds emotional and intellectual reason to stir up motivation. At some point, motivation must switch from external (from the coach, parents etc) to internal (the player wants to participate on their own). Commitment is the final step and can only come from the individual.

ii) How the Learning 'Laws' could be applied to coaching starter players

Learning 'Laws'	Implications for the coach	Practical application for groups of starter players
1. students learn in different ways	1. communicate visually in different ways 2. communicate verbally in different ways	1. use abundant demonstrations 2. use different coaching styles 3. give clear instructions, using variations in tone, volume and emphasis 4. let people learn by doing. Aim to maximise activity time, and reduce time spent talking, explaining and demonstrating.
2. students learn at different speeds	1. recognise when players are ready to progress or regress – optimal challenge 2. coach needs to know how to differentiate tasks	1. know how to stimulate players – use faster balls, larger courts or modified rules to help them do this 2. differentiate activities (different balls, court sizes or rules) so that each player is playing at a level suited to their ability
3. students require a desire to learn	1. stimulate players 2. motivate players 3. players may start to show greater commitment	1. know how to help players achieve success – use slower balls, smaller courts or modified rules to help them do this 2. teach tactics – help players to learn how to play the game 3. teach players how to serve, rally and score, ideally in the first lesson 4. teach appropriate simple techniques to help players to play the game better

Figure 1- The 'Learning Laws' and starter players

**Essential coaching skills**

1.5 Communication

It has already been stated that coaches should be good communicators, who can set up and explain tasks and demonstrate specific aspects of the game in a simple, relevant and interesting way to players. Good communication requires an understanding of the Learning 'Laws' shown in the previous section. It is also important for coaches to recognise that effective communication between coach and player addresses 3 integrated issues: what, why and how – what the player is to do, why they should do so, and how they should do it (Young, 2006).

People learn by seeing (visual), hearing (auditory) and feeling/doing (kinaesthetic). However, every person learns using different amounts of these three qualities. When coaches are giving instructions, effective coaching will involve:
• many demonstrations, showing actions, tasks or drills
• some explanation, using clear words
• many opportunities to practice the skill

Every human being is different, and the extent to which each person relies on hearing, seeing and doing will vary. This means that whilst one person may learn best by being told what to do, another may need to see what to do first. However, it is clear that all players need to practice in order to improve, rather than just watching or listening.
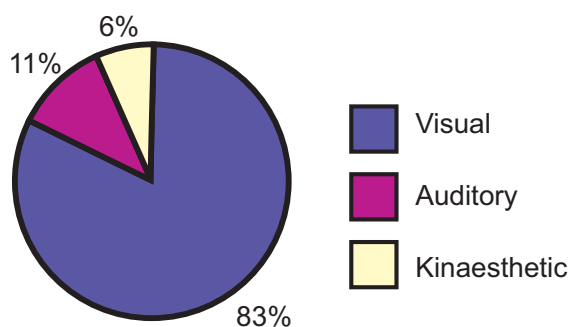
Communication skills are a fundamental skill for all coaches. The ability to teach, organise, animate and stimulate rely entirely on the ability of the coach to communicate. Communication can be:
• verbal, where information and feedback is given by speaking, where players learn by being told or by answering questions
• non-verbal, where information and feedback is given by use of demonstrations, body language, signals and gestures

Figure 2 - How people learn (ITF, 1998)

It is important for coaches to learn how to communicate effectively, so that the task is clearly received and understood. This can be done by:

• finding a position where everyone can see and hear. It is also preferable to find a position where there are no distractions behind the speaker, so that the audience can focus on what is being said or shown
• waiting until the audience is concentrating and ready to listen or watch. This is called engaging the audience.
• keeping the explanation or demonstration brief, so that everyone is able to concentrate
• asking questions to test understanding

It is often advisable to further test understanding by getting one of the students to demonstrate the the task or instruction.

1.6. Verbal communication

A large amount of the verbal information which we receive every day is forgotten. It is important that coaches ensure that information given to players is not only simple, but also of high quality, and therefore easier to remember. Players are more likely to take in information if the coach sounds interesting and interested. This can be achieved by:

• making sure that everyone is paying attention, and ready to receive information.
• varying volume and tone, to emphasise key words or phrases
• speaking slowly and clearly, leaving occasional pauses
• using words which players understand. This means simplifying language if speaking to young children, and avoiding slang or technical terms which people may not understand
• asking questions, which make the audience think about the information being given

1.7. Non-verbal communication – demonstrations and body language

People generally remember more of what they see. Demonstrations of tasks and instructions are vital for starter players, who can then watch and imitate the coach.

Non-verbal communication is therefore an important skill for coaches. Visual communication includes:
• demonstrations, which can be used to show people how to perform a particular skill, such as playing a forehand groundstroke, or how to perform a particular drill or practice.
• body language, which gives an indication of how we feel. Positive body language is an important way of motivating players and creating enjoyment in coaching sessions.

Examples of good body language include:
• smiling and showing enjoyment for coaching and for tennis
• hand signals or gestures to show that a player has achieved a task
• a relaxed but alert posture, looking energetic, interested and animated

1.8. Different communication styles

Coaches will communicate in of 2 main ways:
• direct (often known as command style), where the coach makes the decisions and gives all the instructions. Whilst this is often well suited to working with young children, it allows little opportunity for players to think independently
• discovery (also known as cooperative) style, where the coach and player work together to help the player learn

There is no 'best way' of communicating. However, to be more effective, coaches need to communicate in different ways. They will use different styles interchangeably, switching frequently a direct to discovery style and back again.

Direct style	Discovery style
• coach gives instructions and players listen to the coach • coach tells players how a goal will be achieved • skills or activities may be demonstrated • the skills will be practiced in a drill situation first and then perhaps in a game • coach gives feedback to players during and after the drill	• coach may give players a tactical problem to solve. • coach and players discuss how a goal may be achieved • there is no demonstration of the skill, but the coach may demonstrate the task • the skills are learnt in game situations • coach may ask questions to help players solve problems
Advantages: • clear and quick when setting up activities or practices, dealing with large numbers or to highlight safety issues • Simple to use with players who lack experience to solve problems Disadvantages: • does not encourage the player to think or reflect • makes it harder for the coach to know what the player knows	Advantages: • encourages players to solve problems within the game • helps players make simple tactical decisions • good for longer-term learning Disadvantages: • can make players feel uncomfortable if they are not used to making decisions or answering questions • may take longer to get to the solution

Figure 3 - Directed and discovery styles

Remember too that good coaches combine different verbal communication styles with demonstrations so that players can also see what to do.

Section 5.1 shows a checklist that can be used to evaluate both verbal non-verbal and communication skills.

1.9. Varying communication styles for different types of players

Coaches need to be able to vary their methods of communication according to the knowledge, understanding and maturity of the players. In other words, coaches could vary their communication in the following examples:

Group	Likely style	Issues
A large group of young children in Mini Tennis	largely directed with some discovery	• limited understanding • large group - so little time for discussion • may need direct style to maintain authority • some simple discovery could be used – learning to play the game
A small group of starter juniors	combined directed and discovery	• limited understanding • small group so more time for discussion • may need direct style to compensate for lack of experience • some simple discovery could be used for problem-solving tasks – learning to play the game
A group of starter adults	combined directed and discovery	• limited understanding • discussion is important for customer care • may need direct style to compensate for lack of experience • adults may expect more direct style • some simple discovery could be used for problem-solving tasks – learning to play the game

Figure 4 - Varying communication styles

1.10. Effective questioning

The ability to ask questions is an important skill for coaches using a discovery style. There are two types of questions:
- closed questions, prompting a 'yes' or 'no' answer
  - o eg. "was the serve in?"
- open questions, which require thought and/or description
  - o eg. "where did the serve land?"

Open questions are important because they make the respondent process information and reflect before answering. Open questions are also useful for checking understanding. Effective questioning helps to build independence in the student and to build self-confidence.

Open questions do not allow simple "yes" or "no" answers, which often do not require much thought or reflection. Open questions start with:
- Why? – why did the you miss the shot?
- How? – how could you improve consistency?
- When? – when could you play a lob?
- What/which? – what are your options when your opponent approaches the net?

Closed questions usually start with:
- Did? – did the ball land in the service box?
- Are/is? – are there/is there a time when you would approach the net?

1.11. Organising groups of players

Good coaches have to be good organisers. This means that they are able to work effectively with groups of people, so that everyone is active and understands what they are to do, and how to do it. They can organise large groups of players quickly and efficiently. Coaches need to be able to organise in different situations:

*   organising groups activities such as a warm up or large group activity
*   organising large groups into smaller groups, so that players can work more effectively on a court
*   rotating players so that everyone fulfils a different role. Examples of how to rotate a group of 6 players are shown in Fig. 4
*   organising a group of players for a tournament, where players take it in turns to play and umpire matches

1. Circular rotation – all players move round one space round the court

2. Triangular rotation – all players move round one space at both ends of the court

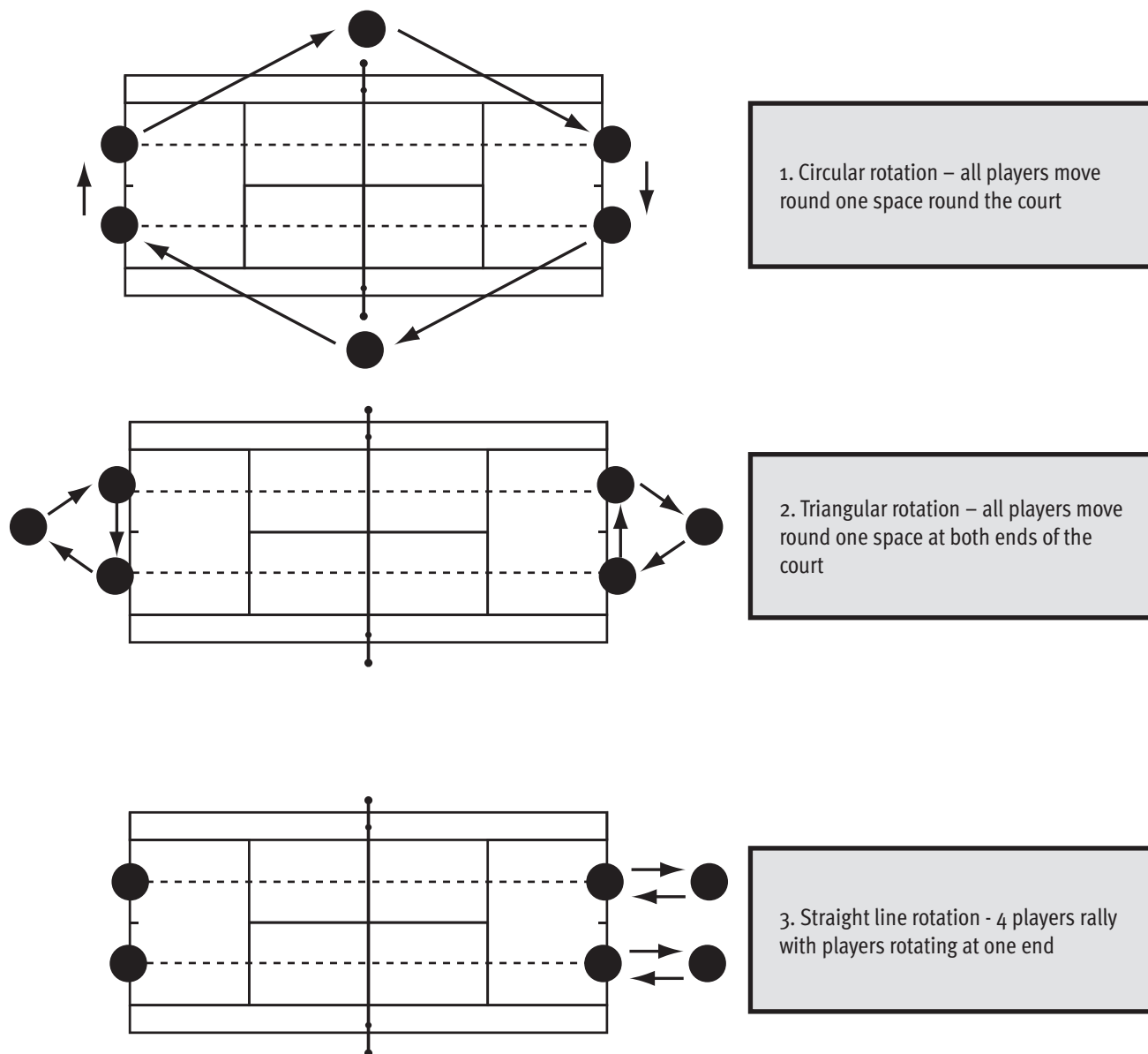3. Straight line rotation - 4 players rally with players rotating at one end

Figure 5 - Methods of rotating a group of 6 players using half courts. Courts could be full size, 18x9m courts, 12x6m or simply using the service boxes. Slower balls can be used to correspond to the abilities of the players.

1.12 Rotating players in a group

Rotations can be organised in different ways:
- Timed – for example, players could play and then rotate every 1 minute, when the coach gives the instruction.
- Task-based – players could rotate when the task set by the coach has been achieved. For example, the task might be for the server and his partner to complete 3 rallies where the players, serve and play out the rally. When the server has served 3 times, the players rotate and the roles are reversed
- Winners and losers – for example, when scoring during the rallies:
  - o   players could rotate when they win the point
  - o   players could rotate when they lose the point
  - o   players could rotate when a player gets to 2 points

Coaches need to be able to organise players quickly, so that everyone is kept busy and challenged. Organisation can be improved by:
- being able to organise and re-organise quickly, so that activity levels are maintained.
- planning in advance. This may mean:
  - o   having a simple session plan which shows all the practices and progressions which will take place in the lesson. A session plan template is given in Section 5.2
  - o   simply taking time to think first before instructions are given
- having strong communication skills, which make it easier to explain and demonstrate how the practice is to be organised.

This can be done by:
  - o   organising the group to perform the task, which ideally involves playing the game, and then
  - o   speaking individually to players and adapting the practices according to individual needs and abilities of players
- being able to recognise if a practice or drill is not working, and being able to re-organise it quickly. For example, two players who find it difficult to start and then maintain consistency in a rally could quickly be given a smaller court and a slower/ softer ball by the coach to help them be more successful

1.13. Feeding when working with groups of starter players

Ideally, coaches should use the correct balls, smaller courts and rackets which will enable starter players to rally with each other.

However, in exceptional circumstances when the player cannot rally, the following progression can be used for feeding:

Organisation skills are very important in good feeding practices.
- Players should be rotated frequently so that every players has a chance to play with the coach, and so that players play with different people.
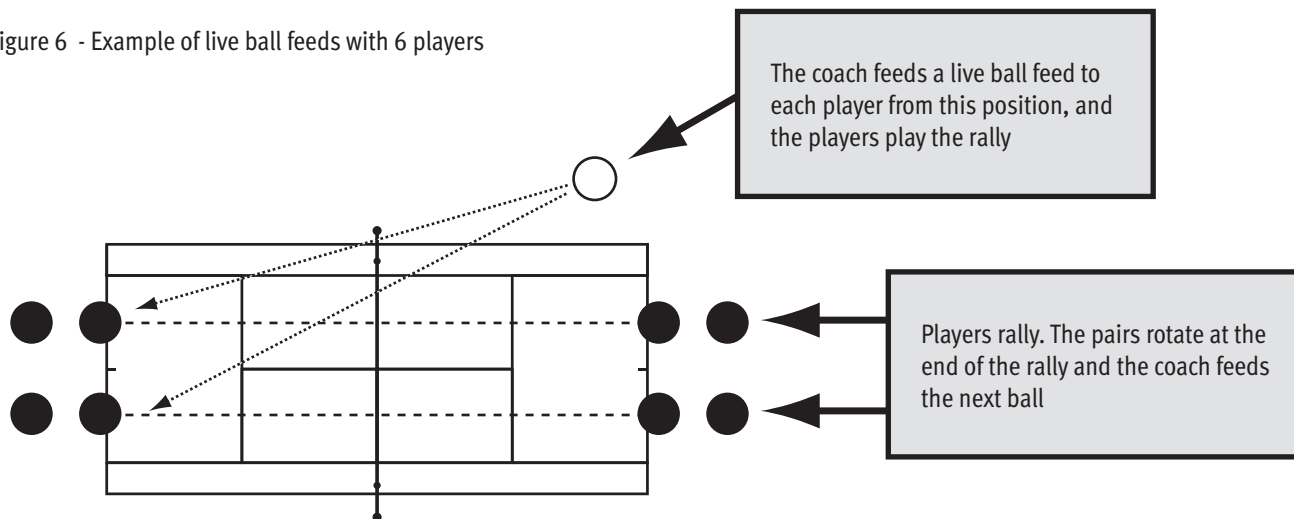- Players must know where to stand when they are waiting, so that accidents are avoided.

- hand feeds – a simple drop or throw with the coach standing near, in front and slightly to the side of the player. This is useful for complete beginners or when working on a correct contact point
- single basket feeds – the coach hits the ball, but does not return that shot. This can be done from the opposite service line or baseline
- rally feeds - the coach hits the ball, and plays the rally with the player. This can be done from the opposite service line or baseline. When feeding from the service line, it is likely that the coach will volley the ball. The feeder should be aware that this can make the task more challenging for the player because there is less time to prepare for the next shot.
- live ball feeds – the coach feeds the ball in for the players to then rally with one another, and to ensure less interruption in the activity

Feeding is an important skill for coaches to master. When working with starter players, the coach should consider the following:
- feed the ball sympathetically so that the player has time to receive the ball
- feed the ball using an appropriate trajectory so that the player has a chance of hitting at a comfortable height
- keep spin to a minimum. Starter players may find it hard to judge the bounce and trajectory of a spinning ball
- give time between each feed, so that the player has time to recover and prepare for the next shot

Good feeding allows the coach to simulate the game situation. For example, if the players are learning to rally from the baseline, the feed can be given from the baseline. However, sometimes the coach may want to stand closer to the player (at the service line) to see more clearly and to speak more easily with the player.

Figure 6 - Example of live ball feeds with 6 players

The coach feeds a live ball feed to each player from this position, and the players play the rally

Players rally. The pairs rotate at the end of the rally and the coach feeds the next ball

1.14. Organising odd numbers

There may occasionally be odd numbers in a group. This creates certain challenges which coaches must be able to overcome. It is important to remember that everyone should be kept busy with purposeful activity during lessons. With odd numbers this means rotating players in different ways. Assuming a group of 5 or 7 players on one court, players could be organised in the ways shown in Figs. 6 and 7.

Information on how to organise a group of mixed abilities is given in Section 2.

1. Straight line rotation - 5 players rally with 2 rotating at one end, either after one point or if the player loses the point, for a maximum of 2 points

2. Triangular rotation at one end–players move round one space at one end of the court. Players rotate after one minute.
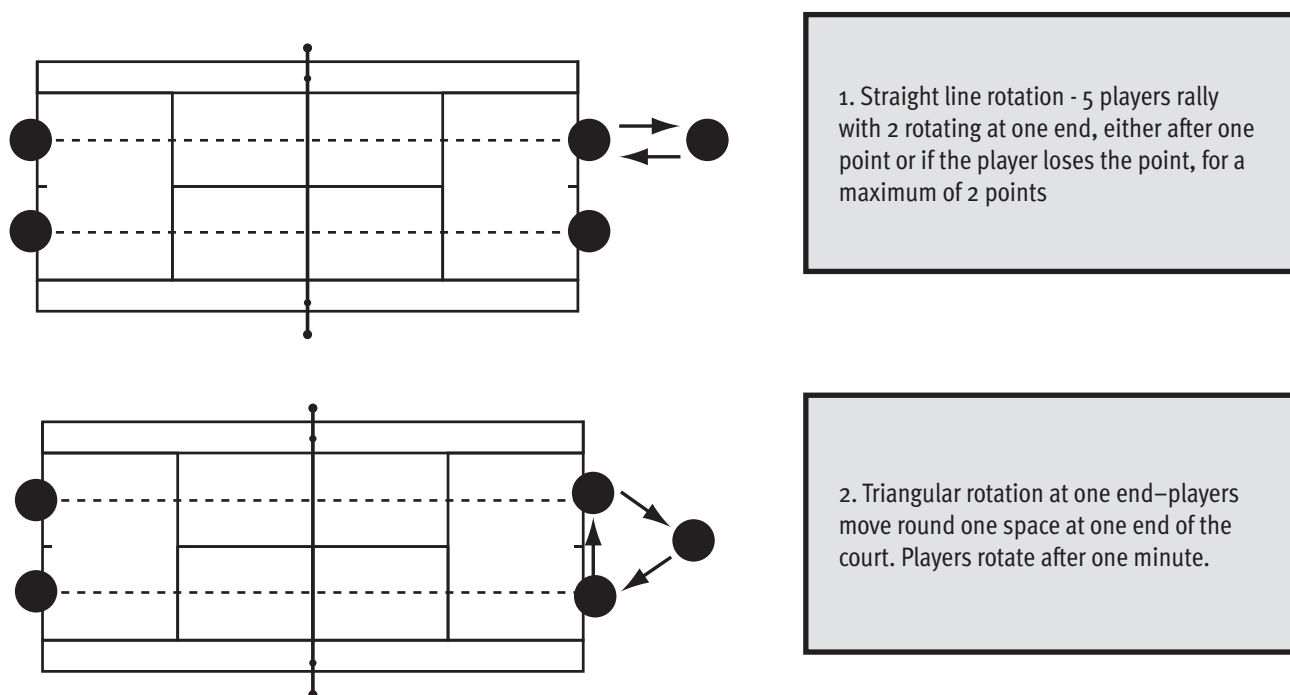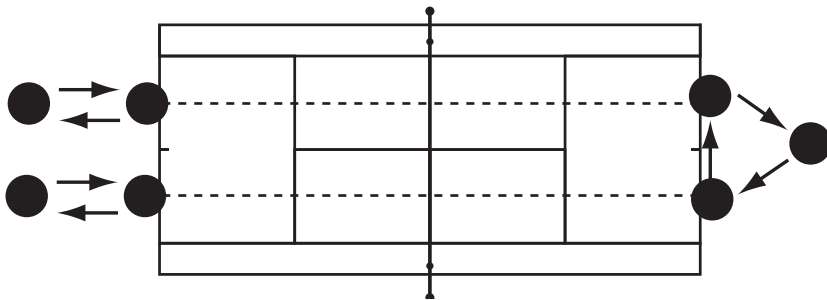
Figure 7: Methods of rotating a group of 5 players using half courts. Courts could be full size, 18x9m courts, 12x6m or simply using the service boxes. Slower balls can be used to correspond to the abilities of the players.

3. Triangular and straight rotations combined –players move round one space at one end of the court, and take alternate turns at the other end. Players rotate after one minute.

Figure 8: Methods of rotating a group of 7 players using half courts.
Courts could be full size, 18x9m courts, 12x6m or simply using the service boxes. Slower balls can be used to correspond to the abilities of the players

Note: for ideas on how to lay out 11m and 18m courts, refer to Section 5.4

Remember that excellent inter-personal skills, communication, organisation and enthusiasm are important factors for starter players. They should not be overlooked. Remember too that players should ideally be given the opportunity to serve, rally and score in their first lesson. Ideas on how to do this are given in Section 2.

Section 2 – CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In this section, you will learn about:
- Game-based coaching
- Creating a stimulating environment
- Optimal challenge
- Adapting the lesson tools to suit the player
- 10-step tennis
- The basic game situations
- Basic tennis tactics
- Differentiation

Game-based coaching

In modern day coaching an important job of the coach is to get the players to play tennis (serve, rally and score) as soon as possible. Once they are playing relevant tactical and technical instruction can be given to help them to play the game better.

It is sometimes easy to forget that to many people, tennis is a game in which they like to play and compete with friends at a club. For most students it is more important for them to play the game than to learn a range of techniques which they might find hard to learn and use effectively when playing the game. Coaches can, however, ensure that tactics and techniques are learnt whilst players hit lots of balls and play the game. By adopting a game-based approach coaches can use the different game situations and the basic tactics of the singles game to help players to learn how to play the game better, whilst learning basic techniques and tactics which are relevant and which help them to be more successful. The different game situations are shown later in this section.

2.1. Creating a stimulating environment

Section 1 emphasised that a key role of the coach is to stimulate and motivate players to play the game. Players will be stimulated by sessions containing enjoyment, continuous activity, variety of practices and a feeling of improvement and the ability to succeed. The absence of these factors in sessions are key reasons which players often give for not continuing to play tennis.

It is therefore imperative that coaches understand that all players are different in their abilities and needs. These differences may be caused by:
- playing experience
- age
- physical characteristics such as coordination, movement, agility and strength

As a consequence, starter players may find tennis a difficult game to play, because of the speed of the ball. Children may have additional challenges caused by their lack of size in relation to the size of the court which they need to cover, the height of the bounce of the ball and their lack of strength in being able to control the racket.

2.2. Keys to success with starter players

Starter players often find playing on a full court with a normal ball very difficult, due to the size of the court, speed of the ball, height of the bounce and lack of consistent technique to control the ball. Because of these factors, coaches should aim to change the playing environment for starter players in order to help them achieve the objective of being able to play a game (serve, rally and score) as soon as possible. This objective is recognised as a fundamental objective of the game-based approach. Critical factors in helping to simplify the game are:
- The type of ball used
- The size of the court
- The teaching approach which is used
- The rules, which can be adapted to provide the optimal challenge
- Choosing a cooperative or competitive element to the practice

If starter players cannot serve, rally and score, a softer ball can be used. This allows players more time to receive the ball, and makes the technique easier because the bounce is lower. The ITF endorses a 3-step progression which uses different court sizes and slower balls.

i) The ball and the size of the court

The playing environment can also be modified by changing the size of the court. Shorter courts mean that players do not need so much strength to hit the ball, and can therefore rally with more control. Narrower courts mean that the distance to be covered is reduced, which can allow the player to reach more balls and to be more balanced when playing the shot.
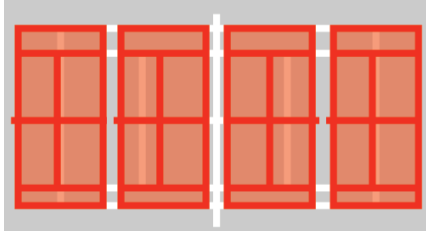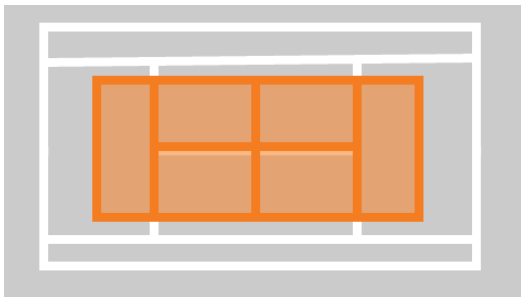
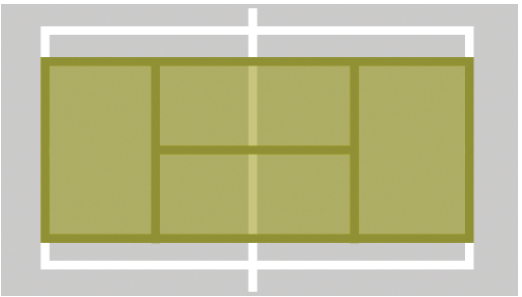|			
	Red/Stage 3 - ideal for Mini Tennis • Sponge and low compression balls, used on a 11m(36ft) court • Recommended racket size: 41-48cms (16-19 inches) • Starter children aged 5 to 8 and adult introduction		Red 11 metre (36ft) courts with red ball. Court width 5-6m (16-19ft)
	Orange/Stage 2 – 50% slower and ideal for starter players, of all ages • Low compression balls for starter players of all ages, used on an 18m (60ft) court • Recommended racket size: 53-58cms (21-23 inches) • Starter adults and children aged 7-11		Orange 18 metre courts with orange ball. Court width 6.5-8.23m (21 27 ft)
	Green/Stage 1 – 25% slower and ideal for an introduction to the full court • low compression balls for starter players of all ages, used on a full sized court • Recommended racket size: 63-68cms (25-27 inches) • Starter adults and children aged 8-15		Green Full court with green or normal ball

Figure 9: Different balls and court sizes

The ITF recognises that in some parts of the world it is not always possible to have a range of different balls which allow starter players to progress from one ball to another. However, it is important that coaches working with starter players use at least one type of slower ball as a means of introducing starter players to the game.

When players can serve, rally and score using this slower
ball on a smaller court, then they can be moved to a bigger court, and eventually to a normal ball.

ii) The teaching approach which is used

It is important that starter players are taught how to play a simple game from the very start. This involves using the game-based approach. The Play Tennis course demonstrates how players can be taught to serve, rally and score from their first lesson. During this time, the technique used by the players is less important than the tactical objectives.

"If the ball type was changed, net height and court size would also have to be altered otherwise the [player] may not be able to get the ball over the net or reach the back of the court"(Mitchell and Stanbridge, 2000)

2.3. Optimal challenge

Coaches will generally find that players lose motivation if a task or game is either too simple or too difficult. If the task is too easy, players are likely to get bored. If the task is too difficult they are likely to get frustrated. One of the reasons why many starter players do not pursue further tennis opportunities is because they perceive tennis as a difficult game to play. The task of the coach is to find the level of optimal challenge, which ensures that the task is neither too easy nor too difficult for the player.

It is important to realise that success in being able to play the game will result in greater self-confidence in starter players. This will encourage them and make it easier for them to arrange to play with other players outside of coaching sessions, which in turn will accelerate their learning.

A coach will recognise when players have exceeded their level of optimal challenge because:
• they are able to maintain consistency too easily
• they are not being required to move very much
• they are able to win too many points against the opponent

Coaches might use the following methods to adapt or change the practice and change the level of optimal challenge:
• increasing or reducing the court size
• changing to a faster or slower ball
• changing the rules of the practice to require more or less movement
• changing the scoring to make the practice more motivating
• feeding a more challenging or easier ball
• pairing them with a better or weaker player
• making the practice a cooperative one rather than a competitive one

2.4. Adapting equipment and the lesson to suit the player

It is important that coaches are able to adapt the playing environment to suit the abilities and needs of the player. This can mean changing:
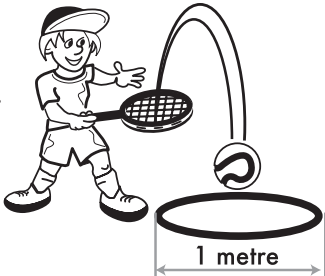• the ball, to make the game slower and to reduce the height of the bounce
• the court (length and/or width), to reduce the area to be covered, and to allow players to maintain control by not having to try to hit the ball too hard
the rules, in order to simplify the game or practice.

10-step tennis (Tennant, 2005)   The 10-step rally for starter players

10-step tennis is a progression of ten easy steps which can enable starter players with no experience to be able to develop rally skills very quickly. By the end, every player is able to serve, return, rally and score in a small court.
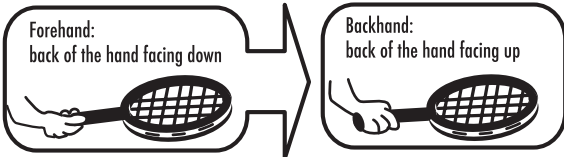
① **Self-Rally.**

- Player marks out a 1 metre circle on the court.
- Tap the ball up to head height to make it bounce in the circle.
- Ball should be hit upwards using an open racket face with a smooth low-to high. Follow through should follow the ball.
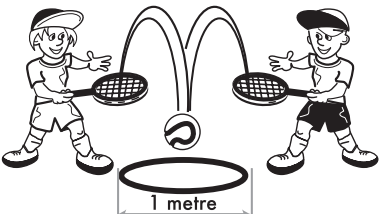
1 metre

② As ① but with back of the hand facing up (backhand).

- Progress to alternate sets of 5 using forehand and backhand.
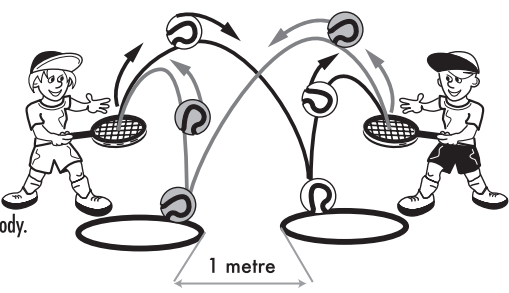- Emphasise hitting upwards and contacting the ball in front and to the side of the body.

Forehand: back of the hand facing down

Backhand: back of the hand facing up

③ **Rally with a Partner.**

- Players stand 1 metre apart with a circle between them.
- Players take turns to the ball up to head height to make it bounce in the circle. Do 4 sets of 5 with back of the hand facing down (forehand) and 4 sets of 5 with back of the hand facing up (backhand).
- Ball should be hit upwards using an open racket face with a smooth low-to high follow through which follows the ball. Emphasise hitting upwards and contacting the ball in front and to the side of the body.

1 metre

④ - Players stands facing each other with one circle in front of each player, so that the circles are 1 metre apart.
- Players take turns to hit the ball up to head height to make it bounce in each other's circle using the forehand.
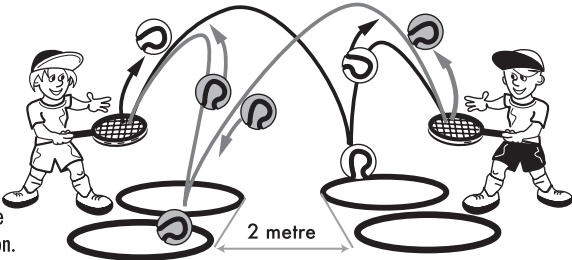
⑤ As ④ but do 4 sets of 5 with the back of the hand facing up (backhand).
- Emphasise hitting upwards and contacting the ball in front and to the side of the body.

1 metre

⑥ As ④ but players have a pair of circles 2 metres apart.
- Players take turns to hit the ball up to head height to make it bounce in the partner's left and right circles alternately.
- Hit the ball upwards using an open racket face. Emphasise hitting upwards and contacting the ball in front and to the side of the body.
- Players may want to use 2 hands to hold the racket on the backhand.

⑦ As ⑥ but players can aim randomly to either circle as they wish.
- Coach should check for balance of the players, hitting upwards, meeting the ball in front & to the side of the body and recovery back to a central position.

2 metre

⑧ As ⑥ with circles 1 metre either side of a simple net (rope, line of cones etc.)
- Coach should check for balance of the players, hitting upwards, meeting the ball in front & to the side of the body and recovery back to a central position.

⑨ As ⑧ but players play over the regular net in a small court 2 metres square rather than using circles. Rallies can initially be cooperative, but could become competitive.
- Coach should set rules to ensure groundstrokes only.
- Start rally with gentle under arm serve.

⑩ As ⑨ but players play in a small court 4 metres square.
- Coach may introduce a gentle overarm serve to introduce the feel of a different contact point.
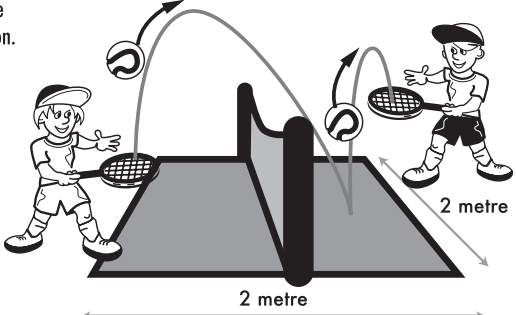
2 metre

2 metre

Figure 10 - 10-step tennis (Tennant, 2005)

2.5. Progressions from the 10-step rally (Tennant, 2005)

When players can serve, rally and score together in a small court using a slower ball, the court can be made larger. The same ball could be used, or a slightly faster ball could be used.

10-step tennis (Tennant, 2005)
From the 10-step rally to the bigger court

As the court gets bigger (longer and wider) the players need to hit the ball a little harder and a little higher over the net. The will also have to move more to play each shot. The following progressions can then be used.

1. players play in a small court measuring 3 metres square. Coach may introduce a gentle overarm serve to introduce the feel of a different contact point.
  a. Small court requires gentle controlled hitting. Contact point will be in front of the body. The swing will be short and should allow good clearance over the net.
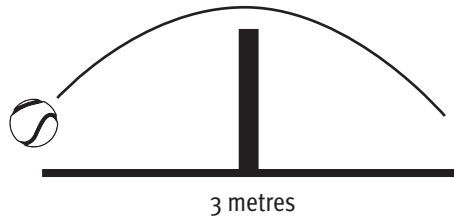
3 metres

2. players play in 1 service box each.
  a. Small court requires slightly bigger swing than for a 3 metre court hitting. Contact point will be in front of the body. The swing will be longer than in 1 and should allow good clearance over the net
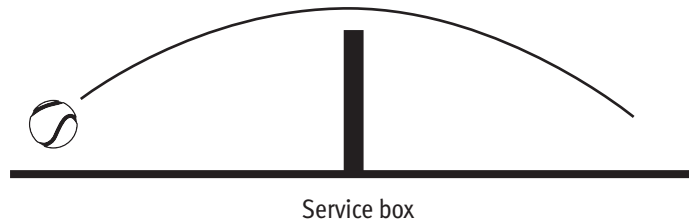
Service box

3. players play in half an 18m court.
  a. 18 metre court requires bigger swing than for service box hitting. Contact point will be in front of the body. The swing will be longer than in 2 and should allow good clearance over the net

18 metres
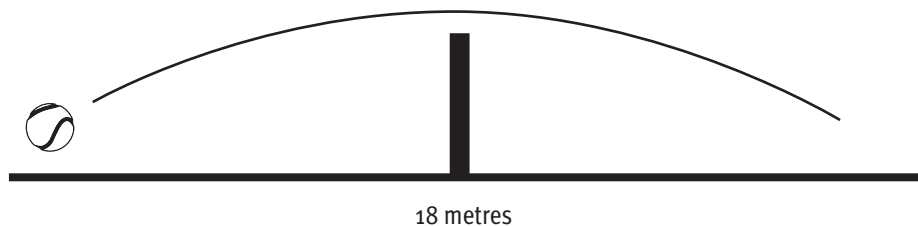
4. players play in half a full length court
  a. Full court requires bigger swing than for 18m court hitting. Contact point will be in front of the body. The swing will be longer than in 3 and should allow good clearance over the net.

Full court

2.6. The basic game situations

It is generally agreed that there are five game situations in singles. However, to simplify the game for starter players, this can be reduced to three.

Observation of 2 players playing a game of singles will show that at any one time, the two players are either:
• serving or returning,
• playing groundstrokes, or
• approaching or at the net, or passing or lobbing the opponent
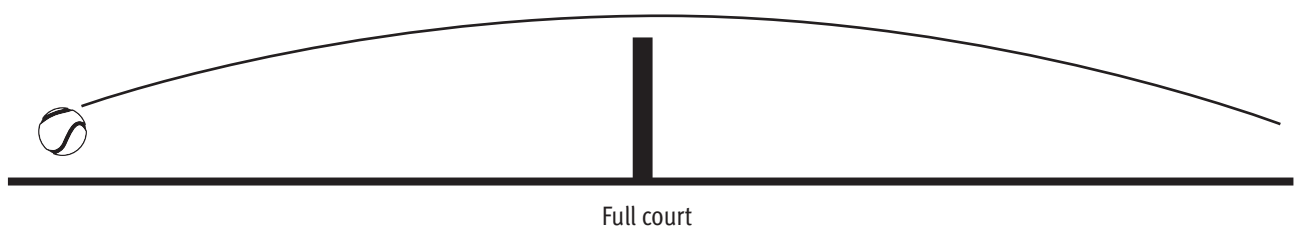
These 3 situations are known as game situations, and can be played on a court of any dimension, using a variety of different balls.

The 3 game situations are important for coaches, because they define the role of the each player at any one time in a match, and therefore make it easier for coaches to identify areas where players are either successful or unsuccessful. In order for players to develop a strong all round game, which allows them to serve and rally with another player, it is important that coaches are able to set up practices which encourage players to play in the different game situations.

Ideas for practices in each of the three game situations are given in Appendices 3 and 4.

2.7. Basic tennis tactics for starter players

Tennis is a tactical game. In addition to the 3 game situations, players will use different tactics to try to win more points. The basic tactics for singles are:
• consistency. This means getting the ball over the net and in the court more often than the opponent
• moving the opponent. This means hitting the ball into court (or into the service box if serving) and then into space to make the opponent move
• maintaining good court position. This means making sure that the opponent is not able to hit the ball into space to make you move
• playing to strengths. Players are more likely to maintain consistency and accuracy if they can use the shots they can play best. For starter players, the forehand is more likely to be a strength that the backhand.
• exploiting the opponents' weakness. Players can win more points by forcing errors from the opponent by making them hit using their weaker side. In many cases with starter players this will be the backhand.

2.8. Differentiation

Differentiation is the ability to adapt the task to the level of the player, ensuring a level of optimal challenge for every player in the group. It involves being able to work with players of different abilities within the same group, so that:
• everyone is working at a level of challenge that is appropriate for their level of play
• everyone is participating in the same activity, but playing with a different level of difficulty

Clearly it is advisable to try to organise groups so that players are of similar standard, but this is not always possible. Coaches working with starter players must therefore be able to run differentiated activities.

A typical group of juniors or adults may have a mix of players where:
• some have experience of tennis, and who can therefore already rally
• some have experience of other sports, but not tennis. These players may be good athletes, and may have experience of other sports. Such players may, for example, have good ball sense
• some players have no experience of tennis or any other sport, and so lack coordination and ball sense
• some players have disabilities

It is very important that the coach is able to organise activities and practices for players of all abilities in the first session.

Whilst the traditional approach used to involve learning in-depth techniques with limited levels of activity, it is recognised today that it is possible to introduce a basic serve and rally with simple scoring in the first session. The advantage of this approach is that players can immediately start to learn how to play the game, and can play outside of the lesson, thus accelerating improvement of their level of play.

Such an approach will require the coach to understand how to differentiate to make the game fit the player.

Differentiation can be achieved by:
- using different types of balls. Low compression balls travel more slowly, giving the player more time to react and move, and have a lower bounce. For younger players, a low compression ball is also less heavy to hit. Starter players will find that they can achieve longer and more consistent rallies using slower balls
- using different court sizes. Smaller courts with lower nets allow players to hit using more control and less power, which helps achieve a longer and more consistent rally. For younger players, a smaller court also means less court area to cover whilst playing.
- modifying the practice. The adaptation of practices is the responsibility of the coach. These adaptations will be based on observations made by the coach on the ability of the players to play the game. Allowing players to serve underarm, for example, will allow starter players a better chance of starting the rally. Making rallies cooperative rather than competitive could also allow players to develop better rallying skills.
- changing the scoring used, and the rules of the practice or game
- changing to a cooperative rather than a competitive practice
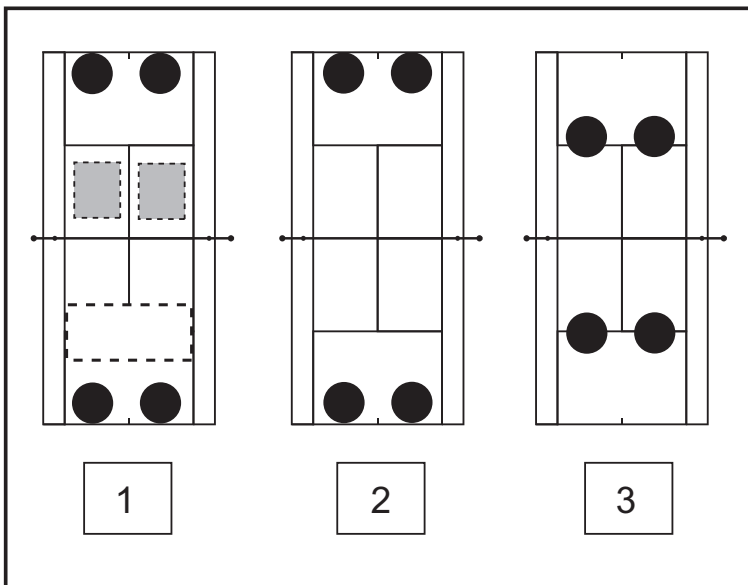
Figure 11 – Examples of differentiated activity:
- Lesson objective – consistency of serving and returning
- Court 1 – 2 serving for accuracy and 2 returning for depth, using full court and normal balls
- Court 2 - 2 serving for consistency and 2 returning for consistency, using full court and green or orange balls
- Court 3 - 2 serving for consistency and 2 returning for consistency, using service boxes and orange balls

The ITF recognises that availability and cost of slower balls varies around the world. The ITF is dedicated to helping to increase availability and reduce cost. However, it is important to point out that where possible, coaches should try to use what ever means and equipment are available to them to help make the game easier for starter players. This could involve differentiation by use of:
- Slower balls
- Smaller courts
- Smaller rackets
- Different rules and practices

The ideal combination, however, would be a combination of all four.

Remember that excellent inter-personal skills, communication, organisation and enthusiasm are important factors for starter players, and they should not be overlooked. Remember too that players should ideally be given the opportunity to serve, rally and score in their first lesson.

Section 3 – BASIC TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

In this section, you will learn about:
* Basic tactics to help players improve
* Basic techniques to help players improve

3.1. Serve, rally and score - The game-based approach

This manual has already suggested that a very technical approach to teaching is not best suited to starter players, many of whom simply want to play. A more game-based approach to coaching is therefore suggested as a suitable alternative to the traditional technical approach as a means of teaching starter players. This game-based approach means:

* basing the activity around the 3 game situations:
    o serving or returning,
    o playing groundstrokes, or
    o approaching or at the net, or passing or lobbing the opponent
* setting up a range of rally-based activities which ensure that players spend their time hitting balls rather than spending time listening to the coach giving technical advice, or in very repetitive practices
* using different court and racket sizes and slower balls to help players rally at their own level
* Giving advice as players play. This may mean simply walking round the group helping and encouraging players through giving simple technical and tactical instruction to help them play better.
* Bearing in mind that game improvement is not just about technique. A player may benefit just as much from being told to hit the ball higher over the net when playing a forehand, which could increase consistency and keep the opponent at the back of the court

> The game-based approach is about getting players to play the game:
> * basing the activity around the 3 game situations
> * setting up a range of rally-based activities
> * using different court sizes and slower balls to help players rally at their appropriate level
> * Giving tactical and technical advice as players play
>
> Technique is still very important but should only be taught to implement tactics (ie to play the game more effectively)

3.2. Basic tactics to help players improve

To many starter players, the ability to play a basic game of tennis is what will keep them interested in the game. Whilst the temptation is often to make technical corrections to players, making simple suggestions on where and when to hit can be more useful than how to hit.

> "The tactics of the game dictate the technique of the game. In other words, one needs to know what to do before being taught how to do it" Elderton (2001)

Section 2 of this manual introduced the basic tactics for singles:
* consistency
* moving the opponent
* maintaining good court position.
* playing to strengths
* playing to the opponents' weakness.

Simple tactical observation could involve some simple questions that may help starter players to play the game more effectively without making major technical changes.

Tactical objectives (serving)	Can players...........?
Consistency	• hit higher over the net to give better net clearance?
Moving the opponent	• hit wide and down the middle to keep the opponent guessing?
Maintaining good court position	• recover to a central position, or are they leaving large spaces for the opponent to hit into? • approach the net after the serve?
Using strengths	• use a consistent, accurate or fast serve to attack the opponent?
Exploiting opponents weaknesses	• find opponents weaknesses? • serve accurately and consistently to the opponents weaker side?

Tactical objectives (groundstrokes)	Can players...........?
Consistency	• hit higher over the net to give better net clearance? • hit deeper to push the opponent back?
Moving the opponent	• hit to the sides to make the opponent move more? • hit deep to make the opponent move more?
Maintaining good court position	• recover to a central position, or are they leaving large spaces for the opponent to hit into? • move inside the baseline if they play an attacking shot?
Using strengths	• move to play forehands from the backhand side if this is the stronger side?
Exploiting opponents weaknesses	• find out their opponents' weakness? This could be a particular stroke, but it could also be mobility or fitness!

Figure 12 – Tactical observation questions to help players play more effectively

Coaches can do much to improve the ability of starter players to play the game by making simple tactical suggestions such as these to help them understand and play the game better. It is also worth noting that if players become used to having to consider such questions when the coach asks them in a lesson, players will also start asking themselves the same questions when playing matches!

3.3. Basic techniques to help players improve (LTA 2004)

Good basic technique is important for starter players, because it will help them to play the game.

Good basic technique will include:
- early preparation, which involves moving to the ball and taking the racket back early to allow the ball to be hit in front of the body
- consistent contact points, which are to the side and in front of the body, at a comfortable height
- good balance, so that control of the stroke can be maintained
- avoiding extreme grips. Starter players may use 'incorrect' grips to help them achieve early success. For example, it may be advantageous for a starter player to serve using an eastern forehand grip to begin with
- receiving skills which will help players anticipate and judge the flight of the ball more effectively

It is important to understand that game-based coaching does not mean that technique is being neglected. Game-based coaching is simply a way of ensuring that techniques which are taught are relevant and appropriate to the player's ability, and that the techniques learnt can be used in simple practices to help players play the game better.

There are two types of techniques in tennis. These are:
• reception skills and
• hitting skills

Reception skills

There are general principles which are fundamental to all sound techniques and for all strokes.

• The player should be able to recognise the flight and direction of the incoming ball as early as possible.
• The player should be able to move quickly to the ball and prepare to play the shot.
• The player should be well balanced throughout the stroke
• The racket should have the correct momentum and racket head speed for the stroke.
• The player should be able to recover to a good position on the court in anticipation of the opponent's next shot

Reception skills are very important because:
• they help the player to judge where the ball is going, and therefore to move into position in time to play the shot
• they allow the player to prepare early by taking the racket back,
• they give the player the chance to play the shot on balance
• they allow the player to contact the ball in front of the body using the appropriate action

Figure 13 – The process of receiving and sending in a rally

Wait in ready position
Opponent hits the ball

Read flight of
on-coming ball:
- Height
- Speed
- Depth
- Width
- Spin

Start to move towards
where the ball is
anticipated
- Left
- Right
- Back
- Forwards
- Stay

Prepare racket using action
suitable for game situation
- Long swing
- Short swing
- Punch

Be balanced and in
position and contact the
ball in front
Hit the ball
- Return
- Groundstroke
- Volley
- Passing shot or lob

Recover or maintain good
position on the court
- Recover to baseline
- Approach the net
Wait in ready position

Hitting skills

Players need to learn the hitting skills necessary to be able to play and control the different strokes which occur in each game situation. This will involve the use of different actions depending on where the stroke is played from.

Serving

At starter level, the serve is a key game situation, since it is the beginning of the rally. Although the initial and basic goal should be to put the serve in to start the point, the player should gradually think of the serve as a potential weapon in order to put the pressure on the opponent from the first moment.
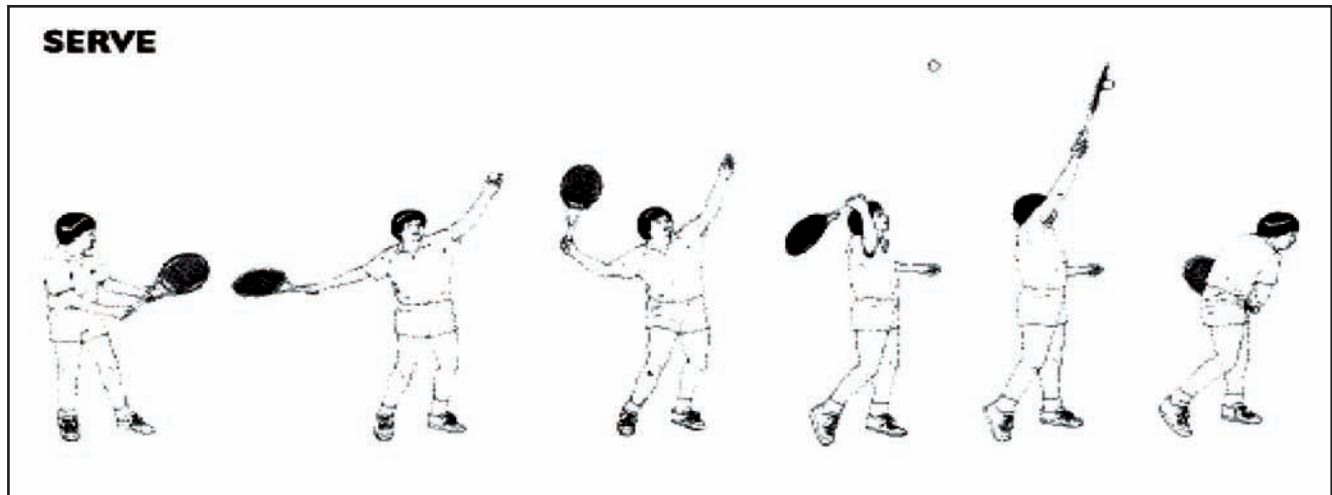

- correct stance to give the player balance and a sound base for the throwing action. This is usually sideways to the baseline with shoulder-width apart. The right foot is almost parallel to the baseline. The left foot points towards the right net post
- the rhythm of the action should be simple and smooth. The movement of the racket and ball placement arms should be synchronised in one movement for a starter player.
- throwing action of the racket head up to the ball.
- the placement of the ball should be high enough to allow the player to contact the ball with the racket arm at full stretch.

It is important to note that complete beginners, and especially young children, may prefer to start with an underarm serve before progressing to the overarm serve. An underarm serve involves dropping the ball, and hitting using a swinging action to make contact before the bounce.

Returning

The return of serve is a neglected practice part of the game. The receiver has to play the serve back in order to be in the rally. That is why the main goal of the return should be to keep the ball in play. However, eventually the play may start to put some pressure on the server with an attacking return. At starter level, the techniques of the return will be those of the forehand and backhand groundstrokes.

Forehand groundstrokes
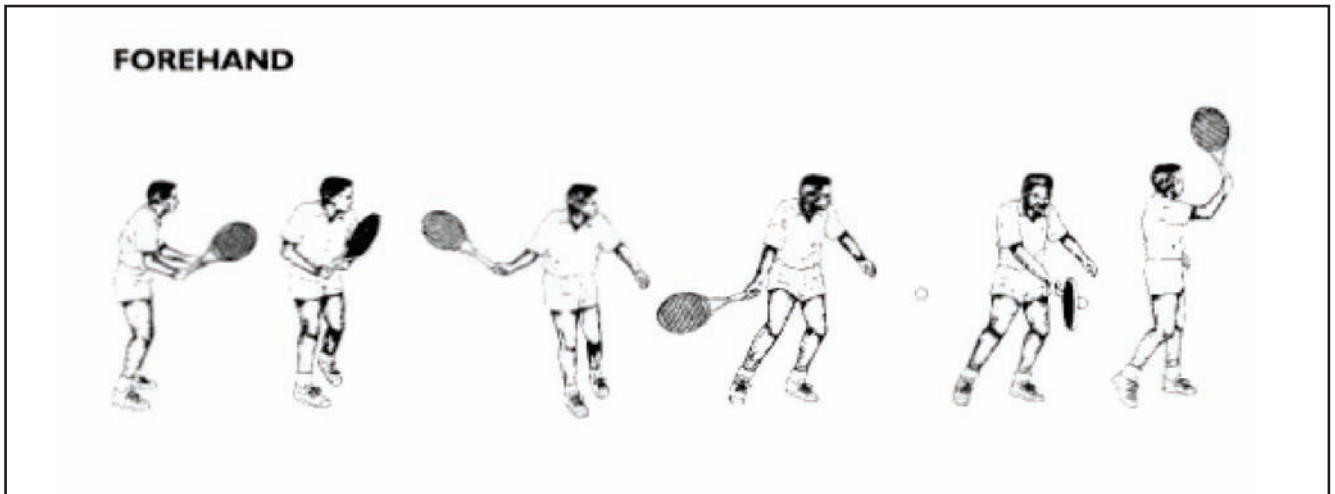
FOREHAND

- ready position - the racket is held in front of the body half-way between the forehand and the backhand side in an eastern grip. The left hand cradles the throat of the racket.
- the path of the backswing can vary, but its primary purpose should be to initiate momentum for the forward swing
- the backswing and the forward swing should be a simple action
- the movement pattern and footwork should help the player maintain balance throughout the action including the follow through
- the contact point should be to the side and in front of the body
- return to a ready position ready for to play the next shot

Backhand groundstrokes (double-handed)

DOUBLE HANDED BACKHAND
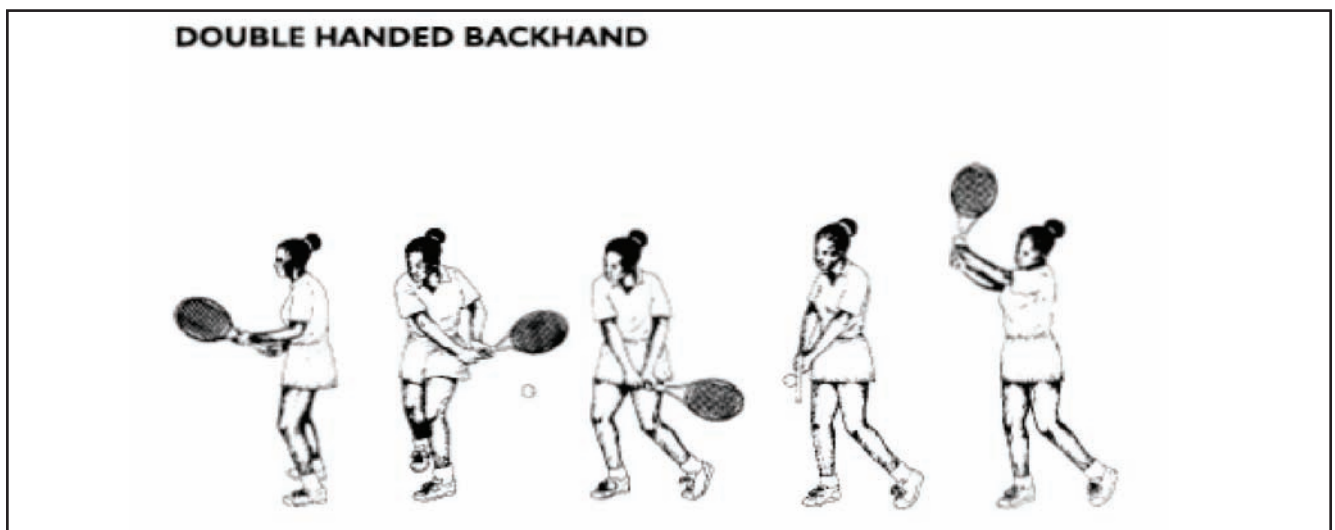
- ready position
- the shoulder rotation should be used to take the racket back
- the movement pattern and footwork should allow the player to maintain balance and be in the correct position to hit the ball
- the contact point should be to the side and in front of the body - the distance will vary according to the grips
- the racket should follow through and allow recovery for movement to the next stroke.

Backhand groundstrokes (single-handed)

SINGLE HANDED BACKHAND
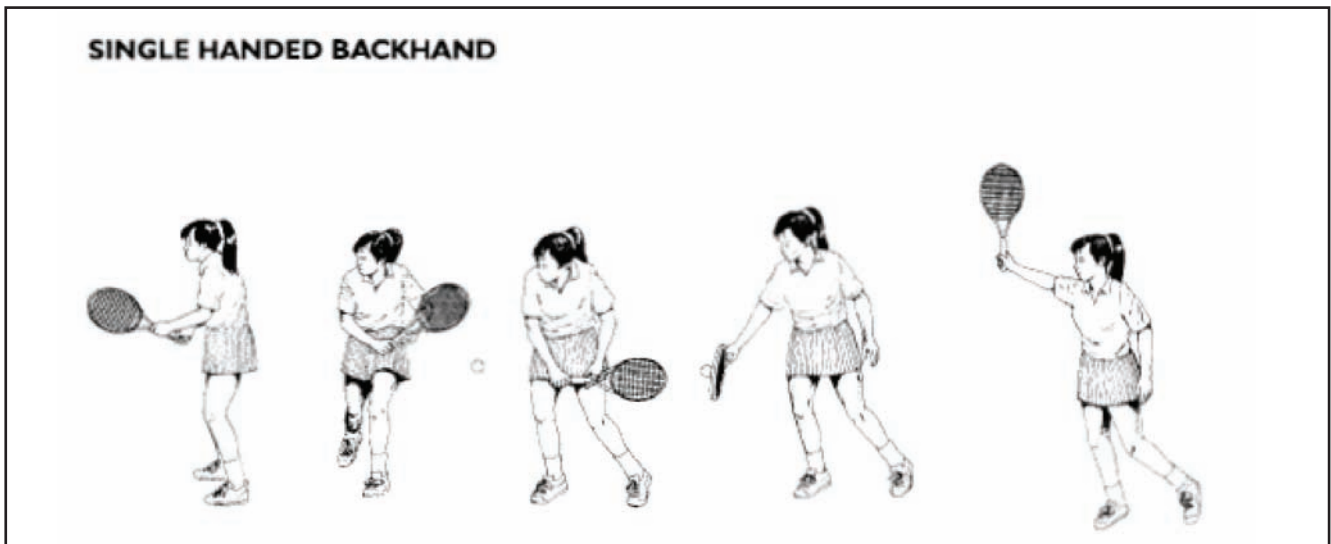
- ready position
- the shoulders should be rotated and the non hitting hand used to take the racket back
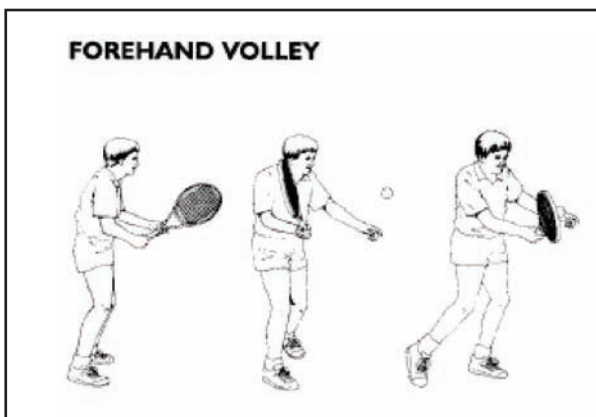- the backswing and the forward swing should be a simple action
- the movement pattern and footwork should allow the player to maintain balance
- the contact point should be to the side and in front of the body
- the racket should follow through to a high point across the body and allow recovery for the next stroke.

Volleys (forehand)

FOREHAND VOLLEY

- the correct starting position for the volley should be a ready position, with the elbows up so that the player will move forwards to meet the incoming ball
- the contact point should be in front and to the side of the body
- the follow through should be very short and firm and allow the player to recover quickly.

Volleys (backhand)

BACKHAND VOLLEY
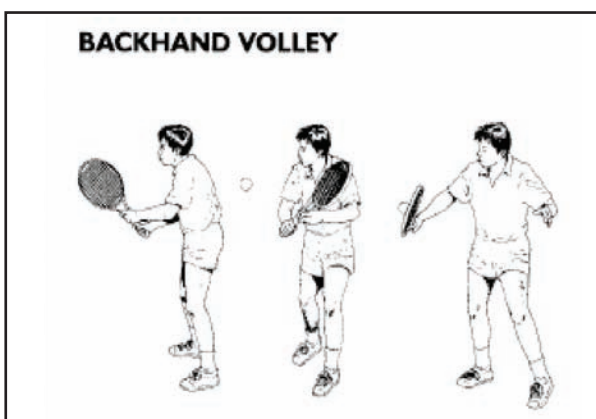
- the correct starting position for the volley should be with the racket in front of the body, with the elbows up so that the player will move forwards to meet the incoming ball
- the shoulders should be turned, using the non hitting hand to keep the racket head firm
- the contact point should be in front and to the side of the body from a short takeback
- the follow through should be short and very firm and allow the player to recover quickly.

It is important to remember that starter players may lack experience and the specific reception, movement, coordination and technical skills to play the game to a high level. It should be remembered that players come to play the game, and that techniques should therefore be taught using a game-based approach, where only techniques that can help players play better are taught.

> Good basic technique is important for starter players, because it will help them to play the game. Good basic technique will include:
> - early preparation,
> - consistent contact points,
> - good balance,
> - avoiding extreme grips.
> - receiving skills which will help players anticipate and judge the flight of the ball more effectively so as to get in position to play the shot

Common challenges for starter players	Possible solutions
Wait in ready position Opponent hits the ball	• Ensure players are alert mentally and ready physically
Read flight of on-coming ball • Starter players may find 'tracking' the speed, height, depth and bounce of the ball difficult	• Use a slower (softer) ball to give more time to 'track' the ball • Begin in a smaller court so that distance and the area to be covered are reduced
Start to move towards where the ball is anticipated • Left • Right • Back • Forwards • Stay	Teach players to move as soon as they know where the ball is going: • Movement in different directions might involve larger steps to cover distance, and smaller steps to adjust when near the ball
Prepare racket using action suitable for game situation • Long swing • Short swing • Punch	Starter players do not need much detailed technique.However, check that: • The players understand good contact points • An appropriate action for the part of court they are hitting the ball from • No extreme grips are being used
Be balanced and in position Hit the ball • Return • Groundstroke • Volley • Passing shot or lob	Balance is important because it helps the player control the shot. • Help players to move into position early with the racket back ready to play the shot
Recover or maintain good position on the court • Recover to baseline • Approach the net • Wait in ready position	• Teach players where to position themselves after their shot. The idea of 'hit and move' is important in learning to play a rally
In all cases, a slower ball used in a smaller court can help starter players serve and rally more effectively	

Figure 14 – Common challenges and solutions for starter players

A reminder!
Section 1 of this manual detailed the importance of making tennis lessons interesting and stimulating, where players can feel a sense of achievement from having played the game.
Coaches should therefore remember that excellent inter-personal skills, communication, organisation and enthusiasm are important factors for starter players. They should not be overlooked. Remember too that players should ideally be given the opportunity to serve, rally and score in their first lesson.

Section 4 – COOPERATIVE AND COMPETITIVE PRACTICES

In this section, you will learn about:
• Cooperative and competitive games and practices
• Competition formats
• The International Tennis Number (ITN)

4.1. Cooperative and competitive games and practices

Tennis is a competitive game. This means that it is very important that all players learn how to play the game through the different game situations that have been covered in this manual. It is especially important that starter players are encouraged to learn to play matches and to compete at a level that suits their game.

It is the responsibility of the coach to decide what type of practice is best for the players. These practices can either be:
• Cooperative, where the objective of the exercise is to practice a particular game situation in a way that helps each player to develop their game skills without being concerned about winning and losing. This approach is especially useful with starter players who may lack confidence and may be reluctant to compete because of the risk of losing
• Competitive, where the objective is to practice a particular game situation to try to win points against another player.
• A combination of the two, where for example, two players could play a rally of 4 cooperative shots before the players compete to play out the point.

> "Without competition, players would have no reason to have coaching or practice. They practice to improve their level of play"
> (ITF, 1999)

Game situation	Cooperative	Cooperative/competitive	Competitive
Serving and returning	2 players playing together to see how many serves and returns they can play into court	Serve and return are cooperative, and the point is 'live' on the third shot of the rally	2 players playing tiebreaks together and seeing how they can use the serve and the return to win points against their opponent.
Groundstrokes	2 players rallying to see how many groundstrokes they can play into a target area	2 players rallying groundstrokes. When the ball lands in the target area, the player can use variations of groundstrokes to win the point	2 players rallying groundstrokes to try to win the point.
Approaching and passing	2 players rallying where one player approaches the net after a designated number of strokes	2 players rallying where one player approaches the net when the ball is hit to a deep target. The point then becomes 'live'	2 players rallying where players can win points with volleys, lobs or passing shots

Figure 15 – cooperative to competitive practices
Coaches may use the same practice, but will simply add scoring to change the practice from a cooperative to a competitive one.

Examples of game-based cooperative, cooperative/competitive and competitive practices for the 3 game situations are shown in Section 5.3.

4.2 Competition formats

Tennis competition can be great fun. Players of all abilities can compete and formats and scoring systems exist that suit all lifestyles. The ITF encourages coaches to ensure that all starter players compete (serve, rally and score) from the first lesson and that starter players that cannot play on a full court with a normal ball play competition using the slower red orange and green balls on smaller courts.

Playing competition offers the chance for starter players to meet other players of similar abilities and to mix in a fun and friendly atmosphere. For starter players the ITF recommends formats that involve players playing more than one match (round robin/feed in events/compass draws etc.). The ITF does not recommend single elimination formats for starter players.

Visit the new ITF Competition Formats website at www.tennisplayandstay.com

The rules of tennis now allow many new and alternative scoring systems

These changes introduced since 2000 allow clubs and coaches to tailor the competition to the needs and lifestyles of the players including time constraints.

For more information on competition formats and scoring systems, go to the ITF competition website on: www.tennisplayandstay.com

o   No-Ad scoring method: at deuce, one deciding point is played to determine the winner of the game. The receiver decides to which service court the last point is to be played.
o   Short sets: the first player/team who wins four games wins that set, provided there is a margin of two games over the opponents(s). If the score reaches four games all, a tiebreak game shall be played
o   Deciding Tie break game (7 points): when the score in a match is one set all, or two sets all in a best of five sets matches, one tie-break game shall be played to decide the match. This tiebreak game replaces the final deciding set. The player who wins seven points shall win this match tiebreak and the match provided that there is a margin of two points over the opponent(s)
o   Deciding match tiebreak (10 points) – when the score in a match is one set all, or two sets in a best of five sets match, one tie break game shall be played to decide the match. This tiebreak game replaces the final deciding set. The player who wins ten points shall win this match tiebreak and the match provided that there is a margin of two points over the opponent(s)

Figure 16 - Alternative scoring systems

Section 5.5 shows three simple formats that can be used with starter players. The ITF Competition Formats Manual (ITF 1999) also gives ideas on different types of competition.

4.3. International Tennis Number (ITN) (ITF 2002)

The ITN is an International Tennis Number that represents a players general level of play. In time it is hoped that every tennis player worldwide will have an ITN.
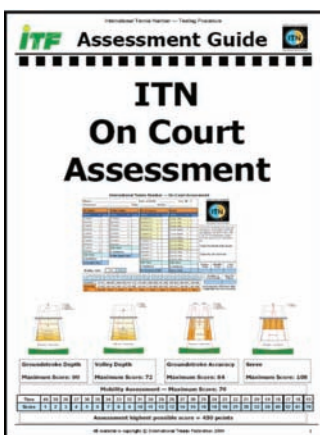
Under this system players are rated from ITN 1 to ITN 10. ITN 1 represents a high level player (holding an ATP/WTA ranking or of an equivalent playing standard) and ITN 10 is a player who is new to the game. ITN 10.3, 10.2 and 10.1 are for starter players who cannot play (serve, rally and score) with a normal ball. A description of standards has been developed to describe each of the ten rating categories.

The objectives of the ITN are to:
• Encourage more playing of tennis
• Unite tennis under a common rating language
• Encourage national associations to implement a tennis rating system in their own country
• Promote a variety of tennis competition formats which are linked to the tennis rating system
• Give more options for finding compatible playing partners and therefore more enjoyable competitive play
• Facilitate the movement of all levels of players between countries

All starter players should be encouraged to undergo an ITN On Court Assessment to determine their ITN.

To facilitate the rating of players the ITF have developed a Description of Standards and an objective On Court Assessment both of which can be used to rate players in the absence of competition results.

The 'ITN Description of Standards' describes each of the ten rating categories. A concise summary of this Description of Standards is shown below. The intention is that it should be easy to understand and useful for both the player and / or the assessor (coach / administrator).

The following is an extract from the ITN Description of Standards and gives a concise summary of the 10 ITN rating categories. The Play Tennis course is designed for coaches working with players of ITN 10.3-9

ITN 1   This player has had intensive training for national tournament competition at the junior and senior levels and has extensive professional tournament experience. Holds or is capable of holding an ATP / WTA ranking and their major source of income is through tournament prize money.

ITN 2   This player has power and / or consistency as a major weapon. Can vary strategies and styles of play in a competitive situation. Is usually a nationally ranked player.

ITN 3   This player has good shot anticipation and frequently has an outstanding shot or attribute around which a game may be structured. Can regularly hit winners and force errors off short balls. Can put away volleys and smashes and has a variety of serves to rely on.

ITN 4   This player can use power and spins and has begun to handle pace. Has sound footwork, can control depth of shots, and can vary game plan according to opponents. Can hit first serves with power and can impart spin on second serves.

ITN 5   This player has dependable strokes, including directional control and depth on both groundstrokes and on moderate shots. Has the ability to use lobs, overheads, approach shots and volleys with some success.

ITN 6   This player exhibits more aggressive net play, has improved court coverage, improved shot control and is developing teamwork in doubles.

ITN 7   This player is fairly consistent when hitting medium paced shots, but is not yet comfortable with all strokes. Lacks control over depth, direction and power.

ITN 8   This player is able to judge / control where the ball is going and can sustain a short rally.

ITN 9   This player needs on court experience and strokes can be completed with some success.

Players are rated from ITN 1 (ATP or WTA standard or equivalent) to 10 (starter players). Below ITN 10 there are 3 further categories for players aged 10 and older:
- 10.1 for players using green balls on the full size court
- 10.2 for players using orange balls on the 18 metre court
- 10.3 for players using red balls on the 12 metre court

The importance of the ITN 10 category

When implementing the ITN, National Associations will realise that they have a large number of starter players in the entry levels of the system. The future of tennis will depend so much on this category and the effectiveness of taking starter adults and children from 10.3 to 10 when they can start playing tennis competitively. Experience has shown us that the best way for children and adult beginner players to learn tennis is through a modified version of tennis / Mini Tennis (tennis played on a smaller than normal court with slower balls). Mini Tennis not only helps to introduce people to the game effectively but also ensures that starter players get to rally and play the game of tennis as soon as possible which makes learning tennis easier and more enjoyable.
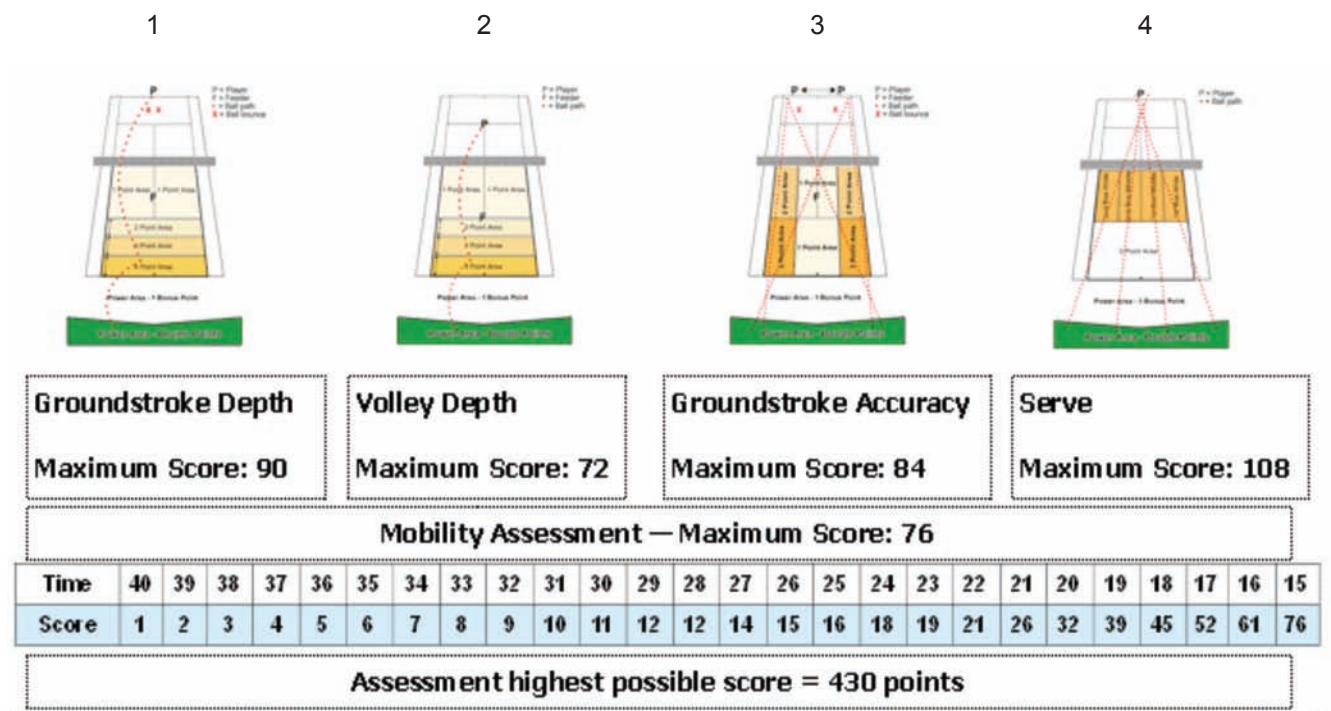
ITN and players under 10

Players under 10 would normally develop their game using balls, racket and courts adapted to their size. Once they reach the age of 10 they would get an appropriate ITN.

An ITN on-court assessment has been developed which can be used as an objective way of initially rating recreational players.

For more information on ratings and the ITN, go to www.itftennis.com/ITN

The ITN on court assessment

An on court assessment has been specifically developed for the ITN, which will be an important tool for the ongoing success of the ITN. The ITN On Court Assessment measures certain key strokes of consistency, accuracy (1st bounce) and power (2nd bounce). It also includes a mobility element. The various components of the assessment and the maximum points available for each part are outlined below:

Groundstroke Depth	Volley Depth	Groundstroke Accuracy	Serve
Maximum Score: 90	Maximum Score: 72	Maximum Score: 84	Maximum Score: 108

Mobility Assessment — Maximum Score: 76

Time	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15
Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	14	15	16	18	19	21	26	32	39	45	52	61	76

Assessment highest possible score = 430 points

1) Groundstroke Depth Assessment: 10 alternate forehand and backhand ground strokes
2) Volley Depth Assessment: 8 alternate forehand and backhand volleys
3) Groundstroke Accuracy Assessment: 6 alternate forehand and backhand down the line and 6 alternate forehand and backhand cross court.
4) Serve Assessment:12 serves in total, 3 serves in each target area; 2nd serve (used if first serve is missed) to score up to 50% of first serve score
5) Mobility assessment: measures the time it takes a player to pick up five tennis balls and return them individually to a specified zone.
• Scoring Accuracy: Points are awarded for each shot based on where the ball lands within the singles court.
• Scoring Power: 1 Bonus point is awarded when the second bounce lands between the baseline and the Bonus Line. Double points are awarded when the second bounce lands beyond the Bonus Line.
• Scoring Consistency: 1 extra point is awarded for every shot that is not an error.

The ITN On Court Assessment is:
• An objective on-court assessment based on a set number of tasks.
• An objective means of rating starter players (ITN 10.3 - ITN 9).
• A tool to measure control, accuracy and power in a set of tasks.
• An objective assessment tool to differentiate between players of similar ability.
• A tool to enable players to benchmark their tennis level against themselves and others around the world.
• A tool to enable players to track their own development and improvement in an objective manner.
• A reward and recognition tool.
• A tool to encourage participation in tennis at all age groups and standards.
• A tool to motivate players to improve / take lessons
• A tool that will enable assessors to generate income from conducting assessments.
• A tool to help promote the ITN

Because tennis is a sport which demands technical ability, tactical ability, physical ability, determination and has match pressure, it is unlikely any test / assessment will ever 100% successfully predict a player's competitive level. The best way to test a player's competitive level is through competitive play. However in the absence of meaningful competitive results, the ITN On Court Assessment will be a reasonably accurate method of estimating a recreational player's initial rating because the tactics of a recreational player are all assessed in the ITN On Court Assessment:

- Consistency
- Depth
- Moving your opponent / exploiting opponent's weakness

The ITN On Court Assessment is not:

- An exact indication of how the player will perform under match conditions
- An assessment of the player's technical ability
- An assessment of the player's style
- A replacement for competition.

ITN Conversion Chart												
ITN	AUS	BEL	CAN	FR	GBR	IT	MOR	NED	ESP	SWE	SW	USA
1	N1	A INTL A INTL B-15/4 (23 bis-35bis)	7.0	1st série Promo -30 -15 -4/6	1.1 1.2	Cat. 1 2.1 2.2 2.3	1st série	Cat 1	No 1-150	Above 600p	N1 N2	7.0
2	N2 N3 N4	B-15/4 (50 bis-65bis) B-15/2 (100bis)	6.5 6.0	-2/6 0 1/6	2.1 2.2	2.4 2.5 2.6	-30 -15 -4/6	Cat 2	No 151 - 300	401-600p	N3	6.5 6.0
3	N5	B-15/1 B-15 B-4/6	5.5	2/6 3/6	3.1 3.2	2.7 2.8 3.1	-2/6 0 2/6	Cat 3	3rd cat. Group 10	301-400p	N4	5.5
4	N6 N7	B-2/6 B-0 B+2/6	5.0	4/6 5/6 15	4.1 4.2	3.2 3.3 3.4	4/6 15 15/1	Cat 4	3rd cat. Group 9	201-300p	R1R1	5.0
5	N8 N9	B+4/6	4.5	15/1 15/2	5.1 5.2	3.5 4.1	15/2 15/4	Cat 5	3rd cat. Group 8	61-200p	R2	4.5
6	N10 N11	C+15	4.0	15/3 15/4	6.1 6.2	4.2 4.3	30	Cat 6	3rd cat. Group 7	51-60p	R3	4.0
7	N12	C+15/2	3.5	15/5 30	7.1 7.2	4.4 4.5	30/1	Cat 6	3rd cat. Group 6 & 5	50p	R4	3.5
8	N13	C+15/4	3.0	30/1 30/2	8.1 8.2	NC	30/2	Cat 7	3rd cat. Group 4 & 3	NR	R5	3.0
9	N14 N15	C+30	2.5	30/3 30/4	9.1 9.2	NC	NR	Cat 8	3rd cat. Group 2	NR	R6	2.5
10	N16 N17	C+30/2 C+30/4	2.0	30/5	10	NC	NR	Cat 9	3rd cat. Group 1	NR	R7	2.0
10.1 to 10.5	N18 N19 N20	NR	1.5 1.0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	1.5 1.0

Figure 17 - ITN Conversion Chart (ITF 2002)

More information and a wide range of downloadable resources on the ITN can be found at www.ITFTennis.com/ITN

Section 5

- 5.1 – Communication checklist
- 5.2 - Sample lesson plan
- 5.3 - Game based practices for the three game situations
- 5.4 - Ball and court specifications
- 5.5 - Competition formats for starter players
- 5.6 - Course Participants Evaluation Checklist

5.1 – Communication checklist (Adapted from ITF, 1998)

Aspect	Item	Value				
		+				-
Verbal	Coach uses players' names	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses simple and direct messages	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach focuses on one thing at a time	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses open questions	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses positive feedback	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach varies the tone, volume, rhythm of the voice	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses appropriate styles of coaching for various situations	5	4	3	2	1
Non verbal	Non-verbal message is compatible with verbal message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach listens to the student	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses demonstrations to enhance the verbal message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach smiles often	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses body gestures appropriately (hands, arms) to enhance the message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach maintains good body posture at all times	5	4	3	2	1

Overall evaluation

Aspect	Points	Excellent (>50)
Verbal		Good (40-49)
Non verbal		Fair (30-39) Bad (20-29)
Total		Very bad (<20)

Aspect	Item	Value				
		+				-
Verbal	Coach uses players' names	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses simple and direct messages	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach focuses on one thing at a time	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses open questions	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses positive feedback	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach varies the tone, volume, rhythm of the voice	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses appropriate styles of coaching for various situations	5	4	3	2	1
Non verbal	Non-verbal message is compatible with verbal message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach listens to the student	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses demonstrations to enhance the verbal message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach smiles often	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach uses body gestures appropriately (hands, arms) to enhance the message	5	4	3	2	1
	Coach maintains good body posture at all times	5	4	3	2	1

Overall evaluation

Aspect	Points	Excellent (>50)
Verbal		Good (40-49)
Non verbal		Fair (30-39) Bad (20-29)
Total		Very bad (<20)

5.2 - Session plan template

SESSION PLANNER FOR STARTER PLAYERS

Date	Venue
Time	Length of session
Number in group	Ability of players

Equipment needed:
- red/orange/green balls
- targets/throw down lines
- small rackets

Game situation for the session (tick one of the following)	Tactical objective for the session (tick one of the following)	Basic techniques
• Serving and returning • Rallying from the baseline • Approaching and passing	• Consistency • Moving the opponent • Recovery/Maintaining court position • Using a strength • Playing to the opponent's weakness	• Reception skills • Correct and consistent contact point • No extreme grips • Balanced when hitting the ball • Appropriate action (throw, swing, punch)

Warm up/recap from last session

Time allocated:

Main content	Player tasks/differentiation of tasks	Rotations and organisation

(Time allocated   )

Cool down/summary

(Time allocated   )

Evaluation

Objective for next session Game situation for the session (tick one of the following) • Serving and returning • Rallying from the baseline • Approaching and passing	Tactical objective for the session (tick one of the following) • Consistency • Moving the opponent • Recovery/Maintaining court position • Using a strength • Exploiting the opponent's weakness

5.3 - Game based practices for the 3 game situations

This manual has emphasised the importance of coaching in a manner which allows starter plays to hit lots of balls in an active session. In the first lesson the players should be given a chance to serve, rally and score. A game-based approach using the appropriate ball and court can allow this to happen.

The 10-step tennis progressions in Section 2 (Figure 7) show how starter players can develop rally skills in a short space of time, using small courts and softer slower balls. Once players can serve, rally and score in a short court, the ITF 'Play Tennis' course introduces six simple game-based practices so that starter players can learn to play the game in an active and stimulating way, whilst at the same time learning the basic tactics of the game. These are shown on the following pages.

There are six basic practices, covering the three game situations. However, ideas are also given to show how practices can be modified to make them cooperative or competitive. Further ideas on how to modify the practices using the following criteria are covered in the course:
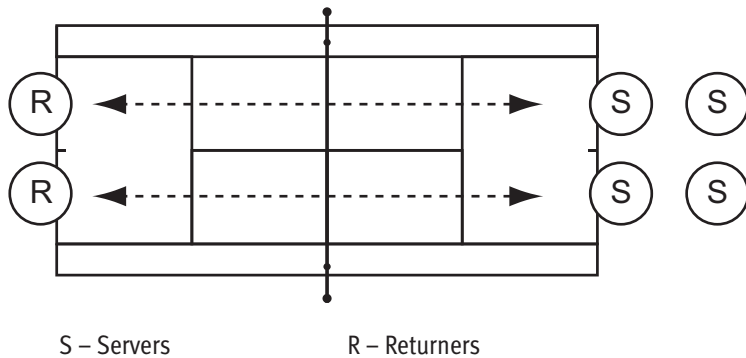
- Tactics – starter players need to develop consistency. This is important because it will allow them to maintain the rally. However, progressions to the practices can be used to help players learn different tactical options such as moving the opponent, and playing to opponents weaknesses. Figure 8 shows how players can improve their tactical understanding without necessarily changing techniques.
- Numbers – the diagrams showing the practices show 6 players on one court. Numbers of players and courts will vary, and coaches should be able to adapt the practices given the number of players and courts available, without losing the activity levels which stimulate players
- Differentiation and optimal challenge - the diagrams showing the practices show the practice on a full size court. However, the course has emphasized the importance of changing the court size and the ball to simplify the game if necessary. Other ideas such as changing the rules and scoring can also be used. It is important to understand that these practices can be run on any court size using any ball. However, starter players may initially find that they are able to play a better game on a smaller court with a slower ball.
- Cooperative, cooperative/competitive and competitive practices – practices may often start with players playing in a cooperative way, which will help them rally. However, coaches can change a practice to make it more or competitive or more cooperative. Ideas for doing this are provided.

If coaches are able to set up simple practices such as these, understanding when and how to change the practices to meet the needs of players, and to run sessions with enthusiasm and energy, starter players will find tennis a stimulating game to play.

Game Based Practices for the 3 game situations

Game situation: Serving and returning (Red or orange balls and courts)
Tactical objective: Consistency

S – Servers   R – Returners

Objective: to develop consistency when serving and returning

Description: Players play in half courts. Server serves (this could be underarm or overarm), and returner returns. The objective of the practice is to serve and return consistently and to play out the rally, keeping score. Servers rotate after each rally. Servers and returners rotate after 3 minutes.

Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – consistency Stage 2 – servers moving the opponent, returners moving the opponent, with both players maintaining good court position Stage 3 – using own strengths and playing to opponents weakness
Numbers	7 players – 4 servers who rotate, and 3 returners who rotate 8 players – 4 servers who rotate, and 4 returners who rotate
Numbers Differentiation and optimal challenge	• Use a slower or faster ball • Use a smaller or larger court • Use tactics above to challenge players more
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • Team scores – if players get a serve and return in, they score 1 point • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the serve and return, and then competitive until the end of the point Competitive • competitive on the serve and return where either player can win the point from the start • first server to score 3 points becomes the returner

Game situation: Groundstrokes (Red or orange balls and courts)
Tactical objective: Consistency

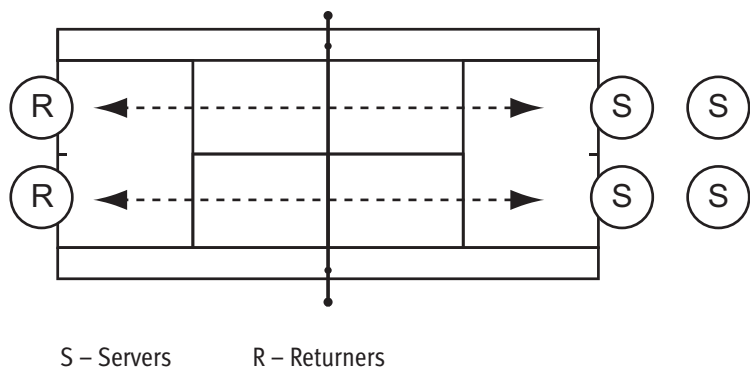# Practice 2
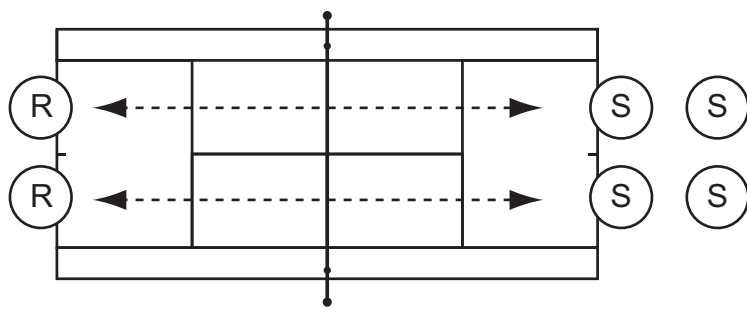
S – Servers   R – Returners

Objective: to play a consistent groundstroke rally

Description: Players play in half courts. Players serve (this could be underarm or overarm), and players play the rally using groundstrokes. Players count to see how many rallies of 10 they can complete without error in the given time. The 2 servers then rotate with the 2 waiting servers at the end of the rally. Servers also then rotate with returners after 3 minutes.

Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – consistency Stage 2 – servers moving the opponent, returners moving the opponent, with both players maintaining good court position Stage 3 – using own strengths and playing to opponents weakness
Numbers	7 players –3 players at one end rotate, and 4 players at the other end rotate 8 players – 4 players rotate at each end
Differentiation and optimal challenge	• Use a slower or faster ball • Use a smaller or larger court • Use easy targets or more challenging targets • Use tactics above to challenge players more
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • play 10 ball rally then rotate • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the first 3 balls of the rally, and then competitive until the end of the point • cooperative on the serve and return and until a player can play a forehand, then competitive Competitive • play until point is won • score 1 point for every ball hit beyond the service line, with players playing first to 10 then rotate • play for 5 minutes. The player winning at the end of 5 minutes moves right, and the loser moves left
Feeding	Live ball - coach feeds in ball at start of the rally

Game situation: Approach and volley (Red or orange balls and courts)
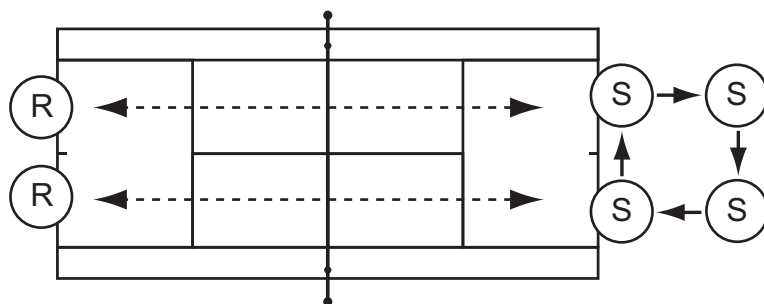Tactical objective: Consistency

Practice 3

Objective: to play a rally which allows the players to approach the net and volley

Description: Players play in half courts. Servers serve (this could be underarm or overarm), and players play the rally using groundstrokes. Either player can approach the net if the ball lands inside the service line. No lobs are allowed. Servers rotate after each rally. Servers also then rotate with returners after 3 minutes

S – Servers   R – Returners

Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – consistency of groundstrokes, approach and volley Stage 2 – moving the opponent using depth and width, with both players maintaining good court position Stage 3 – using own strengths and playing to opponents weakness
Numbers	Numbers 7 players – 3 players at one end rotate, and 4 players at the other end rotate 8 players – 4 players rotate at each end
Differentiation and optimal challenge	• Use a slower or faster ball • Use a smaller or larger court • Use easy targets or more challenging targets • Use tactics above to challenge players more • Lobs are permitted
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • If players play an approach and 2 volleys, they win a point for their team • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the serve and return and until the player can approach the net, then competitive • cooperative on the serve and return and until a player plays a drop shot, then competitive Competitive • play until point is won by either player playing a winning volley, pass or lob • play first to 3 points then rotate
Feeding	Live ball - coach feeds in ball at start of the rally

Game situation: Serving and returning (Green balls and courts)
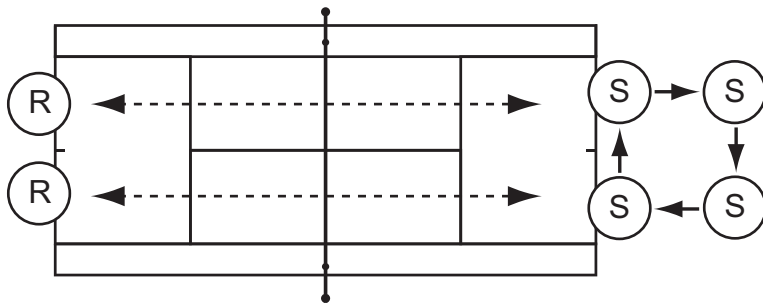Tactical objective: Consistency

Practice 4

Objective: to develop consistency when serving and returning

Description: Players play in half courts. Server serves (this could be underarm or overarm), and returner returns. The objective of the practice is to serve and return consistently and to play out the rally, keeping score. Servers rotate after each rally. Servers and returners rotate after 3 minutes.

S – Servers   R – Returners

Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – consistency on a larger court Stage 2 – servers moving the opponent, returners moving the opponent, with both players maintaining good court position Stage 3 – using own strengths and playing to opponents weakness
Numbers	Numbers 7 players – 4 servers who rotate, and 3 returners who rotate 8 players – 4 servers who rotate, and 4 returners who rotate
Differentiation and optimal challenge	• Use a slower or faster ball • Use a smaller or larger court • Use easy targets or more challenging targets • Use tactics above to challenge players more
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • Team scores – if players get a serve and return in, they score 1 point • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the serve and return, and then competitive until the end of the point Competitive • competitive on the serve and return where either player can win the point from the start • first server to score 3 points becomes the returner

Game situation: Groundstrokes (Green balls and courts)
Tactical objective: Consistency and moving the opponent

S – Servers   R – Returners

Objective: to serve and return then complete the rally by hitting deep groundstrokes which bounce beyond the service line

Description: Players play in half courts. Servers serve (this could be underarm or overarm), and players play the rally using groundstrokes.
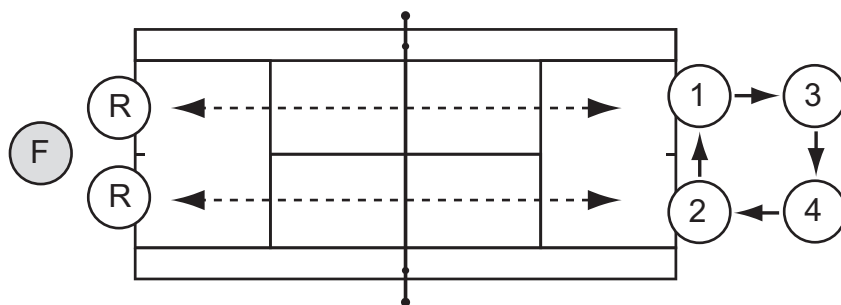
Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – consistency of deep groundstrokes, Stage 2 – moving the opponent using depth using forehands in the first rally and backhands in the next Stage 3 – moving the opponent using depth using alternate forehands and backhands, with both players maintaining good court position
Numbers	Numbers 7 players – 3 players at one end rotate, and 4 players at the other end rotate 8 players – 4 players rotate at each end
Differentiation and optimal challenge	• Use a slower or faster ball • Use a smaller or larger court • Use tactics above to challenge players more • Lobs are permitted
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • play 8 ball rally then rotate • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the serve and return and competitive until either player misses or makes the ball land in the service boxes • cooperative on the serve and return, then competitive when either player can try to win with a drop shot Competitive • play until point is won • points can only be won with a drop shot • play first to 3 points then rotate
Feeding	Live ball - coach feeds in ball at start of the rally

Game situation: Approach and passing shots (Green balls and courts)
Tactical objective: Consistency and moving the opponent

Practice 6

Objective: to learn to approach the net and pass

Description: Players play in half courts. Coach feeds ball in for players 1 and 2 to approach. Objective is for 5 and 6 to try to pass. Players 1-4 rotate after 3 points.
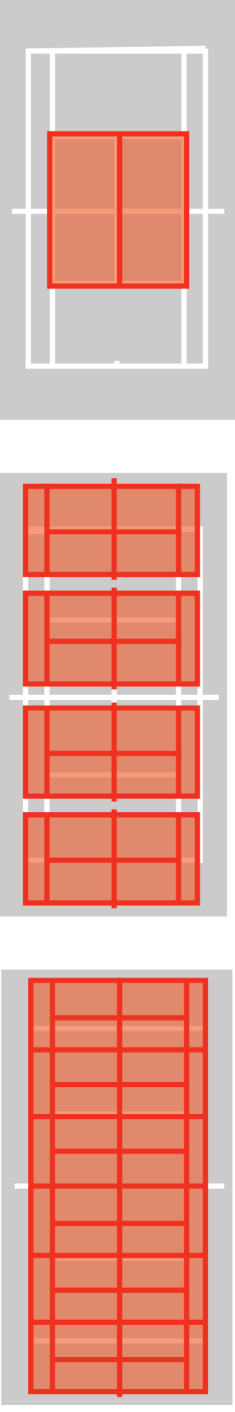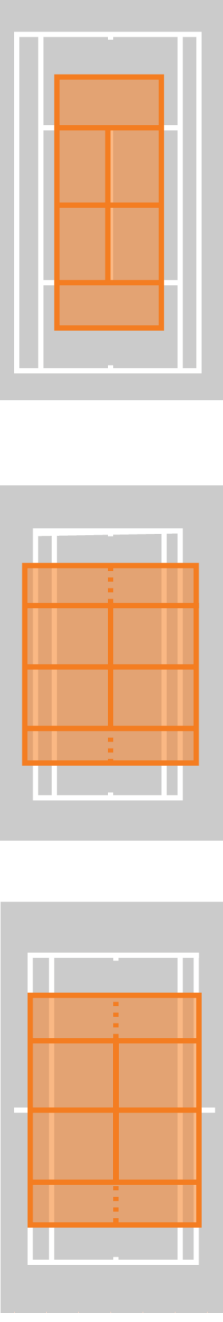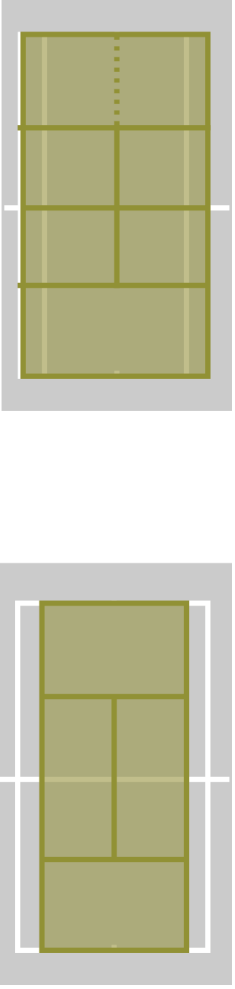
F – Basket feeding by coach

Progressions and variation	
Tactics	Stage 1 – Coach feeds first ball, player approaches and volleys (no lobs) Stage 2 – serve, return and approach when ball lands in service box (no lobs) Stage 3 – as Stage 2, but players can lob or pass at any stage
Numbers	Numbers 7 players – 3 players at one end rotate, and 4 players at the other end rotate 8 players – 4 players rotate at each end
Differentiation and optimal challenge	• use a slower or faster ball • change the position of the line which determines a short ball • use tactics above to challenge players more • lobs are permitted
Cooperative to competitive	Cooperative • Coach feeds first ball, player approaches and volleys (no lobs) • serve for three points then rotate • play for 2 minutes then all rotate Cooperative/competitive • cooperative on the serve, return and approach, then competitive • cooperative on the serve and return, then competitive when either player decides to approach Competitive • play until point is won with either player able to approach • points can only be won with a volley • play first to 3 points then rotate
Feeding	Live ball - coach feeds in ball at start of the rally

5.4 - Ball and court specifications

The ITF recognises the importance of 'making the game fit the player'. This chart shows how modified court sizes can be used with different types of tennis balls to make a simple game of tennis easier to achieve for starter players of all ages. It is important to recognise that whilst it would be ideal for all modified courts to fit standard measurements, the size of courts and the type of ball used will realistically be adapted to suit variables such as facilities and equipment available, group sizes, and the type of practices being worked on. Such layouts are demonstrated and used in the ITF Play Tennis course.

Courts	Suggested variations/court layout		
• 11m x 6m - 11m x 5.5m • service boxes can be used as an alternative For ITF ball specifications on Red balls, go to www.tennisplayandstay.com	TRAINING	COMPETITION	ALTERNATIVE
• 18m x 6.5m – 18m x 8.23m For ITF ball specifications on Orange balls, go to www.tennisplayandstay.com	TRAINING	TRAINING ALTERNATIVE	COMPETITION /ADVANCED TRAINING
• normal courts For ITF ball specifications on Green balls, go to www.tennisplayandstay.com	TRAINING	COMPETITION / ADVANCED TRAINING	

5.5 - Competition formats for starter players

Up & Down/ Escalator

<u>Setting up</u>
This easy format is a good social doubles event because it enables players to play many different opponents. In each round a team plays a different opponent. The winner is the last team to win on the top court.

<u>Match format</u>
The numbers of players is the number waiting cannot exceed the number playing. For example, 1 court with 2 teams playing can have 1 team waiting. The number of courts available determines the number of players. Two courts could have 6 teams; 4 teams playing and 2 teams waiting. Four courts could have 12 teams; 8 teams playing and 4 teams waiting. The teams not playing would wait in a designated area near each court.
Alternative formats are:
- singles or doubles and works well in a variety of time frames.
- 30 minutes in a lesson or as a half day event. A shorter period of time would require a shortened scoring format.
- set period of time. The team with the most games or points won at the end of the time is the winning team.
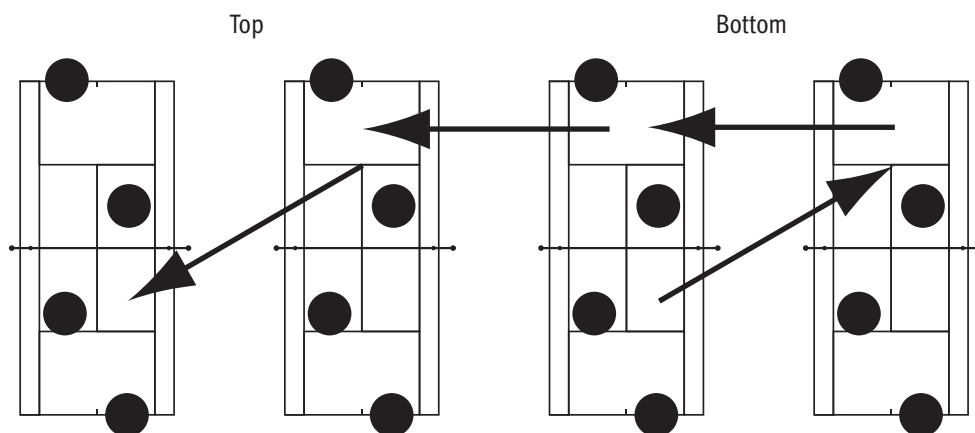
<u>Organisation and scoring</u>
The winning teams move anticlockwise/left toward a top court and the losing teams move clockwise/right toward a bottom court. The winners on the top court stay until they are defeated. No score sheet is needed.

Round 1
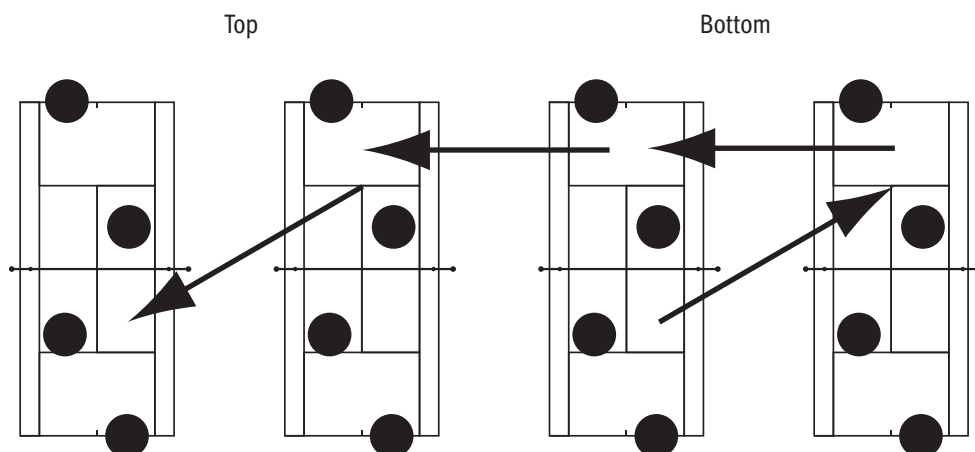
Round 2

Clock System

<u>Setting up</u>
In this format everyone plays each other. This is a good format for both singles and doubles and can accommodate a maximum of 12 players or teams. You can have up to four teams per court which would provide a built in rest time.

<u>Match format</u>
* one hour with shortened scoring
* 3 hours or full day using longer methods of scoring.

The scoring method used will be determined by the time available and the number of courts.

<u>Organisation</u>
Each player is given a number. Player 1 stays in the same position for the whole competition while all other players rotate one position. This can be shown on a scoreboard at the start so that players know where to move to. With an odd number include a 0 and become the stationary position. Each team will receive a bye
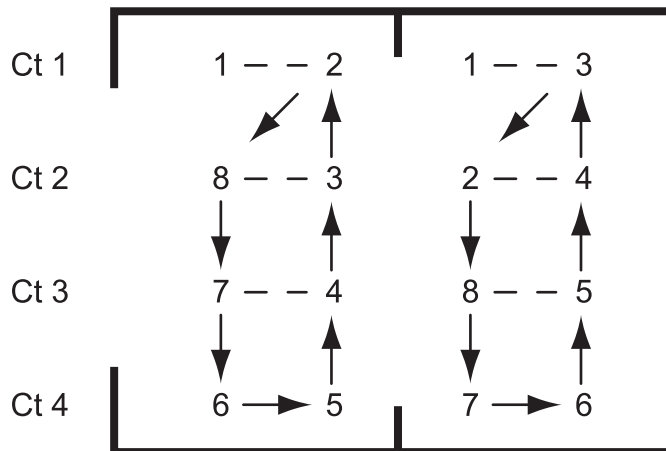
<u>Scoring</u>
A winner can be determined by:
* the number of matches won
* adding up the total number of games or points won.

<u>At the end</u>
The players with the highest total is declared the winner.

The diagram below shows the movement .

Ct 1	1 — — 2	1 — — 3
Ct 2	8 — — 3	2 — — 4
Ct 3	7 — — 4	8 — — 5
Ct 4	6 → 5	7 → 6

Round Robin Competition

Organiser tips

1. Setting up
Divide your players into groups of 4 players on 2 courts (if you have more players, see the 'Variations' section)

2. Match format
Each player plays a short set match (first to 4 games, with tie break at 4-4) against another

3. Organisation
For each group of players, use the following format

	1st Round	2nd Round	3rd Round
Court 1	A plays B	A plays C	A plays D
Court 2	D plays C	B plays D	C plays B

4. Scoring
Players are responsible for scoring their own matches

Players give their scores to the competition organiser at the end of the match.

Scores are added to the score sheet.

5. At the end
The winner will be the player with the highest number of match wins. To decide player positions, take results in the following order:
a. highest number of match wins
b. highest number of points for
c. lowest number of points against
d. the result of the match between the 2 players who are tied

Round Robin Competition

Scoresheet (for 4 players)

	A	B	C	D	WINS	POINTS FOR	POINTS AGAINST	POSITION
A								
B								
C								
D								

Order of play

A v C	B v D	A v D	B v C	C v D	A v B

Scoresheet (for 6 players)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	WINS	POINTS FOR	POINTS AGAINST	POSITION
A										
B										
C										
D										
E										
F										

Order of play

A v D	C v E	B v D	A v E	B v C	D v E
A v C	B v E	c v D	A v B		

A wide range of competition formats for different ages, duration and group sizes can be found at www.tennisplayandstay.com

5.6 Play Tennis Course Participants Evaluation Checklist

The ITF Play Tennis course is not an assessed course. However, this checklist is used to help participants offer feedback to each other on Day 4 of the course. Complete this sheet on your own or in pairs and then give it to the participant after their session.

Name of participant:	Name of observer:	Date:

Skills of the participant	Value				
The participant demonstrates:	+				-
• an enthusiasm for tennis, creating a positive and stimulating environment for players in sessions	5	4	3	2	1
• clear and quick organisation of a small group of players	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to work effectively with odd numbers	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to rotate a small group of players so that all are kept active and are given different tasks within the practice	5	4	3	2	1
• an excellent range of verbal communication skills (using names, loud, clear instructions, giving one instruction at a time, asking open questions, offering positive feedback etc) (see Appendix 1, Play Tennis Manual)	5	4	3	2	1
• excellent body language (facial expressions, hand signals, open body language, walking round the court etc)	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to introduce tennis as a tactical game using the 3 singles situations (serve and return, groundstrokes, approach and pass)	5	4	3	2	1
• basic observation skills to gauge the success of players using these practices	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to reorganise or make simple changes to activities to maintain optimal challenge	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to give simple instructions to each player within the group to help them be more successful when playing	5	4	3	2	1
• understanding of the difference between cooperative, cooperative/competitive and competitive practices	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to progress a practice, first using a cooperative practice, and eventually progressing to a competitive practice	5	4	3	2	1
• understanding of the difference between cooperative, cooperative/competitive and competitive practices	5	4	3	2	1
• the ability to progress a practice, first using a cooperative practice, and eventually progressing to a competitive practice	5	4	3	2	1

Overall evaluation	Points Excellent (65-75)
	Good (55-64)
	Fair (40-54)
	Poor (0-39)

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