

Delivering Tennis Programs to Your Community

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For you to deliver tennis programs successfully to your community, you need to know what programs are generally available and how to get information about them so you can adapt them for your needs. Good resources to contact are the tennis industry partners and allied organization that have been working with the USTA to grow the game. These organizations, whose involvement in tennis range from introductory events to top professional competition, are listed in Appendix A. They include:

- Tennis Industry Association (TIA)
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
- International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)
- United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA)
- Professional Tennis Registry (PTR)
- American Tennis Association (ATA)
- Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) World Tour
- Women's Tennis Association (WTA)
- Gay & Lesbian Tennis Alliance (GLTA)
- World TeamTennis (WTT)
- Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA)
- National Intramural Recreation Sports Association (NIRSA)



Your awareness of what programs are locally available combined with the national effort by the tennis industry to grow the game can only strengthen your ability to attract and retain players. Here are a few program ideas:

- **Hold an Introductory Event.** There are a variety of ways to get people started in tennis. The keys are to bring fun into the experience and provide a way for them to continue playing—and for that to happen, you want their initial experience to be a positive one. That's why it's a good idea for a person to try tennis for the first time under the direction of a tennis instructor. To find an instructor, contact the USPTA or PTR, a pair of organizations that certify teaching professionals. These pros will help ensure that proper fundamentals are being used.

- Introduce kids to the sport with **Kids' Tennis Clubs** or **Tennis Play Days**.
 - Kids' Tennis Clubs allow kids to sample tennis through supervised play and interactive activities. These “clubs” offer kids the opportunity to have fun, gain confidence, and meet new friends, all while enhancing their social and physical development.
 - Tennis Play Days provide kids of all levels the opportunity to continue to develop and enhance their skills. They are a welcoming way to experience the social and competitive aspects of tennis.
 - Check with your USTA section office for ideas on implementing an introductory events. And remember, introductory events can take many forms, such as a tennis carnival or festival, an in-school or after-school program, or an event that is combined with other local activities.
- **Offer a league.** Once a person has started to play tennis, there are many ways for him or her to continue. Finding someone to play with becomes easier when there is a CTA to organize the competition. Another popular way to continue playing tennis is in a league, such as USTA League, the world's largest recreational tennis league. Every USTA section offers leagues, the USPTA and World TeamTennis also organize leagues, and many towns also have their own form of non-advancing competition.
- **Conduct a tournament.** Continuing skill development and a thirst for a higher level of competition will encourage players to enter district, section, national, and even international tournaments. Contact your USTA section to find out more about having your CTA put on a tournament. The USTA sanctions thousands of tournaments each year.
- **Ally with another organization.** To deliver tennis programming in your community, join forces with another organization. For example, a joint partnership between the USTA and the NRPA supports community tennis growth and development in the areas of instruction, program development, technical assistance, and facility enhancements in our public parks.

Also, many CTAs offer self-funded programs. One such program is USTA National Junior Tennis & Learning (NJTL), a nationwide network of community tennis organizations seeking to develop the character of young people through tennis and education. Founded in 1969 by Arthur Ashe, Charlie Pasarell, and Sheridan Snyder, this growing network of tennis providers:

- reaches out to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to play the sport;
- instills in youngsters the values of leadership and academic excellence;
- gives all kids (regardless of income, race, or gender) the opportunity to fully develop their tennis skills so they can derive a lifetime of enjoyment from the sport.

Regardless of which organization you team up with, it takes capable administration to pull everything together.

Getting Started

Regardless of which programs you plan on offering, here are the basic components for getting the ball rolling:

- **Assessment of program options**—Know what is available and what you want to do.
- **Contact collaboration**—Check with organizations that are already offering similar programs. Network with them for information.
- **Secure funding**—Figure out whether your programs require self-funding or need outside help.
- **Plan**—It is important to have a timeline and action steps. Your USTA section will assist you in many ways. Get in touch with them from the beginning.

10 and Under Tennis

10 and Under Tennis is the largest youth initiative in USTA history and represents a revolutionary change in the way kids learn and play tennis, as well as in how they compete. 10 and Under Tennis tailors equipment and courts to a child's size and age—with smaller courts, slower-moving and lower-bouncing balls, and shorter, lighter racquets—so that he or she develops skills and has fun right from the start, rallying and playing quickly and in a way that is both enjoyable and rewarding.

10 and Under Tennis eliminates waiting in long lines to hit the ball and the frustration kids feel at not being able to rally. Kids will enjoy playing the game right away and will keep coming back for more, developing a lifelong passion and appreciation for tennis.

Also, with the new equipment and smaller courts that allow more players to participate at once, 10 and Under Tennis can serve as an excellent way to grow and expand your youth programming.

Programming

■ On-Court Training

Get instructors trained through a 10 and Under Tennis workshop, as well as a Recreational Coach workshop (designed for recreational coaches working with players of all ages). Find a workshop near you at www.usta.com/coaches_onscourt_training.

■ Facility Assistance

Decide whether or not you want permanent lines on your courts and/or playing surface. The USTA offers grants for these projects, so it's easy and affordable to line tennis courts or surfaces such as blacktops. If interested, go to www.usta.com/facilities to fill out a facility assistance request form. You can also apply for grants to build the permanent 36- and 60-foot courts utilized for 10 and Under Tennis. (A typical full-size court is 78 feet.) Another simple method for lining courts is by using tape or throw-down lines.

■ Register Your Facility

We want to make sure that you and your program are listed on the USTA's 10 and Under Tennis registry so parents searching for youth facilities and programming in their local area can find you. Make sure you not only register your facility, but that you register yourself as an organizer. That will allow for additional opportunities for parents to find you as they conduct their search. To register your facility and to register yourself as an organizer, visit www.10andundertennis.com/organizers.

Play Opportunities

With 10 and Under Tennis, there are more opportunities than ever before for children to get in the game. The goal of USTA youth programs is to give kids a foundation on which to build a lifelong passion for tennis. The USTA is committed to building tennis participation among youth in our communities, and the offerings are designed for kids at any and all levels.

■ Tennis Festivals

Tennis Festivals are free events that provide an exciting and entertaining opportunity for kids to experience what tennis has to offer. They offer a variety of tennis activities, interactive games, and contests that appeal to a wide range of ages and skill levels. In addition to introducing tennis to the kids and teaching them about the game, Tennis Festivals offer parents the opportunity to learn how to get their kids involved in a local program.

■ Kids' Tennis Clubs

Kids' Tennis Clubs are offered at local schools, parks, youth centers, and tennis facilities. This format lets kids “sample” the sport in a social and group environment. A Kids' Tennis Club is structured in a similar manner to other organized extracurricular activities. These clubs offer kids the opportunity to have fun, gain confidence, and meet new friends all while enhancing their social, educational, and physical development. If a Kids' Tennis Club isn't offered in the local community, parents should encourage local youth-serving organizations to add tennis to their curriculum.

■ Play Days

Play Days are designed to give kids additional court time in a fun, low-pressure, non-elimination setting where they can continue to develop and enhance their skills. For both novices and more experienced players, Play Days are a welcoming way to experience the social and competitive aspects of tennis. Organized by skill level, Play Days afford kids the chance to gain additional play experience by rotating opponents through short, continuous matches over a 2- to 3-hour period. Play Days promote a sense of achievement through a fun and spirited atmosphere.

■ USTA Jr. Team Tennis

USTA Jr. Team Tennis is often a child's first experience at organized play in a team setting. Through singles, doubles, and mixed doubles formats, team competition helps kids develop a sense of individual contribution within a group. Jr. Team Tennis promotes social skills and important values by fostering a spirit of cooperation and unity, as well as self-growth. Whether they win or lose, kids learn that succeeding is really more about how they play the game.

■ USTA Junior Tournaments

USTA Junior Tournaments are a great way for kids to enjoy the thrill of competition by getting on the court, playing a variety of styles, and making new friends. Competing in Junior Tournaments will help kids determine their personal goals for tennis—high school, college, or the pros. With a range of levels from novice to national competition, tournament participation encourages player development and advancement.

For more information on 10 and Under Tennis, please visit www.10andUnderTennis.com. Or for information on where to find any of these offerings in your local community, contact your local tennis facility to find out what programs and initiatives they offer.