

Partner with Schools Handbook



Table of Contents

3	FOREWORD: WELCOME
4	SECTION 1: APPROACHING SCHOOLS
8	SECTION 2: CREATING INTEREST
18	SECTION 3: ORGANIZING PLAY
22	SECTION 4: RESOURCES



FOREWORD

This resource is designed to introduce tennis to kids in school and connect them to follow-up programs.

By utilizing kid-friendly equipment, shorter courts, and instant play games and activities, kids will fall in love with the game at the first stroke of the ball. The USTA has developed a specific curriculum and training program for introducing tennis in physical education classes, which can provide a strong foundation for connecting kids to additional play opportunities.

▶ THE FOLLOWING HANDBOOK IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR SECTIONS FOR QUICK REFERENCE:

Section 1: Approaching Schools

Breaks down the steps for adopting a school and talking with school decision makers to implement and/or promote a tennis program.

Section 2: Creating Interest

Provides basic templates for visiting schools and getting kids excited about tennis, whether it's through a lunchtime demo, class visit, assembly, or school tennis festival.

Section 3: Organizing Play

Includes suggestions and tips on how to organize, set up, and conduct Student Tennis Clubs and Play Days for large numbers of students.

Section 4: Resources

Overviews additional resources essential for a successful school tennis effort including training opportunities, equipment, facility assistance, and more.



All tennis enthusiasts and program providers should contact their USTA Section and District offices to coordinate outreach to schools. There may be existing relationships and programs in place that need to be considered before communicating directly with school decision makers.

SECTION 1: **APPROACHING SCHOOLS**

- FAST TRACK FOR TAKING TENNIS TO SCHOOLS
- HOW TO INFLUENCE DECISION MAKERS



Fast Track for Taking Tennis to Schools

- Identify schools that will feed into your program.
- Create a flyer for a distribution at the schools.
- Get to know the administrators, teachers, and personnel of the schools and promote the benefits of the program.
- Ask a local business to help sponsor the program
 - a. Attend PTO/PTA meetings
 - b. Conduct an assembly or lunchtime demo
 - c. Offer to assist with P.E. classes
 - d. Help organize and start a Kids' Tennis Club at the school
 - e. Assist with a School Tennis Workshop
- Organize a Play Event to kick off the program.
- Host a season-ending Play Day for targeted schools to link to your facility or program.



In conjunction with the local USTA office, the steps above can be initiated by tennis pros, parents, volunteers, Jr. Team Tennis Coordinators, NJTL Leaders, and CTA program organizers.



How to Influence Decision Makers

1. Work closely with your USTA Section and/or District office to coordinate efforts for schools that will be targeted for tennis programming.
2. Determine if a working relationship already exists within the district or individual schools. Possible places include:
 - a. Board of Education (BOE)
 - b. District Curriculum Director
 - c. Athletic Director
 - d. Principals and physical education teachers
 - e. Local Parks and Recreation offices
3. Express your willingness to be a “good neighbor” and friend right off the bat, as time with a busy administrator may be limited.
4. Explain that the USTA has resources and programming that can address the health and wellness needs of their school/s.
 - a. Training workshops
 - b. School Tennis curriculum kit
 - c. Kids’ Tennis Club Materials
 - d. Equipment assistance
 - e. Program start-up materials and grants
 - f. Access to network of USTA trainers and staff
5. Explain that the curriculum kit was written according to national standards for physical educators by physical educators. Utilize the name and reputation of Dr. Robert Pangrazi and refer to the endorsements by the American Heart Association and the Cleveland Clinic.
6. Stress the lifelong physical and emotional health benefits of tennis and how that will reflect positively on their school district.
7. Highlight the fact that tennis can be conducted on school grounds without tennis courts. It can be offered in physical education, at recess, as well as before and after school.
8. Explain how the modified tennis equipment is student friendly and ensures a high level of success for all students involved. Students with disabilities can participate and no one is left behind.
9. Familiarize them with the high-quality school equipment offered at incredible pricing through the USTA partnership. (Show samples of the equipment and hit balls in the hall if necessary!)
10. Finally, listen carefully to all questions, provide practical information on how much the program will cost and who will execute it, and **get a commitment from the decision maker before leaving.**

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Developing mutually beneficial relationships/partnerships takes time. Each school is a group of separate personalities, attitudes, opinions, and policies.

Organizing your materials in advance and being prepared to address a variety of responses is important when dealing with resistant staff.

Highlighting the affordability of tennis in schools is key:

- Equipment costs per school for other sports can range from approximately \$2,500 for archery and bowling to nearly \$3,000 for golf. Compare that to an estimated \$375 tennis equipment package (24 racquets, 3 dozen balls, plus shipping/tax) which gives every kid in school the chance to experience tennis.

Most systems require the Superintendent's permission to distribute materials; however, individual principals, PE teachers, etc. can make some decisions. More importantly, one enthusiastic advocate may have "pull" in capturing the attention of key decision makers.

Having a direct, specific approach allows key decision makers to quickly assess your programs/offerings.

Be sure that you are aware of (or "that you follow" or "comply with") the school, school district, or organization's policies and procedures regarding child safety and protection (i.e., background checks, insurance, etc.).

Why should school systems support tennis programs for their students?

"Tennis players score higher in vigor, optimism, and self-esteem, and lower in depression, anger, confusion, anxiety, and tension than other athletes and non-athletes."

– Dr. Joan Finn, Southern Connecticut State University

"Tennis is an ideal physical education activity for improving wellness and fighting obesity in children."

– Cleveland Clinic

"Playing tennis is an excellent way to engage kids in regular physical activity to help them live longer, healthier lives."

– American Heart Association

Youth who play tennis get higher grades in school, are better behaved, and are less prone to risky behaviors.

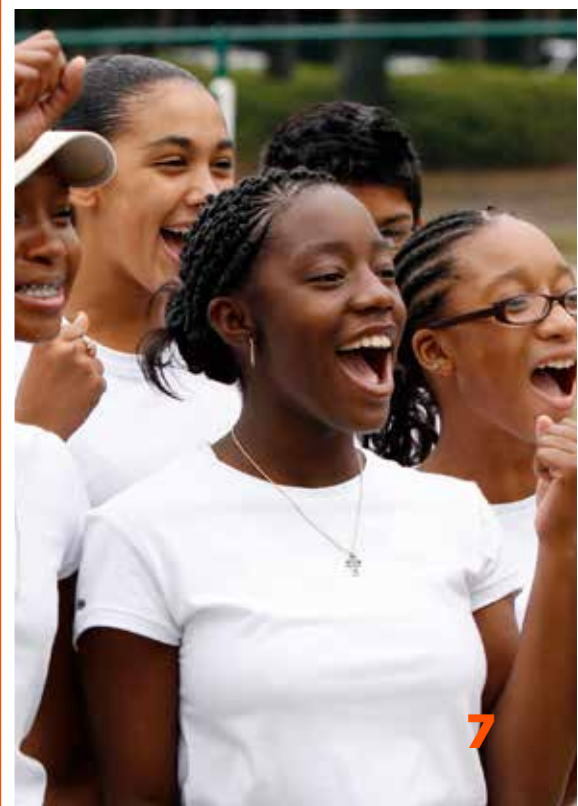
– USTA Foundation Research Survey

The USTA has created an extensive package of resources to make starting a tennis program easy and manageable.

For more information please visit: usta.com/schools

In the event that you experience resistance from a School District:

1. Work with individual schools and leverage support from PTOs/PTAs to implement programming. They are dedicated to promoting childrens' health, well-being, and educational success through strong parent, family, and community involvement.
2. Contact the surrounding Parks and Recreation Department Managers and youth organizations to establish a partnership with them in approaching the schools.
3. Offer to host a fundraising event (tennis festival) to help schools with related costs. This will increase awareness of the program and generate needed funds.



SECTION 2:

CREATING INTEREST

- LUNCHTIME DEMO
- CLASS VISITS
- SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN (K-2)
- TENNIS ASSEMBLY
- TENNIS SKILLASTICS
- TENNIS FESTIVAL



Lunchtime Demo

Generate excitement for tennis and/or getting kids into a program by using this format. First, gain permission from school officials and utilize kid-friendly equipment during lunchtime or recess periods. Typically, hundreds of kids hang around for a chance to play their friends or “beat the pro”.

KEY POINTS

- Set up a couple of pop-up nets on the playground and get kids playing tennis during recess or lunch period.
- Utilize – short courts, smaller racquets, slower moving balls, and a lower net create opportunities for instant success while guaranteeing RIGHT AWAY PLAY for kids.
- Mix things up – try different games such as Beat the Pro, Champs of the Court, or Longest Rally Challenge.
- Cultivate enthusiasm – play music and demonstrate skillful or flashy shots for kids to see. (topspin shots, between the legs, overhead smash, etc. — really hotdog it!)
- Add excitement and bring some stickers or inexpensive prizes to give away for effort, sportsmanship, greatest shot, etc.
- Hand out your flyers and invite the kids to a family tennis festival where parents can sign up their children up for USTA Jr. Team Tennis, instruction and play programs, junior mixers, and non-elimination tournaments.



Do not line kids up for drills or teach them technique during lunchtime/recess demos.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

ONE-POINT CHALLENGE

Put four kids on the mini court, play one point, and rotate everyone out. Winners and losers rotate off and go back to the end of the lines until their next turn. For even more fun, players/teams can earn a sticker or stamp for each point they won. The goal is to earn as many stickers/stamps as possible during the recess or lunch period.

ONE-POINT TOURNAMENT

Eliminate players until one team remains. Format thins playing fields quickly while generating excitement for the game.

RAPID ROTATIONS

Rotate players quickly out of the games to give large numbers of kids a chance to get on the court. For fewer kids waiting to play, allow them to stay in for more points before rotating.

CLASS VISITS

Grade Levels: 3-6 (Adaptable to other grade levels)

Once school permission is obtained, conducting PE class visits is a very effective way to introduce tennis to large numbers of students and familiarize them with the local tennis program and/or facility. The following routine is an effective way to organize a class and introduce basic skills.

EQUIPMENT

- Youth tennis racquets or paddles
- Foam tennis balls
- Bean bags and/or Koosh balls
- Courts are NOT required

KEY POINTS

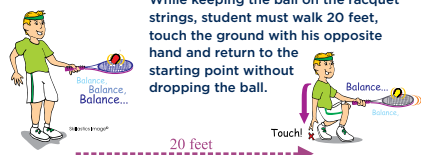
- Set up activity zones around the perimeter of the playing area
- Demonstrate how to use the equipment properly and utilize cue words such as “soft swings,” “short swings” and “bump it”
- Ask students to practice an assigned skill from the “Tennis Challenge – Checklist”
- Encourage students to work in a safe/responsible manner
- Each zone can represent a different activity, or students can stay in the same zone and be assigned a new skill

TIPS

- Start with skills/games that involve basic coordination such as tossing and catching
- Consider equipment adaptations to ensure success and safety such as bean bags, Koosh balls, hand paddles, lollipop paddles, etc.
- Modify the number of repetitions required for each activity based on the ability level of the students
- As rallying skills improve, activity zones can be adapted for miniature games of tennis over lines and makeshift nets
- Music can be used as a signal to play/practice and also as a signal to end play

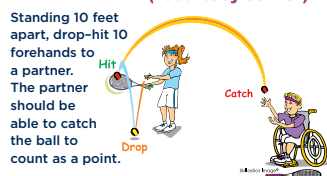
TENNIS CHALLENGE

Ball Balance



While keeping the ball on the racquet strings, student must walk 20 feet, touch the ground with his opposite hand and return to the starting point without dropping the ball.

Drop-Hit Forehands ("courtesy serve")

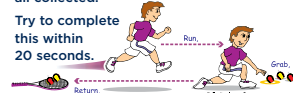


Standing 10 feet apart, drop-hit 10 forehands to a partner. The partner should be able to catch the ball to count as a point.

Ball Kid Burst

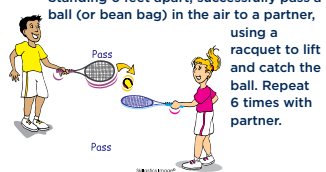
Place a racquet on the ground and a pile of 3 tennis balls 15 feet away. Run and grab each tennis ball (one at a time) and place them on the racquet strings until they are all collected.

Try to complete this within 20 seconds.



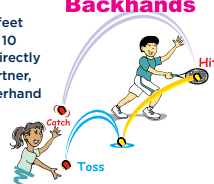
Partner Ball Pass

Standing 6 feet apart, successfully pass a ball (or bean bag) in the air to a partner, using a racquet to lift and catch the ball. Repeat 6 times with partner.



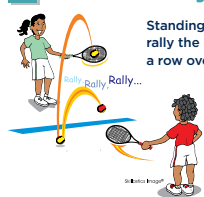
Toss-Hit Catch Backhands

Standing 10 feet apart, return 10 backhands directly back to a partner, from an underhand toss.



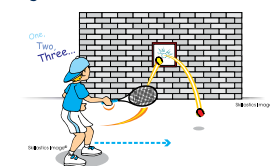
Partner Rally

Standing 6-10 feet apart, rally the ball 10 times in a row over a line or makeshift net with a partner.



Wall Rally

Standing 6-10 feet away, hit 10 consecutive ground strokes against a wall or backboard using forehands or backhands.



Ups and Downs



With the palm facing down, try tapping the ball 10 times in a row, waist high. Switch — with the palm pointing up, bump the ball up in the air 10 times without missing, eye high.

Station Activities for Younger Children (K-2)

When working with younger children, be sure to use activities that minimize the use of tennis racquets initially. Start with skills and games that involve basic coordination such as tossing and catching or rolling balls back and forth. In addition to racquet alternatives (hand paddles, lollipop paddles, etc.) tennis balls can be substituted with koosh balls, beanbags, yarn balls, beach balls, or balloons to ensure success.

Balloon Bump Ups

Kids learn control by bumping a balloon with their hands. Each player tosses a balloon up in the air and, while standing in their self-space, they keep the balloon up in the air by continuously bumping the balloon up. Players can try to see how many times they can bump the balloon up without the balloon falling to the ground.

Equipment needed:

One balloon per player.

Tennis Hockey

Kids learn to aim their shots by rolling a ball towards a goal. Place two cones as a goal about 4 feet apart. Position players at a starting line located several feet away from the goal. Players begin to roll the ball towards the goal guiding the ball with their racquet. When they get close to the goal, they stop the ball on a target spot and try to score a goal by hitting the ball from the ground between the two cones. To simplify this activity, use a small beach ball so that kids are able to control the larger object more easily.

Equipment needed:

One racquet/paddle and one ball per player, two cones, one target spot.

Ball Drop

Working in pairs, kids learn to react quickly. One player has a ball in both hands with arms extended at shoulder height. The player drops one ball and the partner attempts to catch the ball after one bounce. Move back slightly after each successful catch. Ball Drop can also be simplified for the younger kids by only dropping from one hand in close proximity.

Equipment needed:

Two balls per pair.

Throw-Ball Tennis

Players throw and catch a foam ball over the net simulating tennis. To begin, players are on either side of a line or portable net. One player throws a foam ball underhanded while the opposite player catches it after one bounce. Next, the player who just caught becomes the thrower. To make the game easier, players can use a larger ball and multiple bounces. Also, they can move closer to the net before throwing.

Equipment needed:

One foam ball or playground ball per game.

Bungee Jump

Kids learn racquet/ball control by catching tennis balls on the racquet face. To begin, each player balances a ball on the strings. Next, the ball is dropped off the racquet, letting it bounce on the target and then catching the ball back on the racquet. At first, students may need to use their hands to trap the ball on the strings. To simplify this activity, remove the racquets and have kids use their hands instead along with multiple bounces if needed.

Equipment needed:

One racquet/ paddle, one ball, and one target per player.

Toss to Targets

Kids work together to earn points by landing tosses on the targets. Standing three-five feet away from a target (doughnut, hula hoop, or flat rubber spots), kids take turns with their partner tossing the ball to the target using an underhand motion and stepping forward with the opposite foot. As kids gain accuracy, they can move further away.

Equipment needed:

One ball per pair, one target per pair.

Crash Test

Kids learn to strike balls with control. Four players, each with a racquet stand diagonally opposite each other in pairs. Each pair has one foam ball. On command, the players roll the ball with their racquets to their partner opposite them, so two balls are going at the same time. If the two balls collide in the middle, the players yell out, "Crash." A modification of this activity would be to allow kids to roll with hands instead of racquets.

Equipment needed:

One racquet/paddle and one ball per player.

Koosh Ball Pass

Kids learn racquet/ball control by passing Koosh balls back and forth. Have players begin by standing close together passing the Koosh ball back and forth from one racquet to the other. After several successful trials, have them move back and gently toss the Koosh ball from one racquet to the other. Allow kids to be creative by encouraging creative catches such as standing on one leg, between the legs, etc.

Equipment needed:

One racquet/paddle per player, one Koosh ball per pair.

Tennis Assembly

The School Tennis Assembly is an entertaining, yet informative show done in front of a class or an entire school that is intended to motivate students to play tennis. Ideally, the assembly will be used to kick off an after-school/Kids' Tennis Club program. The key to success is to keep things fast paced and exciting. Know your audience and keep the material age appropriate. The format is flexible enough to adapt to any age and ability level, as well as the personality of the presenter. Have fun and be energetic!

KEY POINTS

- Have fun, keep it moving (don't get bogged down!), and follow the time-tested script.
- Rally, Rally, Rally – Provide pointers as to how the kids can rally with friends and family at home in the driveway or at a local park.
- Sell, Sell, Sell – Remind the kids frequently of the after school/Kids' Tennis Club program they can join.

BEFORE ASSEMBLY

- Contact school and confirm time and location.
- Where will the assembly be held, in the gym or outside?
- What equipment does the school already have?
- Is there a sound system?
- How many students, which grades?
- Are there any students that play tennis or on a tennis team?

EQUIPMENT

- **Tennis Racquets** – 6-8
- **Tennis Balls** – A hopper of red foam and red felt balls; one can of traditional balls
- **“Special” Racquets** – Have a small variety of racquets. Examples are: small/tiny, old wooden, or giant promotional. Make sure you have your “pro” racquet too!
- **Exploding Tennis Ball** – Prior to assembly, cut a ball in half (be careful!), fill with cornstarch or baking soda, and glue ball back together with rubber cement. Ball will explode at impact.
- **“Trick Ball”** – Suspend ball to racquet by poking a hole in a felt ball with nail or awl, create fishhook with end of paper clip and insert into the nail hole; loop other end of paper clip onto strings and ball should be able to suspend upside down without falling off.
- **Net** – Use the school volleyball net, or an 18' pop-up net.
- **Prizes** – Wristbands, stickers, pens/pencils, key chains, posters, etc...
- **Music** – CD/MP3 player and portable speaker
- **Microphone** – Cordless or with a long cord (often can be supplied by schools)
- **USTA Banner** – Bring bungee cords to hang

DAY OF ASSEMBLY

- Arrive at least 45 minutes before the scheduled start time!
- Set up net, racquets, balls, prizes, hang banner, etc.
- Check sound system. Test the microphone and music.
- Ask teacher to point out several students that might be good non-tennis playing participants for the Rally Demonstration and other key portions of the assembly program. Also, find out if there will be any tennis players in attendance for special demonstrations.
- Ask teachers to seat students on one side of the gym/auditorium/cafeteria/black top, whenever possible.

TENNIS ASSEMBLY “CHEAT SHEET”

“Hot shot” Demo: With music playing, rally foam or low compression balls back and forth as the students are walking in and getting seated. Keep the ball going and play it up – lobs, overheads, “tweenies,” groundstrokes, and volleys will make the kids go crazy!

- 1.** Introduction: Explain who you are and why you are here...promote the after-school program and/or team tennis sign up day!
- 2.** Explain to the kids that they will be witnessing several fun tennis games today and there will be times to cheer loudly and times to be quiet. Demonstrate the universal signal for cheering (presenter raises hands and racquet high in the air) and the signal for being quiet (presenter hugs racquet against chest with finger in front of mouth). Practice this a few times before progressing and be consistent with holding the kids to the rules during the assembly.
- 3.** Pick a volunteer from the crowd who has never played tennis before and have them stand far away “just like they do on TV”. Offer that they can win your racquet if they can get the ball back in play. (Kids go nuts!)
- 4.** Bust open a “fresh can” and hit three traditional tennis balls to the student—student is awkward and unsuccessful from full court. Explain no student has ever been able to get the ball over the first time when starting so far away, “so don’t feel bad, we can fix that!”
- 5.** Explain the best way to learn is to start close like the best players learning tennis today.
- 6.** Move up close and get the student to hit ten foam balls in a row (crowd cheers, hand out prize).
- 7.** Pull 6-8 volunteers from the crowd for ups, downs, and flip-flops (for older kids). Have the kids do their best for 30 seconds - trying to beat the “national average”. (Crowd cheers for each of the teams).
NOTE: Volunteers must be sitting down and politely raising their hand to be chosen for activities (use the quiet signal). Teachers can be asked to pick out volunteers for the activities.
- 8.** Pull teacher or principal out from crowd (chosen by kids). Demonstrate the difference between rallying the ball out of the air and off the ground. Try and set a school record for longest consecutive volley rally. Whatever the teacher or principal gets earns them a prize. Encourage students to try and set a school record on their own as part of the upcoming program being promoted.
- 9.** Do a quick demonstration of the basic serve and return. Pick a volunteer from the crowd and make comparison of a service returner to a shortstop or catcher. Hit a few soft serves for player to return. Then have the PE teacher come out to show the fast speed of his/her serve. Explain that he/she can hit a ball so hard that it’s like a bolt of lightning. Use fun “exploding” tennis ball filled with baking soda or cornstarch (make sure teacher doesn’t bounce ball before serving).
- 10.** Organize a quick game of Student/Teacher Doubles. Play one game to four points. Explain that kids can play this game with their friends at the local after-school/Kids’ Tennis Club program starting soon.
- 11.** Finish with 4-6 volunteers to try and roll the ball over and onto the other side of the racquet without it falling off. The assembly leader should demonstrate using a trick ball paper-clipped to racquet strings. When demonstrators fail to do the trick successfully, the assembly leader shows again how easy it is but then gives away the secret by holding the racquet upside down.
- 12.** Thank everyone for coming...encourage the kids to stay active and to eat healthy and make sure to PROMOTE the local after-school/Kids’ Tennis Club program!

Tennis Skillastics

A Tennis Skillastics Kit is a great resource for conducting PE class visits, after-school programs, and special events. The kit comes with 26 laminated activity cards, six game mats, six large dice, six colored spots, one large activity mat, an instructor's manual and DVD. Tennis Skillastics can accommodate 1 - 100 students with no courts required.

EQUIPMENT

- Tennis Skillastics Kit
- Tennis Racquets*
- Foam Balls

*Not all activities require racquets and the organizer can choose activities that will maximize available equipment.

TIPS

- Utilize music and offer quick "turbo tips" to keep participants on track.
- Challenge groups with fewer or greater skill repetitions based on their ability.
- Utilize equipment modifications such as koosh balls, bean bags, balloons, etc., to ensure success.
- Encourage and reward effort, sportsmanship, and cooperation.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

ANIMATED INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

Choose three to four activities from the manual and have students perform the activities based on their ability level (beginner, intermediate, advanced).

STATIONS WITH ACTIVITY CARDS

Set up stations around the playing area based on the number of students participating. Choose an activity card for each station. Students can be rotated to a new station every 3-5 minutes, or they can stay in their assigned station and be given a new activity card to perform.

STATIONS WITH ACTIVITY MATS

Set up stations around the playing area. Place an activity mat and colored spot at each station. Place the large activity mat in the center of the playing area. Form teams by assigning a color and station to each team. Teams will race against each other by completing activities shown on the large activity mat. Refer to the instructor's manual and DVD for more information.

CONDUCTING LARGE EVENTS

In order to accommodate hundreds of children involved in Kids' Days, festivals, and special events, follow the steps below:

- Place individual activity mats in stations throughout the playing area (**NOTE:** The large activity mat is not utilized).
- Assign a volunteer station leader to work with each group of kids. Kids will be directed to an open station from the waiting area (up to six kids per station).
- Offer each kid a turn to roll the dice and move the team game piece around the individual mat.
- Once each child has completed their turn and the team has performed six activities, a new group of kids can replace them from the waiting area.

NOTE: In a period of one hour, with new groups of kids rotating into the stations every five to seven minutes, several hundred kids can effectively be introduced to the lifetime sport of tennis!



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO OBTAIN A TENNIS SKILLASTICS KIT, VISIT: SKILLASTICS.COM/TENNIS_SKILLASTICS.HTML OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL USTA OFFICE.

Tennis Festival

A “Tennis Festival” format includes a variety of skill and game challenges that can be done individually or in teams. It can also be effectively incorporated for School Tennis Field Days and for rallies involving several schools.

Similar to a swim meet or track and field meet, players participate in various activities arranged for their skill level and their individual scores contribute to the overall team score. Emphasis is placed on participation, effort, and sportsmanship, as opposed to highlighting the achievements of certain players.

The Tennis Festival format can be used to raise money for schools by organizing it as a PTO/PTA fundraiser. Organizers have the opportunity to attract sponsors, sell tickets to the event, offer different tennis games and activities, provide prizes, sell refreshments, and collect donations for the school’s tennis program.

SET UP

- Tennis games and activities are organized in stations throughout the court or activity area. Each group starts at a designated station and moves to the next station in a timed rotation. Another option is to have the students go to the station of their choice.
- The number of stations set up, the time spent at each station, and the size of each group/team can be adjusted based on the number and skill of the participants.
- Stations can be set up in any facility: blacktop, gymnasium, parking lot, dirt field or tennis courts.





FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

1. Select games which are appropriate for your students and your facilities.
2. Make a sign for each station (lamine for future use) naming the activity and include a simple explanation.
3. Have a reliable station or group leader to keep the activity running smoothly.
4. Each group could have a score card listing the events and the names of the people in the group. The station or group leader will record individual and/or group scores, depending upon the activity.
5. Awards can be given for completion and achievement.

EQUIPMENT

- Signs for each activity
- Tennis racquets
- Foam/low compression balls
- Stop watches
- Scoreboards/ scorecards
- Chalk/floor tape/ rubber lines
- Targets/rubber spots
- Pop-up nets, lowered volleyball nets
- Caution tape (for instant nets)
- Music
- Microphone or megaphone
- Prizes

The most important elements in a Tennis Festival are good planning and organization, lots of action, music and...fun!

TENNIS FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES – SAMPLE GAMES

Bull's-Eye

Hang hoops and/or banners at different heights against the back fence and have players serve or drop-hit balls at the targets. Smaller and more challenging targets can be given greater point values.

Bucket Head Catch

Create teams of 4-6 players. One player from each team is placed on the opposite side of the net holding a bucket in position over their head (if a bucket is not available, use a laundry basket or cardboard box). Teams are given 60 seconds to hit balls, one player at a time, to the designated “bucket head” who must position themselves to catch the balls. The team with the most balls captured in the bucket wins. Safety tip: Be sure to tell the “bucket heads” to stay low and keep their knees flexed to avoid falling backwards.

Another safe and easy way to play this game is for players to hold the buckets in front of their chest.

Inchworm Relay

Players line up shoulder to shoulder with their teammates behind a starting line. The player farthest from the starting line places the ball on top of their racquet strings. When the team leader calls “go”, the ball is passed from racquet to racquet. After passing the ball, each player runs behind his/her teammates to the front of the line to wait for the ball. A bean bag or Koosh ball can be used for younger children. Players keep passing the ball until they reach the finish line.

Navigator (Obstacle Course)

Set up 1-2 lanes of cones, hoops, empty ball cans, etc., as an obstacle course. Require players to navigate through the course while balancing a ball on their racquet, dribbling the ball down, or bouncing the ball up. A combination of skills and movement can make the activity more challenging. Players or teams can compete for fastest time.

Longest Rally Marathon

(can be done off court with makeshift nets):

- **Short court ground strokes —**
One ball or two balls: Two players work together to achieve the longest rally. More advanced players can be required to rally two balls at the same time.
- **Volleys —**
One ball or two balls: Same as the groundstroke rally, but done with volleys.

Racquet Quickness Circle

Create a large circle with the participants and have each player stand their racquet upside down on the racquet tip. When the leader calls out either “right” or “left”, participants let go of their racquet, move in the direction called, and try and catch the racquet next to them before it falls to the ground! If everyone has a successful catch, move back a step. If everyone is not successful move in a step. Try and see how large the circle can get with everyone being successful. This is a great activity to start off your festival.

Serve to Targets

Teams are divided in half, with two lines of servers on opposite sides of the net. The first player attempts to land a serve in the designated zone. If the serve lands in play, a point is earned for the team. If the serve hits a special target within the designated zone, five bonus points are awarded. The player who received the serve now serves it back to the designated zone on the other side. Players serve once an alternate turns with their teammates.

Shooting Gallery

Aiming in the direction of the back fence and using foam balls only, players are given 20 seconds to hit a moving target that is walking or shuffling between two cones spaced approximately five yards apart. Each direct hit is worth a point. Hitters take turns as the moving target!

Tennis Bowling

Set up ten empty tennis ball cans like bowling ball pins. Participants begin on the starting line and try and knock down the pins by rolling or drop-hitting a tennis ball. Players can play three or more frames depending on the number of players waiting in line. Distance away from the pins is based on age and ability.



SECTION 3:

ORGANIZING PLAY

- KIDS' TENNIS CLUBS
- PLAY DAYS



Kids' Tennis Clubs

Kids' Tennis Clubs are designed to give children the opportunity to try tennis in a safe, supportive, extracurricular setting. With tennis sized right for age and ability, it is easier and more fun than ever for kids to play — even if they have never picked up a racquet! Organizing Kids' Tennis Clubs is an excellent way for kids to experience camaraderie, cooperation, and individual self-growth.

By using smaller courts, kid-friendly equipment, and simplified scoring, children can experience success immediately. Traditional tennis courts are not required and Kids' Tennis Clubs can be organized in any school or recreational setting.

KEY POINTS

- Check the school system student activity handbook for appropriate rules and regulations.
- Get required school clearance for all volunteers.
- Decide if the proposed club/league can be a school sponsored and funded event.
- Assess the playing area – tennis can be played in almost any available activity space such as blacktops, gym floors, multipurpose rooms, and even on school fields.
- Obtain insurance to conduct the program as required by school/district.

Determine the season – consider weather, school terms, and conflicts with other extracurricular activities and sports.



EQUIPMENT

- **Foam and/or low compression tennis balls**
 - a. Foam balls are best for beginning players on smaller courts and indoor spaces.
 - b. Low compression/low bounce felt balls are best for the intermediate players on a 60' court.
- **Junior tennis racquets**
 - c. Suggested racquet lengths range from 21"– 23" for 36' courts and 23" – 25" for 60' courts.
- **Lightweight nets and portable standards; or makeshift nets or barriers**
 - d. A lowered badminton net can be used.
 - e. Consider using plastic barrier tape, yellow caution tape, or rope with streamers.
- **An indoor or outdoor play area**
 - f. Most any activity space will do. Existing markings on floors (badminton and volleyball lines) can be utilized.
 - g. Flat rubber lines, chalk or tape can be used for playing surfaces that are not marked.

Play Days

Organizing a Play Day is a great way to wrap up the end of a Kids' Tennis Club season. The Play Day can include multiple Kids' Tennis Club locations and serve as a launching pad for the start of the Junior Team Tennis season.

The games and activities used for the Play Day need to be age- and skill-appropriate based on the abilities of the students. In most situations, kids that have experienced tennis for only a handful of sessions will be at a novice level but can still attempt to serve, rally and play over a net.

NOTE: The suggested Play Day recipe above will likely take 1 – 2 hours with time allotted for warm-up, organizing teams, water/refreshment breaks, scorekeeping, and awarding prizes.

TIPS

- Prizes and awards can be distributed at the end of the Play Day for participation, sportsmanship, best effort, best shot, etc.
- This is a perfect time to distribute the tennis and sportsmanship achievement awards that are provided to Kids' Tennis Club organizers.

EQUIPMENT

- Scoresheets for each team, pens, stickers, music, prizes!
- Racquets (four per court), pop-up/makeshift nets, caution tape for nets, foam balls (one ball per person), rubber spots, buckets to store balls, half cones, throw-down lines.

Adaptations for match play may still be needed, such as standing closer to the net to serve, modifying how the point is started, making the court smaller, etc. Additionally, arranging kids in teams and doing skill challenges can be a nice complement to playing games over a net.



YouthTennis.com
Get Active



Be sure to register your Play Day at **YOUTHTENNIS.COM** and receive resources to help you run a successful event.

KEY POINTS

- 1. Space Preparation.** Establish a playing area away from the registration area. Tape down some Four Square courts and set up several portable nets for kids to use when they show up.
- 2. Volunteer Preparation.** Go over the activities for the day. Remind the volunteers that their role is cheerleader and teacher. Since many of the children are new to tennis, they may need help with rules, scoring and calling balls in or out.
- 3. Rally Warm-Up.** As soon as kids arrive, instruct them to go to the open courts and rally and play with a friend. This will avoid creating congestion in the registration area and create less distraction for the event organizer/s.
- 4. Create Teams.** After everyone has arrived, arrange teams of 4 - 8 players with one parent captain. Provide a scoresheet and pencil for the captains and have kids pick a team name. Teams can be created in advance or on the spot!
- 5. Start Play.** Below are some sample team games (2 - 3 minutes of activity, one minute to record score per activity).

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

TEAM TOSS-HIT-CATCH

Teams divide in half, with one team on the tossing side and one team on the hitting side. The first player from the tossing line tosses the ball to the first player in the hitting line. If the tosser is able to catch the ball from the hitter, the team earns a point. After each turn, the hitters and tossers switch over to the opposite lines. Play for two minutes and record total catches.

TEAM SINGLES

Teams of 2-3 players are placed on opposite sides of the net from each other and use the "team singles" rotation mentioned in the Kids' Tennis Club Playbook.

- Matches are 10 minutes each. Using numerical "ping-pong" scoring, record the total number of points won for each team.
- If time permits, change up the teams and play another round.

INCHWORM RELAY

Players line up shoulder to shoulder with their teammates behind a starting line. The player farthest from the starting line places the ball on top of his/her racquet strings. When the team leader calls "go," the ball is passed from racquet to racquet. After passing the ball, each player runs behind his/her teammates to the front of the line to wait for the ball. Each team that completes the task earns 50 points.

SERVE TO TARGETS

Teams are divided in half across the net from each other. One side begins with a player attempting to serve the ball over the net and into the court. If the serve lands in, a point is earned for the team. If the serve hits a designated target within the court (such as a hula hoop or rubber spot) five bonus points are awarded. Servers get one attempt and rotate to the end of their line. Each person should get a chance to serve three to four times overall. Record total number of successful serves.

FUN PLAY ROTATIONS

Multiple players can be assigned to a court and play a mini-round robin. Each player would play one game against the other players within his/her group.

- Consider organizing one of the suggested "fun play rotations" as described in the Kids' Tennis Club Playbook. Suggested options include "Star Catcher," "Up and Down the River," or "Musical Courts"
- The fun play rotations allow for multiple "mini-matches" to be played with a variety of partners and opponents, play another round.

NOTE: The activities above are only recommendations and can be substituted with other kid-friendly games as the organizer sees appropriate. The time spent on these games will also give you a good idea of the experience level of the players. To maximize space, half of the group can participate in the team games above while the other half of the group participates in rally games over a net.

SECTION 4:

RESOURCES

- SCHOOL TENNIS WORKSHOPS
- EQUIPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
- TENNIS SKILLASTICS
- COACH EDUCATION AND MORE!



School Tennis Resources

The USTA has resources and materials to help organizations and individuals offer quality school based programs.

SCHOOL TENNIS WORKSHOPS

These three-hour workshops demonstrate how to quickly transform a school gym or playground into a dynamic tennis-playing environment — allowing students to experience instant success in a fun and safe manner. No previous tennis experience is necessary for the teachers and the USTA will provide a qualified trainer to conduct the workshop at a time that is convenient for the participating schools. At least 12 participants are required and must be arranged through the local USTA Section or District office. Workshop organizers are eligible for a free equipment package. Contact your Section Schools Coordinator for more information on hosting a workshop for schools in your area.

EQUIPMENT ASSISTANCE

Racquets, balls, nets and scoring have all been modified to make the game fun, safe, and engaging for kids. With the purchase of a USTA Organizational Members (Schools, Parks, CTAs, NJTLs) have access to discounted equipment through a partnership with the Tennis Industry Association.

Visit: usta.com/equipmentdiscounts for equipment discount forms from participating manufacturers.

SCHOOL TENNIS CURRICULUM KIT

Creating a positive first-time tennis experience is the focus of the USTA curriculum kit, “A Physical Educator’s Guide for Teaching Tennis in Schools”. The curriculum kit includes a simple eight-lesson teacher’s manual, a quick-reference pocket guide, and an instructional DVD and CD-ROM of tennis and fitness activity signs. Each of the eight lessons fits into a 30-minute class period and is designed to be versatile and flexible for varying class sizes. The fun and action-packed curriculum can be taught anywhere—on court, in a gym, on a playground, or other activity areas.

TENNIS SKILLASTICS

Through an exciting mix of tennis and fitness activities, children of all abilities can develop skills quickly, gain confidence, and acquire a love of the game that can last a lifetime. Tennis Skillastics kits come with an instructional DVD, teacher manual, 26 animated task cards, a large group activity mat, and six station mats. Ideal for PE classes, after-school programs, back-to-school nights, and play events, Tennis Skillastics can be purchased at a discount by USTA members. For more information, visit: skillastics.com/tennis_skillastics.html.





**FOR MORE
INFORMATION
ON USTA
PROGRAMS AND
RESOURCES
AVAILABLE TO
SUPPORT YOUR
EFFORTS,
VISIT USTA.COM.**

COURT/FACILITY ASSISTANCE

The USTA provides technical assistance and funding opportunities for lining, constructing, and refurbishing school tennis courts. This includes permanent line grants for 36' and 60' courts. For more information visit: usta.com/technical.

COACH EDUCATION

In partnership with the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) and United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) the USTA offers coach education workshops and on-line training courses to further the education and development of youth tennis coaches and tennis program organizers. For information on coach education opportunities, log onto: coachyouthtennis.com. For information on tennis certification opportunities and resources for tennis teaching professionals, contact ptrtennis.org or uspta.com.

USTA PLAY DAYS

Play Days are events designed to introduce kids to competition in a low-pressure setting where results are not documented. These events provide kids with the opportunity to continue to develop and enhance their skills. Free resources are available to assist Play Day organizers in hosting an event (youthtennis.com).

USTA JUNIOR TEAM TENNIS

USTA Junior Team Tennis brings kids together in teams to play singles, doubles and mixed doubles against other teams. It promotes social skills and important values by fostering a spirit of cooperation and unity as well as individual self-growth. Also, it's a fun environment for kids in which they learn that succeeding is really more about how they play the game — win or lose.

COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATIONS (CTAs)

A Community Tennis Association is an organized group of volunteers and professionals who come together to support community tennis programs. As an association, the group works to coordinate and maintain tennis programs and services, guaranteeing that they are open and accessible to all. Fueled by local volunteers, CTAs exist to promote and develop the game of tennis in the community.

NATIONAL JUNIOR TENNIS & LEARNING PROGRAMS (NJTLs)

The NJTL network is a nationwide group of more than 600 nonprofit youth development organizations that provide free or low-cost tennis, education and life-skills programming to more than 250,000 children each year. While NJTLs vary in size and programming, this growing network shares a commitment to positive youth development, the importance of education and tennis as a lifetime sport.



For more information on...

Schools Curriculum & Training,
Registration Incentives, Equipment
Discounts, and more...

VISIT:

www.usta.com/schools