

Coaches Guide to **YOUTH PROGRESSION**



MISSOURI VALLEY



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transitioning your players **YOUTH TENNIS**

As a coach, your goal is simple: help your player reach his or her full potential and develop into the best player possible. But as simple as that goal is, the steps to achieving it can sometimes seem difficult.

The purpose of this booklet is to explain each step of the Youth Progression, giving you benchmarks to show when your player is ready for his or her next step.

Please direct any questions about the Youth Progression, or any of the information in this guide to the USTA Missouri Valley Youth Play Department by emailing pratzel@movalley.usta.com, or calling 913.322.4854.

RED

ORANGE

GREEN

YELLOW

It's not a race to the yellow ball

To make progress, players and coaches must believe in the process. As you are navigating through this process, remember that players grow and develop at different times.

Players 12 and younger can be ages apart physically, mentally and emotionally. It's always important to understand your individual player's needs and goals in order to set reasonable expectations.

By following the Youth Progression and not rushing to the yellow ball, you'll give your player the most chances for success throughout their youth.

The USTA Missouri Valley Youth Progression requirements are all about competition. These should be viewed as minimum requirements to move through the system. Ultimately, kids should be moved based on skill level (competencies). This should be a decision between parents, players and coach.



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USTA Missouri Valley Youth Progression Requirements

A best-in-class system was designed to track progress of junior players ages 10 and under, from orange to green to yellow ball competition.

The system tracks a child's progress through participation in Youth Progression tournaments, 10 & Under Junior Team Tennis and Youth Progression Play Days. Players will also be able to earn "bonus points" on top of participation points for doing well in a tournament. This helps more developed players to move faster through the system, and is similar to what they will experience in the 12U-18U age divisions.

Players complete each "mission" by collecting participation stars and trophies based on their results. To clear a specific level, players will have to achieve a combination of 20 virtual stars and/or trophies. Participation and "bonus points" will now be tracked in combination.

The minimum age to start playing orange ball "progression tagged" tournaments is seven years old. Players six and under are encouraged to participate in Play Days and Junior Team Tennis. On the first day of a player's 11th birthday month they will automatically graduate out of the Youth Progression tracking system. Reaching the age of 10.5 will no longer be a way to advance in 2016.

Participation in Youth Progression Events

	10 & Under Tennis Orange	10 & Under Tennis Green
Participation		
Play Days	One (1) Star (Max 2)	One (1) Star (Max 1)
Youth Progression Tournaments	Two (2) Stars	Two (2) Stars
10 & Under Junior Team Tennis	Three (3) Stars/season (Max 6)	Three (3) Stars/season (Max 6)
Results		
Progression Tournament Winner	Two (2) Trophies	Two (2) Trophies
Progression Tournament Finalist	One (1) Trophy	One (1) Trophy

Participation in Youth Progression Events

Each player's personalized TennisLink page will track progress and accumulation of stars and trophies. As players advance, they will see how many additional stars and trophies are needed to reach the next level.

Players may always participate in their previous ball color and level until they age out. However, stars and trophies will only be collected for the new ball color and level.

Players collect stars for:	Players collect trophies for:
March Youth Progression Play Day	Winning a 10 & Under Tennis section-sanctioned Youth Progression tagged tournament
September Youth Progression Play Day	Finalist in a 10 & Under Tennis section-sanctioned Youth Progression tagged tournament
Junior Team Tennis (10 & Under only)	
10 & Under Tennis section-sanctioned Youth Progression tagged tournaments	

There are many ways a player can clear a level. For example, a player can advance from 10 & Under Tennis Orange to 10 & Under Tennis Green by:

1. Participating in 10 Youth Progression tagged tournaments
2. Participating in seven (7) Youth Progression tagged tournaments and two (2) Junior Team Tennis seasons
3. Participating in one (1) Play Day, one (1) Junior Team Tennis season and eight (8) Youth Progression tagged tournaments
4. Tournament winner in five (5) Youth Progression tagged tournaments



transitioning from red to orange

To transition to the orange ball, players should develop the red ball proficiency for the forehand, backhand, combo, serve, return and volley.

	hands	feet	eyes/mind
forehand	Grip: Eastern to semi-western Unit turn Preparation: Racquet above the wrist	Ready position Lateral movement Split step Recovery: cross-over	Moving forward - down the line Moving back - high cross-court Control/direct ball to zones of the court (7 out of 10) to each zone
backhand	Grip: Bottom hand - continental; Top Hand - continental to eastern Unit turn Preparation: Racquet above wrist	Diagonal movement Forward movement Stances: closed, semi-open	Topspin and slice Open court zone
combo	Transition grip between forehand and backhand	Lateral movement Split step Recovery step	Side to side (7 out of 10)
serve	Continental grip Coordinated service motion Consistent contact point	Balance Stable platform	7 out of 10 to the correct box - each side
return	Grips Ready position Quick unit turn	Split step	7 out of 10 - return to each side
volley	Continental grip	Split before contact	Volley to open court (7 out of 10)



transitioning from orange to green

To transition to the green ball, players must develop the orange ball proficiency for the forehand, backhand, combo, serve, return and volley.

	hands	feet	eyes/mind
forehand	Introduce racquet-head acceleration Consistent contact point Moving toward full extension at point of contact Unit turn, working on keeping non-dominant hand on racquet until the hitting shoulder rotates Wrist load/pre-stretch Load: coordinated movements	Diagonal up Stances: Establish semi-open and introduce open stance Ready position Lateral movement Split step Recover: cross-over Diagonal movement Forward movement Stances: Closed, semi-open	20 balls down the line, side to side (7 out of 10) Understand offense and defense (slice) Moving forward - down the line Moving back - high cross-court Control/direct ball to zones of the court (7 out of 10) to each zone Topspin & slice Open court zone
backhand	Consistent contact point Moving toward full extension at point of contact Set wrist in proper position Load: coordinated movements Grip: Bottom hand - continental; Top hand - continental to eastern Unit turn Preparation: Racquet above wrist		
combo	Smooth, efficient grip change Transition grip between the forehand and backhand	Timing of split step Increase scope of movement Speed of drills increase Lateral movement Split step Recovery step	Cross-court down the line, side to side (7 out of 10) Change direction of ball both down the line and cross-court during competitive rally Side to side (7 out of 10)
serve	Synchronized upper-body mechanics with consistent toss from inside of the front leg Continental grip Coordinated service motion Consistent contact point	Introduce leg drive (use of ground) Either platform or slide Balance Stable platform	Wide/body/T (split box into 3 zones and have to make 7 out of 10) Slice serve and flat serve 7 out of 10 to the correct box - each side
return	Fully execute grip change Outside leg behind the ball with a deeper load Grips Ready position Quick unit turn	Assimilate the 3 footwork movement patterns: back, lateral, forward Split step	Split step and backswing sync with speed of serve 7 of 10 - return cross-court on wide serves, return down middle on middle serves 7 out of 10 - return to each side
volley	Outside leg behind the ball Able to maintain firm wrist at contact Control racquet head Continental grip	Transitional footwork patterns Explosive split step Moving to volley; timing the step Split before contact	Short, deep, and angle volley - control and accuracy (7 out of 10) Volley to open court (7 out of 10)

transitioning from green to yellow

	hands	feet	eyes/mind
forehand	Weapon development: Racquet-head acceleration Develop forehand as a weapon Build racquet-head acceleration Moving toward full extension; consistent point of contact Unit turn - working on keeping non-dominant hand on racquet until the hitting shoulder rotates Wrist load/pre-stretch Load: Coordinated movements Grip: Eastern to semi-western Unit turn Preparation: Racquet above wrist	Well-developed load in sync with unit turn Backward diagonal movement Integrate all three movements Stances: Able to execute all three Diagonal up Stances: Establish semi-open and introduce the open stance Ready position Lateral movement Split step Recovery: Cross-over	Speed Spin Height Depth Location Ball recognition: 7 of 10 - random and 3-way forehand/backhand into appropriate zones 20 balls cross-court past the service line in a row with shape and rotation to both sides Understand offense and defense (slice) Moving forward - down the line Moving back - high cross-court
backhand	Weapon development: Racquet-head acceleration Change direction and shape Consistent contact point Moving toward full extension at point of contact Set wrist in proper position Load: Coordinated movements Grip: Bottom hand - continental; Top hand - continental to eastern Unit turn Preparation: Racquet above wrist	Diagonal movement Forward movement Stances: Closed, semi-open Drop step Move backward on diagonal, get behind the ball and establish the base to get hips moving back Timing of split step Increase scope of movement Speed of drills increase Recovery step	Control/direct ball to zones of the court & 7 out of 10 to each zone Topspin and slice Open court zone Patterns to game style Attack and defend both sides Random: Side to side with appropriate response to coach in corner - 20 in a row Cross-court down the line, side to side (7 out of 10) Change direction of ball both down the line and cross-court during cooperative rally w/partner
combo	Able to position body in relation to ball and establish a contact point Create space between body/ball Absorb power Smooth, efficient grip change Transition grip between forehand and backhand	Drop step Move backward on diagonal, get behind the ball and establish the base to get hips moving back Timing of split step Increase scope of movement Speed of drills increase Recovery step	Patterns to game style Attack and defend both sides Random: Side to side with appropriate response to coach in corner - 20 in a row Cross-court down the line, side to side (7 out of 10) Change direction of ball both down the line and cross-court during cooperative rally w/partner
serve	Integration of lower and upper body (leg drive) in sync Front foot up and over the baseline (leg drive) Introduce kick serve Elbow up to strong man with palm down Synchronized upper body mechanics with consistent toss from inside of the front leg Continental grip Coordinated service motion Consistent contact point	Recovery: Re-establish base after making contact Introduce leg drive (use of ground) Either platform or slide Balance Stable platform	Routine Adjust speed on first and second serves Accuracy: 1st Serve: 6 of 10 2nd Serve: 8 of 10 8 of 10 to backhand side Wide/body/T (split box into 3 zones and have to make 7 of 10) 7 of 10 - return cross-court on wide serves, return down middle on middle serves 7 of 10 - return to each side
return	Handle: High kick, wide slice, and hard, flat serve Fully execute grips/grip change Outside leg behind the ball with a deeper load Ready position Quick unit turn	Use of all three stances Recovery after contact Move around and hit forehand on second serve Backhand slice approach Assimilate the 3 footwork movement patterns	Routine Return and attack Return 7 out of 10 to all three zones (short, deep cross-court, deep down the line) Split step and backswing sync with speed of serve 7 of 10 - return cross-court on wide serves, return down middle on middle serves
volley	Swing volley; Low/high volley with varied speed and spin Outside leg behind the ball Able to maintain firm wrist at contact Control racquet head Continental grip	Transitional footwork patterns Explosive split step Moving to volley and timing the step Split before contact	Volley sequence: deep to short (7 of 10) Swing volley (7 of 10) Short, deep, and angle volley - control accuracy (7 of 10) Volley to open court (7 of 10)

What's what...

What is a Play Day?

Let kids experience the thrill of competition without the pressure. Kids are introduced to competition in a low-pressure setting where the emphasis is on FUN. Play Days allow kids to gain match-play experience with others of similar age and skill so they can transition to team tennis and tournaments.

Play Days typically last two to three hours, and allow kids to play multiple matches in a non-elimination setting—all with the goal of enhancing skills and making friends in a fun, social atmosphere. For both novices and experienced players, Play Days are a welcoming way for kids to experience the social and competitive aspects of tennis.

What is Junior Team Tennis?

Kids can get active, have fun and make friends by playing tennis on a team. 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.

What is a Youth Progression tagged tournament?

Advance your game by getting on the court, learning from the best and connecting with your friends. Competing in junior tournaments will help take your game as far as you want to go - high school, college or the pros.

When your child is ready to compete, there is no better way to start than with USTA junior tournaments. Junior tournaments are great for kids who want to test their games, get out on the court and make new friends along the way.

Youth Progression tagged tournaments are 10 & Under Tennis tournaments for players that have tested the waters in-house, at a Play Day and Junior Team Tennis and are now ready to test their skills further.

The USTA Missouri Valley Youth Pathway

START

**RED
BALL:**
Age:
6-8 years

*Participation credits are not tracked at the section level in red ball. Participation in red tournaments and Play Days is encouraged before a player progresses to orange ball.

**ORANGE
BALL:**
Age:
7-10 years

Earn 20 stars and/or trophies.

**GREEN
BALL:**
Age:
7-10 years

Earn 20 stars and/or trophies.

**YELLOW
BALL:**
Age:
11+ years

See district regulations for 12 and Under Tennis criteria and green ball opportunities.

10 & Under Training Opportunity

Early Development Camps

Early Development Camps (EDC) is a new initiative developed by USTA Player Development that focuses on local players 7 to 10. The goal is to bring together players currently competing in the Youth Progression Pathway in a local area for intensive half-day orange ball training sessions. EDCs located throughout the section will help develop the talent pool of USTA Missouri Valley junior players.



Resources

A list of Youth Progression events and full USTA Missouri Valley Youth Progression regulations can be found at missourivalley.usta.com



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