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## PLAY TENNISSEE

### Level I "Learn to Play" Curriculum

We hope you are as excited to dig into these plans as we were in creating them! Your role in bringing the game of tennis to the next generation of players is of the highest importance. Through the experiences they share with you on the court, your players have the opportunity to come away as lifelong enthusiasts of our sport and lead healthier, happier lifestyles because of it.

This manual was written so you could lean on the USTA and experts in the industry to provide you with turnkey plans for beginner tennis players. As you read on, you will see the plans can be adapted across a range of circumstances to help serve their needs and deliver a great experience that's sure to have people playing and enjoying the game from day one.

This resource could not have been completed without the input and thoughtful collaboration of some of the best minds and teachers in the tennis community. To those who contributed to these plans by way of review, suggestion or other means, our most sincere appreciation for the time and care that you provided. The importance of creating a positive first experience for beginner tennis players can't be overstated, and we are honored to present a resource that reflects the passion and expertise of all those involved.

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From the entire team at the USTA, thank you for your commitment to bringing our incredible game to a new generation of players!

## PLANS AT A GLANCE:

	<u>Class 1:</u> Rally Now	<u>Class 2:</u> Rally Again!	<u>Class 3:</u> Get to the Net!	<u>Class 4:</u> Double Trouble	<u>Class 5:</u> Hit 'Em High, Hit 'Em Low	<u>Class 6:</u> Game On!
Instant Activity	Racquet and Ball Exchange	Shuffle Catch	Chase!	Up and Over	Mini Tennis Side to Side	Bryan Brother Volleys
Activity 1	Instant Rally Progression	Tap Up	Rally Now!	Rally Now! Beat your Record	Mini-Tennis	Team Up
Activity 2	Rally Now!	Rally Now!	Intro to Volley	Ground-stroke and Volley	Rally Now!	
Activity 3	Build Up	Serve and Return	Ground-stroke and Volley	Serve and Return	Up-and-Back Volley	
Activity 4	Serve and Return	Champs and Challengers	Serve and Return	Gladiator	Serve and Return Points	
Activity 5			All-Positions Doubles	All-Positions Doubles	Charge! Doubles	

## GET TO KNOW THE PRACTICE AND PLAY PLAN

### CLASS #: NAME OF CLASS

**Instant Activity:** Get players moving right from the start.

**Setup:** Arrangement of your players, balls, equipment, etc. in the play area.

**Description:** What the players are going to do after the setup.

★ As the coach, make sure to briefly demonstrate every activity! ★

**Levels:** Activity variations in order of increasing difficulty.

**Skills:** Areas of focus that will be developed.

**TIP:** Reminders to help you facilitate the best possible experience for your players.

**Coaching Cues:** Simple phrases to guide your players where appropriate.

**REVIEW & PREVIEW:** Use this time to give a brief overview of what's been established to this point and how it is featured in what's to come.

## **CLASS 1: RALLY NOW**

### **Instant Activity (5 Minutes)**

#### **Red or Orange Ball - 36' Court**

**Racquet and Ball Exchange:** This activity works on lateral movement combined with hand-eye coordination.

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs on opposite baseline of 36' court. Use spots if necessary.
- One player has a racquet, the other player has a ball.

#### **Description**

- Partner with the ball underhand tosses the ball to partner with racquet, who lets the ball bounce.
- Partner with racquet hits the ball cooperatively back, allowing partner to catch the ball after it bounces.
- Partners run forward and meet at the center, exchange the racquet and ball, turn, then shuffle or run back to the baseline.

Repeat the pattern above.

## **CLASS OVERVIEW**

### **FUN INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION OF TENNIS BENEFITS (3 MINUTES)**

Ask "Who has played before?" Pick a skilled player from the first activity to help demonstrate a brief rally from the service line. Mention this is today's goal: to be able to rally.

**Skills:** Hand-Eye Coordination, Rally Forehands & Backhands, Serve & Return

**TIP:** The class starts when the first person walks through the door.

#### **Foam or Red Ball — 42' Court**

### **Activity #1: Instant Rally Progression (Foam or Red Ball, 15 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Players spread out around the court, each with a racquet and a red ball.
- Be sure players are oriented facing their net or line.

#### **Description**

- Toss ball up and let it bounce, tap up with racquet (palm up) once, and catch with free hand.
- Toss, bounce, tap up twice. Continue until you reach five in a row.
- Self-rally on a target.
- Partner rally on a target.
- Partner rally over a line.

**Level 2:** Use backhand (knuckles up).

**Level 3:** Alternate forehand and backhands.

**Coaching Cues:** Tap up ball eye-high and bend your knees.

### **Activity #2: Rally Now! (Foam or Red Ball, 10 Minutes)**

**TIP:** Demo Forehand.

1. Mid-Service Box / racquet in front, starting at contact point.
2. Service Line / racquet to side, extend to finish.

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs spread out on each side of net.
- Position partners opposite each other about 10 feet from net. Each player has a target in front of

- them to help with consistency.
- Players mark court boundaries using chalk, existing lines or throw-down lines (TDLs).

#### **Description**

- Start a cooperative rally using forehands and backhands.
- Players aim for target.

**Level 2:** Players move back one racquet length after a rally of six shots.

**Coaching Cues:** Small swing, short distance. Distance affects technique.

#### **Activity #3: Build Up (Foam or Red Ball, 10 Minutes)**

##### **Setup**

- Players in pairs, using half-court.
- Partners opposite each other on both sides of net, in middle of service box.

##### **Description**

- Players rally back and forth using forehands and backhands.
- Coach determines number of shots to rally back and forth (e.g., four).
- Once the number is achieved, players increase rally goal by increments of two shots.

**Level 2:** Forehand only.

**Level 3:** Backhand only.

**Level 4:** Move to service line.

**Coaching Cues:** Ready position and react.

#### **Activity #4: Serve and Return (Foam or Red Ball, 10 Minutes)**

**TIP:** Demo Serve and Return.

##### **Setup**

- Two pairs per court, diagonally across net from each other on service line.
- Server's front foot pointing to dominant side net post, back foot parallel with baseline.

**TIP:** If greater than two pairs per court, divide service boxes in half to ensure no player is waiting.

##### **Description**

- Mid-Service Box / Abbreviated swing path emphasizing contact point. Partner on service line / Trap at contact point (emphasizing out in front and to the side of the body).
- Service Line / Abbreviated swing path emphasizing contact point and the start of the follow-through. Partner midway between service line and baseline / Contact point adding follow-through.
- Add backswing and complete full-service motion.
- Serve overhand into service box. Partner in athletic ready position incorporating full return.
- Using an abbreviated motion, player serves overhand to partner, who traps ball on strings with free hand and serves back.

**Level 2:** Receiver returns serve, server traps it on strings. After four serve-and-return sequences, receiver serves.

**Level 3:** Receiver returns serve, server hits back, receiver traps, then serves. Repeat sequence.

**Coaching Cues:** Turn sideways, controlled toss.

#### **REVIEW & PREVIEW — (3 Minutes)**

Thank them for attending. Review activities of the day, encourage them to practice at home and go over what the next session will cover.

## **CLASS 2: RALLY AGAIN!**

### **Instant Activity (3 Minutes)**

#### **Red or Orange Ball - Doubles Alley**

**Shuffle Catch:** This instant activity works on lateral movement combined with hand-eye coordination.

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs in the doubles alley facing each other, starting at the net.
- Each pair should have one ball.

#### **Description**

- Partners shuffle sideways away from the net, toward the baseline, alternating tossing the ball back and forth.
- Partners jog back to starting point once they reach the baseline.

**Variation:** Players can do other movements back to the end of the line (e.g., skip, butt kicks, high knees, etc.).

## **CLASS OVERVIEW**

Welcome the class back for Session Two, ask how their practice went and if they have any questions.

Go over what they will learn in the session. (1 Minute)

**Skills:** Rally Forehands & Backhands, Serve & Return, Doubles Points

### **FOAM or Red Ball — 42' Court**

#### **Activity #1: Tap Up (Foam or Red Ball, 10 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Players spread out on doubles sideline, each with a racquet and a red ball.

#### **Description**

- Toss ball up and let it bounce, tap up with racquet (palm up) until you miss while walking down to the opposite doubles sideline and back.
- Use backhand (knuckles up) and repeat movement down and back.
- Alternate forehands and backhands and repeat movement down and back.
- Make it fun by counting consecutive tap-ups and then beating their record.

**Coaching Cues:** Tap eye-high, palm up or knuckles up.

#### **Activity #2: Rally Now! (Foam or Red Ball, 10 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs spread out on each side of net.
- Position partners opposite each other about 10 feet from net. Each player with a target in front of them to help with consistency.

#### **Description**

- Start a cooperative rally using forehands and backhands.
- Players aim for target.
- After a rally of six shots, players take one big step backwards, until they reach the service line.
- For a fun addition bring out playing cards, have the pair pick a card and hit for the number on the card.

**Level 2:** Partners rally crosscourt.

**Coaching Cues:** Small swing, short distance.

### **Activity #3: Serve and Return (Foam or Red Ball, 15 Minutes)**

**TIP:** Demo serve and return that includes proper stance for each.

#### **Setup**

- Two pairs per court, diagonally across net from each other on service line.

#### **Description**

- Serve overhand into service box.
- Using an abbreviated motion, player serves overhand to partner, who traps ball on strings with free hand and serves back.
- Server's front foot pointing to dominant side net post, back foot parallel with baseline.

**Level 2:** Receiver returns serve, server traps it on strings. After four serve-and-return sequences, receiver serves.

**Level 3:** Receiver returns serve, server hits back, receiver traps, then serves. Repeat sequence.

**Coaching Cues: Turn sideways, controlled toss.**

### **Activity #4: Champs and Challengers (Foam or Red Ball, 15 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs, up to five pairs per court. Make pairings as even as possible.
- Doubles points are played using both service boxes of 78' court.
- Singles can be played with smaller number of players.
- One team starts on one side of court (Champs); other teams lined up on opposite side behind service line (Challengers).

#### **Description**

- Challengers may try to serve overhand first, but if they miss they may drop-hit ball to Champs, who must let ball bounce, and play out point.
- If Challengers lose point, Challengers rotate to back of line and the next team moves up.
- If Challengers win point, they stay in to play another. If they win the second point, Challengers run to the other side to replace Champs.
- For odd numbers, keep Challengers in two lines and play with a different partner each time.

**Level 2:** A winner automatically takes the Champs' position.

**Coaching Cues: Recover to ready position.**

### **REVIEW & PREVIEW — (2 Minutes)**

Review activities of the day, encourage them to practice at home and go over what the next session will cover.

## **CLASS 3: GET TO THE NET!**

### **Instant Activity (3 Minutes)**

#### **Red or Orange Ball — 36' Court**

**Chase!:** This instant activity works on acceleration, quickness and tracking.

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs.
- One player on the doubles sideline with a tennis ball and their partner in front of them on the singles sideline. Both players are facing the court.
- The players on the singles sideline should be in an athletic stance.

### Description

- Partner on the doubles sideline will roll the ball between their partner's legs. As soon as the player sees the ball go through their legs, that player chases down the ball.
- Partners then swap places and repeat the activity.

**Variation:** Partner on the doubles sideline underhand tosses the ball over their partner's head, who attempts to retrieve the ball in the fewest bounces.

## CLASS OVERVIEW

Welcome everyone back, ask if they have any questions and go over the exciting things you have planned for the day! Introduce the orange balls and the 60' court. (1 Minute)

**Skills:** Rally Forehands & Backhands, Volley, Serve & Return, Doubles Points

### Red or Orange Ball — 60' Court

#### Activity #1: Rally Now! (Red Ball, Orange Ball, 8 Minutes)

##### Setup

- Players in pairs opposite each other, spread out on each side of the net.
- Players start on service line with red balls.

##### Description

- Start a cooperative rally using forehands and backhands.
- After a rally of six shots with red balls, players take one big step backwards, until they reach 60' baseline.
- At the 60' baseline, they start their cooperative rally with an orange ball.

**Coaching Cues:** Small swing, short distance; bigger swing, greater distance.

#### Activity #2: Intro to Volley (Red or Orange Ball, 8 Minutes)

**TIP:** Demo Volley.

##### Setup

- Players in pairs on opposite sides of the net, using half-court. Players stand about four feet from the net.
- One player is the volleyer, the other is the feeder with balls.

##### Description

- Feeder stands in the front half of the service box and underhand tosses ball to volleyer at net.
- Feeder stands in the front half of the service box and drop-hits ball to volleyer at the net.
- After six attempts, players switch roles.

**Level 2:** Feed to backhand.

**Level 3:** Alternate forehand and backhand volleys.

**Coaching Cues:** Keep racquet up above the wrist.

### **Activity #3: Groundstroke & Volley (Orange Ball, 8 Minutes)**

**TIP:** Demo activity with one student.

#### **Setup**

- Players in pairs opposite each other, using half-court.
- Player 1 starts on service line with orange balls.
- Player 2 starts at the net.

#### **Description**

- Player 1 drop-hits the ball to Player 2, who split steps and volleys the ball back.
- Player 1 lets the ball bounce and traps, then drop-hits the ball back to Player 2.
- After six attempts, players switch roles.

**Level 2:** Player 1 backs up in between the service line and the 60' baseline.

**Level 3:** Rally balls without traps.

**Coaching Cues:** Split step as partner hits the ball.

### **Activity #4: Serve and Return (Orange Ball, 10 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Two pairs per 60' court, diagonally across the net from each other, with the server on the 60' baseline.
- Extend 60' baseline to net posts to create two 60' courts to accommodate more than four players playing at once.

#### **Description**

- Serve overhand into service box.
- Server's front foot pointing to dominant side net post, back foot parallel with baseline.

**Level 2:** Receiver returns the serve; the server traps it on the strings. After four serve-and-return sequences, the receiver serves.

**Level 3:** Receiver returns the serve, the server hits back, the receiver traps, then serves. Repeat sequence.

**Coaching Cues:** Turn sideways, controlled toss.

### **Activity #5: All-Positions Doubles (Orange Ball, 15 Minutes)**

#### **Setup**

- Four to six players per court, using orange balls.
- Players begin in a one-up/one-back doubles formation, on the 60' doubles court. Sidelines are the singles lines of the 78' court.

**Coaching Cues:** Go over the role of each position with players.

#### **Description**

- Play two doubles points and rotate positions one spot to the left at a time. If players struggle with serve, allow them to drop-hit second serve, or coach can put the ball in play to returner.
- With five players, have one player out at the net post.
- With six players, have a player out at each net post.

**Level 2:** Net players can't let ball bounce.

**Level 3:** One side must come in on short balls.

**Coaching Cues:** Track the ball and move with your partner.

### **REVIEW & PREVIEW — (3 Minutes)**

Review activities of the day and express with excitement that they now have all the skills and knowledge necessary to play on their own. Encourage them to practice at home and go over what the next session will cover.