



QuickStart Head Start!



**GET A
HEAD START
IN LIFE
WITH
QUICKSTART!**



QuickStart Head Start!

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of these fun lessons and practice sessions is to help children coming to tennis for the first time to learn the basic skills and principles of the game and enjoy the experience of hitting balls back and forth, even if this is not always over a net. Children of this age have slower reactions and little experience, so they need time and patient coaching to learn to receive and hit a ball. This will be along the ground or over a low barrier before they graduate to the low net itself.

At the age of 3-4, the physical abilities and mental/emotional development level means the focus should be on developing motor skills and learning cooperative behavior rather than striking the ball over a net and playing competitively. The children will “think” they are playing tennis because tennis racquets and balls are being used.

Each practice will also develop the principles and basic rules of playing sports in general, and tennis in particular. Children should be taught fairness, begin to understand winning and losing and how to work with other children. Cooperation should be stressed before competition. **QuickStart Head Start!** emphasizes cooperation, teamwork, success and FUN, not individual competition or winning.

A teaching session for this age group should last **no longer than 30 minutes**. Once a week is fine. Sessions are not timed; simply start the next week’s session where you left off last week.

Each lesson plan is structured in 5 parts:

1. Theme of the day
2. Movement activities
3. Skill development
4. Team game that reinforces the skills and tactics of the playing situation
5. “Take Away Tennis” activity (homework)

In some cases, activities from a prior session(s) are repeated as a means of reinforcement.

These practice plans are intended as guides. Please improvise as you see fit, and if something isn’t working, move on to something else. We would appreciate your feedback. Email: quickstartcentral@comcast.net.



Tennis - it all starts with QuickStart!



QuickStart Head Start!

GOALS FOR THREE YEAR-OLDS

General

- ✦ Learn to cooperate with other children
- ✦ Help with ball and racquet pickup
- ✦ Play safely and take care of equipment
- ✦ Enjoy participating and have FUN!

Motor Skills

- ✦ Balance on foot for five seconds
- ✦ Keep balloon or beach ball in the air for five consecutive hits
- ✦ Catch and roll foam ball back and forth with parent coach five consecutive times
- ✦ Drop, bounce and catch foam ball five consecutive times
- ✦ Throw five balls in a row to a target three feet away

Racquet Skills

- ✦ Balance foam ball on a racquet while walking 20 feet over and 20 feet back without dropping it
- ✦ Hit five stationary balls in a row
- ✦ Throw the ball in the direction called out by the coach
- ✦ Make five volleys over the net from a coach's toss
- ✦ Name the parts of the racquet: head, face/strings, throat and handle/grip
- ✦ Ability to demonstrate the forehand and backhand motion

GOALS FOR FOUR YEAR-OLDS

General

- ✦ Learn to cooperate with other children
- ✦ Help with ball and racquet pickup
- ✦ Play safely and take care of equipment
- ✦ Learn to keep score
- ✦ Enjoy participating and have FUN!

Five Consecutive Times:

- ✦ Toss foam ball in the air and catch it after one bounce
- ✦ Throw a foam ball to a target five feet away
- ✦ Do freeze ball
- ✦ Do "upsies"
- ✦ Do "downsies"

Ten Consecutive Times:

- ✦ Hit forehand volleys
- ✦ Hit backhand volleys



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INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Introduction to QuickStart Tennis --Sit the children in a circle on the floor and tell them:

- QuickStart is a new way to teach tennis developed especially for children your age!
- Equipment is kid-sized!
 - Show them the small racquets
 - Pass a racquet around so they can touch and hold it
 - Name the parts of the racquet – head, face/strings, throat and handle/grip, butt (they'll giggle on that last one, part of the fun!)
- The ball bounces are just the right height for children
 - Demonstrate how the ball bounces
 - Pass a ball around so they can see how soft it is
- We're going to have a lot of FUN learning to play tennis!
- Your parents will be able to play with you too!
- QuickStart is FUN for everyone!

Tennis Walk. Line the children up behind you and have them follow you in a circle around the perimeter of the play area while you walk slowly. Once they understand the "Tennis Walk," you can move to the center. As they walk around, ask them to name their favorite fruit. Tell them tennis players love to eat fruit, and the banana is a tennis player's favorite fruit. This is the default activity until all children are ready to proceed.

Statues. Have children move around until they hear "freeze." Then they have to stop immediately and hold their body completely still. Repeat several times. Tell them when you say **freeze** at any time they are to stand still wherever they are. (Call out "freeze" several times during the other activities to condition the children to respond to the "freeze" command.)

Racquet hug. Have each child pick up a racquet and show them how to hug it to their chest. Tell them when you say "**Hug!**" this is what they're supposed to do. Tell them they hug the racquet because they LOVE tennis!

Spots. To keep children a safe distance from each other, assign each child a "spot." Tell them when you say "spots" they need to go to their assigned spot.

Running around a racquet. Have each child place a racquet on the ground in front of them. Have them walk slowly around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them side shuffle around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them walk backwards around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them skip slowly around the racquet. Call "**Hug!**" then have children return racquets to the place where they got them.

Flamingo. Have the children stand on one foot with arms extended out like a flamingo. Then have them move around the area like an animal the coach chooses (tiger, kangaroo, alligator, etc.). When the coach shouts out "**Flamingo,**" the children stop the animal imitation and balance on one foot with their arms out and eyes looking straight ahead. Repeat several times, choosing a different animal to imitate. You can even let the children make the animal noise and choose the animals.

"Take Away Tennis"

Talk to their parents about QuickStart Tennis and ask the parents to learn to play too. QuickStart provides a great opportunity for family fun! QuickStart is family-friendly!



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LESSON ONE – CONTROLLING THE BALL (Part One)

Movement Activities

Tennis Walk. Line the children up behind you and have them follow you around the perimeter of the play area while you walk slowly. Once they understand the “Tennis Walk,” you can move to the center. As they walk around, ask them to name their favorite fruit. Tell them tennis players love to eat fruit, and the banana is a tennis player’s favorite fruit. This is the default activity until all children are ready to proceed. Then tell the children to go to their designated spots.

Statues. Have children move around until they hear “freeze.” Then they have to stop immediately and hold their body completely still. Repeat several times. Tell them when you say **freeze** at any time they are to stand still wherever they are. (Call out **freeze** several times during the other activities to condition the children to respond to the freeze command.)

Racquet hug. Have each child pick up a racquet and show them how to hug it to their chest. Tell them when you say “**Hug!**” this is what they’re supposed to do. Tell them they hug the racquet because they LOVE tennis! Ask them to name the parts of the racquet – head, face/strings, throat and handle/grip.

Running around a racquet. Have each child place a racquet on the ground in front of them. Have them walk slowly around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them side-shuffle around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them walk backwards around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them skip slowly around the racquet. Call “**Hug!**” and then have them return racquets to the place where they got them.

Hopping. Hop on one foot for 10 hops, then change to other foot. Remind children to try and keep their arms by their sides and to keep the top half of the body upright with their head still and eyes forward. (Develops body control as well as the ability to do different things with different parts of the body.)

Skipping. Skip, trying to get knees high by using arms to help lift the body. Keep the head up and eyes forward. Help those children who are unable to coordinate alternating arms and feet. Also help the children who land on their whole foot instead of the ball of their foot. Encourage them to land quietly.

Flamingo. Have the children stand on one foot with arms extended out like a flamingo. Then have them move around the area like an animal the coach chooses (tiger, kangaroo, alligator, etc.). When the coach shouts out “Flamingo,” the children stop the animal imitation and balance on one foot with their arms out and eyes looking straight ahead. Repeat several times, choosing a different animal to imitate. You can even let the children make the animal noise and choose the animals.

Frog Hops. Jump from a crouching position along the ground, landing quietly on the balls of the feet and with both feet together. 10 hops, rest and repeat.

The Bird. Have the children move around the court with the coach, but this time imitating one of three different types of birds that the coach will call out-either a hummingbird with arms moving short and quick, a robin with medium length and medium speed arm movements, or an eagle with long and slow arm movements. Repeat several times. Ask children to name other birds and show how they fly.



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Skill Development - Learning to Control the Ball

Roll with hands. Have the children pair up and stand 2 to 3 feet apart. Have them roll a foam ball back and forth to their partner. (Make sure they bend their knees.) Have them catch the rolling ball with two hands directly in front of their body. Once this is mastered, have them roll the ball to one side of their partner and then the other to get the partner to move. Then have them roll the ball to their partner and the partner stops it with his foot. Rotate partners and repeat.

Underhand ball toss. Have children pair up with a new partner when you say “**Scramble!**” Have them gently toss a foam ball back and forth to their partner. (Have them catch the ball with two hands directly in front of their body.)

Catch Me If You Can (self toss and catch). Each child has a foam ball and tosses it in the air, at least head high, lets it bounce and catches it. Who can catch it five times in a row?

Game

Racquet line. Divide children into teams of four or five and space out in a line with one racquet and a ball between them. The first child in the line balances the ball on the racquet and then passes the racquet and the ball to the next child in the line without the ball falling off. The racquet and ball are progressed down the line and then back to the beginning. Which team wins? Switch up teams and repeat several times.

Cool down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them.

Go Bananas for QuickStart! Cheer. Divide the children into two groups opposite each other. Tell one group to yell “Quick” on cue. Tell the other group to yell “Start” on cue. Tell them to yell that three times and then everyone will yell “Go Bananas!” and jump up and down together. Start the cheer.

“Take Away Tennis”

Roll ball tennis. On any flat area such as a driveway, playground or even a hallway, the children pair up and play roll ball tennis, rolling and stopping a ball back and forth with a partner. See how many consecutive rolls and stops the player and partner can get.





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON TWO – CONTROLLING THE BALL (Part Two)

Movement Activities

Tennis walk. Line the children up behind you and have them follow you around the perimeter of the play area while you walk slowly. Once they understand the “Tennis Walk,” you can move to the center. As they walk around, ask them to name their favorite fruit. Tell them tennis players love to eat fruit, and the banana is a tennis player’s favorite fruit.

Statues. Have children move around until they hear “freeze.” Then they have to stop immediately and hold their body completely still. Repeat several times. Tell them when you say “freeze” at any time, they are to stand still wherever they are. (Call out **freeze** several times during the other activities to condition the children to respond to the “freeze” command.)

Racquet hug. Have each child pick up a racquet and show them how to hug it to their chest. Tell them when you say “Hug!” this is what they’re supposed to do. Tell them they hug the racquet because they LOVE tennis!

Running around a racquet. Have each child place a racquet on the ground in front of them. Have them walk slowly around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them side-shuffle around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them walk backwards around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them run slowly around the racquet. Call “Hug!” them return racquets to the place where they got them.

Tunnel Ball. Two players stand across from each other about 4 or 5 feet apart with one foam ball per pair. One player rolls the ball to her partner, who moves so the ball will roll through her legs without touching her feet. Every time the players are successful, they score a point. Contest: Who can get to 7 first? Variation: Have partner facing away. Have player roll ball through partner's legs. Partner runs after ball as soon as he sees it and catches it.

Red Light - Green Light. Players line up side by side, facing the coach who is a distance away. Children have a racquet with a ball balanced on the strings. The coach calls out either "green light" or "red light." On green light, the players can move toward the coach. When red light is called, they must stop. If the players are caught moving when red light is called, if the ball falls off the racquet or if they touch the ball, they must go back to the starting line. The first player to reach the coach wins.

Catch Me If You Can (self toss and catch). Each player has a ball and tosses it in the air at least head-high, lets it bounce on the court and catches it.

Underhand throw and catch (add clapping). Show children how to toss the ball underhand, standing with both feet facing the target and stepping forward with the opposite foot (left foot if they are right-handed) and swinging their arm at their side. Place a target for the ball about two-thirds of the distance to the partner so the player has an aiming point. Have the catcher clap when the ball bounces before catching. You can have them add multiple claps if they elect to catch the ball after two or three bounces.

Ball drop. In pairs or with a coach, one player has a ball in both hands with arms extended at shoulder height. The player drops one ball and the partner runs and catches the ball after one bounce. Move slightly back after each successful drop and catch.



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Around the World. In pairs, one player has a ball in both hands and passes it to the partner who receives it with both hands - around the waist (both directions), from knee to high over the shoulder (both sides), over the back and through the legs.

Team tag. Divide players into two groups. Use the area between the baseline and the service line. Call the name of one player who will attempt to tag as many players as he can in 30 seconds. If a player moves out of the defined playing area or if they get tagged, they are out. After 30 seconds, all players are back in and the coach calls out a new name.

Skill Development - Learning to Control the Ball

Cannon Ball. The coach tosses a foam ball high in the air and calls out a player's name. The child attempts to catch the ball after it bounces, counting how many times it bounces before it is caught. This continues until all the children have been called.

Cannon Ball Champion. The coach tosses a foam ball high in the air and calls out a child's name. The child attempts to catch the ball after ONE bounce. If the child catches it after one bounce, she is still "in." If she doesn't, she sits down on the sidelines. Champion is declared.

Game

Roll ball tennis. With two players about 10 feet apart, each player rolls the ball under the caution tape (no net is used for this game). The other player moves into position, where he stops the rolling ball with his racquet and rolls it back. See how many rolls and stops the players can get in a row. As a variation, have the players stop the ball with their feet before rolling it back.

Cool down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them. Have the children name their favorite fruit when they drop the balls in the container.

"Take Away Tennis"

Drop and catch. Have children practice dropping and catching a small ball 7 times after the bounce, with both hands. Practice dropping the ball to either side of you and in front of you. Bounce it close and then far away from you. How many times can you get to 7?





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LESSON THREE – CONTROLLING THE RACQUET (Part One)

Movement Activities

Racquet passes. To help the children get used to handling the racquet, tell them to get a racquet and stand in their designated spot. Then have the children pass the racquet from one hand to the other. Then have them pass it around their body . . . both legs . . . one leg.

Racquet run around. Have each child place a racquet on the ground in front of them. Have them walk slowly around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them side shuffle around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them walk backwards around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them run slowly around the racquet. Call “**Hug!**” then have children return racquets to the place where they got them.

Racquet quickness. Two children stand facing one another, each standing a racquet on the tip of the frame with the handle pointing up. At the count of three, the children will switch places and catch the other child's racquet without letting it drop. After several successful trials, move the children back a half-step at a time and see how far they can go without letting the racquets drop.

Balance and control. Place several lines of three to four cones on the ground. Children have to move between the cones while balancing the ball on their racquet. The objective is to get them to control the length of the racquet and learn how to hold it. Some children will try and hold the ball with the other hand but encourage them not to do so. Also, encourage children to hold the racquet out in front of them, with a space between themselves and their racquet, even if they hold it with two hands.

Tap and bounce with a partner. Two children -- both with racquets, but only one ball between them. Move them about 2 feet apart (either side of a line or a large donut) and show them how to tap the ball up in the air toward their partner, who then lets it bounce before trying to tap it back. How many can the pair do in a row? Aim for highest score toward 7.

Pass the ball with a partner. Two children stand on either side of the net (or a low barrier), each with a racquet and with one ball between them. Each of them balances the ball on their racquet before tipping it onto their partner's racquet. How many times can they roll the ball between their racquets without it falling off? The ball must not be touched with their hands. Try to move the children farther apart. Make sure the children try to keep the racquet away from their body.

Rolly Polly. The players stand across from each other about three feet apart. Players have a racquet and should position themselves sideways to the ball as they might be positioned for a forehand - with the edge of the racquet on the ground behind the ball and the strings touching the ball. Using the racquet, the player with the ball rolls it to his partner, who stops the ball with his foot and rolls it back. After five successful attempts, the two players roll the ball and stop it with the racquet before rolling the ball back.

Hopping. Hop on one foot for 10 hops then change to other foot. Remind children to try and keep their arms by their sides and to keep the top half of the body upright with their head still and eyes forward. (Develops body control as well as the ability to do different things with different parts of the body.)



QuickStart Head Start!

Skipping. Skip, trying to get knees high by using arms to help lift the body. Keep the head up and eyes forward. Help those children who are unable to coordinate alternate arms and feet. Also help the children who land on their whole foot instead of the ball of their foot. Encourage them to land quietly.

COACHING TIPS

- Young children need to learn how to handle/control the ball and the racquet with simple exercises that encourage them to hold the racquet without it turning in their hand. They also need to learn to hold the racquet at the end of the handle and control it is as far away from their bodies as possible so their arms are almost straight.
- Begin the process of children learning to score to 7 points in any scoring games they play, so the foundation for learning to score is being put in place.

Skill Development – Learning to Control the Racquet

Tennis Hockey. Players form two teams and stand across from each other 3 feet apart. Place 2 cones as goals about 3 feet beyond the end of the line. Keeping the ball close to their racquets, the children tap the ball along the line or imaginary line (have them name the line) trying to keep the ball going straight. When they get to the end, they must try to score a goal for their team by hitting the ball between the two cones.

Game

Wacky Relay. Split children into two single-file lines (or four lines to have a race) across the width of the play area from each other. Start by having one child carry a beanbag or Koosh ball on his or her racquet strings to the first person in line across the area and transfer the beanbag (without touching it by hand) to the other person's racquet. That player carries it back to the other side. The relay continues until everyone has had a specified number of turns. To make it competitive, first team to complete the circuit wins. Mix up teams and repeat several times.

Cool down

Clean up. Divide the children into two groups. One group collects the balls, the other group collects racquets and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container.

“Take Away Tennis”

One Bounce - Two Bounce. The adult or older partner tosses a playground ball up in the air and calls out “One,” “Two,” “Three” or even “Zero.” The player must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it and tossing it back to the adult.

Racquet Quickness Activity





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LESSON FOUR – CONTROLLING THE RACQUET (Part Two)

Movement Activities

Sharks in a tank. Define the play area, depending on the size of the group. The coach calls out the name of the child and that child becomes the “shark” and attempts to tag as many players as possible. When a player is tagged, he steps out of the boundaries, does two jumping jacks and then rejoins the game. It is a good idea to control the movement — calling out “fast walk,” “skip” or “march” — to prevent anyone from getting hurt while running. The coach changes the identity of the shark frequently.

Ball drop. In pairs or with a coach, one player has a ball in both hands with arms extended at shoulder height. The player drops one ball and the partner runs and catches the ball after one bounce. Move slightly back after each successful drop and catch.

Ball relay. Divide the children into teams. All teams start at one side of the area. An equal number of balls are placed in containers – baskets, buckets, hoops, boxes or hoppers 20 feet away. Children must run, skip, jump, etc., to the container, pick up a ball and return to place it in the container at the starting point. Each child has a turn in relay fashion until all balls are in the basket by the fence and everyone is sitting.

Caterpillar. Arrange a line of children, all facing the same direction, shoulder to shoulder. All racquets are held in front. Starting at the end of the line, each person passes a beanbag or ball to the next person’s racquet and quickly goes to the front of the line. Try to move the line from point to point, about three feet apart. If the ball is dropped, the team must start over. This is a good relay race.

Popup volleys. Children start in a squatting position 3 feet from the net. The instructor is across the net and randomly tosses balls to them. When the ball is tossed, the child it is tossed to pops up and hits a volley. Each successful volley earns the child a point.

Racquet imitations. Use a racquet as a prop for a number of imaginative activities:

- Large spoon stirring a pot
- Guitar
- Canoe paddle
- Flag
- Hat
- Mirror
- Saw
- Fan
- Umbrella

Figure 8. Put two cones about 6 feet apart, then have the children move up and around each cone, making a figure 8.

Line hop. Using both feet, children hop over a line, forward and back and side-to-side.



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Skill Development - Learning to Control the Racquet

Instant Rally Progression

Freeze Ball. Show children how to bounce the ball and freeze it on the racquet, palm up. Toss the ball up, let it bounce then catch it on the racquet with as few bounces as possible.

Tap up, bounce and catch. Players will tap the ball up about head-level height, let the ball bounce and catch it on the racquet.

Bounce Catch. Show children how to bounce the ball, hit it up (racquet face up), let it bounce, hit it up (racquet face up) then keep repeating. Contest: Who can do 7 in a row first?

Bounce Catch with target. Show children how to bounce the ball, hit up with the racquet, let the ball drop and try to hit target on ground with the ball. Repeat. Contest: Who can hit the target the most times in 60 seconds?

Self rally. Show children how to after the first bounce, continue to tap the ball up after one bounce to about head-level height.

COACHING TIPS

- Young children need to learn how to handle/control the ball and the racquet with simple exercises that encourage them to hold the racquet without it turning in their hand. They also need to learn to hold the racquet at the end of the handle and control it is as far away from their bodies as possible so their arms are almost straight.
- Begin the process of children learning to score to 7 points in any scoring games they play, so the foundation for learning to score is being put in place.

Game

Racquet skills relay. Divide the children into two teams facing the net. Toss foam ball to each child, one at a time. Children hit the ball over the net and run to the end of their team's line. The first team to hit five balls over the net wins. Winning team takes a step back from the net and the relay is repeated.

Cool down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them. Have the children name their favorite vegetable when they drop the balls in the container.

"Take Away Tennis"

Applause. Use a foam or playground ball. The adult tosses the ball up and the child claps and catches the ball after the bounce. Do the same with two claps and three claps before the catch. See if the coach and player can clap between the toss and catch without a bounce. Can you do two claps before the bounce? Three claps?



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LESSON FIVE – SENDING AND RECEIVING

Movement Activities

Running cones. Teams of three or four. Children take turns running in and out of 8 cones placed in a straight line as fast as they can. Each child takes turns to go forward through the cones. Repeat moving sideways. Encourage them to keep their arms by their sides and not held wide. This exercise is to help them learn to control their body as they move quickly.

Flamingo. Have the children stand on one foot with arms extended out like a flamingo. Then have them move around the area like an animal the coach chooses (tiger, kangaroo, alligator, etc.). When the coach shouts out "Flamingo," the children stop the animal imitation and balance on one foot with their arms out and eyes looking straight ahead. Repeat several times, choosing a different animal to imitate. You can even let the children make the animal noise and choose the animals.

Tap and bounce with a partner. Two children – both with racquets, but only one ball between them. Move them about 2 feet apart (either side of a line or a large donut) and show them how to tap the ball up in the air toward their partner, who then lets it bounce before trying to tap it back. How many can the pair do in a row? Aim for highest score toward 7.

Pass the ball with a partner. Two children stand on either side of the net (or tape, or other low barrier), each with a racquet and with one ball between them. Each of them balances the ball on their racquet before tipping it onto their partner's racquet. How many times can they roll the ball between their racquets without it falling off? The ball must not be touched with their hands. Gradually move the children farther apart. Make sure they try to keep the racquet away from their body.

Rolly Polly. The players stand across about 3 feet apart. Players have a racquet and should position themselves sideways to the ball as they might be positioned for a forehand – with the edge of the racquet on the ground behind the ball and the strings touching the ball. Using the racquet, the player with the ball rolls it to his partner, who stops the ball with his foot and then rolls it back with his racquet. After five successful attempts, the two players roll the ball and stop it with the racquet before rolling the ball back.

Dodge ball. Players with racquets form a circle. One player is selected to be in the middle of the circle without her racquet. Players attempt to roll a foam ball across the circle and tap the player in the middle with the ball, who is dodging the rolling ball. Make this game move even quicker by using two or even three balls.

Skill Development – Learning to Send and Receive the Ball

Lollipop – Roll or toss to a color. Two players, each with a racquet, stand 5 to 6 feet from each other with 2 spots of different colors in front of them. One of the players calls out a color of one of the spots and rolls the ball to that spot. The partner moves to stop and pick up the ball, calls out a color and rolls the ball back to that spot. Start this game with a rolling ball, progress to a tossed ball and finally incorporate rolling the ball with a racquet.



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Game

Frying Pan Tag. Set up four cones to delineate the play area. Each child must remain inside the cones, balancing a ball on their racquet. The coach names one person the “chaser,” who then must tag people to get them out. Anyone venturing beyond the cones or dropping the ball off their racquet is also out. Last one out becomes the chaser for the next game. Repeat several times.

Cool down

Clean up. Divide the children into two groups. One group collects the balls and the other group collects racquets; both groups bring them back to the hopper/cart/container.

“Take Away Tennis”

Throw ball. Have the child and an adult rally with a playground ball by throwing and catching over a line in the driveway or any other flat surface. You can allow multiple bounces and let the child move closer to the line/net for better success.





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON SIX – SENDING AND RECEIVING (Forehand)

Movement Activities

Lobster Trap. This activity is done in pairs. The players stand 4 to 6 feet apart, with one player holding two racquets, one in each hand, and the partner with one ball. The player with the ball (the tosser) rolls the ball toward the partner and the player with the racquets (the lobster) catches the ball after the bounce by trapping the ball between both racquets. After trapping the ball, the player drops the ball from the racquets and hits the ball gently back to the tosser along the ground. Encourage the “lobster” to trap the ball at the side of his body so it is easy to make the drop and hit from a sideways position. Change tossers and lobsters after five tosses.

Team Lily Pad. Players work as a team to get from one side of the play area to the other (the swamp). To cross the swamp, one player must step only on the “lily pads” (poly spots or donuts). Each team has two poly spots and one player places one lily pad in front, where the other player can hop to or step on. The partner picks up the vacated lily pad and moves it in front so the partner can move forward by stepping or hopping to the next lily pad. This continues until one team makes it across the swamp. At this point, the players change roles and one person moves the lily pads while the other steps or hops to the open lily pad in front until she makes it back across the swamp.

Through the Tunnel. Players line up right behind each other, with their legs wider than shoulder width apart. The last player in line, or the coach, rolls the ball between the legs of the other players. After the player rolls the ball, she runs to the front of the line and tries to stop the ball before it passes her. Continue this format until the team reaches a designated area.

Crash Test. This activity uses four players, each with a racquet and one foam ball per pair. Partners stand diagonally opposite each other with one ball, and the other pair is also diagonally opposite with one ball. When the coach calls out, “Go,” 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, the players yell out, “Crash.”

Applause. All players have a ball in their own space. Each will toss the ball up, clap and catch after the bounce. To increase the difficulty, have them clap twice before catching, then three times, then as many times as they can before the ball bounces twice.

Skill Development – Sending and Receiving with a Racquet

Tennis Shootout. Players are divided into two teams. Spots are spread in a straight line with two cones forming a goal are placed at one end of the line. Make sure the goals are large enough to ensure success. Players from each team stand on a spot so they form a line. The ball starts with the player at the end without the goals, who rolls the ball with his racquet to the next player, who stops it and rolls the ball to the next player until it gets to the last player, who shoots the ball between the cones with her racquet. The first team to get the designated number of balls between the cones wins the game.

Game

Home Base. Players hit or toss a ball to each other over the net or tape. A spot is placed in the center of the baseline as the “recovery spot.” Every time a ball is tossed or hit, the player goes for the ball, traps it on his strings and hits or throws the ball to the other side of the net and recovers to his spot. The players work cooperatively to score 5 points—a successful hit or toss, the trap, return and recovery.



QuickStart Head Start!

Cool down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them. Have the children name their favorite fruit when they drop the balls in the container.

“Take Away Tennis”

Lobster Trap. The coach has one foam ball and the child has two racquets, one in each hand. The coach makes an easy underhand toss to the child, who traps the ball between both racquets after the bounce. After the trap, the child turns to the side, drops the ball from the racquets and hits a forehand to the coach.



Bananas, whole-grain cereal bars and water for snacks – that’s what tennis players eat on-court!





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON SEVEN – SENDING AND RECEIVING (Backhand)

Movement Activities

Racquet Splat. Two players with one ball are facing each other. Place a racquet between the two players who are standing 4 to 6 feet apart. Each player will make an underhand toss attempting to hit the racquet face. Each time the ball hits the face of the racquet, the team scores one point. Make this a cooperative game so each team is trying to score as many points as possible in the allotted time. Keep the time frame short, such as 30 seconds, and switch partners frequently.

Bungee Jump. Each player has a ball that is balanced on the strings. The players move around the court balancing the ball. When the coach calls out, “**Bungee Jump**,” the players let the ball drop off the racquet, let it bounce and then catch the ball back on the racquet. They may have to use their hands to trap the ball on the strings, but with practice they can just use the racquet face. Once the ball is on the strings, the player continues to move until the coach calls, **Bungee Jump**, again.

Clear the court. Divide players into two teams and put them on either side of the net. Dump out as many foam balls as you have on both sides of the net. When the coach calls out, “Clear the Court,” players pick up balls and throw them over the net to the other side. Let them continue to catch or pick up balls and throw them over to the other side for a minute to see what side of the court has the fewest balls.

Ice Cream Cone Catch. Give each child a plastic cone and a foam ball. Have the children bounce the ball and try to catch it in the cone. See who can do five in a row.

Sandwich races. Put the children in single-file lines, keeping the teams small. Place a beanbag on a child’s racquet and have the child name what kind of food it is. Another child places his racquet atop the beanbag, then places a beanbag on his/her racquet, naming it a food; and so on. (Be sure children do not place too much pressure on the bottom racquet.) When the sandwiches are built, the teams must keep them intact as they race to a specific spot, or see which team can go the farthest.

Skill Development – Send and Receiving with a racquet (backhand)

Tennis Hockey. Use Backhand Side of the Racquet. Place children in groups along a line starting by the net. Place two cones as a goal about 4 feet beyond the baseline. Keeping the ball close to the racquet on the backhand side, the children tap the ball along the line while trying to keep the ball on the line. When they get to the baseline, they try to score a goal by hitting the ball between the two cones.

Alligator River. Use Backhand Side of the Racquet. The players line up on either side of the doubles alley, each with a racquet and with one ball for each pair. The coach or one of the players is the “alligator” and is going to walk down the “river” – the alley. As the coach walks down the alley, the players roll the ball to their partner trying to hit the “alligator’s” feet.

Game

Simon Says. Play this game using objects such as tennis racquets, balls, bean bags, etc. Children should obey the commands preceded by “Simon says.” Commands may be as simple as “Jump on both feet,” “Hold the racquet over your head with two hands,” “Hold the ball and turn in a circle,” “Hug your racquet,” or “Pretend to hit a volley.” Also, ask them to hold the racquets by the different racquet parts you name during the game (head, face/strings, throat and handle/grip).



QuickStart Head Start!

Cool down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them.

“Take Away Tennis”

Applause. Use a foam or playground ball. The adult tosses the ball up and the child claps and catches the ball after the bounce. Do the same with two claps and three claps before the catch. See if the coach and player can clap between the toss and catch without a bounce. Can you do two claps before the bounce? Three claps?



She can't wait to get home to play tennis with her Mom!
QuickStart is family-friendly tennis!





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON EIGHT – RALLY SKILLS (Part One)

Movement Activities

Statues. Children jog around the area until the coach calls out, “Freeze.” Children have to stop very quickly and hold their balance. Repeat several times.

Call My Name. Children are in pairs, one partner with a ball and the other with her back to her partner. The partner with the ball tosses it up and calls out the partner’s name. The partner has to turn around and catch the ball after one bounce.

Slamma Jamma. Place throw-down lines or poly spots/donuts every 5-6 feet. Players stand on either side of a line facing each other. Players side-shuffle up and down tossing a ball underhand to a partner. The ball must bounce between the players before the partner can catch it. The goal is to move without dropping the catch. Every time a player drops the ball, the team quickly goes back to the nearest throw-down line or spot before continuing.

Different moves. Players are in pairs with one person designated as the leader. The leader does a movement activity on the court, such as jogging, hopping, skipping, jumping, etc., and moving in different directions—forward, backward, sideways. The partner has to copy the movement and follow the leader as closely as possible. Players take turns as the leader. Switch-up pairs and repeat.

Running forward and backward. Line the children up on one side of the designated area. Show them the boundary on the other side. Have them slowly run forward between the two points in the play area, circling arms forward and backward. Join in and make sure the children start from one side of the area and run across to the other. Try to keep them in a line so they can concentrate on what they are doing and not on racing each other. Repeat several times. Line up again and repeat running backwards this time. Encourage children to lean forward when they run backward so they keep their balance. Start slowly. Tell them it’s important to warm up before they play.

Red light/Green light. Line children up next to each other in a line. Create a target opposite the children about 20 feet away. When you call “green light” the children move toward the target. When you call “red light” they must freeze. The activity continues until each child reaches the target. Repeat having children balance a ball on a racquet while they move toward the target. If the ball falls off the racquet, they must go back to the starting point and continue from there.

Skill Development - Rally Skills

Jacks. The player tosses the ball up and lets it bounce, bumps it up with the racquet one time and catches it—“onesies.” The player then attempts to tap it up twice—“twosies”—and so on until they reach “fivesies”—or five in a row.

Partner Jacks. Same as above except the ball is caught by a partner on each tap-up.

Rally Me. Within a designated area, the player tosses the ball, lets it bounce and then bumps it up with the racquet, lets it bounce and taps it up again. This can be done while moving around the play area.



QuickStart Head Start!

Game

Survivor. Players line up on one side of the net (the island side), and drop a ball and then try to hit it over the net — or, if need be, hit from a toss made by the coach. If the ball goes over the net, the player stays on the island and goes to the end of the line. If the player misses, he is off the island and goes across the net, where he will try to catch a ball. If he catches the ball in the air, everyone on that side (the off-the-island side), gets to return to the island. If the ball is caught after one or two bounces, only that player returns to the island. The last player left who successfully hits the ball over the net, into the court and that is not caught is the survivor.

Cool Down

Clean up. Divide the children into two groups. One group collects the balls while the other group collects racquets; both groups bring them back to the hopper/cart/container.

“Take Away Tennis”

Rally – player and adult. Player rallies with an adult on any flat surface with a foam or oversized low-compression ball. Alternate hitting up after one bounce and trying to keep the ball from going outside a defined area, such as an area in a driveway, sidewalk or playground.





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON NINE – RALLY SKILLS (Part Two)

Movement Activities

Follow the leader. Line the children up behind a “leader” and have them follow the leader around the perimeter of the play area while they walk slowly. As they walk around, ask them to shout out their favorite fruit as they walk past you. Tell them tennis players love to eat fruit, and the banana is a tennis player’s favorite fruit. After one lap, change leaders.

Running forward and backward. Line the children up on one side of the play area. Show them the boundary on the other side. Have them slowly run forward between the two points in the designated area, circling arms forward and backward. Join in and make sure children start from one side of the area and run across to the other. Try to keep them in a line so they can concentrate on what they are doing and not on racing each other. Repeat several times. Line up again and repeat running backwards this time. Encourage children to lean forward when they run backward so they keep their balance. Start slowly. Tell them it’s important to warm up before they play.

Roll with hands. Have the children pair up and stand 4 to 5 feet apart. Have them roll a foam ball back and forth to their partner. (Make sure they bend their knees.) Have them roll the ball to one side of their partner and then the other to get the partner to move. Then have them roll the ball to their partner and the partner stops it with his foot. Rotate partners and repeat.

Underhand ball toss. Have children pair up with a new partner when you say “**Scramble!**” Have them gently toss a foam ball back and forth to their partner. (Have them catch the ball with two hands directly in front of their body.)

Roll with racquets. Have the children pair up and stand 4 to 5 feet apart. Have them roll a foam ball with a racquet back and forth to their partner on the forehand side. Have them roll a foam ball back and forth to their partner on the backhand side. Have them roll the ball to one side of their partner and then the other side to get the partner to move. Then have them roll the ball to their partner and the partner stops it with his foot. Rotate partners and repeat.

Lobster Trap. Players work with a partner, one player holding two racquets and one player with a foam ball. The feeder (player with the ball) makes an underhand toss and bounces the ball to the other player, who traps the ball between two racquets (lobster claws). The player then turns sideways, drops the ball from the racquets and gently hits the ball back to the feeder, who catches it after one bounce.

Skill Development – Rally Skills

Coach is positioned at the net and the children are behind a line made up of drop-down lines or spots. The coach rolls or bounces a ball to either side of a child, who runs, catches and rolls or tosses the ball back to the coach. Repeat. The child then goes to the back of the line. While the children wait their turn, have them hug their racquets and count how many bounces it takes a child to catch the ball.



QuickStart Head Start!

Game

Volley target relay. Divide the children into two groups facing the net. Coach tosses the ball to each child one at a time. Children volley the ball over the net then go to the back of the line. While the children wait their turn, have them count how many volleys their team has hit over the net. First team to 7 wins!

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them.

"Take Away Tennis"

Walk the dog. Use a racquet to push the ball along the ground following a line or person.

Big ball catch. Play catch with a large ball.



**Want to be a great
tennis player?**

**Eat like a great
tennis player!**

- Eat lots of fruits
- Eat lots of veggies
- Drink lots of water
- Eat whole-grain foods
- Eat lean meats, seafood and protein
- Play lots of tennis!

Go Bananas for QuickStart!



QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON TEN – RALLY SKILLS WITH PARTNER

Movement Activities

Follow the leader. Have children follow the coach around the court and imitate the movement of the leader, such as run, hop, swinging arms, monster walk, march, shuffle sideways, skip, etc. The coach can substitute a player to serve as the leader.

Partner toss and catch. Place two players in a service court with one ball. The player with the ball will toss it up at least head-level height so it lands anywhere in the service box. The other player must move and catch it after one or two bounces, then toss it so the first player must run and catch it. See how many successful toss and catches each team can make. Change partners frequently.

Inch Worm. Players line up shoulder to shoulder in a straight line, with their racquets held out in front with the strings facing up. The last player in the line has a beanbag or Koosh ball. That player passes it from his racquet to the next player in line and then runs behind the line of players to the front of the line. As each player passes and moves to the front of the line, the line moves forward to the opposite end of the court.

Throw ball. Using a playground ball and a rope or string as a net, have two children throw the ball back and forth with using two hands and a release from the side. The body rotation is similar as when hitting a forehand and backhand. You can allow multiple bounces if necessary. As the child improves at this activity, throw the ball on either side to create movement before catching the ball.

Tap and bounce with a partner. Two children, both with racquets, but only one ball between them. Move them about 2 feet apart (either side of a line or a large donut) and show them how to tap the ball up in the air toward their partner, who then lets it bounce before trying to tap it back. How many can the pair do in a row? Aim for highest score toward 7.

Pass the ball with a partner. Two children stand on either side of the net (or a low barrier), each with a racquet and with one ball between them. Each of them balances the ball on their racquet before tipping it onto their partner's racquet. How many times can they roll the ball between their racquets without it falling off? The ball must not be touched with their hands. Try to move the children farther apart. Make sure the children try to keep the racquet away from their body.

Skill Development – Rally Skills with Partner

Partner Rally Jacks. Partners alternate hits going from one hit each, “onesies,” up to five hits each, “fivesies.”

Splat. Two players each with a racquet and a ball pyramid made of 4 balls (3 for the base and one on top). One player drops and taps the ball up at about head-level height, trying to hit the ball pyramid to make it “splat.” When the balls are hit, the player scores a point.

Mini rally. Partners work together and rally over a line or low obstacle that serves as the net. They stand close to the obstacle and gently rally balls over the line or obstacle using the forehand. To start the rally, have players start close and sideways to each other, match up racquet faces and take two steps back.



QuickStart Head Start!

Game

Tag team singles. There are a few variations to this cooperative game where players in two lines on opposite sides of the net hit and move to the end of the line while keeping the ball in play. The rally begins with the first hit being a drop hit by the first player in line or by an underhand toss from the coach. This game is perfect for coaches and helpers to play as part of the team. They should get in line and participate just like the children, hopefully adding consistent and accurate hits when they play.

Cool Down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them. Have the children name their favorite fruit when they drop the balls in the container.

“Take Away Tennis”

Mini rally. Player mini-rallies with an adult over a line or low obstacle such as a racquet bag or any low barrier made by items from the house or garage. Use a foam or oversized low-compression ball.





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON ELEVEN – THE VOLLEY

Movement Activities

Running around a racquet. Have each child place a racquet on the ground in front of them. Have them walk slowly around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them side shuffle around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them walk backwards around the racquet. Reverse direction. Have them run slowly around the racquet. Call “Hug!” then have children hug their racquet and return it to the place where they got it.

Hopping. Hop on one foot for 10 hops then change to other foot. Remind children to try and keep their arms by their sides and to keep the top half of the body upright with their head still and eyes forward. (Develops body control as well as the ability to do different things with different parts of the body.)

Skipping. Skip, trying to get knees high by using arms to help lift the body. Keep the head up and eyes forward. Help those children who are unable to coordinate alternate arms and feet. Also help the children who land on their whole foot instead of the ball of their foot. Encourage them to land quietly.

Different moves. Players are in pairs with one person designated as the leader. The leader will do a movement activity on the court, such as jogging, hopping, skipping, jumping, etc., and moving in different directions—forward, backward, sideways. The partner has to copy the movement and follow the leader as closely as possible. Players take turns as the leader.

Ball chase. Two players stand beside each other, one with a ball, and the other player with his back to his partner. The player with the ball rolls it away from the partner and calls out, “Go.” The other player turns around, chases after the ball and stops it before it finishes rolling. A variation is to face forward and have the back player roll the ball between the legs of the player in front, who runs after the ball and stops it before it stops rolling.

Skill Development – The Volley

High fives. Have the children stand near the net or tape. Show them how to touch their racquet to your hand in a high five, then how to use the same motion to “high five” the ball. Stand close and toss balls to each child so she can gently tap (“high five”) them over the net or tape. Toss three balls to each child and rotate quickly.

Pop-up volleys. Children start in a squatting position 3 feet from the net. The coach is across the net and randomly tosses balls to them. When the ball is tossed, the child it is tossed to pops up and hits a volley. Each successful volley earns the child one point.

Game

Volley relays. Set up targets on one side of the net. Divide children into two teams in two lines on the other side of the net 4 to 5 feet back. Alternate tossing the ball to each team. Remind the children of the “high five” motion. Children rotate to the back of the line after their turn. Count the targets hit for each team. After each team has been through the line twice, declare the winning team. Mix up teams and repeat.



QuickStart Head Start!

Cool Down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them. Have the children name their favorite QuickStart activity when they drop the balls in the container.

"Take Away Tennis"

Play two five-minute games of catch during the week.





QuickStart Head Start!

LESSON TWELVE – PLAY DAY/TENNIS OLYMPICS

Movement Activities

This is a fun day and the activities can be just for fun or they may be competitive, especially if the children are placed on teams. Stations are set up around the play area and players start at an assigned station and perform the activity. When the time is up, they move to the next station. All the activities have been done at least once in previous practice sessions.

Here are some samples of simple activities for the stations:

- Self rally
- Rally with a partner
- Splat
- Inch Worm
- Throw ball
- Any other activity that the players enjoy

A is for Apple . . . Have children form a wide circle with you in the center. Ask first child to name a fruit or vegetable that starts with an “A.” After several “A” fruits and vegetables have been named, continue the alphabet – “B,” “C,” etc. As each child names one, have the child take one small step toward you in the center. Once all the children are in the center, have them take 3 or 4 giant steps outward to recreate the circle. Continue the alphabet progression and repeat.

Running cones. Teams of 3 or 4 children take turns running in and out of eight cones placed in a straight line as fast as they can. Each child takes turns to go forward through the cones. Repeat moving sideways. Encourage them to keep their arms by their sides and not held wide. This exercise is to help them learn to control their body as they move quickly.

Game

Tag team singles. There are a few variations to this cooperative game where players in two lines on opposite sides of the net hit and move to the end of the line while keeping the ball in play. The rally begins with the first hit being a drop hit by the first player in line or by an underhand toss from the coach. This game is perfect for coaches and helpers to play as part of the team by getting in line and participating just like the children, hopefully adding consistent and accurate hits.

Cool Down

Clean up. Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart/container without dropping them.

“Take Away Tennis”

Mini rally over a line. Player mini rallies with an adult over a line or low obstacle such as a racquet bag or any low barrier made by items from the house or garage. Use a foam or oversized low-compression ball.



QuickStart Head Start!



Tennis is the "sport for a lifetime" and makes friends for life!



Get a Head Start in life with QuickStart!