



# **After School Tennis Organizer Kit**

# Table of Contents

	<u>PAGE</u>
School Tennis Participation Pathway.....	1
Game Plan for an After School Tennis Program.....	2
Short Court Tennis Description .....	3-4
Team Tennis Format.....	5
Round Robin Format.....	6
Mid-Court .....	7
How to Guide for Starting a Student Tennis Club.....	8
Starting a Middle School or High School Tennis League.....	9-10
No-Cut Tennis Programs.....	11
No-Cut Coach Incentives offered by the USTA.....	12

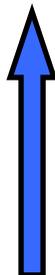


# SCHOOL TENNIS PARTICIPATION PATHWAY



## Tennis on Campus

College Intramurals and Student Tennis Clubs

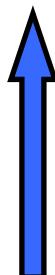


## High Schools

No-Cut Teams, Team Tennis Leagues, Tennis Clubs, Intramural/Interscholastic Competition

### In School Tennis

Teacher Training and Curriculum for Physical Education

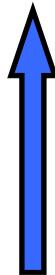


## Middle Schools

Team Tennis Leagues, No-Cut Teams, Tennis Clubs, Intramural and Interscholastic Competition

### In School Tennis

Teacher Training and Curriculum for Physical Education



## Elementary Schools and After School

Instant Play Formats with Modified Equipment and Court Boundaries, (36'/60')

### In School Tennis

Teacher Training and Curriculum for Physical Education



## Game Plan for After School Tennis Programs

Offering a team tennis program is the best way to attract students and it allows them to play tennis with friends in a safe and healthy environment. No previous tennis experience is required for program organizers or coaches and the USTA can help with training, funding, and start-up materials. Furthermore, for locations that do not have access to tennis courts, the league can be played on blacktops, cement multi-purpose courts, or gymnasium floors using modified court boundaries, transition tennis balls, and makeshift nets.

Similar to other organized youth sports, fees should be charged to ensure the program will be self-sufficient. Fees can include the cost of a racquet and transition ball for each child, t-shirts, awards, fliers, team photos, site fees, administration, insurance, etc. For in-depth information on USTA Junior Team Tennis and National Junior Tennis League program offerings, contact your local USTA Section office.

### Key action steps for getting after school tennis programming underway:

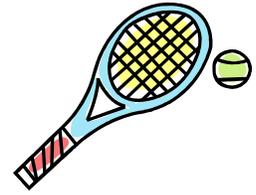
1. Identify school/s that will feed into the after school program.
2. Create a flyer promoting the after school team tennis program and host a registration/kickoff event.
3. Recruit parents and volunteers to serve as organizers, coaches, and site leaders.
4. Acquire some basic training - this can be as easy as visiting [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com) for downloadable coaching tips, practice plans and match formats. USTA Recreational Coaches Workshop are also available for rookie coaches and organizers to learn fast and easy ways to introduce tennis to children. Workshop dates and locations are available at [www.usta.com/rcw](http://www.usta.com/rcw).
5. Get to know the P.E. teachers, parents, and personnel of the school/s and distribute information.
  - a. Offer to assist with P.E. classes (demonstrate short court tennis or portions of the new school curriculum\*)
  - b. Conduct an assembly and promote the kickoff event/registration day
  - c. Host a field trip for school/s at your facility
  - d. Attend monthly/quarterly parent teacher meetings (if offered)
  - e. \*Assist with a USTA School Tennis Teacher Training
6. Conduct the registration/kickoff event and begin the season!

*\*For maximum results, it is recommended that each school contacted be involved with the USTA School Tennis Program, which offers teacher training, user-friendly lesson plans, and equipment loans to schools. Kids are introduced to tennis in the P.E. classes, which transition into the local Junior Team Tennis League and/or NJTL/After-School program.*



**For more information on local USTA support including training, grants, and access to discounted equipment for after school programs contact your section school's coordinator. Information available at: [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com)**

# Short Court Tennis



## After school format suggested for elementary schools

### What is Short Court Tennis?

We are all accustomed to sports that have been modified for children. Little league baseball fields are smaller. Grade schools often have eight-foot, instead of ten-foot baskets for basketball. Youth soccer is played on a reduced field. Yet we seldom see such a formal adaptation of tennis courts.

Short court tennis puts an emphasis on giving children a chance to really play the game. To play tennis is to serve, return serve, rally, and keep score. By utilizing smaller courts, you can get multiple children actually playing tennis in a limited space, indoor or out. The smaller courts and modified equipment shifts tennis from a game that is very difficult and often frustrating to one that is immediately accessible and rewarding.

### How to Get Short Court Tennis Underway

Here's what you need:

1. An indoor or outdoor play area
2. Junior tennis rackets
3. Lightweight nets and portable standards; or makeshift nets or barriers
4. Foam tennis balls

### Play Versus Instruction

Short court tennis is designed to be a continuum of tennis in physical education classes. While opportunities for coaching will abound, it is our hope that the focus will be play, and not instruction. Using short courts and easy-to-rally tennis balls brings down the level of difficulty to the extent that almost everyone can get right into the swing!

### Age and Skill Level

Short Court Tennis is recommended for 3rd-4th grade students but can be played by beginning players of all ages and is ideal for locations with limited space. As players advance in skill, they can participate in Mid-Court Tennis formats (see page 7) and eventually full-court formats.

### Playing Area

Gym floors or paved schoolyards are ideal. Short court tennis can also be set up on packed dirt, or even on grass. The best court size for beginner mini tennis is 18 to 20 feet wide and 36 to 44 feet long. Existing markings on floors can be utilized. The lines of a badminton court (20' x 44') fit this perfectly.

A regulation tennis court can be turned into six mini courts by hanging a net or rope with streamers through its center lengthwise from fence to fence and using the service lines and baselines as sidelines and the sidelines as baselines (see diagram # 1). The length of a volleyball court (60') can be used for intermediate players (refer to Mid-Court Tennis description). Flat rubber lines, chalk or tape can be used for playing surfaces that are not marked.

### Balls

Foam balls are the best choice for beginning players on smaller courts.

### Nets

Use any lightweight net that can cover an 18- to 20-foot area. A badminton or volleyball net can be used if a tennis court net is not available. You can also improvise by using plastic barrier tape, yellow caution tape, or rope with streamers. The net should be approximately 2 ½ feet high in the center.

## Racquets

Small racquets work best and are safest for doubles. Suggest racquet lengths range from 21" – 23". Please see the accompanying chart regarding suggested specifications for short court and mid court formats.

## The Game

The goal of Short court tennis is to simulate full-size tennis. As a result, play can be either singles or doubles. Overhand serves can be used, but underhand serves are perfectly acceptable. Once in play, the ball can be hit after one bounce or out of the air. All other rules parallel tennis.

## Scoring Options:

- Numerical scoring is recommended (1-2-3-4) with games being first to win four points and sets being first to win four games ( 2 out of 3 point tie-breaker at 3 games all).

## Serving

To speed up play, give players only one serve to get the point started (overhand or underhand). Otherwise, two serves are acceptable.

## Short Court Formats

There are numerous successful models for organizing short court programs. These range from drop-in formats, organized team play, and round-robin tournaments. Short court formats are a perfect bridge towards organized team programs at the middle school and high school level. We recommend formats that emphasize participation, and that do not require elimination of any students. Parents should be utilized as organizers and program leaders whenever possible.

## Team Tennis

**Concept:** To provide structured team matches with students remaining on the same team for an entire season.

**How to:** Students are divided into teams representing their class, their grade, or their school. Team size should reflect the facilities, with the goal of creating matches where every player can remain active. Schedule of matches should allow each team to play each other at least once during the season.

## Flexible Team Competition

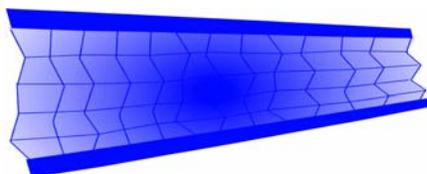
**Concept:** To allow for team competition in a situation where the student population changes from day to day.

**How to:** Divide students into teams and play a series of short scoring matches (e.g. 11 point games, 21 point games), or for a designated time (ten-minute matches). Each team may have, for instance, four doubles squads. At the end of the period, points can be totaled to determine the day's winner.

## Round Robin Tournament

**Concept:** Provide students with equal opportunity for competitive singles or doubles play in a non-elimination format.

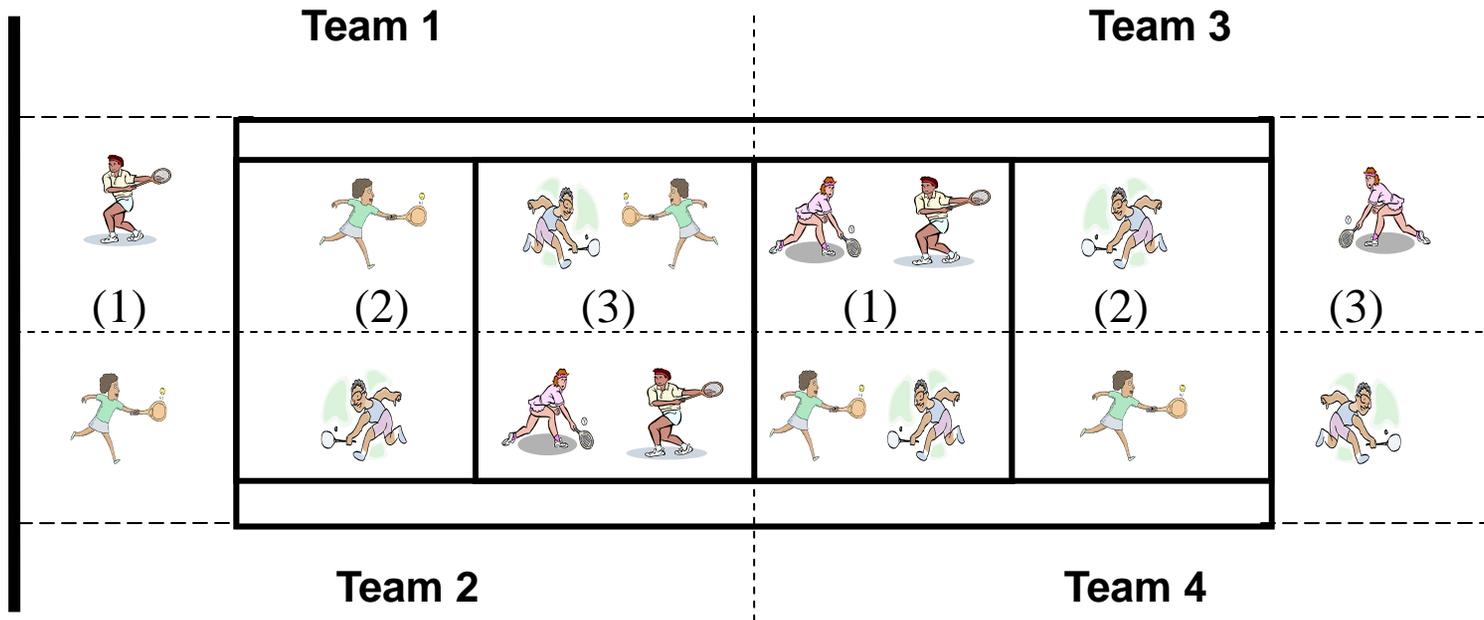
**How to:** Players are divided into four to five small groups of four to five students. Students will play all other students within that group. This will usually result in records that have a distribution of something like: 3-0, 2-2, 0-3. For the second half of the intramural program, students are once again divided into groups (or flights) based upon their record. This format works best if you can separate the most skilled players during the first session.



# Short court tennis (36')

## TEAM TENNIS

Diagram 1

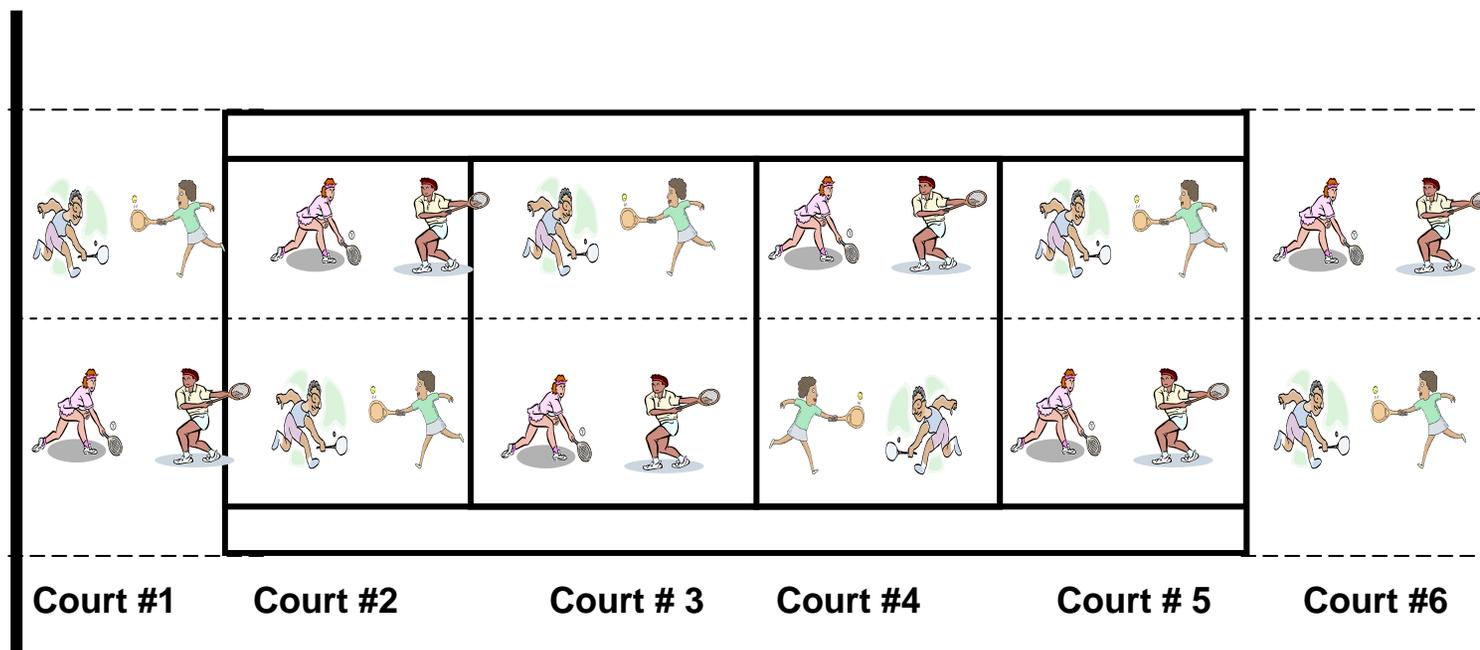


## RULES

- Four teams on each regulation tennis court—Two dual matches (1 vs. 2, 3 vs. 4)
- Three mini matches for each dual match:
  - Options— 3 doubles; or, 2 singles/1 doubles; or, 3 singles/3 doubles
  - Players can alternate playing singles and doubles (e.g. play 2 singles and 1 doubles and switch—the doubles players play singles and the singles players team up for doubles)
- Players spin the racquet for side and serve
- Games are first to 4 points; Sets are first to 4 games, 2 out of 3 point tiebreaker at 3 games all
- Sets can also be 2 out of 3 games
- Players rotate sides and alternate serving just like full court tennis

# Short court tennis (36")

## Round Robin Mix & Split Diagram 2



### RULES

- Six mini courts on a regulation tennis court (court is divided with barrier tape or short court nets from fence to fence)
- Play can be singles or doubles as long as it is the same on each court
- Games can be played first to four points with players/teams alternating serve after each game; or, ping-pong scoring can be used (play to 11 or 21) with sides alternating serve every 5 points.
- Players can be required to play 4 game sets with a 2 out of 3 point tiebreaker at 3 games all; Sets can also be 2 out of 3 games
- Players spin the racquet for side and serve and alternate sides and serving just like full court tennis
- Players can also play to time or to when the music stops; whoever is ahead, moves up a court, whoever is behind moves down. If playing doubles, teams can split and get a new partner.

# Mid-Court Tennis (60')

**After school format suitable for upper elementary & middle schools**

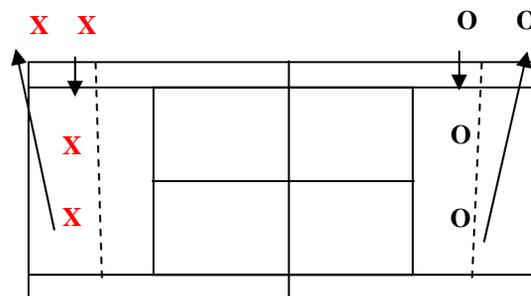
## What is Mid-Court Tennis?

After students experience success with short court tennis, the next progression is to play Mid-Court Tennis. To maximize court space, the following rules and guidelines for play are outlined below:

## Specifications for Mid-Court Tennis

- Skill/Age Level: This format is recommended for intermediate players, 5th grade and above.
- Playing Area: A 60' x 21' court is recommended for doubles play; 60' x 18' is recommended for singles play. Volleyball courts are 60 feet long and can be modified as needed with temporary tape and lines.
- Ball: Low compression tennis ball or high density foam ball for indoor play
- Racquet Length: 25" racquets are recommended for the 60 foot court.
- Net Height: 3 feet high is recommended (traditional tennis net height)
- Teams: Up to 6 players are put on a team. Only two players per team play at one time (see diagram 3).
- Scoring: Using numerical scoring (score by ones), the first team to four points wins a game. Play as many games as time allows. (Note: games are played to 4 so players can transition easier to traditional scoring (15, 30, 40, game).
- Serving: Drop hit or serve overhand. The server gets two tries to get the ball in play. The same team serves an entire game.
- Rotation: Players stay in the game for two points. The first point is served from the right side by Player #1 and the second point is served from the left side by Player #2. Be sure to rotate substitutes evenly from the side. (Refer to diagram 3)

Diagram 3



**(Up to 8-12 kids per court and only 4 racquets are required!)**



# How to Guide for Starting a Student Tennis Club



*A student tennis club is a great way to organize and attract students interested in playing an inclusive team sport with friends in a safe and healthy environment.*

## Key action steps for getting a student tennis club developed:

**1. Recruit and develop club leaders:** In order for any program to get started or to work successfully it is important to have the support and involvement of a number of people. This team may vary between schools but should include:

- At least one supportive administrator who can affect policy or purchasing decisions
- One or two faculty members to serve as advisors to the students
- A parent or teacher to be the lead organizer (no previous tennis experience is required).
- Parents and volunteers to form a core planning group that will set any rules, decide on cost and funding means, direct volunteer recruitment and handle publicity

## 2. Getting started

- Check the school system student activity handbook for any rules and regulations governing club sports and make sure all volunteers have required school clearance.
- Set a schedule and secure a playing area. Are there courts at the school, nearby, or an open area where modified/portable courts can be set up?
- Plan a meeting with the principal and athletic director that includes the PTO president.
- Once approved, create and distribute a flyer/announcement/registration form containing appropriate information for students to take home to decision makers.
- Organize a first meeting. Go over club rules and policies, schedule of practices, and any other necessary information.
- Arrange for in school announcements to be made promoting the student tennis club.
- Publicize through school newsletter, list serve, posters, and local newspaper if appropriate.
- Order t-shirts for the club members. There is no better advertisement than to have the students wear their t-shirts once a week. It is also a great way to build team spirit.

## 3. Let's play tennis

- Host a kickoff event. Include students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Consider offering refreshments, awards and prizes to create a memorable event.
- During the season, combine practice opportunities and playing opportunities. Divide players into teams and have team competition throughout the season.
- Invite local tennis professionals to get involved and help support the club.
- Have an end of season final event and celebration of the season.

## 4. Sustaining and growing

- Student participation and empowerment is the key to starting and sustaining a club program. Without students embracing responsibility and receiving recognition for maintaining and improving upon the program, the club may fade with faculty or staff turnover.
- Maintain an open door policy--everyone gets to participate!
- Be sure club meetings and on-court sessions are fun and well-planned. This will keep students coming back and help build the program.
- At the end of the season, gather the core planning group to evaluate the program and plan for the next year.
- Inform players of other playing opportunities in the community – Junior Team Tennis, NJTL, tournaments, camps, etc.

## Everything you need to get started:

The USTA has created an extensive package of resources to make starting a tennis program easy and enjoyable for after school program providers and organizers. Downloadable materials are available by visiting [www.usta.com/schooltennis](http://www.usta.com/schooltennis).



## Starting a Middle School or High School Tennis League

**Finding a Coordinator:** The league coordinator is key to the success of an after school tennis league. The coordinator must identify the prospective schools and coaches, then market the program to the potential schools. This person should have great organizational skills as well as people skills, and be flexible and creative enough to make format changes at the last minute. This individual could be affiliated with the school system or may be an employee or volunteer with the local Community Tennis Association or District Tennis Association.

**Identifying your Coaches:** Coaches can be found anywhere and everywhere! Parents, PE teachers, HS coaches, and league tennis players that just love to share the game are the ideal coaches for this league. Make a contact list so that coaches can contact each other during the season as well as after the season. Many coaches work with their players in the off-season if they have the time.

**Identifying your Season:** The tennis season time and length varies depending on location. Considerations are weather, school terms, tennis court locations and availability, and conflicts with other extra-curricular activities and sports such as high school tennis, soccer and basketball.

**Identifying the Facilities:** Identify all public and private tennis courts/facilities located nearby the potential schools. Determine who owns the courts and contact them for permission to use the courts. Insurance is available through the USTA to cover all sites to be used for the league, whether public or private. If the league is run under the auspices of the District or Sectional Association, the league is covered by USTA insurance and the facilities may be provided with Certificates of Insurance.

**Contacts with the Schools:** Invite both public and private schools. Since this league may be, but need not be a "sanctioned" interscholastic league, you may include all schools and children, including charter schools and home schooled children. Visit with the school district's administration office, athletic department and/or the community relations person. Obtain permission to distribute flyers and information to students on campus.

Check to see if the proposed league can be a school sponsored and funded event---either through the governing body for interscholastic and extracurricular activities or simply as an after school sports club connected with the school. Also consider contacting the principals of the schools that you would like to include in the league. Send the principals a letter explaining your program and inviting their schools to participate.

**Funding and Fees:** Participant fees sufficient to support the costs of the league should be projected and charged. Costs associated with running the league could include the stipend for the coordinator if not supported by the school system or by the District, Section or CTA, expenses related to the year-end tournament (trophies and tournament t-shirts for the champions, refreshments, printing and supplies, etc.).

Additional expenses for the season might include match balls, refreshments, team t-shirts, transportation, court fees, and any salary or stipends for coaches and assistants (if they are not volunteers). Some funding for school teams may be found in USTA Intramural/Interscholastic grants or through USTA

Section foundations. Student fundraising efforts should also be utilized similar to other youth sports (e.g. car washes, bake sales, tennis fundraising events/ tournaments, etc).

**Recreational Coaches Workshop and Coaching Tips:** Plan and organize a Recreational Coaches Workshop in your area to support your coaches and train them in handling large groups of diverse levels of players. Implement a play based approach for beginners by utilizing transition balls and modified serving if necessary. Contact your Local USTA Section Office for more information. That information can be found through [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com) .

**The League:** Be flexible in your programming and tailor the match format to your situation, taking into consideration the number of courts available for practices and matches, the size of the schools, and the likelihood you will have a balance of girls and boys participating. Match players against players of comparable skills by providing divisions similar to those used in high school tennis such as Varsity, Junior Varsity and C team divisions. Start small with six to ten teams, if that is what works for your first season. Don't worry - it will grow each year!!

A possible format for a 6 court facility and 12-24 players on a team fairly evenly balanced between girls and boys is to play three boys' singles and doubles and three girls' singles and doubles. This format can be played with as few as 12 and as many as 18 (9 boys and 9 girls). A modified format (Coed Mix & Match Division) may be used with six singles and 3 doubles played according to strength, with any combination of girls and boys. This format can be played with as few as 6 and as many as 12. For after school, we suggest a match format of one set, no-ad scoring, with a set (twelve point) tiebreaker at six games all.

**USTA Junior Team Tennis:** Formats, found at [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com), can also be utilized as can TennisLink, the USTA's league registration system. If possible, advance all teams to the league's year-end tournament to provide these young players with an additional opportunity for competition. Season standings may be used to determine tournament flights and seeding.

**High School No Cut Programs and JV Leagues:** Now that you have started a successful Middle School League, consider whether you may want to develop a High School No Cut Program or JV League. The same principles used for middle school interscholastic play can be applied to the development of a Junior Varsity League for players that don't make their schools' varsity teams. You can utilize the middle school formats for a JV or School Club program or you can simply mirror your local high school tennis formats as to gender, team size and season. For example, if the girls play in the fall and the boys in the spring, develop another division for the girls in the fall and the boys in the spring, allowing these JV or C Team players an opportunity to be a part of their high school programs. Increased participation at the Middle School level means there will be increased participation at the High School Level. Have FUN!!

**Who to Contact for More Information:** League materials including score sheets and model practices and more may be found at: [www.usta.com/Schools](http://www.usta.com/Schools)

If you want more information on starting a Middle School Tennis League, contact your sectional USTA School Tennis Coordinator by visiting [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com).

# No-Cut Tennis Programs



## Top Reasons to Offer a No-Cut Tennis Program

- It's the right thing to do—every child should have the opportunity to engage in healthy, lifelong activities in a safe and supportive environment with their peers.
- A no-cut policy sends the message that developing kids, even the less talented and/or late bloomers, is important to the coach and school.
- One week of tryouts is not enough for a coach to know who the best players will be in four years. Coaches are often pleasantly surprised by the contributions made by individuals considered to have less potential.
- Participating on a team helps create well rounded student athletes, develops leadership and teaches responsibility, discipline, teamwork and cooperation—skills every student should be entitled to develop.
- Children who are cut from sport programs are almost always the least skilled or those who have discipline problems. It is precisely these youngsters who are in need of an opportunity to grow through sport. " Frank L. Smoll and Ronald E. Smith, Sports and Your Child, second edition; Warde Publishers, Inc. 2005
- Veteran no-cut coaches typically have higher winning percentages because they are able to capitalize on talent from a larger pool of players.
- Coaches conducting no-cut programs implement better coaching techniques, group management skills and set a great example for other school activities.
- No-cut programs open more opportunities for cooperation with parents, school and community that can result in much needed booster support as well as a built-in fan base for team matches.
- Giving students the opportunity to be on a team with friends and representing their high school can provide a positive and memorable experience that will benefit them long into adulthood.
- Tennis helps athletes develop strength, flexibility, balance and agility along with aerobic and anaerobic capacity. Research shows that tennis players score high in vigor, optimism, and self-esteem, and lower in depression, anger, confusion, anxiety and tension than other athletes and non-athletes.

### A Coach's Testimonial

"We only had two courts and I had 21 kids turn out," Coach Escame recalled of the 1969 season. "After the first week, I wrote down 16 names, and said if your name was on that list, you made the team. This girl came up to me in the hall and she said, 'Mr. Escame, my name isn't on the list.' She started crying, and I couldn't look at her. I said, 'You're right on the cusp. If you go out and practice, you're sure to make the team next year.' Then she said, 'If I'm not on the team, how can I practice?' I made up my mind after that season that I would keep everyone."

--Steve Escame, a no-cut high school tennis coach of 34 years with over 500 tennis victories



UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

For more information on the USTA High School No-Cut Initiative, registration details or to contact the advisory team please visit:

[www.usta.com/highschoolcoaches](http://www.usta.com/highschoolcoaches)

## **No-Cut Coach Incentives offered by the USTA**

- **No-Cut Coach recognition certificate and commendation letter**
- **Recognition letters and a press release template sent to the athletic director and principal for participating schools**
- **Official No-Cut Tennis Coach hat**
- **Official No-Cut Tennis Team banner (3' x 5')**
- **Subscription to Racquet Sports Industry magazine (1 year)**
- **Consideration for the No-Cut Coach Starfish Award, whereby two coaches are selected each year to receive national recognition at the USTA Tennis Teachers' Conference during the US Open.**
- **Access to USTA's No-Cut Advisory Team for assistance and ideas for managing teams with limited courts**
- **Frequent updates of games, activities and practice plans**



UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

**For more information on the USTA High School No-Cut Initiative, registration details or to contact the advisory team please visit:**

[www.usta.com/highschoolcoaches](http://www.usta.com/highschoolcoaches)