



**Groundstrokes**

Groundstrokes are the basic rallying strokes in tennis. A groundstroke is any ball that is played off the bounce and is usually hit while standing close to the baseline. Coaches should incorporate mobility drills in the practice plan as footwork is an essential part of good stroke production. It is recommended to begin with static teaching and progression drills involving footwork.

Note: It is recommended that a coach focus on one stroke within each lesson plan.

**Forehand Ground Stroke “Grips, Preparation And Swing Path” Courtesy of USTA**



Preparation      Unit Turn      Loading      Hitting      Contact      Extension      Finish

**Eastern Forehand Grip**

**Grip**

The player should use a grip close to the Eastern forehand grip when learning the forehand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the **GRIP** backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Grip during the unit-turn using the non- dominant hand.

**Preparation**

Preparation begins with an athletic ready position with the head and eyes forward, knees slightly flexed and the weight on the forward part of the feet.

The racquet is held in front of the body with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. The racquet begins to move back from the ready position as the hips and shoulders turn to the side (unit turn). The racquet will continue to stay above the hand as it moves into position.



Athletic ready position



Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand

**Swing Path**

The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side.



## Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities

---

The racquet head then drops below the ball and accelerates through the so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net. The follow-through will finish from between the waist to over the shoulder.



The swing path is a loop starting above the hand, dropping below the ball and rising through the point of contact to extension

### Key Words

- ♦ "Shake Hands"
- ♦ "Not too tight, not too loose"
- ♦ "Turn, step hit"
- ♦ "Eyes on ball"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ "Swing low to high"
- ♦ "Finish with a hug"

# Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

## On-Court Training Activities



### Forehand

Coaches are encouraged to use demonstration throughout each progression. When teaching a skill there are four basic components: grip, ready position, stroke and follow-through. It is best to begin new athletes in **Level 1**. This will allow for greater success.

#### Forehand Grip

- ◆ Have athletes learn the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip (eastern forehand grip), where the athlete:
  - ◆ Stands with the feet slightly apart and holds the racquet with the non-racquet hand.
  - ◆ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slides the racquet hand down the racquet until the hand reaches the grip.
  - ◆ Wraps the fingers around the handle comfortably and "shake hands."
  - ◆ The grip should not be held too tight ("not too tight, not too loose").



#### Ready Position



- ◆ Athletes face forward with knees slightly flexed, feet shoulder width apart and heels up off the ground.
- ◆ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level.
- ◆ Use the key words "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready."



#### Forehand Stroke

- ◆ Athletes turn shoulders and hips to face sideways to the net (racquet is in a volley position with the strings facing the net). Use the key words, "stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer" or "turn your shoulders."
- ◆ Athletes take the racquet back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface). The shape of the swing, when put together as one motion, will be a "C" loop.
- ◆ Before initiating the swing, the athlete takes a few adjusting steps towards the ball.



## Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide On-Court Training Activities

- ◆ Demonstrate the contact point position (freeze this position and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted).

The stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through as athletes will put it all together when actually striking a ball), racquet pointing up and toward the net (like “shaking hands with a giant”).



### Follow-through

- ◆ The swing is completed with a follow-through that finishes with the racquet pointing to the opposite side of the net "finish the stroke," “point the racquet at your opponent, "turn, step, hit."
- ◆ The follow-through should be high above the head, swinging from low to high “swing low to high.”



### Key Words

- ◆ Shake hands”
- ◆ “Not too tight, not too loose”
- ◆ “Eyes on the ball”
- ◆ “Relax and be ready”
- ◆ “Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer”
- ◆ “Turn your shoulders”
- ◆ “Finish the stroke”
- ◆ “Shaking hands with a giant”
- ◆ “Point the racquet at your opponent”
- ◆ “Swing low to high”
- ◆ “Turn, step, hit”

### Coaching Tips

- ❑ The contact point is the most important part of the forehand. Emphasize contact at the front foot with a perpendicular racquet head.
- ❑ Begin with the contact point and follow-through for the first 50 balls the athlete hits. Working from the contact point will provide the best control once the stroke begins to take shape. Add the backswing once the athlete has demonstrated a balanced contact and follow-through position.
- ❑ Encourage the athlete to hit the forehand gently and stress that tennis is a game of control. Hitting the ball over the fence is not a home run in tennis!