

# Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

## On-Court Training Activities



### Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve. The ball must be hit without bouncing on the court with either an overhead or underhand serve. The Serve is the most complicated stroke. Coaches who use a progressive training plan help athletes achieve success.

### “Grips, Preparation and Swing Path” Courtesy Of USTA



Preparation



Toss Release



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Position



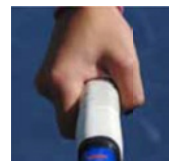
Contact



Finish

### Grip

The player should use a Continental grip for the serve and overhead. This grip allows players to make contact with the ball at full extension, allows the wrist to relax and aids in creating spin.



### Preparation

The feet should be shoulder width apart with the front foot pointing toward the corresponding net post, right post for right-handers, left post for left-handers, and the back foot parallel with the baseline.

The racquet should be supported at the throat with the non-dominant hand and the dominant hand should be in a relaxed Continental grip.

The toss release should occur above the head and follow in line in front of the forward foot.



Preparation



Toss Release



Loading



#### Swing path

Both arms will drop down and swing up together. The non-dominant hand tosses the ball in position and the racquet head drops down to the hitting position where the tip of the racquet points toward the ground.

The racquet arm elbow leads forward and up and the racquet follows, accelerating to the contact at full extension above and slightly in front of the body, finishing down and across the body.



**Position**



**Contact**



**Finish**

#### Teaching the Skill Tips

##### Serve

The serve is the stroke that starts each point. Players have two attempts to hit the serve into the service box. The serve must be hit diagonally across the court to be a "good" serve. The serve may be hit overhand or underhand but the ball may not bounce before striking.

##### Assessing Player Readiness

The serve can be the hardest part of tennis for beginners. Beginners should follow a serving progression for success.

- ♦ Athletes stand (Wheelchair athletes non-dominate shoulder to net)
- ♦ Athletes begin standing 2 steps behind the net.
- ♦ Allow the athlete to have 2 attempts on the serve.
- ♦ *Throw* the ball into the appropriate box (Crosscourt).
- ♦ Move 2 steps back and repeat.
- ♦ Continue moving 2 steps back to the service line.
- ♦ Add Racquet and begin 2 steps behind net.
- ♦ Racquet extended, ball is tossed then tapped to the correct service box.
- ♦ Repeat moving back to service line after 2 attempts.

##### Grip

Beginners will normally resort to a "pancake" or "frying pan" grip. This grip is usually between the forehand grip and up to a half turn to the right of the forehand grip. The proper grip is a "continental grip" (between the forehand and the backhand), which is the same grip as the volley. Many athletes will struggle with this grip because it requires sufficient racquet head speed to be successful. The grip is a matter of comfort and coaches will have to make adaptations as necessary.



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### Ready Position

- ♦ Stand sideways to the net, behind the baseline, with feet comfortably (shoulder width) apart.
- ♦ Hold the racquet in front of the body, with arms relaxed and a tennis ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Shoulders and hips should be aligned diagonally to aim toward the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Key words are "relax," "where are you aiming?" and "where are your feet pointed?"

### Ball Toss Progression (for the right handed player)

- ♦ Athlete stands at back fence or court curtain.
- ♦ Racquet is extended up
- ♦ The left hand tosses (key words “lift and let go” or “place the ball on the second shelf”) Stress that the ball is placed, not thrown.
- ♦ Athlete traps ball with extended racquet against the fence or curtain. Repeat.
- ♦ Coaches can help the player by standing to the side of the athlete and tossing the ball.
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in back overhand throwing position.
- ♦ Move to court and begin with arm extended and tap the ball. Give 2 attempts. (Follow athlete assessment progression)
- ♦ Repeat with racquet in throwing position.
- ♦ When successful at racquet back overhand throwing position, assist athletes with a “down together, up together” arm motion until they get the idea of both arms working together
- ♦ The ball slightly in front and to the right of the server high enough so the ball can be contacted with an extended racquet.



### Overhand Throwing Position



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#### **Serving Motion**

- ◆ It is best to have athletes start with the racquet in the backscratch position resting on the shoulder (this will represent half of the full backswing). The athlete tosses and hits the ball from this position (emphasize the contact point).
- ◆ The full backswing can be added when athletes are able to get the contact point and toss to meet.
- ◆ To assist with teaching the full stroke, have the racquet and arm in the “down together, up together” motion. The racquet will swing across the top of the player’s feet, then toward the back fence and eventually reach the shoulder position.
- ◆ The racquet reaches up to contact the ball with an extended arm.

#### **Follow Through**

- ◆ After contact, the weight comes forward into the court and the racquet finishes across the body