

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities



A special thanks to Kirk Anderson, USTA Director, Coach Education and Development for his contribution.

Beginner and Skills Activities

17” - 19” racquets recommended

Goals

- ♦ Training sessions length: 30-45 minutes
- ♦ Planned activity - Pick an activity from each section when planning your training session.

Suggested Equipment:

- ♦ Variety of tennis balls (Red foam balls, orange, green and yellow), balloons, variety of bean bags, beach balls, play ground balls, sand pails, poly rings, poly spots, koosh balls, segmented color hula hoops, Frisbees, foam footballs, juggling scarves, yellow mesh jersey, music, whistle, foam paddles, 6” cones and 9” cones.

A. Balance

1. Funny Bones – Body parts on lines

To get children moving, balancing and learning the lines of the court, have them move to the lines called out by the coach and balance on the line with the instructed number of body parts. The coach will give two commands: One will be for the line and the second for the number of body parts to put on the line. For example, the coach could say “Skip to the baseline and balance on three body parts” (as in two feet and one hand) or “March to the center service line and balance on two body parts, but you can only use one foot.”

2. Flamingo

Have the children move around the court like an animal the coach chooses. When the coach calls out “Flamingo,” the players 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 let the children make the animal noise. Good examples are a kangaroo, monkey, horse, frog, bear and elephant

3. Pac Man

Coach chooses 1 child to be Pac Man. Pac Man wears a yellow jersey. All other children spread out on court Lines. Coach blows a whistle or starts music and all children walk on court lines. Pac Man tries to tag children. If a child is tagged, runs or moves off line, they step off the line and jump up and down 5 times then return to walking on lines. After 1 minute, blow whistle ~or stop music and choose another Pac Man.

4. Lily Pads

Have children on four teams in lines so they can do this activity continuously. Place a series of five spots in front of each line at varying distances apart. Each player must jump and land on the spots (lily pads), and hold for a moment to maintain balance. After completing jumps to five spots, they get back in line and repeat.

5. High circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as high as you can over your head; Stand on two feet, then try standing on one foot and switch feet.

6. Low circles

Standing in your own space make a circle with your arms as low as you can to the ground.



B. Hand Eye:

1. Keep it up

Each child has a balloon (works best indoors). Tell children to use their hands to keep the balloon eye-high. Play music for 1 minute. After 1 minute, tell children to use an elbow, head, knee or foot to keep the balloon up. Start music and repeat every minute.

2. Help Me Fly

Each child has a juggling scarf. When the music starts, children toss up the scarves as high as they can and try to catch it eye-high. Continue for one minute. Repeat with children using their opposite hand.

3. Catch Me If You Can

Each child has a ball and tosses it in the air at least head high, lets the ball bounce and catches it. Add variation with two or three bounces before catching. Start with play ground ball, then foam tennis ball, then orange tennis ball, followed by green and finally yellow.

4. Applause

The player will toss a foam ball up in the air, clap and catch it after the bounce. Add two bounces, then three before the catch. See if they can toss, clap and catch before the ball bounces.

5. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player 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. Start with beach ball, then playground ball, then red foam tennis ball.

6. Hula Hoop roll

Children form 2 lines at the baseline facing the net. Each line has a color segmented hula hoop. The first person in each line picks a color of the hula hoop. The coach then rolls the hula hoop toward the net. The child tries to catch the hoop on the color segment called before hoop falls flat on the court.

The hoop is brought back to the coach and handed to him/her.

7. Elevator

While balancing the bean bag on the racquet, child will hold the racquet high on the "top floor" command, waist height for the "middle floor" command and low for the "bottom floor" command

C. Throwing/Catching/Tracking

1. Messy Court

Divide class in half and have them stand on opposite sides of the net. Give them red foam tennis balls on each side (1 or 2 per child). When the music starts or whistle blows, children overhand throw balls over the net. Goal is to have the least amount of balls on your side after 1 minute. Signal stop, count balls on each side, and then award 1 point to the winner. Game goes to 7 points (as in a tie break)

No throwing after the stop signal. Throwing consequence – other team gets the point.

2. Bombs Away

Set up empty tennis ball cans on opposite side of net. Divide children into 4 teams. Place poly spots for the launch site in the middle of the service box and in front of each line. The first child in each line moves to their launch site. The rest of the children remain in their 4 lines behind the service line. Each child gets 2 throws at the targets. Use red foam tennis balls. After throw, the child returns to the back of their line and the next child moves to the launch site. A point is given for each can knocked down. Game goes to 7 points.

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities



3. Oscar's Can

Set up laundry baskets or sand pails on opposite side of net. On signal, children overhand throw red foam tennis balls aiming for the basket/pails. One point is awarded for each ball that land in the basket/pail without bouncing on the floor first. Start close to the net and challenge the children to move back. Goal is to throw from the service line.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce

One child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out “one” or “two.” The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it and tossing it back, also calling out a number. Start with small beach balls or playground balls and progress to red foam balls.

5. Falling apples

Children are on two teams. There is a catching side and a throwing side. The first two children from each team stand just behind the service line on the opposite side of the net with small baskets. The remaining team forms a single file line behind the opposite diagonal service line. On the throwing side, the first child in each line has 2 attempts to throw overhand diagonally over the net. The catching team member catches the ball in the basket after the ball bounces once in the service box. After 2 attempts, the thrower goes to the end of the throwing line. The catcher becomes a thrower once each thrower has had 2 attempts. Game is won when one team has 4 catches in the basket.

6. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row? Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

7. Bulls eye

2 single file lines of children stand facing each other about 6 feet apart. The coach stands in the middle, holding a hula hoop. Using soft footballs or red foam tennis balls, the first person in 1 line tries to throw the ball through the hoop to the 1st person in the line facing them. After throwing, the child goes to the end of their line. The coach can change height of hoop before the throw.

8. Call my name

Players are in pairs, one with a ball and the other with his back to the partner. The player 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.

9. Roll ball with hands

Using a playground or beach ball, have the children stand 4-5 feet apart and have them roll the ball back and forth over a line to their partner or coach. Have them catch the rolling ball with two hands directly in front of their body. Players can challenge each other by rolling the ball to either side of their partner.

D. Movement

1. 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.

2. Ball Chase

Both players are close together, one with the ball, and the other player with her back to her partner. The player with the ball rolls it through the legs of the player in front, who runs after the ball and stops it before it stops rolling. Switch roles and repeat.



3. Sharks and Minnows

One child is chosen to be the Shark. The rest of the children (Minnows) stand in the Ad court alley. The shark says go and the Minnows need to run across the court to the opposite alley. If tagged, the minnows become sharks. Play continues until there is only 1 minnow.

4. Midnight

Pick one time keeper. All children with their backs to the net, including the time keeper, facing the baseline. The time keeper calls out the time (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock). All children except the time keeper take that many steps toward the baseline. When the time keeper calls "Midnight", children turn and run toward the time keeper to touch his/her outstretched hand. Whoever touches first becomes the next time keeper.

5. "What time is it Mr. Bear"

One child is chosen to be Mr. Bear and stand by the net at the center strap. The rest of the children stand on the baseline. The baseliners ask; What time is it Mr. Bear? Mr. Bear says an hour (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, or 11 O'clock) The baselines take that many steps toward the net.

Mr. Bear may call "Dinner Time" at any time. At that, all baseliners turn and run back to the baseline while Mr. Bear chases the baseliners trying to tag one child. If tagged that child becomes Mr. Bear and if not, Mr. Bear returns to the net to start again.

6. Jog-Jog-Jump

Children line up on service line, facing the net. Children jog in place for a count of four then jump in place. Continue for 1 minute.

7. Line Jump

Place poly strips varying distances apart. When the music starts have children jump from one line to another.

E. Manipulatives

1. Train crash

Two players stand 4-5 feet apart, each with a ball. Players roll the balls back and forth with their racquets at the same time, trying to "crash" the balls between the two players.

Progression: Stand close then move back.

Roll ball with hands then add racquet.

2. Splat

Two players each with a racquet and a ball pyramid made of four balls (three for the base and one on top). One player taps the ball up to about head-level height, trying to hit the ball pyramid to make it "splat."

3. Bungee Jump

The player has a ball that is balanced on the strings. They walk around the court, playground or driveway. When they get to a spot marked by tape or chalk, the player let's to ball drop off the racquet, lets it bounce and then catches the ball back on the racquet. They may have to use their non-racquet hand to trap the ball on the strings, but with practice they can just use the racquet face.

4. One Bounce – Two Bounce with racquet

Using red foam balls, one child tosses the ball underhanded over a line or net and calls out "one" or "two." The other child must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it with their racquet and hand. The catcher may have the hand on the throat of the racquet to start. Place the caught balls in a basket. After 1 minute, switch roles. The goal would be to move the racquet hand to the grip.

Special Olympics Tennis Quick Start Guide

On-Court Training Activities



5. Bounce down

Have students bounce the ball down at about waist level height as many times as they can in one minute. Have them keep track of their number. Repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.

6. Lobster Trap

Children stand 6 to 8 feet apart, with one child holding two racquets, one in each hand, and the partner with one ball. The player with the ball makes an easy underhand toss 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 rolls the ball back to the tosser. Start with a beach ball and foam paddles, then work up to racquets and red foam balls.

7. Rolly Polly

Children stand across from each other on either side of the doubles alley. Children 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 child 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.

F. Culminating Activities

At the end of the training session, an activity day for athletes demonstrate their skills are enjoyed by parents and athletes.

1. Roll Ball with partner

See how many times two players can roll a ball back and forth without a miss. Increase distance to make this more challenging.

2. Partner Toss and Catch

Do the same as above but this time use an underhand toss, one bounce and catch with a partner. How many catches can a team get in a row?

Try to improve on your consecutive catches with different partners.

3. Forehand Drop-Hit and Catch

Partners stand about six feet apart from each other. One player drop-hits a forehand to their partner who catches it and rolls it back to the hitter. Switch hitters and catchers after three successful hits and catches.

4. Rally with partner over a line

Have partners rally over a line and see how many consecutive rallies that can make. Switch partners and try to beat your previous score.

5. Alligator River – Use the forehand side of the racquet

The players line up on either side of the doubles alley, each with a racquet and with a 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.

6. Roll around the head

Have students roll the ball around the head of the racquet as many times as they can in for one minute. Have them keep track of their number of complete rolls without the ball falling off the racquet. Have them repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.

7. Bounce down

Have students bounce the ball down at about waist level height as many times as they can in one minute. Have them keep track of their number. Repeat for another minute to see if they can beat their previous score.