

## **II. Level 1 – Tennis Individual Skills**

- ♦ 42' Court with Red Foam Ball
- ♦ 21"- 23" racquet recommended

### Equipment:

- ♦ Red foam balls balloons
- ♦ variety of bean bags
- ♦ 21" racquets, 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
- ♦ 16" cones
- ♦ Balance lessons by warmup, lesson focus , drill, game and wrap up.

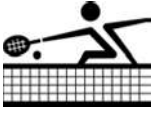
### **A. Warm-ups**

Non-static warm-up is recommended. Movements to be used in lesson should be incorporated into warm-up. Creative, engaging warm-ups set dynamics of the lesson.

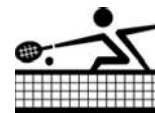
#### Suggested lesson activities:

1. Kirk-O-Rama activities. *Thanks to Kirk Anderson, USTA, for his contribution.*

- ♦ Dribbles (keep the ball waist high)
  - ♦ With their hand for 30 seconds then switch hands
  - ♦ With their racquet, holding it by the throat for 30 seconds with dominate hand.
  - ♦ With their racquet, holding on the grip for 30 seconds with dominate hand
- ♦ Self rally using a forehand
  - ♦ The player taps the ball up to about head level high, lets the ball bounce and hits it up again. Use only forehands
- ♦ Self rally using forehands and backhands
  - ♦ Same as above but the player hits the ball up first on the forehand side then alternates to the backhand side of the racquet. Continue hitting up to head level alternating between forehand and backhand
- ♦ Ups (keep the ball eye high)
  - ♦ Players dribble the ball in the air without having the ball bounce on the floor for 30 sec.
  - ♦ Start with balloon/beach-ball and hand - palm up
  - ♦ With racquet and balloon/beach-ball, holding racquet throat, repeat holding grip.
  - ♦ With racquet and red foam ball, holding at throat



- ♦ Flip Flops
  - ♦ The player hits the ball up continuously alternating between the forehand and backhand side of the racquet. Use different types of balls to help player be successful
- ♦ Flip Flops and up on the edge
  - ♦ This is the same as flip flops but this time tap the ball up on the edge of the racquet in between hitting on the forehand and backhand sides of the racquet.
- ♦ Hopping on one foot while tapping the ball up
  - ♦ Hop on one foot while keeping the ball bouncing up off your strings.
- ♦ Hopping on one foot while bouncing the ball down
  - ♦ Hop on one foot while dribbling the ball down off the strings.
- ♦ Circle around the body
  - ♦ The player bounces the ball down while standing in one place but the ball is bounced in a circle around the body.
- ♦ Figure 8's around the leg
  - ♦ This activity is similar to around the body but this time you must choke up on your racquet and dribble the ball in a figure 8 pattern around your legs.
- ♦ Hitting up with racquet between your legs
  - ♦ Begin with knees bent and the racquet between your legs so the strings face the sky.
  - ♦ Try to tap a ball up continuously while with the racquet between your legs and in front of your body.
- ♦ Jacks
  - ♦ 1 racquet and ball person
  - ♦ Onsies – tap up 1x , ball bounces on ground and catch with string
  - ♦ Twosies – Tap up 2x, ball bounces and catch with string
  - ♦ Continue adding one number.
  - ♦ See how far each person can get in 1 minute, then 2 minutes.
- ♦ Target Hitting
  - ♦ Players practice drop hitting or serving balls to target areas (banners, hoops, etc.) attached to walls or fences



### Hand-Eye Coordination

Hand-eye coordination is the foundation for striking the tennis ball. Without developing this skill, the athlete will become frustrated by not making contact with the ball.

#### Safety Concerns

Each athlete should establish his/her own personal space and should remain in that space at all times. A good safe position for each athlete is to hug the racquet to his/her chest. In a group setting, ask athletes to place racquets against the fence when not in use. During group activity, athletes should identify their own space by holding their outstretched racquets so they do not touch other athletes. There should be enough space so racquets do not touch one another.



#### Teaching the Skill

1. Utilize different size “balls” such as balloons, foam balls, transition balls (low compression) and SpeedBalls, as well as traditional tennis balls. SpeedBalls are specially designed soft balls available through the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR), the *Official Training Partner of Special Olympics Tennis*.
2. To develop hand-eye coordination, the beginning player should begin by practicing with a tennis ball and his/her hand (no racquet).
3. Encourage athletes to watch the ball.
4. Encourage athletes to keep their heads still when making contact.

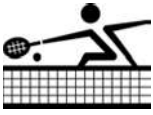
#### Drills for Eye-Hand Coordination

##### Hand Bounce Drill

The athlete performs the following progression:

- ♦ Gently toss a foam ball from left hand to right hand.
- ♦ Place the ball in the left hand, bounce on the ground and catch with the right hand.
- ♦ Find a partner and gently toss the ball toward the partner with the ball bouncing before it is caught.
- ♦ Gently bounce a large foam ball tennis ball with the palm of the racquet hand, eventually progressing to the transition ball and then the traditional tennis ball (“hit gently”).
- ♦ Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled fashion for 15 seconds (“stay in your place”).

The coach can utilize targets and lines on the court (hoops, poly spots, etc.) to make the hand bounce drill more advanced.



### Cup/Cone Catches

- ◆ Athlete holds a large cup or cone in his/her dominant hand and catches a tossed ball in the cup or cone and tosses back to his/her partner (“watch the ball”).



### Key Words

- ◆ "Watch the ball."
- ◆ "Hit gently."
- ◆ "Stay in your place."

### Racquet Control

Controlling the racquet is an important building block to learning tennis skills. Coaches should consider the size of the racquet and racquet grip for their players.

### Assessing Player Readiness

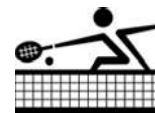
Beginners have difficulty in controlling their racquets in relation to the approaching ball. A beginner often swats at the ball instead of controlling the racquet. Intermediate players have developed control of the racquet to a level where they rarely miss contacting the ball. Strokes are relatively smooth and in control.

### Teaching the Skill

Although tennis players hold the racquet (grip) in many ways to execute different strokes, Special Olympics recommends using the eastern grip for athletes beginning to play tennis. View the video for further information on teaching correct grips.

- ◆ Use of foam balls is recommended when athletes are beginning the skill progressions.
- ◆ Athletes should be taught the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip, where the athlete:
  - ◆ Stands with feet slightly apart with the racquet in the non-racquet hand.
  - ◆ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slide the racquet hand down the racquet until the hand reaches the grip.
  - ◆ Wraps fingers around the handle comfortably and "shakes hands."
- ◆ Using this grip, have athletes practice drills that increase their ability to control the racquet head.





### Drills for Racquet Handling

#### Racquet Balance

- ◆ Athletes hold the racquet head on the ground with one hand on the grip, then let go of the racquet, but catch it before it falls.
- ◆ Drills can be made more difficult by having athletes touch a body part (head, shoulder, knee, etc.) before catching the racquet.



#### Walk the Dog (Follow the Lines)

- ◆ With the racquet touching the ground, the athlete rolls the ball on the ground with the racquet by following the lines around the court, trying to maintain control of the ball.
- ◆ Like walking a dog on a leash, the athlete attempts to keep the ball beside the racquet.



#### Pass the Ball

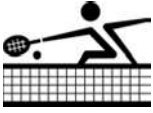
- ◆ With a partner, athletes pass the ball from the middle of their strings to the middle of their partner's strings without using their hands.
- ◆ The ball is passed gently “gentle” back and forth in a down-the-line exercise (can be used as a team game).
- ◆ With their racquets, athletes line up on the baseline and place a ball on the racquet strings. Athletes walk or run to the net trying to keep the ball on the strings. If the ball drops, athletes pick up the ball and continue.



#### Ups

- ◆ Using the forehand grip “fingernails up,” the athlete holds the racquet at waist level.
- ◆ Athlete drops a ball onto the strings with the non-racquet hand. “Hit the ball in the middle of the strings.”
- ◆ Athlete performs as many “ups” as possible in 30 seconds.





### Downs

- ♦ Using the forehand grip “fingernails down,” the athlete holds the racquet at waist level.
- ♦ Athlete gently bounces “gentle” the ball downward with the strings of the racquet.
- ♦ Athlete performs as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds.
- ♦ As players advance, have them hit “edgies,” dribbling the ball using the side of their racquet.



### Forehand Bumps

- ♦ Remind athletes to bump up, rather than down at the target.
- ♦ Partners stand about 5-10 feet away from each other with a target in between them and bump “bump” the ball with a gentle forehand motion, trying to hit the target.
- ♦ Emphasis is on control in this drill “control the ball.”



### Backhand Bumps

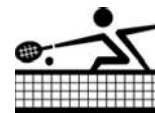
- ♦ Partners stand about 5-10 feet away from each other with a target in between them and bump the ball with a gentle backhand motion, trying to hit the target.
- ♦ Remind athletes to bump up, rather than down at target.
- ♦ Emphasis is on control in this drill “control the ball.”



### Toss-Bump-Catch Game

- ♦ Partners stand 10-15 feet apart. One partner gently tosses a ball so the partner can bump it back.
- ♦ Athletes complete 10 successful bumps and catches, then switch roles





### Racquet Rolls

- ◆ Athlete rolls the ball around the racquet in a clockwise direction.
- ◆ Direction is reversed.



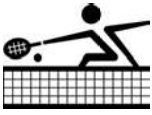
Emphasis on control and improvement should be implemented whether or not this is a game or progression. Intermediate players can play the drills in the form of relay races. The drills can be played for time with the number of successful attempts being recorded.

### Key Words

- ◆ "Shake hands with the racquet"
- ◆ Shake hands"
- ◆ "Watch the ball"
- ◆ "Gentle"
- ◆ "Fingernails up" and "Fingernails down"
- ◆ "Hit the ball in the middle of the strings"
- ◆ "Control the ball"
- ◆ "Bump"

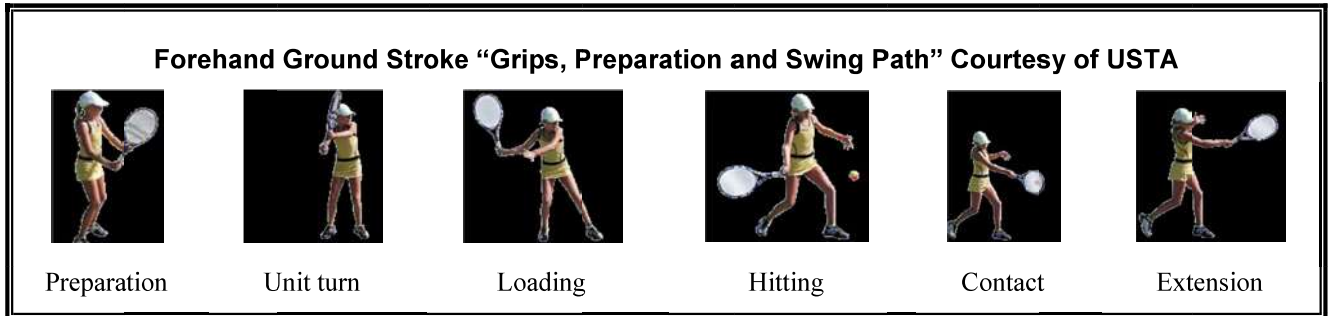
### Coaching Tips

- Emphasize control and gentle bumps of the ball. This is a difficult concept for some Special Olympics athletes.
- Instruct athletes to watch the strings and try to contact the ball in the center of the racquet (sweet spot).
- It is important that the athlete is using the appropriate racquet size, length and weight.
- With lower ability levels it may be useful to use partners as coaches.
- Have athletes practice swinging the racquet while balancing a penny on the edge of the racquet. This teaches athletes to swing under control and to keep the racquet at a right angle to the ground.



**Skill 1: Groundstrokes**

The 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.



**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 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

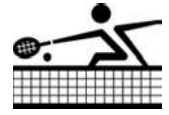
**Swing Path**

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.

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



### Forehand

#### Teaching the Skill Tips

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 the Level 1 format (playing at the service line area or inside the service box). This will allow for greater success and less intimidation than on a full court.

#### Forehand Grip

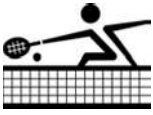
- ♦ Have athletes learn the traditional forehand "shake hands with the racquet" grip (eastern forehand grip), where the athlete:
- ♦ Stands with the feet slightly apart and holds the racquet with the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Places the palm of the racquet hand against the strings of the racquet and slides 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

- ♦ Preparation – Ready position
- ♦ Unit Turn: 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."
- ♦ Loading : 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.
- ♦ Step : Before initiating the swing, the athlete takes a few adjusting steps towards the ball.
- ♦ Contact: Demonstrate the contact point position (freeze this position and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted).
- ♦ Extension/FollowthroughThe 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").



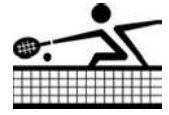
### Follow-through

- ♦ 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."
- ♦ 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"

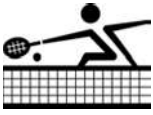


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**Coaching Tips**

- 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!



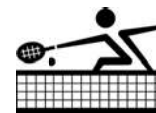


**Faults & Fixes – Forehand**

<b>Error</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Incorrect grip	Mark the racquet handle for a visual reminder.
Improper point of contact or misjudges the ball	Ask the athlete (without racquet in hand) to catch the ball at the proper contact position. Do this with a ball tossed directly to the athlete, progressing to a ball tossed a slight distance from the player, requiring more footwork.
Wrist break on backswing (too large a backswing)	With the player turned and the racquet head up, have the athlete place the palm of the non-hitting hand on the strings (side of the racquet facing the player) and complete the stroke from this position. Placing the hand on the strings will prevent the racquet from taking a big backswing.
Racquet rolls on follow-through	Ask the athlete to roll the racquet over the shoulder. The resulting higher follow-through will improve the stroke.
Slicing the ball (chopping)	The slice is a quality stroke to develop. Ask the player to reach for a long follow-through. The shape is a banana on its back.  Adding topspin for this player is done easier with an old racquet and asking the athlete to touch the ground before contacting the ball.
Wristy at point of contact	Have the athlete choke up on the grip. The athlete will feel the grip on their arm.
Hits off back foot	Have the player stomp the front foot in the proper position. This will allow them to hear and feel the step.
Not enough shoulder turn on backswing	Have the player turn completely to the side before feeding a ball.
Steps in with wrong foot	Use chalk to trace the feet in the proper footwork sequence.

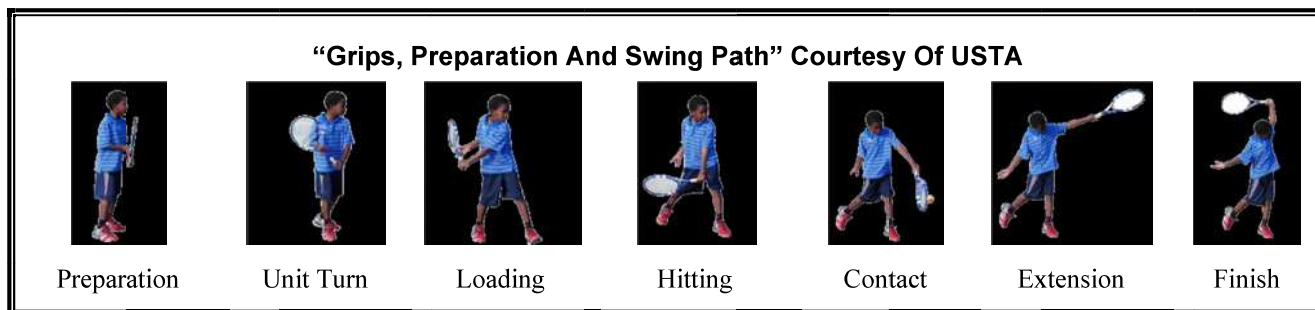






**Skill 2: Backhand Ground Stroke, One-Handed**

The backhand is hit on the opposite side of the body as the forehand. It is perfectly acceptable to hit the backhand with two hands. A two-handed backhand helps the athlete control the backswing. Remember that some athletes may have difficulty with this and may want to hit two forehands. It is important to explore the backhand but be prepared to work with two forehands, if needed.



(Pictures – For Left Handed Player)

**Eastern Backhand Grip**

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominant shoulder to target on turn

**Grip**

The player should use an Eastern backhand grip for a one-handed backhand. The non-dominant hand is used to change the grip from the forehand to the backhand during play.



Player finding the Eastern Backhand grip during the unit-turn using the non dominant hand at the throat

**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. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.



Athletic ready position



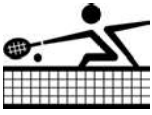
Preparation with a square stance and racquet head above the hand Right handed players point right shoulder to target

**Swing Path**

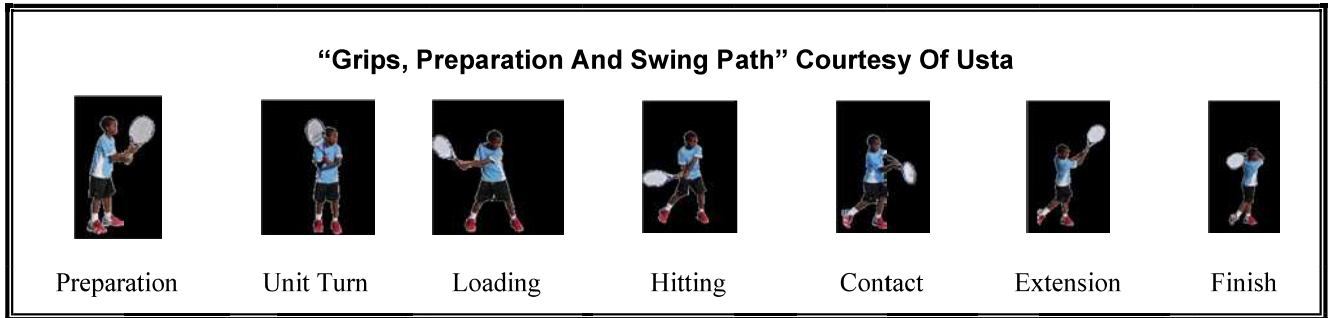
The path of the swing is a loop where the racquet moves in a fluid manner above the hands as the body rotates to the side. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



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



**Groundstrokes : Two Handed Backhand**



(Pictures – For Left Handed Player)

Both right and left handed players use their dominate hand to grip and non-dominate shoulder to target on turn.

**Grip**

The player should use a grip close to Eastern for the top hand and a grip close to Continental on the bottom hand. The non dominant hand on the throat of the racquet is also used to change the grip from the forehand to backhand during play.



Player has taken Eastern Grip on top, Continental on Bottom, the right hand off the throat and has both backhand grips set as he begins the unit turn



**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



Athletic ready position



Preparation with a square Stance and racquet head above the hand

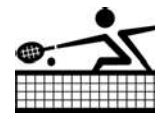
with the dominant hand in a forehand grip and the non-dominant hand supporting the racquet at the throat. During the unit turn the dominant hand moves to an Eastern backhand grip.

**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. The racquet head then drops below the ball, the non-dominant hand releases and the racquet accelerates through the point of contact far enough away from the body so that the swing can extend comfortably through the ball and toward the net.



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



### Teaching the Skill

#### Grip

Athletes perform the backhand grip using the following tips (these tips are used for the dominant hand for the two-handed play)

- ◆ Hold the racquet with the forehand grip.
- ◆ Turn the hand until the first knuckle of the index finger is on top of the grip (1/4 turn).
- ◆ Another way to find this grip is to put the racquet under the left armpit and grab the racquet as if unsheathing a sword.

For a two-handed grip, the dominant hand should be in the continental grip (same as the serve) and the non-dominant hand is placed in an eastern forehand grip. For a right-handed player, the non-dominant hand is a forehand grip for a left-handed player and this is reversed in teaching a left-handed dominant player.



#### Preparation Ready Position

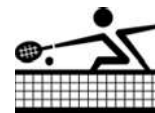
- ◆ The athlete faces forward with knees slightly flexed and feet shoulder width apart.
- ◆ The racquet should be held comfortably at waist level, weight leaning forward on the toes.
- ◆ Use key words: "eyes on the ball" and "relax and be ready"



#### Backhand Stroke

- ◆ Loading: The racquet is taken back and down (pointing at the back fence and down toward the court surface), with a continuous swing. This allows the student to have a loop “C” shaped swing.
- ◆ A few adjusting steps are taken towards the ball.
- ◆ Contact: The coach should demonstrate the contact point position. Freeze at the progression and emphasize that this is where the ball is contacted. Use the key words "hit off your front foot"; "turn, step, hit."





Keep in mind that a one-handed backhand contact point will be out in front of the forward foot, whereas a two-handed backhand contact point will be near the front foot position. Use the key words "hit off your front foot" or "turn, step, hit."

### Extension/Finish Follow-through

- ♦ The stroke continues with a balanced follow-through with the racquet high and out in front (one-handed).
- ♦ Be careful not to exaggerate the follow-through, as the athlete will put it all together when actually striking a ball.
- ♦ The racquet will finish pointing up and toward the net like "shaking hands with a giant."
- ♦ The two-handed follow-through will wrap around the opposite shoulder in a full swing pattern.

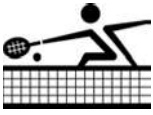


### Key Words

- ♦ "Eyes on the ball"
- ♦ "Relax and be ready"
- ♦ "Stand sideways with your racquet back and look like a surfer"
- ♦ "Turn your shoulders"
- ♦ "Change your grip"
- ♦ "Hit off your front foot"
- ♦ "Shaking hands with a giant"

### Coaching Tips

- Many Special Olympics tennis players like to hit two forehands, a left-handed and a right-handed one. It is important that coaches have athletes learn the backhand stroke.
- The backhand requires more strength and control and it is quite acceptable to use two hands.

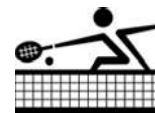


**Faults & Fixes – Backhand**

Error	Correction
Incorrect grip	Mark the racquet handle for a visual reminder.
Improper point of contact or misjudges the ball	Toss the athlete a few balls and ask him/her to freeze the racquet at the point of contact.
Wrist break on backswing (one-handed backhand)	Have the athlete use the non-hitting palm and place it on the strings or on the racquet. This will prevent a large backswing or a break in the wrist.
Racquet rolls on follow-through	Have the athlete stop at the point of contact and then add the follow-through.
Slicing the ball	Have the athlete touch the racquet to the ground before swinging forward. Drop a ball and have the player brush up the back of it to simulate the feeling of topspin.
Hits off back foot	Feed balls from behind the player. Allow the ball to bounce so the athlete can step and hit. The player should start in a side to the net position.
Excessive hip and shoulder rotation (one-handed backhand)	Ask athletes to imagine they are a baseball umpire making a safe sign motion.







### Drills for Forehand and Backhand Groundstrokes

The following drills are presented in a progression from basic to advanced skill level. Some Special Olympics athletes will be able to move quickly through the progression and others may stay at certain levels for a prolonged time. Be flexible and monitor athlete success in these drills. Be cautious of using athletes as training partners, as delivering the ball to each other may be difficult, hampering their success.

#### Shadow Drills

These drills are done without a ball and are an excellent way to monitor proper stroke production. Examples of common game formats include the following.

- ♦ Follow the leader: athlete or coach leads the group and coach checks technique.
- ♦ Simon Says: athletes follow the leader's instructions only when he says "Simon Says, hit a forehand."
- ♦ Freeze: the coach calls out a command for forehand or backhand and then calls out "freeze." Check for proper grips and technique at this point.

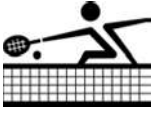


#### Self-Drop Forehand and Backhand Drills

These drills can be also be modified to become a relay race. Each team has 20 balls to hit over the net. Start with a drop hit groundstroke. If the ball lands within the court the athlete repeats the skill; with a maximum of 3 balls per athlete and then switch. If a mistake is made, the next person in line takes a turn. The first team to hit all the balls is the winner. An adaptation is to have the coach stand to the side of the athlete and drop the ball.

The athlete should:

- ♦ Hold the racquet with the proper grip and stand sideways to the net, with the racquet pointing toward the back fence.
- ♦ Drop a ball from the non-racquet hand, in front and to the side of the body.
- ♦ Step toward the ball with the front foot and stroke the ball over the net and into the court.
- ♦ Record the number of successful drop hits and monitor improvement as the season progresses.



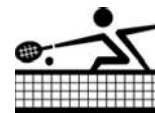
### Alley Rally

- ◆ The athlete stands on the singles sideline facing a coach or partner on the doubles sideline 3 feet away.
- ◆ Place one tennis ball on the singles sideline and another one on the doubles sideline.
- ◆ Have athletes stand just behind the targets and, using the proper grip, gently bump the ball the partner's target.
- ◆ Partners rally back and forth.
- ◆ Monitor how many times the target is hit.
- ◆ To increase or decrease difficulty, use smaller or larger targets.



### Tossed Ball Drills

- ◆ A partner or coach tosses tennis balls to the forehand and backhand sides.
- ◆ Athletes contact the ball after the first bounce and bump it over the net and into the court.
- ◆ Use targets, count consecutive hits and keep score between players. Be creative and keep athletes interested.
- ◆ Have a line of athletes “shadow” the hitter. The hitter stands at the service line and athletes follow the movements of the hitter.



### Basket Feeding Drills

- ◆ Coach feeds balls from a hopper to students.
- ◆ Students form one or two lines on one side of court (depending on the number of athletes).
- ◆ The coach gently hits balls to the forehand or backhand side.
- ◆ Athletes hit a designated number of shots and return to the back of the line.
- ◆ Coaches can make the feeds easy or more difficult.
- ◆ Keep score, aim for targets or have "fielders" who try to catch hit balls. If a ball is caught by a fielder, they become a hitter.
- ◆ Have an athlete on the same side of the net as the coach and play out the point.
- ◆ Be creative and create different combinations of forehands and backhands.
- ◆ Let athletes help create games.

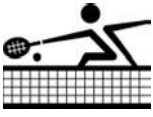


### Ground Stroke Rallying with a Partner or Coach

- ◆ As players progress, they can rally the ball consecutively over the net.
- ◆ Start at the service line and complete 10 consecutive hits. After successfully completing 10 hits, athletes move to the mid-court area and then to the baseline area.
- ◆ Rally using a variety of balls and targets. For example: forehand to forehand cross courts; backhand to backhand cross courts; down the line shots; or all shots must land beyond the service line.
- ◆ Rally a number of consecutive hits. Set realistic goals!







### Ground Stroke Points

- ◆ Athletes play points (no serve) using ground strokes.
- ◆ Play a game to a designated number of points (first to win 6 points, 11 points or 21 points) depending upon skill level.
- ◆ Have athletes play as a team. If they win a point the athlete stays in the game; if they lose the point a teammate takes their place.

### Around the World (requires rallying skills)

- ◆ This is a large group drill with a minimum of 4 athletes per side.
- ◆ Two lines of athletes stand at opposite ends of the court.
- ◆ A drop hit starts the point and the rally begins.
- ◆ Each player hits one ball and runs to the end of the line at the opposite side of the court. The next player in line keeps the rally going.
- ◆ When a ball is missed, the player is out.
- ◆ The last two players play out the point, but do not have to run to the other side of the net.
- ◆ For lower skills players, the coach feeds most of the balls.
- ◆ Variation: Play as a team. After the team returns a ball, each player returns to the end of their respective line. The team with the last remaining player wins.



### Around the World: Forgot My Racquet Variation

- ◆ Athletes play Around the World (above), but all team members share one tennis racquet. This drill requires athletes to pay attention to the game.



### King (or Queen) of the Court; (three to six players) if more players use two courts

The king or queen returns the serve or a drop-hit serve from a member of the group. The players in the group alternate points until someone wins two points in a row and becomes the king or queen. The new king or queen replaces the old king or queen on his/her side of the court. This game is immensely popular and can be played for a long time.





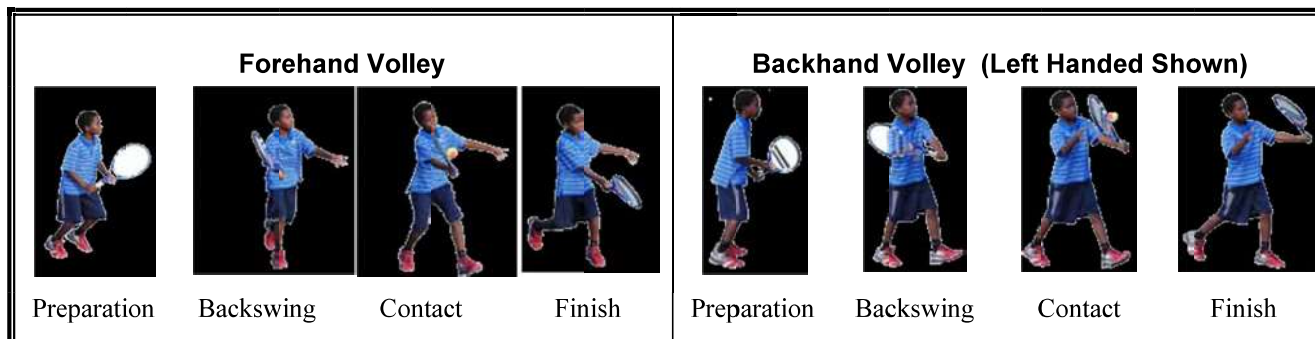
**Skill 3 & 4: Volley**

A volley is a stroke that is played before the ball bounces. It is normally hit when the player is inside the service line.

**Assessing Player Readiness**

Beginners are sometimes more successful with hitting the volley because it does not require the eye-hand coordination of playing the ball off the bounce. Common mistakes made by beginning and intermediate players are taking too big a swing or swinging down on the ball. Players should be reminded to focus on control rather than speed and power.

**Teaching the Skill**



**Grip**

The Continental grip should be used for both the forehand and backhand volley. This grip is half way between the Eastern forehand and Eastern backhand grip. This grip can also be used for the overhead.



Continental Grip

**Preparation**

Preparation at the net begins with an athletic ready position with eyes forward, racquet in front at eye level, knees flexed, weight forward and feet slightly wider than shoulder width. A split step is made as the opponent contacts the ball and the body and racquet move together as a unit sideways so that the strings of the racquet face the ball. The non-dominant hand helps set the racquet face behind the ball on the backhand side.



Athletic ready position



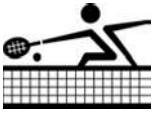
Unit turn with non-dominant hand on the throat for the backhand volley

**Swing Path**

The swing path moves in a straight line from slightly above the contact point to a position above the net. The racquet face is slightly open when contact is made from below the top of the net



The swing path is linear starting just above the point of contact and finishing at net level



### Grip

The same grips used for the forehand and backhand are used for the volley. The eastern forehand and the eastern backhand should be used for both beginning and intermediate players. The volley grip for an advanced player is positioned between the forehand and the backhand groundstroke grips. The same grip is used for both the forehand and backhand volley.



### Ready Position

The ready position is the same as for the forehand and backhand.

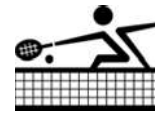
### Volley Stroke

The volley progression includes the following steps:

- ◆ Begin with the athlete blocking the ball with his/her hand (hand up in the air as if giving a “high five”).
- ◆ Add the racquet, with the athlete holding the racquet near the throat, so that the fingers are behind the strings, making a “big hand.”
- ◆ Move the hand down the grip, eventually achieving an eastern grip position.
- ◆ The same progression is followed for the backhand, with a “big thumb” instead of a “big hand.”
- ◆ Athletes turn sideways to the approaching ball.
- ◆ There is no backswing in the volley stroke.
- ◆ The ball should be met in front of the body with a short motion.
- ◆ The wrist is kept firm.



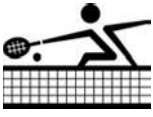
Once the athlete masters basic racquet work, the athlete can learn to step into the stroke. Athletes should work on properly executing the volley while maintaining balance.



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Follow-through

- ♦ The racquet head should remain above the wrist throughout the volley.
- ♦ There is a short follow-through, finishing in the ready position for the next volley.
- ♦ Key words are "racquet head up" and "keep the racquet above the wrist."



### Drills for Volleys

#### Volley Tap

- ◆ Athlete stands in the ready position and the coach tosses or hits a ball to him/her.
- ◆ Athlete steps in with a crossover step and bumps the ball with outstretched hand, simulating a forehand or backhand volley.
- ◆ Next, athletes catch the ball using proper footwork and toss it back to the partner. This drill could be repeated several times.



#### Cup/Cone Catches

- ◆ Using a large cup/ cone, have athletes catch a tossed ball.
- ◆ This emphasizes that athletes do not need to swing to hit a volley.

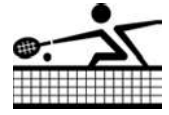


#### Volley Toss

- ◆ Coach or partner tosses a ball and players hit a forehand or backhand volley.
- ◆ Using proper volleying technique, players hit volleys to a partner.
- ◆ Count how many tosses and catches can be completed before a miss.

#### Volley Feeding Drills

Coach feeds balls from a hopper to a single-file line of players. Players hit a specified number of balls and return to the end of the line.



### Criss-Cross Volley Drill

- ◆ Two lines of players start at the corner of the service box.
- ◆ Feed a forehand volley to the first person in the left line and then feed a backhand volley to the right line. Continue to feed volleys, alternating between the two lines.
- ◆ After volleying a designated number of balls, the player returns to the end of other line.



### Alternating forehand and backhand volleys

- ◆ Coach feeds four balls, alternating forehand and backhand volleys.



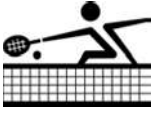
### Corner Volley Drill

- ◆ Two lines are formed at the corners of the service boxes.
- ◆ Feed a ball so the athlete must move to hit the volley.
- ◆ After hitting the volley, the athlete touches the corner of the service box with the racquet and runs back to the net to play another volley.
- ◆ As the player is running to touch the corner, a ball is fed to player on the backhand corner side.

### Approach and Volley (Forehand, Backhand and Same Side)

- ◆ Player hits an approach shot off a ball fed to the mid-court area.
- ◆ The second shot is a deep volley from a ball hit at the service line.
- ◆ The coach feeds several volleys, stressing forward movement between hits.





### Rallying Drills

As players become more advanced, they can practice the volley in a rallying situation with a coach or partner.

### Quick Volleys

- ♦ Two players stand at opposite service lines and volley with control back and forth to each other.
- ♦ Keep track of consecutive hits.

### One Up – One Back

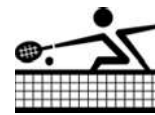
- ♦ Athlete volleys to a coach or partner who is rallying from the baseline.
- ♦ Aim for specific targets (example: forehand cross court rallies).
- ♦ Keep score or devise a game to make this situation competitive.

### Key Words

- ♦ "Racquet head up"
- ♦ "Keep the racquet above the wrist"

### Coaching Tips

- Emphasize that athletes should not swing at the volley, but instead "punch" or "catch" the ball. Have athletes hit and stop their racquet to avoid swinging. Ask them often if they can see their racquet. If they lose sight of the racquet they have taken it too far back.
- The racquet head should be above the wrist throughout the volley.
- Volleys are simple to teach and many Special Olympics tennis players are relatively successful with the stroke. But it is often difficult to make the transition from the baseline to the net in a game situation. Many athletes may only use the volley when in the net position in doubles. Even though they may not use it in their matches, encourage your athletes to practice their volleys.
- To be balanced properly after hitting the volley, it is necessary to use the correct footwork. On the forehand volley, step across with the left front foot and conversely on the backhand step across with the right front foot.
- When feeding balls, make sure balls are fed at different heights and speeds so athletes learn that not all balls approach at shoulder height. Initially, athletes should be given verbal cues such as forehand and/or backhand to help them react more quickly.



### Skill 5 & 6: 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.

#### Assessing Player Readiness

The serve can be the hardest part of tennis for beginners.

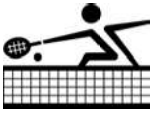
A suggested serving progression for success for Level 1 athletes.

- ♦ Athletes stand with non-dominant shoulder to the 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.
- ♦ Return to the net add a snap and repeat progression to service line.

Intermediate players are more likely to complete a successful serve, but are still prone to double faults. They may struggle with placing the toss consistently and therefore have trouble serving consistently. The following modifications are appropriate for intermediate players.

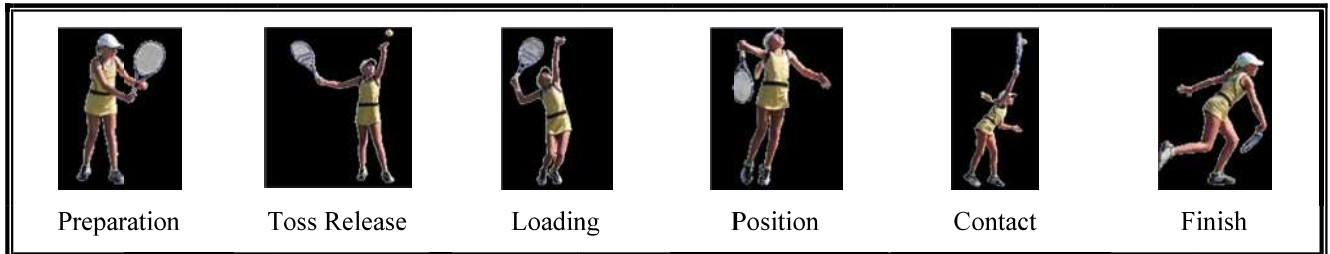
- ♦ Hit an underhand serve (a forehand drop-hit with the ball hit in mid-air).
- ♦ Use an abbreviated service motion:
  - ♦ 1/2 serve is started with the racquet in the "back scratch position."
  - ♦ 3/4 serve is started with the racquet behind the body and pointing toward the ground.





**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.



**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**

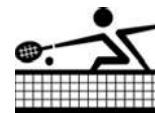
Both arms will drop down and swing up together. The non-dominant hand tosses the ball in position and the racquet head drops down to the hitting position where the tip of the racquet points toward the ground. The racquet arm elbow leads forward and up and the racquet follows, accelerating to the contact at full extension above and slightly in front of the body, finishing down and across the body.



Position

Contact

Finish



### Teaching the Skill

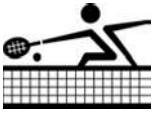
#### Grip

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. It is recommended that coaches begin teaching the serve using a Level 1 format.



#### Preparation – 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?"



### Serve Stroke

#### 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.

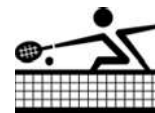


### Serving Motion

- ◆ It is best to have athletes start with the racquet in the overhand throwing 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.



### Overhand Throwing Position



### Lefty Overhand Throwing Position

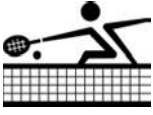


## Drills for Serves

### Throwing Drill

- ♦ Throw a ball over the net and into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Using an overhead throwing motion, throw a designated number of balls into the appropriate service box.
- ♦ Athletes struggling to get the ball over the net can start at the service line and gradually work to the point of throwing from behind the baseline.
- ♦ Use various balls, such as footballs, foam balls, etc.





### Toss Drill

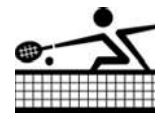
- ♦ Stand in the ready position with a ball in the non-racquet hand.
- ♦ Hold the ball with the fingertips and point the palm upward.
- ♦ With a straight arm, raise the ball upward and let go of the ball when the hand reaches its highest point.
- ♦ Allow the ball to drop back into the left hand while the right arm is outstretched.
- ♦ Count the number of successful tosses and catches.
- ♦ Variations:
  - ♦ Put the racquet on the ground to the right side of the server to act as a target.
  - ♦ Toss the ball as if to serve, but allow the ball to drop to ground.
  - ♦ Count the number of times the ball hits the racquet strings.
  - ♦ Toss the ball while standing alongside the fence. The ball should not touch the fence. This drill helps show the athlete if the toss is going straight up.



### Arm Reach Drill

- ♦ Place the palm of the racquet hand against the back of the neck (back scratch position). Make sure the elbow is bent and pointing upwards.
- ♦ Extend the arm from behind the neck until it is straight and slightly in front of the shoulder.
- ♦ Now try the drill with a racquet in the hand “extend the arm.”





### Catch a Ball from the Service Toss

- ♦ Start with a ball in the tossing hand and the serving arm in the back scratch position with palm against the back of the neck “scratch your back.”
- ♦ Toss the ball and extend the arm as in the Arm Reach Drill and catch the ball with the arm fully extended.

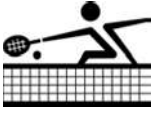


### Serving practice

- ♦ With a bucket of balls at the baseline, practice serves from the deuce court and the ad court. Two athletes can practice serves at the same time.
- ♦ Aim for targets or count the consecutive number of successful serves.
- ♦ Play in teams and race to see which team can get 10 serves in the correct box first. When an athlete misses a serve, they go to end of line.

### Key Words

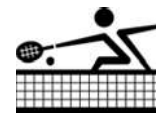
- ♦ "Relax"
- ♦ "Where are you aiming?"
- ♦ "Where are your feet pointed?"
- ♦ “lift and let go”
- ♦ “Place the ball on the second shelf”
- ♦ “Down together, up together”
- ♦ "Scratch your back"
- ♦ "Hit only a good toss”
- ♦ "Extend the arm"



### Coaching Tips

- Explain the boundaries and rules for the serve: (a) athletes must stand behind the baseline; (b) two attempts are allowed; (c) ball must be served diagonally; and (d) serve is replayed if it hits the net and lands in the correct service box (let).
- Stress the proper tactical priorities: (a) get the ball in play and (b) use a progression of placement, depth control, spin and pace.
- Start athletes near the service line when they are learning to serve. As they progress, move back and eventually serve from behind the baseline.
- Modify the serve by using a forehand stroke or a 1/2 or 3/4 serve. It is more fun to begin playing points rather than have a game of double faults.
- Provide athletes with corrections to missed serves.
- For corrections, consider that a ball in the net indicates the toss is probably too far in front or too low and the athlete is hitting down, rather than reaching up.
- A serve that goes long indicates the ball toss is too far behind the body. More extension of the hitting arm is needed.
- Stress the importance of an accurate toss. If the ball is not in the right place, it is difficult to control the serve. When there is a bad toss, encourage athletes to catch the toss and try again. There is no penalty for a bad toss ("hit only a good toss").
- Athletes should practice the serve in every practice. A point cannot be played without putting the serve in the correct service box.

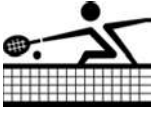




**Faults & Fixes – Serve**

<b>Error</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Back foot slides up to the front foot before contact	Place an object on the foot or drag the back foot through the movement, as opposed to taking a step.
Front foot slides forward before contact (foot fault)	Place an object (ball/ racquet) in front of the front foot.
Improper stance	Imagine aiming a bow and arrow or use chalk to trace the feet of players.
Changes grip in backswing	Place colored dots on the grip for reference, where different colors represent grips for different strokes. Each dot should indicate where the index knuckle is placed.
Uses improper grip	Place colored dots on the grip for reference, where different colors represent grips for different strokes. Each dot should indicate where the index knuckle is placed.
Backswing is too short	Have athlete swing across the top of their shoe laces.
Backswing is too quick	Have the athlete serve in slow motion, increasing speed as they near completion.
Knees dip before toss	Bend the knees first, then complete the serve.
Straight arm serve	Serve by swinging across the shoe laces, then touch the back before contacting the ball and completing the motion.
Lack of continuity (hitch in swing)	Ask the player to toss the ball only two inches in height, making the player hurry through the stroke to achieve a contact point. The coach can also make the toss for the player.
Athlete drops elbow	Exaggerate a high toss, emphasizing reaching up to contact the ball.
Scissor toss	Place the tossing arm over the racquet arm.
Quick toss	Perform a slow motion serve or place the tossing hand under the racquet, allowing the racquet to begin the stroke before the toss has been made.
Weight shifts too soon	Have the athlete stand with a tennis ball under each foot (under toes, not heels), which starts the service motion from a leaning back position.
Improper point of contact	Coaches often do not teach the ball toss and rarely teach how to toss. Emphasize the point of contact by tapping the ball at the point of contact against the fence or backdrop.
Loss of balance	Have the student serve from a standing position with the legs crossed.





### Return of Serve

After the serve, the return of serve is the most important shot in tennis. Successful tennis players have consistent returns.

#### Assessing Player Readiness

Special Olympics athletes must constantly be reminded to be ready and pay attention to the server. Teach players to watch the ball during the toss. This allows for immediate tracking skills to take place. It is often necessary for the athlete to move toward the ball for the return. These can be very difficult concepts to master, but are necessary for the athlete to progress.

#### Teaching the Skill

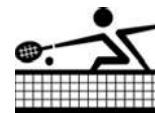
- ♦ The basic ready position (using a forehand grip), presented in the groundstroke lesson, is used in the return of serve. Use the key words “relax,” “look for the ball” and “be ready.”
- ♦ Athletes should begin near the baseline, close enough to touch the singles sideline. The position is the same for both singles and doubles play.

#### Return of Serve Stroke

- ♦ The return of serve is similar to the forehand and backhand, with a shorter backswing due to decreased time to react to the ball. Use the key words “turn,” “shorten your backswing” and “move your feet.”
- ♦ The student turns as if preparing for a volley and takes the racquet back as the body is turning. This helps teach a shorter backswing.
- ♦ Footwork is similar to groundstroke preparation. With limited reaction time, the athlete may take just one step toward the ball before contact. Be sure that the initial step or steps will achieve a suitable position, ‘split step’. A step in the wrong direction will tell the coach that more time is needed working on tracking skills.
- ♦ To practice return of serve, have the athlete track the oncoming serve and catch the ball in a short court format. Increase distance as skill progresses.
- ♦ NOTE: a tennis player should never have both heels on the ground at the same time. In getting ready to return serve, a player must be on the balls of their feet and split step and prepare just before returning the ball.

#### Key Words

- ♦ “Relax”
- ♦ “Look for the ball”
- ♦ “Be ready”
- ♦ “Turn”
- ♦ “Shorten your backswing”
- ♦ “Move your feet”



## **Skill 7: Alternating Ground strokes**

Athletes alternate between forehand and backhand ground strokes while adding movement to the ball. The key is for athlete to begin in ready position, early racquet preparation ( racquet back with shoulder turn), take a few steps to the ball, stop, step in to contact ball, then recover by shuffling back to center mark and ready position and then repeat pattern on opposite side. Athletes change grips while in ready position.

### **Hitting with Movement**

For many Special Olympics tennis players, moving to the ball and then executing a stroke can be very difficult. It is important for coaches to instruct athletes that in a match the ball is not going to come to them; they must move to the ball. Hitting with movement drills should be introduced in the early stages of skill development and should lead to practices that prepare athletes for match play.

### **Assessing Player Readiness**

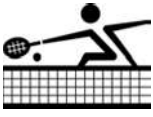
- ♦ Beginners typically do not like to run to the ball. They would rather reach from the waist, extend their arms and then flick their wrist at the ball rather than move their feet.
- ♦ Intermediate players will move more readily to the ball but will often get "jammed" with a ball that is too close or they will reach for a ball that is too far away.
- ♦ The best tennis players move to the ball quickly and get in position to execute their stroke effectively. They are rarely out of position and are balanced at the end of each stroke. They always seem to be in the right place.

### **Teaching the Skill**

There are five steps to developing efficient movement around the court.

1. The athlete needs to determine the direction of the approaching ball. To practice, toss balls to the athlete positioned on the other side of the court. The athlete points in the direction of the approaching ball with the non-racquet hand before the ball reaches the net.
2. Make contact with the ball. The athlete runs toward the tossed ball and catches it after only one bounce. This can be progressed into a drill where the athlete next catches the ball on the strings.
3. Turn the shoulders and take the racquet back into the hitting position while running toward the ball.
4. Step forward with the front foot as contact is made with the ball. Asking the athlete to freeze at that point allows the coach to get a good view of the athlete's footwork.
5. After following-through, the athlete turns and takes a few running steps back to the center of the court. Getting back to a balance position toward the center of the court with a split step in preparation for the next shot. This split step is done at the opponents' forward swing at the ball.

Throughout the sequence, practice the split step to maintain balance. To execute the split step, as the opponent starts his/her swing, the athlete jumps on both feet. Use the key words "split step" or "take little steps." Be sure the athlete understands that the split step occurs all over the court and in between each contact or swing of the racquet.



### Alternating Groundstroke Progression for success

- ◆ Practice movement without equipment.
- ◆ Incorporate movement into warm-ups.
- ◆ Athletes shadow coaches movements.
- ◆ After practicing movement, add ball.
- ◆ Athlete starts at T on service line.
- ◆ Athlete runs to tossed ball.
- ◆ Athlete stops and catches ball then throws balls over net.
- ◆ Athlete shuffles back to center.
- ◆ Next add racquet.and repeat

### Drills for Teaching Movement

- ◆ Demonstrate the correct way to move to the ball
- ◆ Exaggerate what happens if the athlete forgets to take the racquet back while running to the ball.
- ◆ Show the hesitation step to prevent running through the ball.

### Shadow Drills

- ◆ Coach calls out "running forehand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary forehand and completes a forehand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.
- ◆ Coach calls out "running backhand." Athlete runs to hit an imaginary backhand and completes a backhand stroke, executing a "split step" after recovering from each stroke.

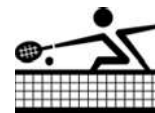


### Tossing Drills

- ◆ Toss balls to alternating sides and have athletes hit and move.
- ◆ Toss balls progressively farther away from athletes.
- ◆ Toss balls without a pattern and have athletes hit and move.

### Feeding Drills with a Basket

- ◆ Athletes stand in a line at the baseline.
- ◆ Players respond one at a time by hitting and moving to a ball fed by the coach.
- ◆ Athletes run side to side to hit a designated number of alternating forehands and backhands.



### Five Ball Drill

- ◆ Coach feeds five balls in the following sequence: forehand, backhand, mid-court forehand, backhand volley, forehand volley.
- ◆ Athlete hits five balls and returns to the hitting line.



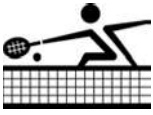
### Agility Drills

- ◆ Shuttle Runs: The doubles sideline is the starting line. Run to the center service line and back to the doubles sideline. Then run to the singles sideline and back. Continue running to far service sideline and back. This can be done several times in a row or on several courts. With four or more players, make a relay race of this drill pitting two against two or three against three etc.
- ◆ Run the lines: Starting in the corner of the doubles sideline, run to the net and backpedal back to the corner. Shuffle over to the singles sideline and run to the net. Backpedal to the service line and shuffle to the center service line.
- ◆ Line jumps: Athletes stand on one side of any line on the court. As fast as possible they jump back and forth over the line for 30 seconds.
- ◆ Jump roping: A great way to increase agility. Do various skipping and hopping routines. Go for speed and endurance.



### Key words

- ◆ “Relax”
- ◆ “Look for the ball”
- ◆ “Be ready”
- ◆ “Split step”
- ◆ “Take little steps”



### Coaching Tips

- When waiting in line, athletes should be active by jogging or moving in place, rather than standing still.
- Balance is the key to moving well. Teach athletes how to be balanced when they hit the ball.
- Incorporate movement or agility drills at the end of each practice. These drills can be done following the lines of the court and run as relay races. Keep it fun!