

INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Tennis Association is pleased to provide you with a comprehensive guide of fun tennis games and activities. We have found these games to be very popular and an efficient way to manage large groups with limited space and staff. The games in this book are intended to be simple for all coaches, even those with limited tennis knowledge, to use with their players.

We recommend that you provide USTA Tennis programs for your players. Many of these programs have minimum standards and monetary incentives for the coaches. Programs are available for all ability levels and ages! A list of USTA Tennis programs is located on the following page.

The mission of the Mississippi Tennis Association is “to promote and develop tennis” in our state. We hope that you will enjoy using this guide and that you will emphasize the lifetime benefits of tennis to your students. Skills learned now will enable players to embrace an active lifestyle throughout their lives. Thank you for helping Mississippians to learn and enjoy the game of tennis!

USTA Tennis Programs

USTA Tennis 1-2-3 A low-cost, introductory program for all ages. It is designed to quickly teach the basic tennis skills to new players in a group environment. The program includes nine hours of instruction. Graduates of the program are encouraged to move into “organized play” programs such as USTA Junior Team Tennis and USTA League Tennis. Monetary incentives are available for providing USTA Tennis 1-2-3 to adults. NJTL is a low-cost, grassroots junior program. It allows children exposure to tennis that may not otherwise have this opportunity. NJTL’s combine tennis instruction with an educational component, such as literacy or drug prevention, to enhance the lives of these young players. NJTL chapters are encouraged to run USTA Tennis 1-2-3 and USTA Junior Team Tennis programs. Grants are available for these programs.

USTA Junior Team Tennis

USTA Junior Team Tennis offers players the opportunity to compete on teams that emphasize fun, fitness and friends. Leagues for youth match players of similar age and ability. A modified form of match play, such as Quickstart, is perfect for beginners!

USTA Schools Tennis

This program introduces tennis to teachers and students. Physical educators are given free training sessions for the skills needed to instruct a basic tennis course, as well as opportunities to buy discounted equipment and get free curriculum guides.

High school coaches have the opportunity to join the No-Cut program to help give more kids an opportunity to play organized tennis, as well as access to a website that provides them with knowledge and advice on how to coach a tennis team.

USTA League Tennis

Offers men and women ages 19 & up competitive team match play in the world's largest recreational tennis league. Players compete against others of similar ability levels using the National Tennis Rating Program. USTA League Tennis features state, sectional and national championships.

For more information on USTA Tennis programs, please contact:

Lindsey Sartain

Mississippi Tennis Association, P.O. Box 5388, Jackson, MS 39296
601-981-4421 or 1-800-349-1683



RELAYS & WARM-UP GAMES

The description of the following relays will assume that you will have two or more evenly-numbered groups in single file lines at the baseline facing the net.

Ball Balance Relay:

At your command, the first player in each line will balance a ball on their racket face and run (or walk) to the net and back. You can have the player pass the ball off to the next person in line or simply have players use their own ball.

Down Dribble Relay:

This is the same game as “Ball Balance,” but each player bounces the ball down on the court and makes their way to the net and back as fast as they can.

Up Dribble Relay:

This game is the same as “Down Dribble Relay”, but each player bounces the ball up in the air with their racket.

Racket Stack Relay:

Set the class in relay form. Balls are not necessary. The first player in each line runs to the net, places their racket on the ground, and then the player runs back and tags the next player. Then that player runs up and “stacks” their racket on top of the first one. This continues until all the “rackets” are stacked on top of each other. Then the first person runs back up to the net to retrieve their racket that is on the bottom of the “stack”. This continues until one team is back behind the line with their rackets.

SANDWICH RELAY

Divide your players into teams of 3-5 people. The sandwich relay begins by with one player running to the net with the racket in hand. After touching the net, the player returns to the baseline. The second person in line places a ball on top of player #1’s racket and then places their racket on top to form a sandwich (with the ball in the middle). Players attempt to move the net and back as unit. You can do this as a race against other teams. Player #3 then places his ball on top of the sandwich and the racket on top of the

ball to form a LARGE SANDWICH! If any of the balls are dropped, the sandwich must be re-built before the team can continue.

CATERPILLAR RELAY

This is a group relay. Divide the players into teams with at least three players per team. Have the players line up, side by side (shoulder to shoulder), behind the baseline. Each player has a racket and holds it out in front of him, parallel to the ground. Only the last person in line has a ball and it is placed on the strings. When you say “go,” the player with the ball rolls the ball from their racket to the next player’s racket. After the ball is on the teammate’s racket, the player who has passed the ball off runs behind their teammates to the front of the line. This is continued over and over until the team makes it was to the designated finish line.

Variations: A beanbag may be used for lower skill level players. Place a bucket of balls at the end of each line and an empty bucket at the front of each line. This time the player nearest the bucket of balls will pick one up out of the bucket with his hand and place it on his racket. Then that player will pass it to the next player and so on until all the balls are out of the bucket and in to the empty one at the front of the line. If you do not have enough buckets for this version of the game, use an extra tennis racket to hold the balls.

TENNIS CHAOS

Put students in groups of about 10 in a large circle. Place a racket with a ball on top of the strings in front of each student. Have students stand about 4 feet away from each other. Once everyone is in position, have the students pick up their ball. When the instructor blows the whistle, students must scramble to find an empty racket to put their ball on (other than their own racket). After placing the ball on a racket, the student then tries to pick up another ball from someone else’s racket. This game usually lasts about 1 minute. Object of the game is to see how many times you can place a ball on an empty racket. Good warm-up game!

RACKET QUICKNESS

Have each player find a partner. Have the partners stand about five feet away facing each other. Each player must balance his racket on the court (racket head down while holding the grip). When you say “go”, both players run and try to catch their partner’s racket before it hits the ground. Each time the team successfully catches each other’s racket, they each must take a step away from each other. Every time a racket is dropped, both players should take a step closer to one another. The object of the game is to see how far apart the teammates can get and still catch each other racket.

Variations:

Have everyone stand in a circle and do the same activity running to the right. Change directions for variation or call out “right” or “left”.

CAN YOU?

This game is a combination of racket skill activity and your imagination. For example, bounce the ball down the court with your racket consecutively (“downs”) and (“ups”) and pat your head. (rub your belly, hop on one leg, spin around, stick your fingers in your ear, etc.)

BOOTY BALL

Equipment: Lots of balls of different shapes and sizes. It is better that you not use real tennis balls because of safety. Balloons will work well too. This is a fun large group game. Divide the group into two teams of 10-15 per team and place them on opposite sides of the net. The object is to have zero balls or balloons on your side of the net at the end of time as possible. This is a team game so passing the balls to your teammates is encouraged. The instructor tosses balls out onto the court evenly on both sides of the net while the players’ frantically try to get the balls on the other side of the net. (Safety first! No pegging) After the balls and balloons are out on the court you call out a body part (knees only) that the player must exclusively use to get the ball over the net and on the other side of the court. That goes for the players just passing the balls to a teammate too. Continue to call out different body parts (elbows, heads, shoulders, booty) until time runs out (about 1minute). Count the balls to see which team won.

GAMES FOR BEGINNERS

ALLEY RALLY

Pair the players up. The coach may play if there is an odd number. Players stand across the doubles alley from one another. Each player puts a target (a ball, poly-spot, etc.) down in front of her feet on the court, and then each player takes one step back away from the target. The players will then try to bump a ball back and forth with the objective of hitting their partner's target that is lying on the court. You may play as a team, where you count the total number of target hits that both players get or against one another. Remind the players to open their racket face slightly and "just bump it"!

Variations

*Play over the net.

*Increase the distance between the two players.

*Use different targets other than the tennis ball (e.g. chalk circles, rubber targets, hula-hoops, towels).

*If you do not have access to a court, place a racket between the players and put the targets at each end of the racket.

BUCKET HEADS

Equipment: A couple of buckets or laundry baskets and some towels or T-shirts to place in the bucket (to keep the balls from bouncing out of the buckets). Players are in teams of at least two. Player 1 should stand at the service line, and player 2 should stand at either on the service line across the net or the baseline (on the same side of the net) depending on their skill level. Player 1 is the hitter and player 2 has the bucket on their head. Player 1 hits the ball with an arc to player 2; player 2 must keep the bucket on their head while trying to catch the ball. They repeat until time is up. If there are more than two players on a team, have players rotate to the end of the line after hitting a shot. The player holding the bucket should not rotate until time is up. This should last about 30 seconds to one minute. Foam balls may be used for safety reasons.

HULA-HOOP TARGET PRACTICE

Setup: Use windscreen ties, tape or string to hang the hula-hoops on the wall or fence. Vary the height of the hoops. Have the players line up in front of a hula-hoop (usually about 10 feet away from the hoop) and place a ball hopper next to the first person in line. Players will have 30 seconds to see how many times they can hit the ball through the hoop. Rather than tossing the balls to each player, it is recommended that the players do a self-feed. You may choose to have the players hit forehands, backhands or serves. Variations: *This can be a team game in which each player hits one shot, then returns to the back of the line. Each line is working as a team to see how many balls are hit through their hoop.

JUST BUMP IT

Divide the group into two or more equal teams. Have them line up on the baseline facing the net. Pick a captain on each team and send the captain to the other side of the net facing the team. Put a racket down on the court on the other side of the net from each captain (on the team side). The captains should have a supply of four or five balls. You say "go" and the first player from each line runs to the net and picks up the racket in a volley position. The captain tosses one ball underhand to the volleyer, who "just bumps it" back to the captain. If the captain catches it, the team gets a point. After one attempt, the player puts the racket back down on the court and runs back to tag the next player in line. Continue the game for approximately one minute. The team that receives the most points is the winner!

Variations:

Play the same game, but with groundstrokes. Instead of putting the racket at the net, put it at the service line. The captain will toss a ball underhand to the hitter and the hitters will "just bump it" to the captain.

RALLEYBALL

Philosophy: The philosophy of this format is to have kids participating in tennis as a team sport, having fun with their friends, and learning basic skills.

Ralleyball Rules:

1. The match begins by determining who will receive the ball.
 - a. The winner of the toss (or racket spin) gets the first toss of the first and third sets.
 2. Play is doubles.
 - a. The first 2 players for each team take the court to begin the match. The players will line up parallel to each other, one on the deuce side and one on the add side. Beginners should start at the service line, while more advanced players can move back to the baseline.
 - b. The remaining players should line up along the sideline.
 3. The instructor tosses the ball to the players to begin the point (for beginners). Advanced players may serve the ball.
 - a. The first feed is to the team that won the spin and to the player on the deuce court.
 - b. Toss a second time to the player if they miss the ball (a second serve)
 - c. The toss is alternated on every point in a figure-8 fashion. The first feed goes to the deuce court; the feed for the second point goes to the deuce court on the opposite side. The feed is always alternated between teams and players.
 - d. Players switch sides at the start of the second and third set.
- Please see the following page for more instructions.

RALLEYBALL

4. Players begin to rally the ball.
 - a. Every time the ball lands "in" (doubles alleys count) that team is awarded one point.
 - b. A point is awarded to the team who receives the feed if they return that feed, in court, even if the opposing team hits a ball in the air and/or that was obviously going out of bounds.
1. 5. The rally continues and points accumulate until someone hits into the net or out of bounds.

_.6. When either player from a team misses the shot, both players from the team leave the court and are replaced by the next two players from the team.

_.a. This process should continue throughout the match.

_.b. Players need to be in pairs and ready to take the court at all times during the match.

1. 7. The team that wins a point can play one more point before being replaced by the next two players, regardless of whether or not they win the second point.

_.8. The sets are timed.

_.a. There are three, ten-minute sets in each match.

_.b. Time is kept running at all times during the set.

9. The winner is the team who has scored the most points in the match.

_.a. The points for all 3 sets are combined for each team to determine the total.

_.b. In the event of a tie score, there will be a one-rally tiebreak. There will be a spin to determine who receives the toss for the tiebreak.

SCRAMBLE

Place a team on each side of the court (spread them out!). Each player has a racket. The feeder puts the ball in play to either team. The team tries to hit the ball over the net and into the court (doubles alleys count). Players may pass the ball to a teammate by hitting it. The ball can bounce an unlimited amount of times. The two ways to lose a point is to let the ball roll on your side or to hit the ball over the net to the opposing team, but outside of the court boundaries. When passing the ball to a teammate, the ball may go outside of the court boundaries (it may hit off of the net, the fences, etc.). However, players may not cross over to the opposing side of the net to hit the ball. You can play to 10 (up to you!) OBJECT- To not let the ball roll on your side.

TAP THE TARGET

Have the players line up in one or two lines half way between the net and the service line. You will toss a ball to the first person in each line and that player will attempt to tap (or bump) the ball over the net to a target that you have placed on the other side of the net. The target could be a racket

cover, a ball hopper, or a chalk mark. Play a game to see which team can hit the target the most in one-minute time period.

TENNIS 21

Players hit one ball from the baseline or the service line and then run to the net to hit an easy volley. They receive two points for a successful groundstroke, one point for a volley. After hitting, the players retrieve the balls, put them back in the basket, and go to the end of the line. Play until someone reaches "21".

TENNIS BASEBALL

Coach divides the team in half. One team will be at bat, the other across the net fielding. The pitcher (coach) throws ball underhanded to the batter's forehand or backhand. Batter tries to hit the ball across the net (with a racket) and into certain parts of the court that are designated as a single, double, triple, or home run (service boxes = HR). A ball hit in the net is an out and a ball hit outside the doubles lines is a foul. Three fouls = out. The fielding team tries to catch the ball and not let it fall to the court. If the ball is caught in the air, it is an out. If the ball is not caught, see where the ball the ball lands and advance the batter appropriately. After three outs, the fielding team is at bat. A batter or base runner cannot be "thrown out" by a play at a base. A base runner cannot steal a base either. The only way to make an out is to catch a batters ball or for them to strike out.

SERVING

PROGRESSIONS

1. Toss and Trap: Have the players stand at the fence (about a foot away) so that they can touch the fence at the intended point of contact for the serve, (To the right of the head for the right-handers and slightly out in front of the body). Have the players practice tossing the ball for the serve just as high as the racket reaches. After they can do that, have the players try to trap the tossed ball against the fence with their racket using just a very minimal swing. A half service motion is all that they need to use. Start the racket on the shoulder so that all they do is reach up to the contact point.

To avoid a big crash with the racket against the fence, tell them to do it “quietly”.

2. Toss and Tap: Start at the net and have the players try to tap the overhead serve over the net. They should start with the racket on their shoulder (half serve) then reach up with the racket to the ball that is tossed only as high as the racket reaches. If the ball goes over the net, they can move back one-step away from the net.

3. Serve to target: Simply have the players serve to an area (target) on the court like the service boxes.

4. Serving Race: Make a line of 5 or 6 balls for each player on the court from the net to the baseline. Have each player start at the ball closest to the net. When you say “go”, each player will pick up the first ball and attempt to serve it over the net. If the player does not hit the ball over the net, the player must continue to try from that same position. The first player to hit a ball over the net from the baseline is the winner.

5. Team Serving Competition: Divide the players into two groups. Have them stand on the service line (the middle of the court) or farther back and play a game to see which group (by serving one at a time) can serve the most balls into the service boxes in one minute. Award one point for each serve that lands in the service box.

GAMES FOR INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED PLAYERS

ALLIGATOR PIT

The teacher stands at the net and is the feeder. The class is on the opposite side of the net in a single file line (or two lines) and will take turns hitting. If the student hits the feed in the court, then they return

to the back of the line. If the ball that the student hits lands either in the net or out of bounds, they must put their racket aside and go to the “pit.” (The pit is the side of the court in which the feeder is standing). But all is not lost! If the person in the pit catches a hit ball either in the air or after one bounce, then they are out of the pit and go back to the end of the hitting line. The person who hits the ball that gets caught has to go into the pit. The last person who hits a ball in the court that doesn’t get caught wins (but the pit is full of gators at this point!).

OBJECT-Hit the ball in the court without someone catching the ball.

I FORGOT MY RACKET

Divide your players into two teams. Place teams on opposite sides of the court, in single file lines. This game may be played at the service line or baseline, depending on skill level. It also may be a singles or doubles game. The first person in each line is given a racket. These are the only two rackets that will be used in the game. The instructor feeds the first ball to either team. Once a player hits the ball, they must pass the racket off to the next person in line. This game can be played competitively by keeping score for each team. Another option is to play cooperatively by counting the total number of shots per rally.

CHAMPS & CHALLENGERS

This is a great game to work on your doubles skills! Place a doubles team, “the Champs,” on one side of the court at the net (in volleying position). All of the other doubles teams, “the Challengers,” should be lined up at the baseline on the opposite side of the court. Feed the ball to the doubles team on the baseline. If the baseliners win the point, they stay in for another point. If they win two points in a row, they take over the position as Champs. Once the baseline team loses a point, they return to the back of the line.

Variations:

*The baseliners (Challengers) can be required to win 3 points in a row to take over the Champs position.

*The Champs may play from the baseline.

*For beginners, you may place all teams at the service line.

*If you have a smaller group, this can be a singles game.

AROUND THE WORLD

Divide the players into groups and place them on the “T” or baseline (depending of the level of the players) in a single-file line facing each other, across the net. You start the game by throwing the ball to the first person in one of the lines (always feed to the largest line if there is an odd number of players). That person tries to bump the ball back over the net to the first person in the opposite line. Once the player hits the ball, they run around the net to the end of the opposite line. Everyone continues to do this until someone misses. As long as the ball lands in the designated court, the player is still “in”. Have the players sit out once they miss. Once it gets down to just two players, instead of having the players run around the court after they hit the ball, have them either: a) put the racket down and run around it; b) spin around in a circle; c) do two jumping jacks; or d) something else creative.

Variations

*Give each player three “strikes” or chances instead of sitting him out on his first miss. *Do not sit a player out at all when the player misses *Play mini-tennis (using just the service boxes) *Use the full court. *Shorten the distance by having players go to the end of their line *Play a cooperative game in which the players are working together to see how many times they can hit the ball without missing.

BEAT MR. NOBODY

This is a serving game in which the players learn how to keep score, play a real game, and serve at the same time. Starting at the deuce side, a player gets two serves that must land in the correct service box, just like in real tennis. If the serve goes in, the server wins the point against Mr. Nobody and the score is 15-love. If the player double faults, they lose the point and the score is love-15. Switch sides to play another point. Continue until the game against Mr. Nobody is over. If you have more than one player, let all players play simultaneously instead of waiting for one player to finish the entire game. The first player in line will start a point against Mr. Nobody in the deuce box, then move to the add box to start the second point. When the first player starts her second point in the add box, finishes her second point, she goes to the end of the line and waits to play her third point.

Continue the cycle until everyone finishes a game.

Important:

Have the players go to the other side of the court to play against Mr. Nobody so that there is not too much waiting time. Be careful since these players will be serving in the direction of each other. There is a chance that an on-coming ball could hit a player.

WIPEOUT

This game is ideal for groups of 8-12 people. Only one court is necessary for Wipeout. Divide the group into two teams: "Team A" and "Team B." The teams are put in single file lines on each baseline. The coach feeds the first ball to either player A1 or B1. The point is then played out. The loser of the point is "wiped-out" (they have to go to the end of their line). The winner stays in and the next player on their team comes in as well. The object of the game is to get every member of your team onto the court and win the final point.

For example, if A1 wins the point against B1, then B1 would be "wiped-out," meaning they would have to go to the end of the line. The doubles team of A1 and A2 now plays a point against B2. If B2 loses the point, then team A gets to bring a third player into the court. If Team B were to win this point, then all of three of Team A's players would be wiped out! Play continues until all of one team is on the court and wins the last point.

