

Esther Forrester



ELF TENNIS

INSTRUCTOR TOOLKIT

A large, stylized graphic of a tennis racket is positioned on the left side of the page. The racket head is at the top, with a grid pattern representing the strings. The frame is a light orange color. The handle is visible at the bottom, featuring a grey and white striped pattern. The background is a light teal color with a subtle grid pattern.

ELF TENNIS

INSTRUCTOR TOOL KIT

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BASIC TENNIS LESSON STRUCTURE

5-10 minutes	Guided stretching and running
10-20 minutes	Fine motor and gross motor skills such as throwing, catching, and rolling of a ball
10-20 minutes	Drills and games teaching volleys
10-20 minutes	Drills and games teaching forehands and backhands
5-10 minutes	Review of scoring, mini tennis game, where the kids compete against each other in some way
5-10 minutes	Review of strokes, huddle for a cheer

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES, WARM UP ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed for kids to learn how handle the ball and the racquet independently and improve eye hand coordination. Sometimes these activities will take up nearly half a class if the kids are under 3 years old.

BALL ACTIVITIES:

Throwing the ball and catching the ball (2 students work together, encourage the kids to hold their hands together and cup them so they are more likely to catch the ball)

Rolling the ball to one another (even have the kids make each other move and not roll the ball exactly to each other)

Dodging the ball when the ball is thrown at students' feet (instructor must partake in this)

Jacks- bounce the ball once and catch it, after being able to accomplish that, let the ball bounce twice on the ground and catch it, etc. This activity is done individually. The older kids may be able to do up to 7 times.

Musical balls – Instructor throws one less ball than there are students. After the chanting of the phrase, musical balls, musical balls, here we come, the students run to pick up the balls with either their hands or their racquets). If a student doesn't claim a ball, then they become a helper. This activity goes on until there is one student left.

Rolling the ball in your hands (done independently), better for younger kids.

The wonder ball- the students throw the ball to each other while chanting the song the wonder ball goes round and round, catch the ball and pass it around. The student who has the ball when the song finishes, is out of the game.

Play the ball as a piano

Roll the ball in your hands

Throw the ball up and catch the ball on your own

Throw the ball and clap your hands

Toss the ball as high as you can

RACQUET ACTIVITIES:

Racquet activities are designed to familiarize students with holding a racquet and help students improve their grip on the racquet, as well as familiarize students with the different parts of the racquet. Some of the racquet activities are meant to approximate strokes, thus allowing kids to feel the production of a stroke without having the pressure of having to connect with the ball. I usually call the racquet activities racquet fun or

- Wave the racquet like you wave to someone
- Do a high Five with the racquet
- Scratch your back with the racquet (relates to the overhead), for more advanced student, you can do scratch, reach, and snap (which approximates an overhead).
- Shovel with the racquet
- Pretend the racquet is a pogo stick and push down and bounce with the racquet (put the head on the ground)
- Pretend the racquet is a cane and walk with the racquet (put the butt cap on the ground)
- Pretend that the racquet is a guitar and play the strings of the racquet while singing.
- Spin the racquet with one hand, and catch the racquet with the other hand (explain that when a match starts we spin for the serve)

MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Hop like bunny rabbits
- Jump like frogs
- Crawl like dogs
- Hop Scotch
- Follow the leader while side stepping and running back wards and forwards, the teacher is the leader
- Train game- teacher will roll the ball through everyone's legs, have the students move as a group towards the ball and see how many peoples legs it rolls through. Make sure that the students understand that the ball should roll through their legs and they don't need to stop the ball. Explain to the students that on a tennis court you move sideways so that you can see the other side of the court.

GREAT GAMES TO TEACH TENNIS SKILLS AND STROKES & KEEP THE CLASS EXCITING

ALIEN INVASION/ SUPERMAN

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, volleys, control, self-regulation, footwork and agility

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Explain to the students that in alien invasion/ superman students are granted permission to run around the net while dodging balls thrown by the instructor if they make all three shots that are fed to them by the instructor. The shots fed can be forehands, backhands or volleys. This game is effective as it gives students a motivation for making all of their shots and gives the students an activity to do while waiting their turn.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy for the students to follow. It encourages a lot of movement and keeps the kids active even when they are not hitting the ball. You can do different variations of the game by allowing students to run even if they only hit one ball, by rewarding points to individuals or teams if they make it around without getting hit by a single ball. In addition, if students are hit by the ball, they must freeze and can be unfrozen by a team mate.

ICE CREAM CONE: I SCREAM, YOU

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Fine motor skills, eye hand coordination, ball tracking, ball throwing.

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Have the students work in pairs. Give each pair two cones and one ball. Have one student place the ball into their cone and toss the ball from their cone into the other students cone. After the partner catches the ball in the cone he/she then tries to throw the ball back to their partner. If the student catches the ball in their cone, have them state what flavor of ice cream it is. When the students begin, they should stand close to each other, as the students improve their skills, they can move further apart from each other.

PEEK A BOO

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner

AGES: 2 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Volleys and listening, catching

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Start by having all of the students face the opposite direction of the instructor. Then have the students turn around and either catch a ball with their hands or hit a volley when their name is called. Mix it up by calling names of students who aren't in the class.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy to follow. It encourages active listening and adds an element of surprise. Encourage the students to move their feet and practice high fiveing while waiting for their turn.

ANTS AND ROACHES

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Volleys and listening skills

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Explain to the students that you are going to feed a ball to them. If you (the instructor) say, "ants", then they have to hit the volley. If you say, "roaches", then they have to duck, jump down, and curl into a ball. If they hit the ball when you say roach, they must crawl around like an ant.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy to follow. It encourages the kids to pay attention to the instructor and it adds an element of

KEEP THE BALL OUT OF THE SWAMP

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner

AGES: 2 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Fine motor skills; gross motor skills, racket grasp, and eye hand coordination

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Have the students pass a balloon to one another first using their hands and then using their rackets (they pop the balloon up with their racquets, they need to hold the racquet straight out horizontally). The goal of the game is to keep the ball out of the swamp (prevent the ball from landing on the ground) so that the alligators do not eat it. Have the students see how many times they can go without the ball falling into the swamp.

NOTES: This game familiarizes students with holding the racket and connecting the racket to the ball. To adapt the game for younger students, use a balloon. A balloon is easier for students to hit than a tennis ball as a balloon is softer and larger.

SNOWBALLS

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner
AGES: 2 and up
SKILLS LEARNED: Throwing and catching
LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Divide the students into two teams. Have them throw the balls onto the opposite side of the net as quickly as they can. After a certain amount of time blow the whistle and count how many balls each team has. Make sure that the students throw the balls, one at a time. After the students have thrown the balls, time them picking up the balls.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy to follow. It encourages the children to move quickly, work on throwing skills and fine motor control, work as a team and learn fairness. Throwing skills are a precursor to the development of serving skills. Make sure that the students use an overhand throw to accomplish this.

THE WONDER BALL

SKILL LEVEL: Absolute beginner
AGES: 2 and up
SKILLS LEARNED: Ball grasp, racket grasp, and cooperation
LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Have the students pass a ball around to one another while chanting the tune "the wonder ball goes round and round". The person who has the ball when the song is over gets an out. You can also vary the game by having the students pass the racket around amongst themselves.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy to follow. It helps very young children get a feel of the racket and the ball. It also encourages the social skills of sharing and learning how to carry a tune and sing cooperatively and in harmony.

RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner- Intermediate

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, speed, eye hand coordination, agility

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Have the students each take one ball and their racket. Have the students push the ball with the racket like one would dribble a hockey puck. When you say, "green light", the students will start pushing the ball and when you say, "red light", the students will stop the ball. Make sure that the students are facing sideways and that their arms are extended, don't let the students put the ball directly in front of them.

NOTES: This is a very simple game that is easy to follow. It is a prelude to forehands (as students use the same motion pushing the ball as they do when hitting forehands) and encourages active listening. It gives students a feel for the ball, connecting their racket with the ball, and making contact with the ball when it is in front of them. The game is also known as tennis hockey. You can humorize the game by saying purple light and orange light to see if you can trick them. If there are many kids in the class, you may want to consider dividing the kids up into teams to avoid kids crashing into each other (trust me on this one)

LETTER GAME

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner and up

AGES: 3 and 4

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, backhands, volleys, letter, sound recognition, alphabet sequence letter/ word pairings

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Explain to the kids that you are about to play the letter game. In the letter game, a student is rewarded a letter every time they connect with the ball. The first student to reach the end of the alphabet is the winner. This game offers motivation for making shots as students aim to be the first to finish the alphabet. The game also is fun for students ages 3 and 4 as they are learning the alphabet in school.

NOTES: The letter game can be a group effort, where the class tries to reach the end of the alphabet before the basket of balls is empty. Always say the letters that the student receives in order to reinforce the learning of the alphabet. Sometimes you may even want to say things like, "a for apple." You can also say strawberry short cake cream on top, tell me the name of your sweet heart is it a, b,c,d,e , etc, the letter that the student reaches when they are finished is the letter that begins with the name of their sweet heart.

FRUIT SALAD

SKILL LEVEL: Any

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Word association, volleys, responsiveness, memory, speed and agility, concentration

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Each student selects a fruit/ candy. Have the students begin the game by turning their backs to the net. When the instructors call out a students' fruit, that student has to turn around and hit a volley. If they miss the volley, they have to run to the baseline and back. If the instructor calls out "fruit salad" all the students have to run to the baseline. Kids find it fun to select which food they will be. The fruits will be called out in no particular order.

NOTES: To make the game livelier you can also throw balls at the students' feet to force them to work on their footwork and sometimes call out foods that none of the students have selected. You can also tell the students that they can run like crazy if fruit salad is called out. You could also make up a mini story with the fruits, like my grandmother bakes apple pie. Or it is really hard to carry a watermelon. This makes the class more lively and makes it harder to pay attention.

MCDONALDS /RESTAURANT GAME

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, backhands, volleys, overheads, cooperation, sharing, following directions and rules, listening, word association

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

GROUP SIZE: 3-4 students

STEPS TO FOLLOW: In the "McDonalds Restaurant" game the instructor tells the students that they are going to give students an order of food that is really the code for asking students to hit different strokes. The basic code scheme is this: forehands are hamburgers, backhands are cheeseburgers and fries are volleys. Overheads are soda. Then the instructor places an order for each student to fill. After the student hears the entire order, they complete all of the strokes that will fill the order. This game gives student the opportunity to practice all strokes while also keeping the students' attention. Students have to listen to the instructor closely as the orders are said.

NOTES: You can change the names of the food. You can add more elements to the game by making a lob a hotdog, making a backhand volley apple pie and making a drop shot a milk shake so you can use this game with more advanced players. Also you can make it fun by changing your voice for different characters placing the order and exaggerating how hungry you are.

JAIL

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner and up

AGES: 3 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, eye hand coordination, fine motor skills. Sportsmanship

HERE ARE THE RULES OF JAIL: The instructor feeds a ball to the student each time students misses a shot they are sent to jail. After the student is sent to jail, the instructor sometimes calls out the students' crime. A student can be freed from jail if they catch one of the other students' balls. If the student catches one of the other student's balls then that student is sent to jail. The last student left wins the game if they are able to hit three balls in a row.

NOTES: Another variation of this game is that one student can be freed by another student who is able to hit the ball over the net and chooses to free them by tagging them. Students can also be freed by agreeing to perform silly acts such as singing and skipping at the same time. The game can be adapted by allowing the student to remain free if they even connect with the ball (depending on the level). You can also make the game more difficult by requiring the students to hit 2-3 balls in a row. Please make sure to mention to the students that they are not really in jail, its just an imaginary event. You can liven the game by inventing crimes that the student may have committed like you stole all of my candy.

ALLIGATOR

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner

AGES: Any age

SKILLS LEARNED: Volleys, eye hand coordination, sportsmanship, humility, humor

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Alligator is used for teaching volleys. Explain to the students that an alligator eats a part of each student's body when the student misses a volley. First the student loses an arm, then another arm, then a leg, and then another leg. The student must attempt the volleys while not using the parts of the body that they have already lost. Once the student is lying down on the floor, they are out of the game. The last student left standing wins the game.

NOTES: It is good for volleys as they are easier to execute without using the given body parts. Students find the idea of losing body parts amusing. If being eaten by an alligator upsets students, discontinue the game or let the students know that them begin eaten is an imaginary event. Make sure that the students are spread far apart, allow for them to lie down on the floor.

GRADUATION

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Counting, forehands, backhands, and volleys

LENGTH OF TIME: Forever

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Explain to the students that in graduation, each time a student makes a shot, they are allowed to move back a step and thus move into a new grade. The students start in preschool and can go as far as medical school. The students begin by starting at the net hitting volleys, as they move further backward, they begin hitting ground-strokes. When the students reach the back of the court, they then proceed to move forward.

NOTES: This is entertaining for students who are moving through school. It is a novel idea for a student who is in kindergarten to pretend that they are in college. Moving up in school is a great motivational tool for students to make their shots. When students are done with college, you can have them attend medical school, law school, even have them become parents. The game can be varied by allowing struggling students to move up a grade if they simply connect with the ball rather than hit the ball over the net.

CRAZY BALL

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, backhands, volley, movement, teamwork, agility, rules following.

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Students will divide into two teams. The instructor will feed the ball to one of the teams. The teams can hit the ball as many times as they need to before hitting it over the net to the other side and they can pass it to one another. The only caveat in the game is that if the ball halts to a dead stop the other team wins the point and the instructor feeds the next ball. Students cannot hold the ball longer than 5 seconds before hitting the ball. Bonus points are rewarded for when every person on a team connects with the ball before the ball goes to the other side of the net. Points are taken away if someone ventures onto the other teams territory.

NOTES: Make sure that the students stay safe and don't run into each other. Also make sure that every student partakes in the game and that it isn't just one student always hitting the ball. Encourage students to bounce the ball and then hit it rather than pushing it on the ground. Award bonus points for well executed shots. This is a great game for large groups as within a short time span many students have the opportunity to hit the ball. Students also get to compete in tennis without necessarily having the skill to maintain a one on one rally.

LOB FEAST

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Lobs and aim

LENGTH OF TIME: 10 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: You need a basketball hoop to utilize this activity. Have students line up at the foul line if there is a basketball hoop at the site. Demonstrate to students how to hit a lob, emphasize opening up the racket and aiming the ball high. Have them lob the ball one by one and try to get the ball into the basketball hoop. Award a prize for anyone who scores a basket.

NOTES: This is a great game if you are teaching tennis in a gym. This is a great way for students to practice lobbing and relate tennis to other sports. Students should have familiarity and comfort with ground-strokes before playing this game.

DIAGRAM OF LOBBING

PENN RELAYS

SKILL LEVEL: All levels

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Eye-hand coordination, speed, and teamwork

LENGTH OF TIME: 10 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Divide students into teams and then have them compete in relay races. The relay races can comprise of carrying a ball on a racket, picking up balls running in and out of balls, bouncing a ball with a racquet.

NOTES: This is a great activity if the kids are looking to burn off lots of energy. The students can also compete individually in a relay if there are only 3-4 kids in the group. You can also vary the task for the relay by having the students run sideways while carrying the ball on the racquet and run backwards while carrying the ball on the racquet.

AROUND THE WORLD

SKILL LEVEL: Intermediate and up

AGES: 8 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Speed and ground stroke

LENGTH OF TIME: 30 minutes

MARATHON TENNIS

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner and up

AGES: 8 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Endurance, agility, changes of direction, groundstroke, and consistency

LENGTH OF TIME: Unlimited

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Each student starts in the center of the court. Then they have to move to hit balls on either the backhand or the forehand side. After each shot, they must move back to the center of the court. The students keep hitting groundstrokes until they miss a shot. The goal of the game is to see how many groundstrokes you can hit in a row.

NOTES: This is a great game to encourage endurance and get students into the habit of moving back into the middle of the court after hitting every shot (which is a good strategy when playing a match), this game also helps students work on their footwork and agility. This game is best done with an extremely small group so that students aren't waiting too long for their turn.

RACE FOR THE CURE SERVING

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner and up

AGES: 8 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Serve accuracy, ball toss, racquet motion for the serve, targetting

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: Students take turns serving balls and see who can get 5 serves in the opposite box first.

NOTES: This is a great activity to help students work on targeting their serves. You can also challenge the students to knock down strategically placed targets.

OFFENSE DEFENSE

SKILL LEVEL: Advanced beginner and up

AGES: 8 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Volleys, groundstroke, transitioning

LENGTH OF TIME: 20 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: In offense/ defense, the students pair up. Two pairs play against each other. The pair who wins the point comes to the net and then can proceed to win points from the net. If a team is at the net and loses the point, then they must run to the baseline and the other team runs to the net.

NOTES: A full court is best for this activity. In addition, a smaller group is best or having two games taking place simultaneously.

TENNIS BASEBALL

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner and up

AGES: 5 and up

SKILLS LEARNED: Forehands, backhands, team spirit, agility, eye tracking, fair play.

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-20 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW: This game works really well for large groups. Divide the class into two teams. One team is the hitting team, while the other team is the fielding team. When someone is up at bat, feed them a tennis ball to hit a forehand or a backhand, then the person runs the bases. The person must stop when the other team has caught the ball. There are strike outs, tagging, and outs. After three outs or after everyone on the team has batted, the teams switch places.

NOTES: This is a great game because kids are kept constantly active throughout the entire activity. Also it encourages team work rather than one man for himself. Please make it clear at the beginning of the activity that the students must touch tag the runner with the ball, they may not try and throw the ball and hit the student. To make the game more interesting, pretend that you are an announcer.

SUMMARY: The games are also enjoyable for the children because they contain a clear goal and outcome. For instance in fruit salad you run to the baseline when you hear fruit salad. In jail you go to the other side of the net when you miss. The outcomes also offer a variation from the hitting of tennis balls. For instance, in jail, you change your routine by running over to the other side of the net. Children often need a change of pace and activity to stay motivated at working on the scheduled activity. You are capable of creating games, similar to this. Just give it a try.

OTHER USEFUL TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

SHADOWING/SONG FOR THE GROUND STROKES

I try to give children songs with mnemonic devices for remembering the parts of a stroke. Boom shaka laka boom (for the parts of a volley). As we review the components of a stroke we recite the song. Boom is ready position, shaka is pivot laka is step and boom is punch for the parts of a volley.

OTHER SONGS

Twist and shout, I like to move it, move it (I like to dodge it dodge it), step into the ball, crush those bugs, scratch, reach and snap, clean up time (circle time), shovel it just a little bit (I wanna see you wiggle it), do the high five (do the helen keller) oh racket racket racket oh racket I will spin (oh dreidel, dieldel, dreidel), everybody's going bouncing (every body is going surfing,beach boys)

ADAPTIVE NETS AND BALLS

When working with younger kids, I sometimes utilize smaller nets and larger foam balls. This makes it easier for kids to connect with the ball and for the ball to travel over the net. When students are successful, they are more likely to stick with an activity and return to the activity. Here are some places you can purchase smaller nets, www.mansionselect.com, www.oncourtoffcourt.com

THE POWER OF SELF HITS

I have children self hit the balls as they can experience hitting the ball without the pressure of an inspecting instructor and internalize the idea of a stroke into memory. I always encourage children to practice their strokes when it is not their turn in the drills. They can either simply swing the racket (when far behind the children who are up) or they can hit the ball back and fourth with another youngster if they are far back or in another corner of the room. I was reluctant to allow kids to hit unsupervised. However, the children are then occupied while they are not playing and therefore maintain their interest in the game. Having a little bit of chaos is better than having children bored. Allowing children to self hit helps them take risks and become comfortable with hitting the ball. They don't feel as embarrassed if they miss while hitting on their own. Children also love hitting the ball back and fourth because then tennis begins to resemble other sports.

RALLY

I always inject a component of the lesson where the children rally back and fourth. Ultimately if one is to be successful in the game of tennis they need to be able to rally back and fourth. The skills required for rallying are a little bit different than those required for simply hitting a ball being fed to you by an instructor. When you rally, you have to move to the ball. You need solid footwork, anticipation, and judgment of the ball. By having the kids rally, it helps them gain these skills. At first, rallying is difficult for many young kids but eventually children progress and are able to maintain a rally of 3 strokes or more. If children have trouble rallying by bouncing the ball, then I have them put the ball on the ground and hit the ball by pushing it to one another. Children also feel glorified when they are able to rally. Many children attest to me that their main inkling is to play "a real game" and this enables them to do this sooner. I also embed learning in the games. If a child loses the point, I often point out the error in their stroke that caused them to lose the point. This way the children still receive instruction and learn more about the game of tennis despite the activity not being led by the teacher.

CHILDREN TEACHING

Sometimes I have students explain the strokes of tennis to new students. Explaining the stroke to another student helps the students clarify the strokes for themselves. I also have the students demonstrate the stroke to each other. The students need to think carefully about the technique before demonstrating. Also, it gives the students the pleasure of being teacher and enhances the students' self esteem. Who would turn down the option of playing teacher for the day?

EXERCISE

I always incorporate exercise into my games. At the beginning the class runs. I also have games that require running to the ball rather than simply hitting a ball right next to you. In addition to enabling the kids to release energy, running helps solve the overarching problem of obesity.

TENNIS JEOPARDY

I always like to educate my students about the game of tennis. During the last 5-10 minutes of class I usually teach the kids a few quick facts about the game of tennis and then quiz them on it in a game of jeopardy. Some facts that I include are the scoring of a game (15, 30, 40 game) adin, deuce), how many games to a set, how many sets for a match, the names of the grand slams, the parts of a racket, and the names of recent grand slam winners. This activity helps students see tennis as a competitive game like basketball and baseball and earns recognition for the sport of tennis. I also ask them to find out facts as homework and tell them that they will receive bonus points if they find out the facts. For facts about tennis you can consult www.tennis.com, www.usopen.org, www.wimbledon.com, www.wtatennis.com, www.atpworldtour.com

TARGETS

It is always productive to place targets while doing a drill and award students with prizes if they are able to hit the target. Not only does this add objective and excitement to the game, but it teaches placement which is usual when playing competitive tennis. Go to www.uncourtoffcourt.com for targets to buy or you can go to target to buy targets.

LET'S PRETEND: Have the kids pretend that they are different pros facing each other in various tournaments. You can be doing a simple volley drill with two lines. One line can be one pro competing, and the other line can be the other pro competing. Let's Pretend can also be used if you have a small group, the kids can be competing in a mock 2 on 2 doubles games.

WORD OF THE DAY: I have a component to word of the day. Every lesson there is a different word of the day. The word of the day is tennis- related and I use this as an opportunity to teach the kids a new tennis term. Some words of the day that I have used are topspin, slice, drop shot, lob, let, hask mark, fault. I will say the word of the day repeatedly throughout the class and the first person to put their hand on their head gets to give me a double dare. Saying the word of the day is a good way to quiet the kids down they get too rowdy.

PLAYER OF THE DAY: I also reward one student as player of the day. The player of the day gets to select a game of their choice next week or they get to double dare me. Having the player of the day aspect, encourages good sportsmanship and effort.

WAYS OF DEMONSTRATING EACH OF THE STROKES

Show the students how to hit the strokes by executing the stroke yourself.

FOLLOW: Have the students follow you as you perform the stroke.

EXPERIENCE: Have the students try to hit the stroke with their racquet without a ball. Have students try to hit the ball by bouncing it in front of them, bouncing it off of a cone, and placing it on the floor and hitting the ball.

DEMONSTRATE: Have the students teach other students how to perform each of the strokes.

VISUAL: Show a picture of the stroke or a video of the stroke.

Break down the stroke part by part. For instance to break down a forehand, the first part is ready position, the second part is pivot, the third part is racquet back, the fourth back is swing forward and the fifth part is follow through.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN STROKES

Here are some basic elements of the strokes that you should correct to help the students improve, while you may not be an expert on tennis, you can certainly help students master the basic foundations of sound tennis strokes.

EYES: Watching the ball. Do kids take their eye off the ball too soon and instead look up. This error will often cause the balls to fly out of bounds.

WHOLE BODY: Using whole body when hitting the ball. This includes rotation of the hips, moving legs forward, rotation of the shoulders, bending of the knees, pointing feet in the correct direction. All of these elements of a stroke help produce more powerful, deep strokes.

RACQUET FORM: Holding the racquet correctly, this includes racquet grip (do they grip the racquet tightly and on the correct bevel), racquet staying straight and maintaining a closed face of the racquet. Correct racquet formation allows for the ball to travel straight.

PREPARATION: Does the student bring the racquet back when they are supposed to (forehands and backhand) and punch when they are supposed to (volleys). An off contact point leads to the ball going out, into the net, or to the wrong target. Late preparation leads to mal-formed strokes.

CONTACT POINT: where and when does the student connect with the ball, the ball should be 3 feet in front of the students and waist high when the student connects with the ball.

FOLLOW THROUGH: Making sure that the strokes are completed fully and the racquet comes over the shoulder. This allows for the ball to have topspin and thus allows for kids to hit the ball hard and still have the ball land within the bounds of the court.

CONTROL AND POWER: Are they able to adjust their power so that they can make shots go over the net and into the court.

ADJUSTMENT: How do they adjust their strokes? Can they sense when they are making a mistake and fix it?

How to make corrections:

- Show • Tell • Do

It is also important to tell students why they want to make a certain adjustment (for instance if they lift their head up, the ball is likely to travel upwards and out of bounds).

TECHNIQUE AND STROKES

At ElfTennis , we endorse any kind of technique. We want to work with what the students feel comfortable using. So we support- open stance, closed stance, topspin strokes, flat strokes, etc.

GOALS

Here are the different goals that you should aim for with students of different ages. The goals aren't absolute as each student is different in capabilities and amount of exposure to the game of tennis.

Age	Goals
2 - 3	Hold ball in hand unassisted for 10 seconds, hold racquet for 20 seconds, follow balls as instructor moves it around, roll ball without assistance to a specified target, and recognize others by saying hi.
3 - 4	Bounce ball with hand 1-5 times, catch ball, roll ball, balance ball on racquet for 20 seconds, hit volleys with two hands, hit forehand unassisted or off of a cone/ tee ball stick.
4 - 5	Hit volley with one hand, catch and throw ball back and fourth 10 times with another student, hit forehand and backhand when fed to by the instructor.
5 - 6	Hit forehand, backhand and volleys with accurate and correct form when fed to by an instructor, dribble the ball with racquet 5 times, maintain a rally of 2-3 strokes with instructor.
7 - 8	Maintain throw and hit drill, when one student throws the ball and the other student hits it, rally the ball 4-5 times with an instructor, understand scoring, dribble ball with racquet 10 times.
9-10	Rally the ball 6-8 times with instructor, dribble ball 20 times, hit serve with accuracy, and improve upon strokes by hitting with more depth and power and controlling the direction of the ball.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Life long lessons that can be learned from tennis. Here are some brief lessons on different life skills that can be learned from tennis that can be done at the end of the tennis lesson.

CHARACTER EDUCATION LESSONS

LESSON TITLE TEAMWORK: together we can make it happen

CHARACTER SKILLS LEARNED: Teamwork, cooperation, delegating tasks

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED: Balls and ball basket

AGES: 5 and up

GOALS: Learn the importance of working together, learn how to delegate learn how to strengthen others through positive reinforcement

ACTIVITIES: Scatter the balls throughout the gym hidden among other objects and tell the students that they have only two minutes to collect all of the balls. Tell them that as a group, they must figure out a way to pick up all of the balls in the allotted amount of time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: After the activity is complete have the students discuss how working as a team helped them finish the activity faster. Ask the students what it means to work as a team. Ask the students to define good teamwork. Ask students if they think we achieve more as a team and why or why not. Ask the students if they think being part of a team motivates you to achieve more. Write out the answers on a sheet of paper or on a blackboard if the students are younger. If the students are age 6 or older have them write a poem on teamwork. Possible structures of a poem include teamwork is or teamwork or haiku.

EINFORCEMENTS/ FOLLOW UP: Always remind the students of teamwork when they play team oriented games that they will work together better if they work as a team. If students wrote poems, have them read the poems in the next class.

LESSON TITLE IN OR OUT, CALLING THE BALL FAIRLY

CHARACTER SKILLS LEARNED: Honesty, trustworthiness

LENGTH OF TIME: 10 minutes after game

MATERIALS NEEDED: Balls and ball basket

AGES: 5 and up

GOALS: Learn the importance of honesty and trust. Test your own morals an ability to uphold them. If given the chance to cheat- will you do it?

ACTIVITIES: Have the students play a game, crazy ball that involves calling the ball in or out.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: After the culmination of the game, have the students gather in a circle and discuss how the game involved students making their own line calls. Ask the students if they ever were tempted to cheat and call the ball incorrectly. Ask the students why or why not they decided to make a correct call or not. Probe the students to examine what motivated their decisions. Ask the students if they felt that any of the other students made an incorrect call (without naming names). Ask the students what makes them trust the other students. Have students write for homework (or dictate if younger) about a time in their life when they had a chance to be dishonest. What did they decide to do? Will their experiences with honesty in tennis affect how they make decisions?

REINFORCEMENTS/ FOLLOW UP: Always remind the students about honesty when playing games that involve scoring.

SONGS TO SING TO TEACH TENNIS

Step into the baalll, step into the baall,
oh yeh, steep into the ball
(when teaching volleys)

I like to move it, move it.
I like to move it.
(when having them run from the balls).
With the funny voice.

Scratch, reach, and snap, scratch,
reach and snap.
(When teaching the serve).

Everybody listen. I don't know but I've been told.
This is how we do a serve.
Scratch, reach, and snap.
Everybody got it? We do the scratch,
we do the reach, we do the snap.

And oh yeh we got one mighty big serve .
I wanna see you shovel it,
just a litte bit, Let me see you shovle it,
just a little bit.

Do the high five, do the high five, everybody ...,
do the high five.
It is so rad, it is so cool,
if you high five and don't take a swing,
you have a mighty mighty volley.

You put your right hand in, you step your left foot in ,
you do the volley wolley and you shake it all about,
that's what its all about.

Musical balls, musical balls, here we come!

Everybody's going bouncing, bouncing all the way,
we let our balls drop down,
down to the ground and when they come off
the floor and our racquet strikes the balls again.

Everybody's going bouncing, boucnig all the way
Yoo yo , its time to hit a forehand.
Not a threehand but a forehand.
Pivot And twist ... and swing.

You got it! The forehand! Oh yeah! The forehand!
Oh yeah! The forehand!
And smash it! And smash it!
And smash it! Mmm. And smash it!

A stylized graphic of a tennis racket is positioned on the left side of the page. The racket head is a large, light blue circle with a white grid pattern. The frame is a thick, light blue line. The handle is a vertical rectangle with a white background and diagonal grey stripes. The background of the entire page is a light blue color.

ELFTENNIS INSTRUCTOR TOOL KIT

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