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## QuickStart Tennis Practice Sessions

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### ages 5–6 practice sessions

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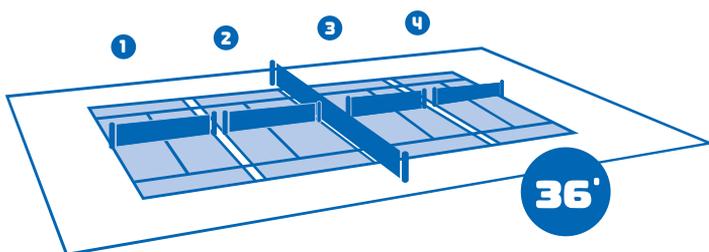


ages  
**5-6**

**practice sessions**

# quickstart tennis

There are eight progressive practice sessions for children ages 5 – 6 playing on a 36-foot court, with a 19, 21, or 23-inch racquet and a foam or very low-compression (red) ball.



The goal of these practices is to help children coming to tennis for the first time to learn the basic skills and principles of the game as quickly as possible and enjoy the experience of hitting balls back and forth, even if this is not initially over a net. Children of this age have slower reactions and little experience, so they need time and skilled coaching to learn to receive and hit the ball. This may be along the ground or over a low barrier before they graduate to the low net itself.

These practices are linked to three of the five playing situations in tennis, so different skills are introduced to help children improve in those situations. At the age of 5 – 6, the physical abilities and mental/emotional development level means that only three situations are really relevant and able to be developed: rallying, serving and receiving.

- **Playing Situation 1: Playing from the back of the court.** This situation requires rallying skills, or more specifically, the forehand and backhand ground strokes. Once children can rally, games and competitions can be used to get them playing tennis. However, for 5 – 6 year-olds, some time needs to be given to helping them receive as well as return the ball after it has bounced. They also need to learn how to control the racquet and the ball together.

- **Playing Situation 2: Serving.** The skill needed for this situation is to hit the ball out of the hand before it bounces — as a serve. For 5 – 6 year olds the overhand serve is more difficult. The underhand serve should be taught first so the children achieve success.
- **Playing Situation 3: Returning the serve.** For a 5 – 6 year old, returning is a technical skill about receiving the ball and learning about positioning, rather than about tactics of the return. The main goal is to return the ball over the net.

Each practice should also develop the principles and basic rules of playing sports in general, and tennis in particular. Children should be taught fairness, begin to understand winning and losing and how to work with other children.

A practice session for this age group should last no longer than 45 minutes.

#### Each session is structured as follows:

1. The **objective** of the practice.
2. A **warm-up** activity that helps develop the athletic skills of the age group.
3. A **review** of what was learned in the previous session.
4. A **new skill** and a series of practices to develop that skill in the playing situation.
5. A **team game** that reinforces the skills and tactics of the playing situation.
6. A **cool down** activity.
7. A **homework** assignment.

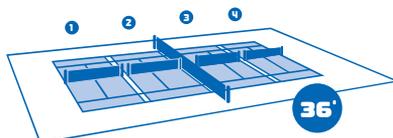
ages  
**5-6** practice sessions

## 8 practice overviews

The eight practice sessions are outlined below. This is a quick reference for the content of each practice session.

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**



### Practice 1 Controlling the racquet and the ball

<b>Warm-up</b>	Running and statues, Coordination, Agility
<b>New Skill</b>	Learning to control the ball and the racquet
<b>Game</b>	Racquet line
<b>Homework</b>	Drop and Catch

### Practice 2 Learning to hit the ball at the side of the body

<b>Warm-up</b>	Walking and running, Coordination, Agility
<b>New Skill</b>	Hitting the ball at the side of the body
<b>Game</b>	Hoop Bounce
<b>Homework</b>	Train Crash

### Practice 3 Receiving and hitting the ball on either side of the body

<b>Warm-up</b>	Moving sideways, Balance, Coordination, Reaction speed
<b>New Skill</b>	Learning to receive and hit the ball on either side of the body
<b>Game</b>	Along the Line to the Goal
<b>Homework</b>	Catches in a Row

#### Practice 4 Learning to serve underhand

<b>Warm-up</b>	Jogging and Simon Sez, Agility, Throwing
<b>New Skill</b>	Learning to serve underhand
<b>Game</b>	Pass the Parcels
<b>Homework</b>	Catch to the Side

#### Practice 5 Rallying to the baseline

<b>Warm-up</b>	Simon Sez, Running, Speed
<b>New Skill</b>	Hitting forehands and backhands from baseline to baseline
<b>Game</b>	Hoop Ball
<b>Homework</b>	Target Throws

#### Practice 6 Serve and return

<b>Warm-up</b>	Statues, Sidesteps, Throwing, Balance
<b>New Skill</b>	Serve and return
<b>Game</b>	Throwing into spaces rally
<b>Homework</b>	Three Targets in a Row

#### Practice 7 Learning to volley

<b>Warm-up</b>	Different Steps, Reaction speed, Throwing
<b>New Skill</b>	Hitting the ball before the bounce—the volley
<b>Game</b>	Target Volley
<b>Homework</b>	Over the Barrier

#### Practice 8 Serving and scoring

<b>Warm-up</b>	Run with arms circling, Running, Speed
<b>New Skill</b>	Overhand serve and learning to score
<b>Game</b>	Team Serve
<b>Homework</b>	Target Tennis

ages  
5-6

## quickstart tennis: practice 1

# Controlling the Racquet and the Ball

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to control the ball and the racquet.

### Warm-up

**Running forward and backward.** Run across the court, circling arms forward and backward. Join in and make sure children start from one side of the court and run across to the farthest line. Try to keep them in a line so they can concentrate on what they are doing and not on racing each other. Encourage them to lean forward when they run backward so they keep their balance.

**Statues.** Children move around until they hear “freeze.” Then they have to stop immediately and hold their body completely still.

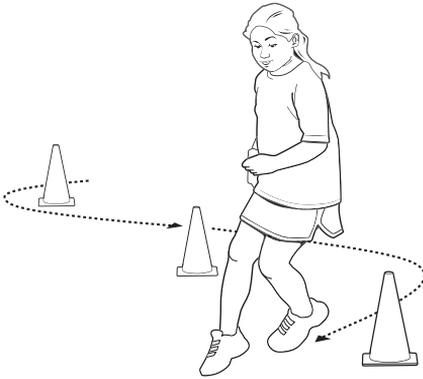
### COORDINATION

**Hopping.** Hop on one foot for 10 hops, then change to other foot. Remind children to try and keep their arms by their sides and to keep the top half of the body upright with their head still and eyes forward. This is to develop body control as well as the ability to do different things with different parts of the body.

**Skipping.** Skip, trying to get knees high by using arms to help lift the body. Keep the head up and eyes forward. Help those children who are unable to coordinate alternate arms and feet. Also help the children who land on their whole foot instead of the ball of their foot. Encourage them to land quietly.

## AGILITY

**Agility drill.** Teams of three or four. Children take turns running in and out of eight cones placed in a straight line as fast as they can. Each child takes turns to go forward through the cones. Repeat moving sideways. Encourage them to keep their arms by their sides and not held wide. This exercise is to help them learn to control their body as they move quickly.



### **New Skill: Learning to Control the Ball and the Racquet**

**Balance and control.** Place several lines of three to four cones on the ground. Children have to move between the cones while balancing the ball on their racquet. The objective is to get them to control the length of the racquet and learn how to hold it. Some children will try and hold the ball with the other hand but encourage them not to do so. Also, encourage children to hold the racquet out in front of them, with a space between themselves and their racquet, even if they hold it with two hands.



This exercise could also be completed by children walking along the lines of the court and learning the names of the lines at the same time. They could also play “follow the leader” after the task is completed with them moving after each other.

**Tap and bounce.** Each child has a ball and a racquet. Show them how to tap the ball up in the air gently and then let it fall and bounce before tapping it up in the air again. Give the children plenty of space. Get children to count their own or to count for each other. How many times? Aim for seven.

**Too easy?**

1. Repeat the tap and bounce sequence several times.
2. Progress to one ball, with either all taps or all bounces, between two children.
3. Alternate the tap and the bounce between two children.

**Too hard?**

1. Do one bounce at a time.
2. Reduce number of consecutive taps and bounces.

**Tap and bounce with a partner.** Two children, both with racquets, but only one ball between them. Move them about 2 feet apart (either side of a line or a large donut) and show them how to tap the ball up in the air toward their partner, who then lets it bounce before trying to tap it back. How many can the pair do in a row? Aim for highest score towards seven.

**Too easy?**

Move the children farther apart or even put them on either side of the tennis net.

**Too hard?**

Get one child to drop the ball for the other to hit up and then change.

**Pass the ball with a partner.** Two children stand on either side of the net (or a low barrier), each with a racquet and with one ball between them. Each of them balances the ball on their racquet before tipping it onto their partner’s racquet. How many times can they roll the ball between their racquets without it falling off? The ball must not be touched with their hands. Try to move the children farther apart. Make sure the children try to keep the racquet away from their body.

**Too hard?**

Replace the ball with a beanbag.

## COACHING TIPS

- Young children need to learn how to handle/control the ball and the racquet with simple exercises that encourage them to hold the racquet without it turning in their hand. They also need to learn to hold the racquet at the end of the handle and control it as far away from their bodies as possible so their arms are almost straight.
- Begin the process of children learning to score to seven points in any scoring games they play, so the foundation for learning to score is being put in place.
- Once they have learned to control the racquet, they're ready to progress, in future practice sessions, to controlling the ball for the different strokes.

## Team Game: Racquet Line

Children spaced out in a line of four or five with one racquet and a ball between them. The first child in the line balances the ball on the racquet and then passes the racquet and the ball to the next child in the line without the ball falling off. The racquet and ball are progressed down the line and then back to the beginning.

An alternative version of this game has the children taking turns balancing the ball on the racquet and moving as fast as they can down the line and back to their place, before passing the racquet and ball to the next child to repeat the sequence.

## Cool Down

Each child collects as many balls as possible on their racquet and brings them back to the hopper/cart without dropping them.

## Homework

**Drop and Catch.** Practice dropping and catching a small ball seven times after the bounce, with both hands. Practice dropping the ball to either side of you and in front of you. Bounce it close and then far away from you. How many times can you get to seven?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## **Objective**

To learn to control the ball and the racquet.

## **Warm-up**

- Running forward and backward across the court, circling arms forward and backward
- Statues
- Coordination: Hopping and skipping
- Agility: Agility Drill

## **New Skill: Learning to Control the Ball and Racquet**

- Child moves between the cones while balancing the ball on their racquet.
- Each child with a ball and a racquet, taps the ball up in the air and then lets it fall and bounce before tapping it up the air again.
- Two children, both with racquets and one ball about 2 feet apart, tapping the ball up and letting it bounce, taking turns with their partner.
- Two children stand either side of the net, each holding their racquet and with one ball between them. They roll the ball between the racquets as many times as possible without it falling off.

## **Team Game: Racquet Line**

## **Cool Down**

Collect as many balls on racquet as possible and bring back to the hopper/cart without dropping them.

## **Homework: Drop and Catch**



ages  
**5-6**

## quickstart tennis: practice 2

# Learning to Hit the Ball at the Side of the Body

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to hit the ball at the side of the body.

### Warm-up

**Walking and running.** Run fast for 10 steps, walk for 10, run slowly for 10. Repeat several times. Can the children control their balance while learning to vary the speed of movement? Do they move with their arms and legs working alternately? Do they move quietly?

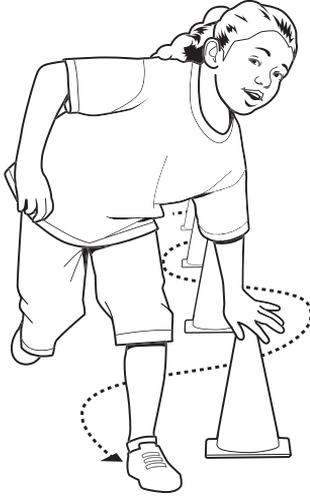
### COORDINATION

**Hop-scotch.** Hop across the court from one foot to two and back to one. Can children control their bodies and their balance? Encourage them to keep their eyes forward (not down to the ground) and head up. Encourage them to land quietly.

**Skipping.** Skip with high knees, using arms to get knee and body lift. Move in different directions. Keep head up and eyes forward. Try to develop the rhythm of skipping.

## AGILITY

**Cone touch.** In teams of three, run forward in and out of eight cones placed in a line about 2 feet apart. Touch each cone with one foot the first time through and with a hand the second time through. Encourage children to keep their back straight, knees bent, head up and eyes forward.



### Review: Controlling the Ball and the Racquet

Remind children about holding the racquet firmly on the handle whenever they have the ball.

Two children, both with racquets and one ball about 2 feet apart, tap the ball up in the air in turn with their partner. How many in a row? Aim for seven. Some children could do this over the net while others should put a line or cone on the ground and try and hit the ball over it. Encourage the children to move farther apart, but still control the ball to each other.

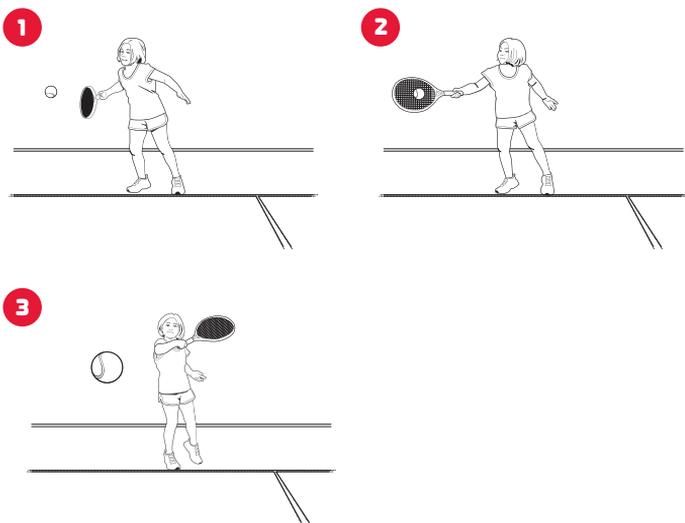
## New Skill: Hitting the Ball at the Side of the Body

Show children how to hit ball at the side of their body and toward a partner. This can be done by first stopping and then hitting the ball along the ground, and then gradually moving children farther apart.

Show them when to watch the ball as it comes toward them (i.e., as it leaves the hand of the feeder or comes off the racquet of the hitter).

Then show them how to get their feet behind and to the side of the ball, and how the ball will bounce and move toward them, not bounce straight up.

Progress to a simple swing of the racquet at the side of the body. (There should be a space between the body and the racquet at the side of the body.) The ball should be hit back gently to a catcher/partner either over the net, along the ground or over a very low barrier.



**Underhand toss.** Make sure children are shown how to toss the ball underhand. Make sure they stand with their left leg forward (if they are right-handed) and swing their arm at their side. Place a target for the ball to land so they know where to aim and how that makes it easier for the hitter.

**Target practice.** Children in pairs, about 10 feet apart. Some children could do this with one of them on either side of the net—one with a racquet and one with two balls. Children with a ball toss it for the partner to hit at the partner's side. Place large targets so the hitters can achieve success when they hit the target.

**Too hard?**

*Put players across a line and let them hit the ball along the ground.*

**Hit and catch.** Children in twos, about 10 feet apart on either side of net. One child has a racquet and the other has two or three balls. The child with the balls tosses them one at a time for the child with the racquet to hit back. The hitter is practicing hitting on the forehand side, while the feeder tries to catch the ball each time after the hit. Change roles after three to five forehands. If necessary, give the children targets for the toss and for the hit. The coach should act as a feeder and move quickly between children, taking turns to toss balls to each one of them.

**Too hard?**

*In a space without a net, get children to rally the ball along the ground to each other. Emphasize getting behind the ball and keeping it to the side of the body.*



## COACHING TIPS

- Children need to learn how to contact the ball at the side and slightly in front, and then learn a simple swing of the racquet to get the ball back to the partner.
- Show children several times what you want them to do — the majority are visual learners.
- Move quickly between all the groups to help children learn both how to toss the ball and how to hit the ball at their side.
- Make other barriers of different heights so children begin to develop a low-to-high swing path of the racquet. (Different height barriers could be a box or low bench. It also is sometimes possible to lower the net by pushing it down on the posts.)
- Note that children are still learning to control the racquet and be in the right place to hit the ball. Some will have difficulty watching the ball and may not be able to make contact. These children should be taught how and when to watch the ball and should spend time throwing and catching, and hitting the ball along the ground to a partner.

## Team Game: Hoop Bounce

Teams of three to four children. Set out an obstacle course of at least five hoops or other very large targets per team. Children have to move between all the hoops with a ball balanced on their racquet. Every time the children come to a hoop, they must bounce the ball up and down into the hoop with their racquet before placing the ball back on the racquet and moving on to the next hoop.

## Cool Down

Collect as many balls on the racquet as possible and return the balls to the hopper/cart without dropping them.

## Homework

**Train Crash.** Practice rolling two balls along the ground between you and a partner, each of you rolling a ball at the same time. How many times can you keep the balls going without losing them? Can you roll them to the side of your partner? Can you make the ball go faster and slower? Do you get behind and to the side of the ball just like you do when you hit the ball?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## Objective

To learn to hit the ball at the side of the body.

## Warm-up

- Walking and running
- Coordination: Hop-scotch and skipping
- Agility: Run between cones placed in lines of eight

## Review: Controlling the Ball and the Racquet

- Remind children about gripping the racquet firmly whenever they tap/hit the ball.

## New Skill: Hitting the Ball at the Side of the Body

- Show children the following:
  - How to hit ball at the side of them toward a partner (either along the ground or over a low barrier or net).
  - When to watch the ball as it comes toward them.
  - How to get their feet behind and to the side of the ball.
- Underhand toss: Make sure children are shown how to toss the ball underhand.
- Target practice: Child with ball tosses it for partner to hit at the side of their body. Place large targets so the hitters can achieve success when they hit the target.
- Hit and catch: One child has a racquet and the other has two or three balls. Child with the balls tosses them one at a time for the child with the racquet to hit back.

## **Team Game: Hoop Bounce**

## **Cool Down**

Collect as many balls on the racquet as possible and return the balls to the hopper/cart without dropping them.

## **Homework: Train Crash**



ages  
**5-6**

## quickstart tennis: practice 3

# Receiving and Hitting on Either Side of the Body

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn how to receive and hit the ball on either side of the body.

### Warm-up

**Moving sideways.** Children sidestep around the court. Encourage them to move quietly, without “banging” their heels together, with their heads up and eyes forward. Then get them to run in different directions. Make sure children keep their arms close to their bodies and their bodies under control as they change direction.

### BALANCE

**Walking the tightrope.** Children first balance on one foot and turn around slowly without falling sideways. They then walk along a line of the court, putting one foot in front of the other without using the arms to balance.

**Staying on the line.** Give children two throw-down lines—they should stand on one line and move the other one, then balance on the second line while they move the first one to a new position.

**Small and tall.** Get the children to curl up like a small ball and then stretch up as high as possible, then curl up again.

## COORDINATION

**Hopping.** Space a number of cones around the court. Children can hop on either leg and change legs. Hop to a cone and bend down, standing on one leg to pick the cone up without wobbling. Replace the cone and then hop to another cone.

**Throw and catch.** In pairs, throw and catch a ball to each other. Clap hands as many times as possible in between the throw and the catch.

**Frog jumps.** Jump from a crouching position along the ground, landing quietly and on the balls of the feet and with both feet together.

## REACTION SPEED

**Quick reaction.** Hold a ball or a beanbag and hold the hand as high as possible. Then drop the ball or beanbag and catch it before it hits the ground. This could also be done with a partner, who drops the ball without warning and the children has to react and catch it after one bounce.

### **Review: Hitting the Ball at the Side of the Body**

Children in twos, about 10 feet apart on either side of net. One child has a racquet and the other has two or three balls. Children with the balls toss them in turn for children with racquets to hit back. The hitter is practicing hitting on the forehand side while the thrower tries to touch or catch the ball each time after the hit. Change roles several times. If necessary, give children targets for the toss and for the hit.

### **New Skill: Receiving and Hitting the Ball on Either Side of the Body**

Show and remind children when to watch the ball and how to move when the ball is to the side of them. Also, remind them about the simple swing of the racquet on the forehand side (see Practice Session 2).

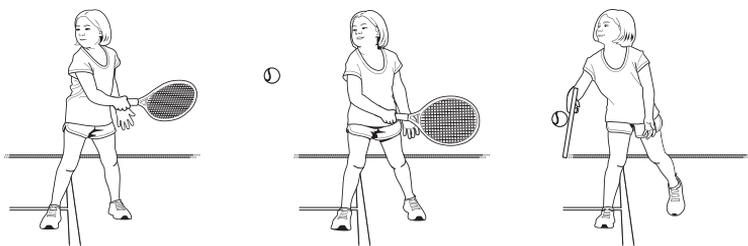
**The backhand.** Show the same hitting action on the backhand side. Show the children how to hold the racquet with both hands at the end of the handle. Be aware that a few children might hold it quite comfortably with one hand (this is fine).

Show them how the racquet needs to be away from the body on both the forehand and backhand so they have room to swing.

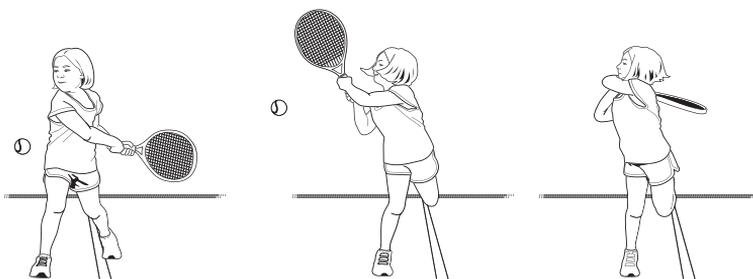
**Toss and hit.** Put children in pairs as before, one tossing the ball and the other one hitting to a target placed about 7 to 8 feet from the net. Practice hitting on both sides. Encourage children to hit to the side and stand sideways to the net, with the simple swing. Encourage children to help each other and say what they see.

**Too easy?**

*More able children can try to rally with each other, instead of one tossing the ball for the other to hit.*



**Backhand (one-handed)**



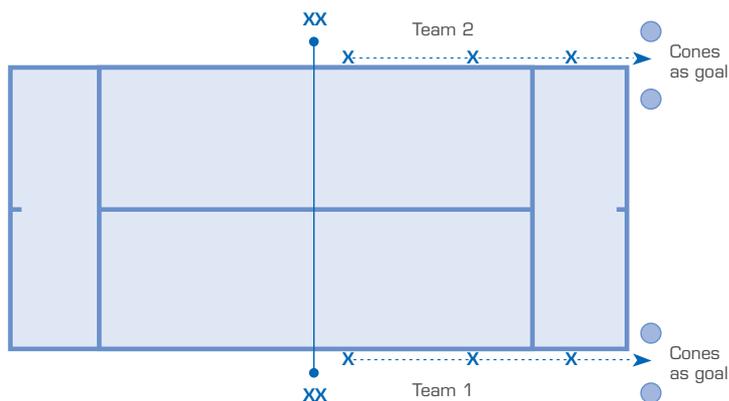
**Backhand (two-handed)**

## COACHING TIPS

- The use of the very low-compression ball or foam ball make it is easier for children to hit the ball at the right height and increases the likelihood that they will hold the racquet with a comfortable grip. Encourage children to hit the ball somewhere between their waist and shoulder.
- Coach from what they have learned already on the forehand side to what they are now learning on the backhand side.
- Children should be reminded to watch the ball from the feeder's hands or the hitter's racquet.
- Children need to learn to hit the ball at the side of their body and with a low-to-high swing.
- To be successful, some children may need to be given a rhythm for hitting the ball (e.g., saying "bounce and hit" to themselves) so they learn how and when to watch and hit the ball.

## Team Game: Along the Line to the Goal

Children are in teams of four or five. Put teams behind a line (e.g., the sideline) and place two cones as goals about 3 feet past the end of the line. Keeping the ball close to their racquet, the children tap the ball so it rolls along the line (they must give the name of the line), keeping the ball on the line. At the end, they must try to score a goal for their team by hitting the ball between the two cones.



**Alternative:** Children run along the line bouncing the ball on the line at least five times before reaching the end of the line and then rolling the ball into the goal. The first team to have every child complete five bounces and be at the end of the line wins.

## Cool Down

Children collect all the balls on their racquets and take the balls to hopper/cart without dropping them.

## Homework

**Catches in a Row.** Practice catching the ball with both hands after someone else has thrown it with a big space between the two of you. Each time you must catch it at waist height after just one bounce. Try to get seven catches without a mistake. Try to move closer together so you have less time to get to the ball.

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## **Objective**

To learn how to receive and hit the ball on either side of the body.

## **Warm-up**

Balance:

- Walking the tightrope
- Staying on the line
- Small and tall

Coordination:

- Hopping on one leg and then the other
- In pairs, throw and catch a ball
- Frog jumps

Reaction Speed:

- With hand held high, drop a ball or bean bag and catch it before it hits the ground.

## **Review: Hitting the Ball at the Side of the Body**

## **New Skill: Receiving and Hitting the Ball on Either Side of the Body**

- Show and remind children when to watch the ball and how to move when the ball is to the side of them.
- Show the same hitting action on the backhand side as on the forehand side.
- Show children how to hold the racquet with both hands at the end of the handle on the backhand side. Be aware that a few children might hold it quite comfortably with one hand (this is fine).
- Show them how the racquet needs to be away from the body on both sides so they have room to swing.
- Toss and hit: Put children in pairs, one tossing the ball and the other one hitting to a target placed about 7 to 8 feet from the net. Practice hitting on both sides (forehand and backhand).

## **Team Game: Along the Line to the Goal**

### **Cool Down**

Collect as many balls on racquet as possible and bring back to the hopper/cart without dropping them.

### **Homework: Catches in a Row**



ages  
**5-6**

## quickstart tennis: practice 4

# Learning to Serve

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to serve underhand.

### Warm-up

**Jogging.** Sideways around the court with crossover steps. Help the children to use a crossover step with the foot coming both from behind and in front of their other foot. Encourage children to stay balanced. If necessary, the activity can be done very slowly so the children can learn how to complete the movement.

**Simon Sez.** Call out a movement (run, hop, swing your arms, move sideways) that the children have to follow. Vary speed at which instruction is given. Encourage children to listen and then do what they hear.

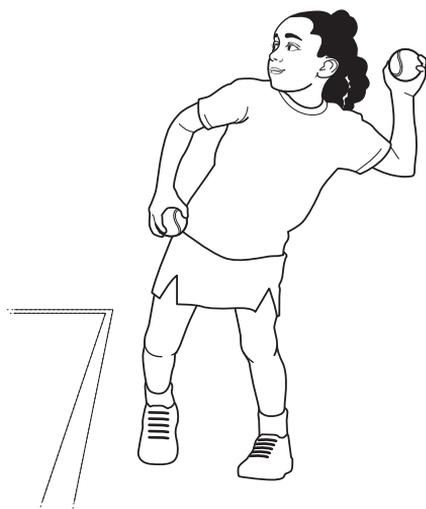
### **AGILITY**

**Cone tap.** Children hold their racquet in one hand and then move quickly in and out of a large number of cones placed at random around the playing area. As they get to a cone, they must tap it with their racquet. Encourage the children to move both forward and sideways.

## THROWING

**Developing the overhand throw.** Get children to stand sideways to a line and throw a ball as far up in the air and forward as they can. Make sure they throw with the hand they hold the racquet with. It is very important to show them how to throw upward and forward (the arm should be straight as they release the ball) as they stand sideways—ensure that they do not swing the back foot or hip forward until they release the ball.

**Alternative:** Use a foam, NERF ball or NERF football instead of a low-compression ball, but make sure children are throwing high up into the air and trying to get their throwing arm straight.



### **Review: Hitting the Ball on Either Side of the Body**

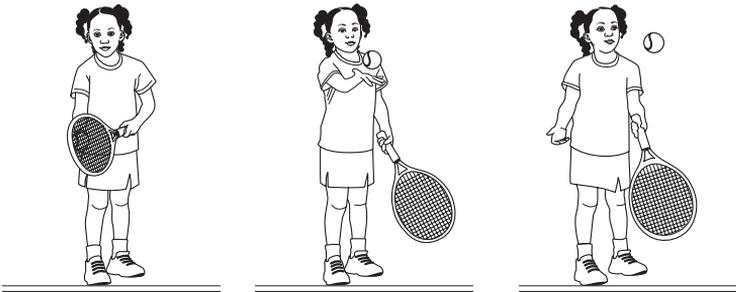
Children in pairs as before: One tossing the ball, the other hitting to a target placed about 7 to 8 feet from the net. Practice hitting on both sides. Encourage children to contact the ball to the side of the body, not facing net, and remind them to use a simple swing. If children are able to, have them rally in pairs.

## New Skill: The Underhand Serve

Show children how to serve the ball underhand. Show them several times and emphasize the following points:

- The stance is the same as it is to throw the ball overhand.
- How to hold the racquet and ball in front and to the side of the body.
- The ball must not bounce before it is hit.
- The racquet has a long swing.

Space children out along the baseline of the court with a supply of balls so they can practice the underhand serve. Show them how to aim the ball at very large targets placed in the service courts.



### COACHING TIPS

- Children should learn the swinging action of the racquet to hit the ball dropped from the hand. It is essential to emphasize the sideways stance because it makes it easier for them to learn the action (and also because it builds the basics of the overhand serve for the future).
- Children will quickly learn that the distance the ball will travel before it bounces depends on how hard they hit the ball (the swinging action).

## Team Game: Pass the Parcels

Children in teams of three or four, each of them with a racquet. Each team has two balls and the children pass one ball from racquet to racquet and the other from hand to hand, but at the same time. First team to make it down the line wins.

### **Too hard?**

*Use beanbags instead of balls.*

## Cool Down

Each child with a ball, trying to tap ball up in air and then again after each bounce. Try and move toward the hopper/cart and then put ball in box without touching the box.

## Homework

**Catch to the Side.** Throw and catch a ball after one bounce that a partner has thrown to you. You must throw and catch it with one hand and to the side of you. Make sure you try to catch on both sides of your body and with different hands so you will change your catching hand. Can you catch 10 times in a row? Can you move and catch a ball that is two or three steps away from you?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## **Objective**

To learn to serve underhand.

## **Warm-up**

- Jogging with crossover steps
- Simon Sez

Agility:

Holding racquet in hand, move quickly in and out of cones placed at random around playing area.

Throwing:

Developing overhand throwing skills.

## **Review: Hitting the Ball on Either Side of the Body**

## **New Skill: The Underhand Serve**

- Show children how to serve the ball underhand. Show them several times and emphasize the following points:
  - The stance is the same as it is to toss the ball.
  - How to hold the racquet and ball in front and to the side.
  - The ball must not bounce before it is hit.
  - The racquet has a long swing.
- Space children out along the baseline of the court with a supply of balls so they can practice the underhand serve.

## **Team Game: Pass the Parcels**

### **Cool Down**

Each child with a ball, trying to tap ball up in air and then again after each bounce. Try and move toward the hopper/cart and then put ball in box without touching it.

### **Homework: Catch to the Side**

ages  
**5-6**

## quickstart tennis: practice 5

# Rallying to the Baseline

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to hit the ball higher over the net and to the baseline.

### Warm-up

**Simon Sez.** Call out a movement (run, hop, swing your arms, move sideways) or shape (tall, wide, small) that the children have to follow. Vary the speed at which instruction is given. Encourage children to listen and then do as they hear.

**Running.** Teach children how to run well—eyes straight forward, head up, using their arms to help them run faster. Encourage children to think about their arms—children sit on ground with legs straight out in front and then move their arms backward and forward as fast as possible. Then begin running again, making sure arms and legs are coordinated. Encourage quiet feet.

### SPEED

**Around the cones.** Space out three or four cones 2-3 feet from the net and put all children with a partner on the baseline. One child of each pair runs as fast as possible up to and around the cone and back to the baseline. When all children are back behind the baseline, the second line of children run up and around the cones and back to the baseline. Repeat four or five times, making sure children do not start until they are told to.

## Review: Hitting the Underhand serve

Children space out around the court with balls and practice underhand serving cross-court. Remind children of the stance and the racquet swing to hit the ball over the net.

## New Skills: Rallying to the Baseline

Show children how to hit the ball from one baseline, over the net to the other baseline. Remind them of the long swing of the racquet so the ball travels farther toward the baseline.

Show them how to swing the racquet from low to high so the ball goes higher over the net. Also, remind them about hitting the ball at the side of the body and at the correct height.

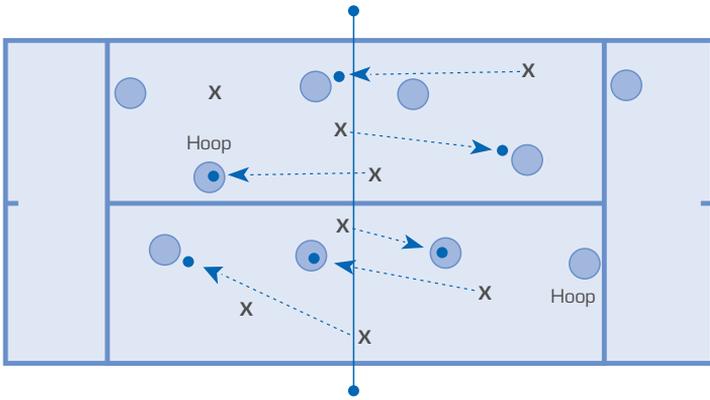
**Toss, hit and catch.** Put children in groups of three, with one feeder close to the net, one hitter at the back of the court and the third child at the back of the court behind the feeder. The feeder tosses the ball underhand to the hitter, who has to try and hit the ball over the net and to a large target at the back of the court for the third child to catch after one bounce. Change places after five or six tries. Start with the toss to the forehand side and then do the same on the backhand side.

### COACHING POINTS

- Children should hit the ball at the side of their body (not facing forward) when they hit the ball off the ground. Remind children to get behind and to the side of the ball.
- Encourage a long, simple swing from low to high so the ball can go higher over the net and farther to the back of the court.

## Team Game: Hoop Ball

Children in two teams of four on opposite sides of the net, without racquets. Four or five hoops are spaced out on each side of the net. The teams are competing to win a point by throwing the ball underhand into a hoop on the other side of the net. Every time the ball comes over the net, the children must throw it back into a hoop on the other side of the net to score a point. Teams take turns trying to throw the balls into the hoops.



## Cool Down

In a group of three, pick up a ball and pass the ball from racquet to racquet to put it in the hopper/cart. Get another ball and do again until all the balls are in the hopper/cart.

## Homework

**Target Throws.** Put a large target, like a hoop, on the ground about 15 feet away from you. Throw the ball underhand to hit the target at least 10 times. See how many times you can get 10. Move farther away and still hit the target. How far can you throw and still hit the target?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## Objective

To learn to hit the ball higher over the net and to the baseline.

## Warm-up

- Simon Sez
- Running: Children run with eyes straight forward, head up, using their arms to help them run faster.
- Speed: Around the cones.

## Review: Hitting the Underhand serve

## New Skills: Rallying to the Baseline

- Show children how to hit the ball from one baseline, over the net to the other baseline.
- Show them how to swing the racquet from low to high so the ball goes higher over the net.
- Put children into groups of three, with one feeder close to the net, one hitter at the back of the court and the third child at the back of the court behind the feeder. The feeder tosses the ball underhand to the hitter, who has to try and hit the ball over the net and to the back of the court for the third child to catch after one bounce. Repeat for both forehands and backhands.

## Team Game: Hoop Ball

## Cool Down

In a group of three, pick up a ball and pass the ball from racquet to racquet to put it in the hopper.

## Homework: Target Throws

ages  
5-6

## quickstart tennis: practice 6

# Serve and Return

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to return the serve.

### Warm-up

**Statues.** Children jog around the court until coach says “freeze.” Children then have to stop very quickly and hold their balance. When the coach says “small,” the children curl up as small as they can.

**Side steps.** Children do side steps, swinging arms over head at same time. Encourage quiet movement without touching heels together. Encourage children to clap their hands above their heads.

### ➤ THROWING

**Overhand throw.** Children practice throwing overhand with one hand to different distances—stand sideways to a line and throw the ball as high and far as possible. Make sure children stay sideways until they release the ball.

**Side throw.** Children in pairs, throwing a ball with both hands across their body to a partner. (The throw should resemble the action of the backhand and forehand ground stroke.)

### ➤ BALANCE

- Stand on one leg with eyes closed—try not to wobble.
- Balance on one foot and one hand.
- Balance on one knee and one hand.
- Walk along a line on tiptoe, putting one foot in front of the other.

## Review: Rallying to the Baseline

Children in twos, trying to rally the ball over the net with forehands and backhands. How far back in the court can the children rally?

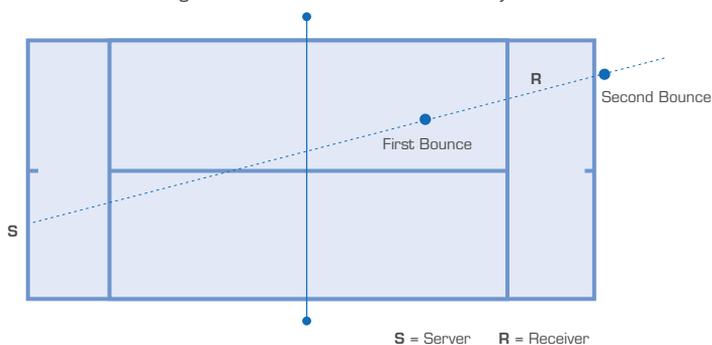
## New Skill: Serve and Return

Quickly review the underhand serve. Show the underhand serve to remind children how to stand, how to hit the ball before the bounce and to review the long swing of the racquet. Practice serving over the net.

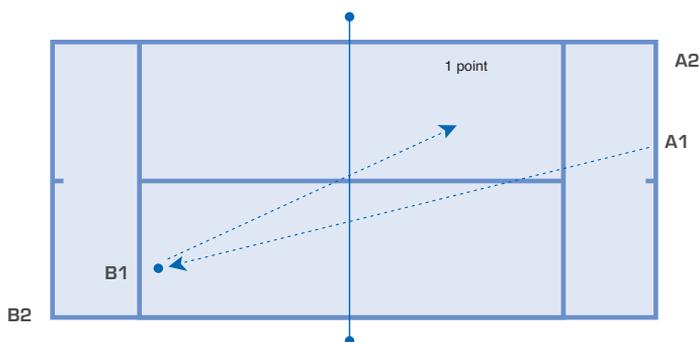
### COACHING TIPS

- Make sure the basic feet, body and racquet actions are consistent.
- Make sure the ball is hit before it bounces.

**Returning the serve.** Show children where to stand to be able to return the serve. Show the “ready position.” Show several returns so the children understand that the return is just like the forehand and backhand they have already practiced. Remind them about watching the ball and hitting the ball at the side of the body.



**Serve and return.** Partner children in twos, one server and one receiver on opposite sides of the net (if necessary, start the server on the service line, not the baseline). Have children take turns as the server and receiver. Count how many serves and returns they can get in a row.

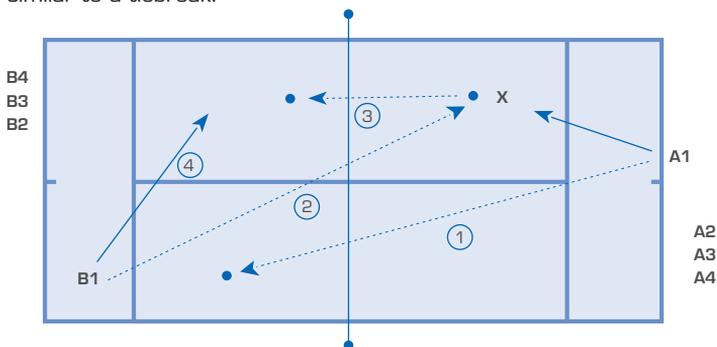


### COACHING TIPS

- Ensure that children understand where to stand to return the ball and how to hit the ball at the side of them.
- It helps to show the players where the serve will bounce and then where the second bounce will be. (see diagram on previous page)
- Explain that they need to be positioned between these two places.

### Team Game: Throw into Spaces Rally

Children in two teams of four on opposite sides of the net without racquets. The teams are competing to win the point by throwing the ball to hit targets, scoring a point each time it does so. The children are aiming to throw the ball underhand quickly to hit targets placed all over the court. Score first team to reach seven points, so scoring is similar to a tiebreak.



## Cool Down

Each team collects as many balls as they can and tries to build more castles of four than the other teams.

## Homework

**Three Targets in a Row.** Put three small targets in a row, with at least 6 feet between them. Get someone to tell you which target to aim at, and then make the ball land on the target with an underhand throw. How many targets can you hit without missing? Increase the distance you stand away from the first target and still hit the right target.

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## **Objective**

To learn to return the serve.

## **Warm-up**

- Statues
- Side steps
- Throwing: Children practice throwing underhand and overhand with one hand to different distances.
- Balance: Stand on one leg with eyes closed. Stand on one leg with eyes closed and move arms around.

## **Review: Rallying to the Baseline**

## **New Skill: Serve and Return**

- Review of the underhand serve.
- Learning where to stand to return the serve.
- Returning the serve, over the net after the bounce.

## **Team Game: Throw into Spaces Rally**

## **Cool Down**

Each team collects as many balls as they can and tries to build more castles of four than the other teams.

## **Homework: Three Targets in a Row**



ages  
5-6

## quickstart tennis: practice 7

# Learning to Volley

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn to hit the volley.

### Warm-up

**Different steps.** Children attempt as many different steps as they can—running and walking, little steps, big steps, skipping, hopping sideways as coach calls out what to do. Do at different speeds and in different directions.

### ➔ REACTION SPEED

**Call my name.** Children in pairs with their backs to each other, one of them with a ball and one without. The player with the ball throws it high in the air and calls out the partner's name at the same time. The partner has to turn around and try to catch the ball after one bounce.

**Through the legs.** Children stand about 3 feet apart, one with his back to the other and with feet apart. Child at back has a ball and rolls the ball through the legs of the other child in front. That child has to run after the ball and stop it as soon as possible.

### ➔ THROWING

Each child with a ball practices the following:

- Throw the ball up with one hand, catch with the other.
- Bounce the ball on the ground and catch it above the head.
- With a partner, throw the ball from behind the head for partner to catch. Then throw the ball from both hands as a chest pass for partner to catch.

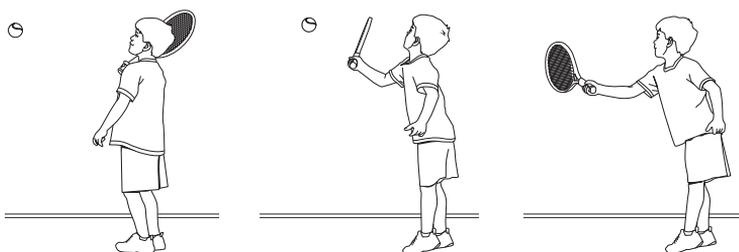
## Review: Serve and Return

Returning the serve back over the net after the bounce. Children in twos, with one serving and the other returning. Take turns.

## New Skill: The Volley

From a position close to the net (about 4 feet back), show the volley and emphasize that volleying means that the ball is struck before it bounces (show the volley several times).

Show the children how to keep the racquet head up and how to move it forward to finish at net height so the ball is hit over the net into the court. (This is in contrast to the forehand and backhand ground strokes, where the racquet is moved from low to high to hit the ball up and over the net.)



**Toss and volley.** Put the children in pairs on either side of the net. Show them how to toss the ball for the partner to volley over the net. Encourage the hitters to keep the racquet head up at the start of the volley. Let each child change over after three or four turns as feeder and volleyer. Note: The coach/helper should move along the line of feeders and toss a few balls to each child in turn.

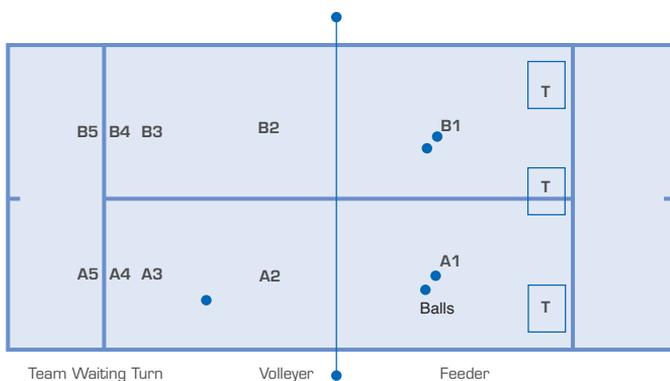
**Toss, volley and catch.** Children in threes—one volleyer, one feeder and one catcher. The catcher should be farther back from the feeder and should be in the target area for the hitter to make the ball bounce (the service court is a good target area). Children take turns in each of the positions. Make sure the volleyer has enough room to move forward to hit ball over the net and toward the catcher's feet.

## COACHING TIPS

- Children need to learn to be about 4 feet from the net and with their racquet up and forward so they can hit the ball in front of them and slightly to the side. The action should be short (i.e., abbreviated swing of the racquet on the volley).
- Encourage children to move their racquet forward as they hit the ball over the net and into the court.

## Team Game: Target Volley

Children in teams of five, four as volleyers (Team A or Team B), each with a racquet on one side of the net, and one as a feeder (A1 or B1) on the other side with a supply of balls. The feeder tosses a ball underhand to each of the volleyers, in turn, for each child to volley to one of several large targets on the other side of the net. Volleyers can choose the target (T). If they succeed in hitting the target, they get a point for the team. Change the children around to take turns as the feeder. Score to seven points, using a line of cones. Teams compete against other teams on other courts.



## Cool Down

Each team of three builds as many castles of four balls as they can by collecting as many balls as possible.

## Homework

**Over the Barrier.** With a partner, throw a ball overhand as high as possible over a high barrier for your partner to catch. Can you make the ball go straight and high for the partner to catch before it bounces? How far can you throw it and still reach the partner?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### **Objective**

To learn to hit the volley.

### **Warm-up**

Different Steps.

Reaction Speed: Call my name; Through the legs.

Throwing: Throw the ball up with one hand, catch with the other; bounce the ball on the ground and catch it above the head.

### **Review: Serve and Return**

### **New Skill: The Volley**

- Show the volley—position at the net, racquet up and how to move the racquet forward to hit the ball into the court.
- Children in pairs on either side of the net. Show them how to toss the ball for the partner to volley over the net.
- Children in threes—one volleyer, one feeder and one catcher. The catcher should be farther back from the feeder and behind in the target area (service court) for the hitter.

### **Team Game: Target Volley**

### **Cool Down**

Each team of three builds as many castles of four balls as they can by collecting as many balls as possible.

### **Homework: Over the Barrier**



## quickstart tennis: practice 8

# Serving and Scoring

Court Size: **36-foot court**

Session Length: **45 minutes**

### Objective

To learn the overhand serve and to learn how to score.

### Warm-up

**Run forward and backward**, circling arms at same time. Call “freeze,” and children must stop quickly and balance on one leg before they are told to start moving again.

### RUNNING

Remind children how to run well with eyes straight forward, heads up, arms by the sides at first and then run using their arms.

**Run and jump.** Practice landing on both feet, one foot and then the other foot. Encourage the children to use their arms and to land with their knees bent.

### SPEED

**Around two cones.** Each pair of children has two cones spaced 2 to 3 feet from the net. Both children together on the baseline, opposite the cones. One child from each pair runs as fast as possible up to and around both cones and back to the baseline. When all the children are back behind the baseline, the second line of children is told to run up and around the cones and back to the baseline. Repeat four or five times, making sure the children do not start until they are told to.

## Review: The Volley

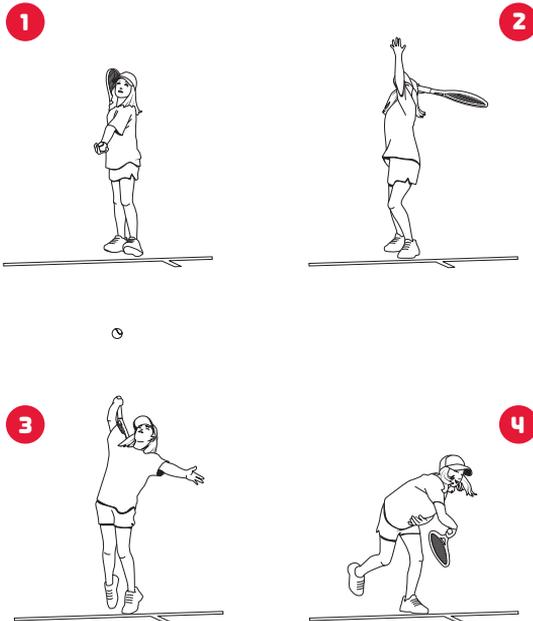
Children in threes, with a volleyer, feeder and catcher. Remind children where to be to feed and where to hit the ball. Children take turns to be in each position for four or five feeds. Volleyer has a large target to hit the ball into.

## New Skill: Hitting the Overhand Serve and Scoring

**The overhand serve.** Show the overhand serve several times and then let the children have several tries at it. Ask them what is the same between the underhand serve and the overhand serve? (Make sure they know: feet position and where the ball and the racquet start.)

Then show the separation of the racquet arm and ball arm so that children can practice it (some children may have difficulties with coordination of arms and balance during the action, but others will find it easy). Break down the action into easier steps if necessary (some children will simply copy what they see and only then need to practice to get the action better).

Show children where to stand along the baseline, and then space them out around the courts. If necessary, move them forward to the service line so they achieve success getting the ball over the net. Then show them where to stand to start the serve on both sides of the court. Practice serving from both sides of court, concentrating on hitting the ball up and over the net.



**Scoring.** Put children in pairs—a server (A1) and a receiver (B1) working together. The server gets two serves. The receiver returns the serve for each of them to get a point. Teach simple scoring to seven points. Children change positions as server and returner after every two serves. To help the children learn to score, give each child a row of seven cones and one ball. As the children score a point, they move the ball up the line of cones until they get to seven.



**Too hard?**

*Have children serve the first ball overhand and the second ball underhand.*

**Too easy?**

*Have the receiver catch or trap the ball on the racquet for it to count as a return.*

*Play same game, but with just a ball and without racquets.*



**COACHING TIPS**

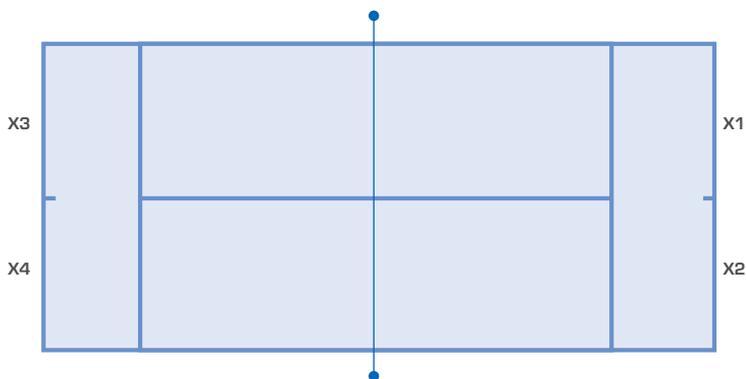
- Break down the serving action into easier steps only if necessary (some children will simply copy what they see and only then need to practice to get the action better).
- Show children where to place the ball when they toss it up for the serve, but beware of spending time on getting the ball in the right place—the action is more important at this stage.

## Team Game: Team Serve

Children in teams of four. Each child has two serves to each of the four service courts on the court. Children can serve either overhand or underhand. Count team scores for number of serves over the net and into the correct court.

### **Too hard?**

*Count each serve over the net, regardless of which court it lands in.*



## Cool Down

In a group of three, pass the ball from racquet to racquet to put it in the hopper/cart. Get another ball and do again until all balls are collected.

## Homework

**Target Tennis.** Put large and small targets on the ground about 10 feet away from you. Throw the ball underhand to hit each target as many times as you can. See how many times you can get 10. Then do the same thing but with overhand throws. Which are you best at?

Session Length: **45 minutes**

## Objective

To learn the overhand serve and to learn how to score.

## Warm-up

- Run forward and backward, circling arms at same time.
- Running: Children run with eyes straight forward, head up, and arms by their sides. Run and jump to land on both feet
- Speed: Around two cones

## Review: The Volley

## New Skill: Hitting the Overhand Serve and Scoring

Serving:

- Show the overhand serve several times and then let the children have several tries.
- Show the separation of the racquet and ball arms so that children can practice it.
- Show children where to stand along the baseline, but if necessary move them forward to the service line so they achieve success getting the ball over the net.
- Practice serving from both sides of the court. Show children where to stand to start the serve on both sides of the court. Practice serving from both sides of court, concentrating on hitting the ball up and over the net.

Scoring:

- Teach simple scoring to seven points. Children change server and returner after every two points. Give each child a row of seven cones and a ball. As they score a point they move the ball up the line of cones until they get seven.

## **Team Game: Team Serve**

## **Cool Down**

In a group of three, pass the ball from racquet to racquet to put it in the hopper/cart. Get another ball and do again until all balls are collected.

## **Homework: Target Tennis**