



Special Olympics

TENNIS COACHING GUIDE

Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

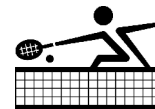
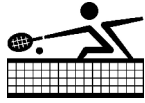


Table of Contents

Benefits of Tennis	3
Tennis Events Offered	3
Setting Goals	4
Essential Components of Planning a Tennis Training Session	5
Principles of Effective Training Sessions	6
Coaches' Top 10 Principles of Effective Planning	7
Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions	8
Tennis Practice Competitions	9
Selecting Team Members	9
Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports®	10
Special Olympics Tennis Rating System	11
Special Olympics Tennis Rating System Sheet	12
Individual Skills Competition Assessment	14
Tennis Attire	15
Tennis Equipment	17



Benefits of Tennis

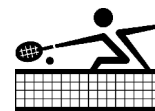
Tennis is a popular sport played at all levels of skill and by players of all ages. It emphasizes values, such as fair play, sportsmanship and respect for fellow competitors. Tennis is not only fun to play, but it is a lifetime sport activity that is fun to practice and fun to learn.

You do not need to be an expert to begin coaching, only enthusiasm and a commitment to learn the basics. With guidance, anyone with time and interest can become a successful Special Olympics tennis coach and help athletes with intellectual disabilities join the worldwide tennis family.

Tennis Events Offered

Tennis competition is based on athlete ability level.

- For athletes with lower ability and limited court mobility, competition is offered in individual skills competition.
- For athletes transitioning from individual skills to traditional match play, competition is offered in Short Court Tennis.
- For athletes with higher physical ability, competition is offered in traditional match play (singles and doubles) and Unified Sports[®] doubles.
- For the actual tennis events offered, see the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis.



Setting Goals

Realistic, yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation. Please see the Principles of Coaching Section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

Elements of Setting Goals

Setting goals is a joint effort with the athlete and coach. The main features of goal setting include the following.

Structured into short-term, intermediate and long-term

- ♦ Stepping stones to success
- ♦ Must be accepted by the athlete
- ♦ Vary in difficulty - easily attainable to challenging
- ♦ Must be measurable

Short-Term Objective

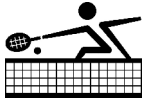
- ♦ Learning tennis in a fun environment.

Long-Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic tennis skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in tennis competitions.

Benefits

- ♦ Increases athlete's level of physical fitness.
- ♦ Teaches self-discipline
- ♦ Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
- ♦ Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction



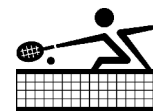
Essential Components of Planning a Tennis Training Session

Each training session needs to contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the goal of the training session, the time of season the session is in and the amount of time available for a particular session. The following elements need to be included in an athlete's daily training program. Please refer to the noted sections in each area for more in-depth information and guidance on these topics.

- Warm-ups
- Previously taught skills
- New skills
- Competition experience
- Feedback on performance

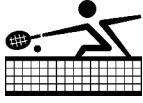
The final step in planning a training session is designing what the athlete is actually going to do. Remember when creating a training session using the key components of a training session, the progression through the session allows for a gradual build-up of physical activity.

1. Easy to difficult
2. Slow to fast
3. Known to unknown
4. General to specific
5. Start to finish



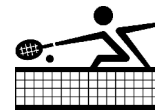
Principles of Effective Training Sessions

Keep all athletes active	Athletes need to be active listeners.
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them.
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction.
Record progress	Chart progress together with your athlete.
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well.
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom.
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun. Help keep it this way for you and your athletes.
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully • Simple to complex – seeing that “I can do it” • General to specific – “this is why I am working so hard”
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively.
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities.



Coaches' Top 10 Principles of Effective Planning

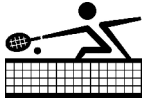
1. Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance to your training plan.
2. When possible, have all equipment and courts prepared before the athletes arrive. Walk the court area and remove unsafe objects.
3. Provide positive reinforcement and “make it fun.”
4. Safety: Each athlete should (1) find their own personal space, (2) hug rackets against chest when listening to instructions from the coach, and (3) hit only on a cue from the coach.
5. Alter the plan according to weather and the facility in order to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
6. Change activities before the athlete becomes bored or loses interest, keeping all players involved.
7. Devote the end of the practice to a fun, group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun and provide athletes with something to look forward to at the end of each practice. This will also assist with assessing the players' progress.
8. Coaches should maintain a command of the court through voice, direction or delegation.
9. Summarize the session, and announce arrangements for the next session.
10. Recognize your volunteers.



Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of tennis. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Tennis is not a dangerous sport, but accidents do occur when coaches forget to take safety precautions. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

- Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them. Some examples are:
 - Keep your hands to yourself.
 - Listen to the coach.
 - When you hear the whistle, "Stop, Look, and Listen."
 - Ask the coach before you leave the field of play.
- When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from inclement weather.
- Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
- Check your first-aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
- Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
- Choose a safe field area. Do not practice in areas with rocks or holes that could cause injury. Simply telling players to avoid obstacles is not enough.
- Walk the court area and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that a player might run in to.
- Review your first-aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first aid and CPR on or very near to the field during practice and games.
- Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each practice to prevent muscle injuries.



Tennis Practice Competitions

The more athletes compete, the better they get. Part of the strategic plan for Special Olympics tennis is to drive more sport development at the local levels. Competition motivates athletes, coaches and the entire sport management team. Expand or add to your schedule as many competition opportunities as possible. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Schedule matches with nearby local Special Olympics Programs.
2. Ask the local high school if your athletes can practice with the team and play practice matches.
3. Join the local community tennis club and/or associations.
4. Host weekly matches.
5. Create a tennis league or club in your community.
6. Incorporate competition components at the end of every training session.

Selecting Team Members

The key to the successful development of a traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports team is the proper selection of team members.

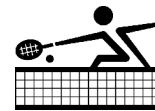
Ability Grouping for Unified Sports Doubles or Doubles

Unified Sports teams work best when all team members have similar sports skills. Partners with abilities that are far superior to other teammates will either control competition or accommodate others by not competing to their potential. In both situations, the goals of interaction and teamwork are diminished and a true competitive experience is not achieved. For example, in tennis, an 8-year-old should not be competing against or with a 30-year-old athlete.

Age Grouping

All team members should be closely matched in age.

- Within 3-5 years of age for athletes 21 years of age and under
- Within 10-15 years for athletes 22 years of age and over



Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

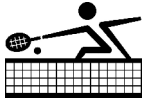
Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. When selecting your Unified Sports team you want to achieve meaningful involvement throughout your sport season. Unified Spots teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for all athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser abilities.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

- Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- Act as on-field coaches, rather than teammates.
- Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- Do not train or practice regularly, and only show up on the day of competition.
- Lower their level of ability dramatically, so they do not hurt others or control the entire game.



Special Olympics Tennis Rating System

The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is a systematic method to determine the skill ability of an athlete. The system is designed to assist coaches in determining an athlete's ability level in tennis before they begin participation. The rating is also used in preliminary divisioning of athletes for competition. Coaches will find the rating system a useful tool for several reasons:

1. Helps the coach and athlete determine in which events he/she will compete.
2. Establishes the baseline training areas of the athlete.
3. Assists coaches in grouping athletes of similar ability into training teams.
4. Measures the athlete's progression.
5. Helps determine the athlete's daily training schedule.

Before administering the rating system, coaches need to perform the following analysis while observing the athlete:

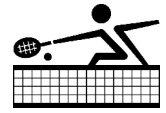
- Become familiar with each of the tennis skills.
- Have an accurate visual picture of each skill.
- Have previously observed a skilled performer executing the skill.

In preparing for Special Olympics tennis competitions, it is recommended that the coach complete the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System Sheet and submit it to the Tournament Committee with registration materials. The Tournament Committee should then conduct a separate on-court rating during a preliminary divisioning round. The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System is modeled after the USTA National Tennis Rating Program. It is a subjective evaluation and it is recommended that raters be familiar with the USTA National Tennis Rating Program or other systems of evaluating tennis playing ability. To use the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, the rater should observe the athlete during simulated play situations. This could involve:

- Athletes hitting with raters, or
- Athletes playing mini-matches with other athletes, or
- Athletes practicing with other athletes.

When administering the Special Olympics Tennis Rating System, coaches should strive to observe the best performance by the athlete. Always begin by explaining the skill you would like to observe and demonstrate the skill when possible.

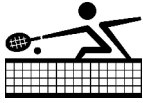
The Special Olympics Tennis Rating System categorizes playing ability into eight levels. Athlete skill is rated on seven basic tennis skills: forehand, backhand, movement, first serve, second serve, return of serve and volleys. The rater should observe the athlete and indicate playing ability by rating the athlete from one to eight on each of the basic skills. The rating form task analyzes each basic skill into levels of ability. A total score is determined for all seven skills and an average rating calculated (for example, 2.5 or 3.8). The overall rating is then used to division the athlete with other athletes of equal playing ability.



Special Olympics Tennis Rating System Sheet

Athlete's Name: _____ Coach's Rating: _____
 Delegation: _____ Date of Coach's Rating: ___/___/___
 Rater's Name: _____ Final Rating: _____
 Date of Final Rating: ___/___/___

<p>Level 1 (athlete at this level should complete the ISC Skills Testing) Player just starting to play tennis (1) Appropriate competition would be ISC (1)</p>	Score:	
<p>A. Forehand (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level) Has difficulty hitting FH shots (2) Hits inconsistent weak FH shots (3) Hits FH shots with little directional control (4) Sustains a short rally using FH and BH shots (5) Sustains a rally with directional control (6) Sustains a rally with consistency and depth (7) Sustains an extended rally (8)</p>	Score:	
<p>B. Backhand (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level) Has difficulty hitting BH shots (2) Hits inconsistent weak BH shots (3) Hits BH shots with little directional control (4) Has directional control of BH shots, but shots lack depth (5) Returns difficult shots defensively (6) Has difficulty with high and hard shots (7) Controls FH and BH shots with direction, pace and depth (8)</p>	Score:	
<p>C. Movement (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level) Stationary position; does not move to ball to hit shots (2) Moves only 1-2 steps toward ball to hit shots (3) Moves toward ball; but court coverage is poor (4) Movement allows sufficient court coverage of most shots (5) Exceptional court coverage (6) Exceptional court coverage and hits defensive lobs and inconsistent overheads (7) Exceptional court coverage and hits offensive lobs and consistent overheads (8)</p>	Score:	



Special Olympics Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Tennis Training & Competition Season

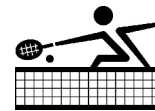
<p>D. First Serve (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level)</p> <p>1st serve is weak (2)</p> <p>1st serve faults are common (3)</p> <p>Hits 1st serves in at a slower pace (4)</p> <p>Hits 1st serves with pace (6)</p> <p>Hits 1st serves with pace and control (8)</p>	<p>Score: <input type="text"/></p>
<p>E. Second Serve (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level)</p> <p>Double faults are common (2)</p> <p>Pushes 2nd serves (4)</p> <p>Hits 2nd serves with control (6)</p> <p>Hits 2nd serves with control and depth (7)</p> <p>Hits 2nd serves with spin, control and depth (8)</p>	<p>Score: <input type="text"/></p>
<p>F. Return of Serve (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level)</p> <p>Has difficulty returning serve (2)</p> <p>Returns serve occasionally (3)</p> <p>Returns 2nd serve consistently (4)</p> <p>Returns some 1st serves; returns 2nd serves consistently (5)</p> <p>Returns 1st and 2nd serves consistently (6)</p> <p>Aggressive return of 2nd serve; weak return of 1st serve (7)</p> <p>Aggressive return of 1st and 2nd serves (8)</p>	<p>Score: <input type="text"/></p>
<p>G. Volleys (one choice --- should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level)</p> <p>Avoids net (2)</p> <p>Does not hit volleys; avoids net (3)</p> <p>Hits inconsistent volleys; avoids net (4)</p> <p>Hits consistent FH volleys; BH volley is inconsistent (5)</p> <p>Hits aggressive FH volleys; hits defensive BH volleys (6)</p> <p>Hits aggressive FH and BH volleys (8)</p>	<p>Score: <input type="text"/></p>

Total Score:

Divide Total Score by 7 to determine Overall Rating

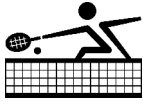
(round off to the nearest tenth i.e. 4.97 = 5.0 or 3.53 = 3.5)

Overall Rating:



Individual Skills Competition Assessment

For athletes of lower skill ability, coaches should use the tennis individual skills competition to rate playing ability. The individual skills competition consists of seven basic tennis skills: forehand volley, backhand volley, forehand groundstroke, backhand groundstroke, serve (deuce court), serve (advantage court) and alternating groundstrokes with movement. The individual skills competition can be used as both an assessment tool for evaluating lower skilled players and a competition format for athletes not ready for traditional match play competition.



Tennis Attire

Appropriate tennis attire is required for all competitors. As coach, discuss the types of tennis clothing that is acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions. For example, long pants or jeans and blue jean shorts are not proper tennis attire for any event. Inappropriate clothing can hinder a player's performance and be a safety hazard. Shirts and shorts should be loose fitting to allow for free movement. Take athletes to high school or college training or competitions and point out the attire being worn. You should set the example by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions. Do not reward athletes who do not come properly dressed to train and/or compete.

Shirts

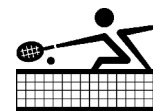


T-shirts are the most comfortable and practical tops for practice and training. Traditionally, tennis competitions are played in collared shirts that are tucked into shorts.

Shorts



During practice, athletes should wear loose fitting gym shorts or conventional tennis shorts. During competition, a traditional tennis short or skirt is preferable. Wearing proper tennis attire for competition can build an athlete's excitement for the competition.



Shoes and Socks



Shoes should be traditional tennis shoes with proper ankle, arch and heel support. Running shoes are inappropriate for tennis because they do not support the ankle. Be cautious of black-soled shoes as they mark the courts. Socks should be of an absorbent cloth to prevent blisters. If an athlete is prone to blisters, two pairs of socks can be worn.

Warm-ups

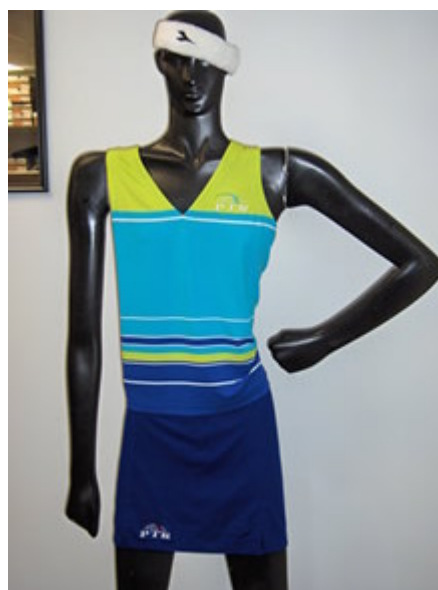


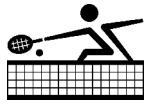
Cotton materials are good for tennis players. They should be worn before and after practice and competitions. Athletes should not wear sweat suits during play unless it is an extremely cold day.

Other items that might help a player's performance:

- ♦ Hats or sunglasses keep sun and wind out of the eyes.
- ♦ Sweatbands and headbands keep moisture off the racket hand and out of the eyes.
- ♦ Sunscreen can keep athletes from being overexposed to the sun.

Tennis Female Attire





Tennis Equipment

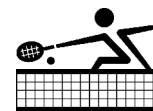
The sport of tennis requires the type of equipment noted below. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment impacts their performance. Have athletes name each piece of equipment as you demonstrate its use. Coaches and athletes should work together to select the proper equipment for each athlete.

Tennis Rackets

Tennis rackets have changed dramatically in the past few years. Space-age materials have made rackets lightweight and very durable. Athletes should select a racket that "feels good" and is not too heavy or too light. Grip size is important for good technique. Have the athlete grip the racket comfortably. There should not be more than a finger width between the base of the thumb and the fingertips. If the fingers are touching the base of the hand, the grip is too small. Younger athletes may benefit from junior-sized rackets which are lighter and shorter. Broken strings and unraveling grips should be replaced as soon as possible. Coaches should teach athletes proper care of their rackets and all equipment.

Coaches will find the following racket sizes: A 23-inch racket is recommended for athletes 8-10 years of age, a 25- or 26-inch racket is recommended for athletes 10-12 years of age and a 27-inch racket is recommended for adults. These are general guidelines as strength, size of athlete and grip size are factors in determining the ideal racket to use.





Tennis Balls



An abundance of tennis balls is important for a successful practice. Ideally, each court would have a separate hopper (teaching cart) of balls. Practice balls can be obtained from tennis clubs (ask a teaching professional for his/her old tennis balls), high schools and colleges.

Other Teaching Aids

1. Notebook for recording attendance, telephone numbers, student comments and progress reports, and medical needs for special athletes.
2. Targets of any shape, size and color can help athletes aim for a specific spot (examples are a pyramid of tennis balls, cones, hula hoops, chalk circles and rope).
3. SpeedBalls (foam balls).
4. Balloons to practice hand-eye coordination drills.
5. Ball machine for athletes to practice a variety of skills.
6. Ball containers as targets in games.
7. Radio or music box to increase attention and enjoyment.



This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.