



Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program, *Tennis Guide*



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INTRODUCTION

This guide provides activities for Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) skills related to the Official Special Olympics sport Tennis.

Skills included in this guide include:

- **Tracking** – Paying attention to a person or object moving through various senses and displaying a response
- **Mobility** – Athlete’s preferred method of moving around (independent or assisted). Athletes may have more than one method of mobility. Also, some athletes that are assisted may have more of a sensory experience
- **Striking** - Using a racquet, body part or other equipment to hit or push a ball (from a tee if necessary)

Note – while tennis has many different strokes focus will remain solely on forehand and backhand techniques or skills.

MATP Athletes who master these skills may progress to the lower-level Tennis skills competitions in official Special Olympics sports.

- For more information please visit www.specialolympics.org



CUES AND ASSISTANCE

Cues – When talking about adapting a skill or task, adapting with cues to give attention to specific areas can be helpful. Giving cues can assist learning or help let the student focus on the movements.

Types of Cues	Examples
Visual cues can be demonstration or visual markers to indicate targets or finish lines.	Bright cones, polypots, colored tape, bright paper, walls
Auditory cues can be short verbal instruction or sounds indicated where a target or equipment is.	“Go”, “Stop” “Hold racquet” “Look at target”, Stereos/ music (as a finish line), balls that make noise.
Tactical cues are useful when indicating what body part needs to move.	Nudge to start running or walking, Student is given a touch cue on their arm. Touch in front of body to indicate stop.
Mixed cues are good for reinforcing different parts of a skill.	Touching arm used to hit with and “Hit ball” cue at a bright cone. Nudging and saying “Go” to walk/run towards wall.

Tips for Cueing

- Keep it simple. Avoid long phrases, difficult visuals, too many cues at once.
- Make it easy to understand. Which method would be best for student?
- Be consistent with cues.



LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE

Level	Amount of Assistance	Example
Independent	No assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student is able to moving ball without cues of where to look. - Student hitting a ball off the tee without assistance.
Independent with Environmental Cues	Requires setup.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student moves to marker and returns back to starting point without prompting or assistance. - Student knows to get to starting position after a ball goes out of bounds lined with small cones.
Independent with Verbal Cues with/without Environmental Cues	May require setup and verbal reminder for the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After being given a verbal cue, student takes a turn hitting a ball off a tee. - After being instructed to move to net and back while holding racquet student is able to complete.
Tactile Cues with/without Other Cues	May require setup. Use tactile cues and other cues if needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student is given a touch cue on their to adjust their racquet position to hit a ball off a tee. - Student is given a verbal and touch cue on their neck to raise head and watch moving ball.
Minimal Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 0-25% assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs once hand assistance for balance to walk around tennis court. - Student tries to hit a ball off a tee with a racket, and needs support at hips to stay steady.
Moderate Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 25-75% assistance.	Student needs assistance at their elbow to hold their arm up to hit a tennis ball off the tee, but is able to swing with support.
Maximum Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 75-90% assistance.	- Student requires max assist to open hand to hold a small racquet.
Dependent	Full assistance while the student is passive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student's arm is moved with assistance through motion to swing a racket to hit a tennis ball. - Student needs to be pushed to complete 2 warm up laps around courts with peers



EQUIPMENT

Ball

Regular tennis balls are normally easy to hold and bounce well. If regular tennis balls are proving too difficult to track and hit, you may want to use foam tennis balls for a slower bounce.

Racquet

If a standard size racquet is too heavy or hard to swing, you can use a smaller racquet or paddle. A paddle will have to be used with a lighter ball. If a student needs equipment that is smaller like a towel or small like bat, that is fine, but, will be harder to volley.

Court

Students can play on a court or area that is suitable for student's abilities. It is acceptable to start in a smaller space and expand the court size as the students abilities improve.

Net

The net does not have to be present for early skill development. A low net, slacked net or other low obstacles can be used when introducing the net barrier.

Prescribed equipment – This guide will not cover prescribed mobility or movement equipment such as walkers, gait trainers, walking aides, braces, splints, or wraps. Prescribed equipment such as these should be used as directed by a parent or professional. If equipment needs to be adjusted or used for any activity, please consult a professional (PT or OT).



ACTIVITIES

Tracking

TITLE: Light or sound finding

GOAL: Have student find bright light or sound target.

EQUIPMENT: Flashlight, stereo, beeper ball, basketball, teammates.

ACTIVITY: Have students follow sound or light or both with eyes, head, or body to move towards the target. Target can be kept on and moved or shut off, moved and then turned back on. Repeat for a short time.

ADAPTATIONS: Change the volume to one that best suits student. When adjusting light, look to adjust color, blinking, or room lighting if possible. Using a video on an ipad or other device may work well to motivate students. It can be hard if the area is noisy, making distinct and clear sound may help students distinguish from other sounds. This activity can be used by itself or with other activities.

TITLE: Ball follow

GOAL: To track a ball and then point, move towards, visually follow or tell where it is.

EQUIPMENT: Ball

ACTIVITY: Throw a ball or rally between 2 others for a short duration. Have student move over to it, look at it, or say where it is or who has it.

ADAPTATIONS: Start slow and close. Can use a bigger brighter ball. Start with only one action and add more as student is able to successfully complete task. Make sure students' response is something they can do easily.



Mobility

TITLE: Destination walk/wheel

GOAL: Have students engaged through physical, cognitive or sensory experiences using their preferred mobility to get to a set destination.

EQUIPMENT: Placement markers (cones, pictures, ploy spots), Objects that they can carry (optional).

ACTIVITY: Have students move to designated route or spot with visual cues or verbal cues. You can assign a task as well (high five, get ball, etc). Students can move with whatever preferred mobility they use. Students should be challenged to be independent with areas they can be (giving instructions, acknowledging movement, walking with distant supervision).

ADAPTATIONS: Students may need help for partial or full trip. Use consistent items, pictures and commands when giving directions. Can assign familiar task or have familiar people at destination. Provide a visual path to follow with floor tape or polyspots.

TITLE: Big step and/or big reach

GOAL: Have student take a step and or reach with hand or racquet.

EQUIPMENT: Spot markers, racquet if needed.

ACTIVITY: Have student step to the left or right when signaled. Student can reach with a hand or racquet instead of a step or with step.

ADAPTATIONS: Give directions and cues that are easy for student to react to. Make the spot markers different colors to help distinguish. Add a picture to the spot marker of items the student enjoys or is familiar with and then refer to the image when asking the child to step.

TITLE: Instructed wheel/walk

GOAL: Have students follow directions and cues on how to move.

EQUIPMENT: Cones, floor tape, arrow signs.

ACTIVITY: Have students follow directions (verbal, visual, gestural, or mix) for a short duration. Directions can be in a form that students can follow. Example of verbal instructions include: walk forward, back backward, walk faster, walk sideway, turn to the net, turn to the bench. Can use sports equipment if desired.

ADAPTATIONS: Students may need assistance and demonstration to follow directions and it may take a while if student to understand new movements. Students who use wheelchairs or walkers will be unable to do lateral movements and will need an alternative. Students can walk or wheel in a line or in a square. Provide a visual (arrows, physically pointing etc.) to accompany verbal instructions related to direction.



Striking

TITLE: Body racquet

GOAL: To hit a stationary ball with a body part (ideally above the waist) in forehand or backhand style.

EQUIPMENT: Ball that is soft, tee (may be off a person's hand).

ACTIVITY: Position a ball at the proper height and distance to be hit. Have student hit with hand (open or fisted) arm, shoulder, head.

ADAPTATIONS: May take a few tries to get positioning right. Can use a tee, tall cone, pool noodle (if ball is light enough to hold), or hand to support the ball.

TITLE: Tee strike

GOAL: to hit a ball off a tee with a racquet or other short striking equipment.

EQUIPMENT: Ball, tee, racquet or other striking equipment.

ACTIVITY: Have student hit ball off tee using forehand or backhand swing.

ADAPTATIONS: Some ideas for other striking equipment: Short dowel, small bat or shortened pool noodle, paddle. Make sure student and tee are positioned correctly. If student has limited mobility consider adapting a hat so student can hit the ball by moving their head (attaching a pool noodle to a hat). Also consider adapting for another body part or giving full or partial assistance.

TITLE: Bounce strike

GOAL: to hit a ball off a bounce with a racquet or other short striking equipment.

EQUIPMENT: Ball, racquet or other striking equipment.

ACTIVITY: Show student how the ball will bounce. Have student in ready position and have student attempt to hit the ball with a forehand or backhand swing.

ADAPTATIONS: Can bounce ball in place or towards student. Try your best to be consistent with bounce. Use striking equipment that is best for student. Use slower bouncing balls like foam balls. Consider using larger, light weight balls like a beach ball.

Title: Hit over the net

Goal: To hit a ball (bounced or off a tee) over a lowered net.

Equipment: Ball, racquet or other, tee (optional), lowered net or other obstacle.

Activity: Position student close to net and have them hit the ball over the net. Students can hit the ball off tee or bounce.

Adaptations: Can have visual marker on the other side of net. Can use a lowered net or other obstacle. Use striking equipment that is best for student.



Personal Best Games

These are all individual games for personal best. Not everyone has to participate the same way but can be played as a group.

TITLE: Racquet Balance

GOAL: To have students balance ball on racket and move a short distance.

EQUIPMENT: Ball, racquet, Begin and end spots (if needed).

ACTIVITY: Have student hold racquet out and put a ball on it to balance on. Have students hold racquet with one, two hands or other. Have students carry balls to end point or bucket. Repeat for time.

ADAPTATIONS: Students can hold racquet however is comfortable. Students can receive assistance if holding racquet still is too difficult. Slightly deflate ball so doesn't roll as easily or use a pom pom which will slide but not roll.

TITLE: Tennis time trail

Goal: Have student complete mini tennis challenge in fastest time they can.

EQUIPMENT: Ball, tee (if needed), racquet or other adapted striking equipment.

ACTIVITY: Have student start on the base line. At the go signal have student move up, hit two balls and then go back to the base line.

ADAPTATIONS: Students can hit the ball from either tee forehand or backhand if not designated. Student can use hand or other body part.

TITLE: Tennis grand slam

GOAL: Have student hit as many balls as they can in 1 minute.

EQUIPMENT: Balls, racquet, tee (if needed).

ACTIVITY: After "Go" student will hit as many bounced balls or balls off a tee as they can in 1 minute.

ADAPTATIONS: Students should be positioned so they are able to hit off tee to desired direction. There may need to be another person to help put balls back on the tee. Students can be assisted into beginning stage of hitting if needed.



Group Games

TITLE: Ball collection

GOAL: Have students work together to collect the most balls.

EQUIPMENT: Collector – bucket, bin or cloth to collect balls. Givers – Balls, racquet.

ACTIVITY: Givers start in their area ready to hit over to collectors. Collectors start in their area ready to get balls. At “Go” givers will hit balls over the net for collectors to get. Collectors can collect balls by catching them in their bins or picking up balls. Teams can use whatever strategy they think will work as long each player type stays in their area. Game lasts for about 1 min then switch.

ADAPTATIONS: Collectors can bring balls to somewhere if better than holding bin the whole time. Collectors can receive assistance picking up balls if needed. Givers can be moved up compared to other students or off to the side to go around the net.

TITLE: Get off my lawn

Goal: Have students throw or hit balls over the net to the opposite team’s zone. The goal of the game is to have the least amount of balls in your zone when time ends.

EQUIPMENT: Balls (depends on how many students are playing), Cones to make zones (if needed), Equipment needed to push or hit ball (if needed).

ACTIVITY: Divide students into teams and assign them to a zone. Student have to hit, push ball from their zone to the other team’s zone. Can have students rotate or work in pairs. When time stops whichever team has the least wins.

ADAPTATIONS: Students may need cues for direction. Try to keep teams balance and utilize rules like working in pairs or rotating. Have some balls on cones for student to hit off of if needed.

TITLE: Rally Count

GOAL: Get as many rallies as possible.

EQUIPMENT: Racquets, ball, net (if needed).

ACTIVITY: Have students rally the ball back and forth between each other. Count the number of consecutive hits.

ADAPTATIONS: Groups or pairs can be as close or far as needed. Use adapted balls and racquet as needed.



Sample Practice -45min

This is an example of a practice schedule and activities. All practices should be adjusted to meet the needs of the individual athletes in the group. Make the best effort to remain consistent with activity choices and not switch each session. This will allow for processing and motor learning to occur between sessions and will help athletes to retain skills previously learned.

Warm up 7-10 mins: (pick 2)

- Target Gazing/pointing
- Destination walk/wheel
- Body racquet
- Other general movement exercises (not listed)

Individual skills 12-15 mins: (pick 2-3)

- Ball follow
- Big step and/or big reach
- Tee strike
- Bounce strike (stations are a great way to work on skills and prevent boredom.
- Students can spend 5-7 minutes at a station and then rotate to another station).

Games 12-15 mins: (pick 1-2)

- Racquet Balance
- Tennis time trail
- Ball collection
- Get off my lawn.

Cool Down 3-5 mins: (pick 1-2)

- Cool down walk or cool down exercises (not listed)