

# SCHOOL TEAM TENNIS MANUAL

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FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS TEAMS

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# GREETINGS, COACH!

We hope you are as excited to dig into this manual as we were creating it! As a school coach, your role in bringing the game of tennis to the next generation cannot be overstated. Through the experiences they share with you on and off the court, your players have the opportunity to come away as lifelong enthusiasts of our sport and lead healthier, happier lifestyles because of it.

This manual was written so you could lean on the USTA and experts in the industry to provide you with a turnkey plan for your school tennis season. As you read on, you will see the plans are able to be adapted across a wide-range of circumstances; from a small 12 player team all the way up to a 12 player per court No-Cut team! Whatever the structure of your team's makeup, you should find solutions in this manual.

Between what's written on the following pages and all the resources available to you online, we're here to support you and your team. The competition and camaraderie of being on a school tennis team is like nothing else in the game for your players, so please take advantage and make this season your best one yet!

Sincerely,



**Elliott Pettit**  
Director, School Tennis

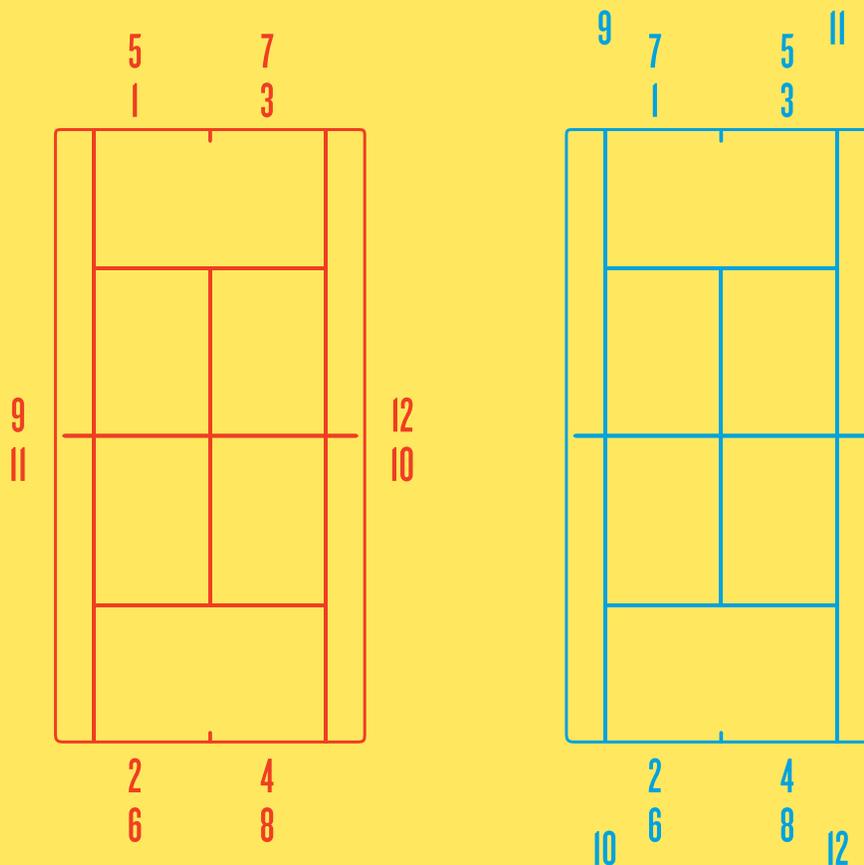


# GETTING STARTED

Between here and the practice plans, there is a lot of information on how to get the most out of this manual. This introduction contains the blueprints of how to use the plans to best support your efforts for the season. Be sure to spend some time reading this to ensure you're comfortable with the lesson structure, court templates, terminology, etc.

Before you go any further, if you are a high school coach, one of the most important things is to understand the rules, regulations and bylaws that affect your state. These bylaws are unique to each state and impact everything from rules governing practice, contact periods, competition structure and lineup regulations, to name a few. If you are unfamiliar with your state's tennis bylaws, contact your state high school association or the National Federation for State High School Associations at 317-927-6900. Additionally, the NFHS will be able to provide you with the most up-to-date copy of "Friend at Court", the book of rules and regulations under which tennis is played in the United States.

As mentioned in the welcome letter, this manual was created to be inclusive to no-cut coaches and to that end, each on-court activity has been selected to be able to handle up to 12 players on one court. If you are a no-cut coach with more than a 12-to-1 player-to-court ratio, we recommend holding more than one practice per day or utilizing off-court stations to get your ratio to the 12-to-1, or less, range.



IN THE DIAGRAMS ABOVE, YOU CAN SEE HOW A FULL-SIZED TENNIS COURT CAN HOLD 12 PLAYERS EACH.

## RED COURT (MOST DOUBLES DRILLS)

- Players 1-4 are actively hitting across the net against or with one another depending on the drill
- Players 5-8 are waiting their turn, determined by how you've set the rotation (more on that later in the intro!)
- Players 9 & 11 are partnered up together at one net post
- Players 10 & 12 are partnered up at the other post

## BLUE COURT (MOST SINGLES DRILLS)

- Players 1-4 are actively hitting across the net against or with one another depending on the drill
- Players 5-8 are waiting their turn, determined by how you've set the rotation
- Players 9-12 are waiting to rotate in after the player in front of them rotates out

Even if you don't have 12 players per court, these plans can be easily adapted to accommodate as few as two players per court for singles and four players per court for doubles. By looking at the corresponding court diagram for each activity, all you need to do is ignore the numbers of the players who aren't there. For example, if you only have eight players on a court, just disregard the numbers 9-12.

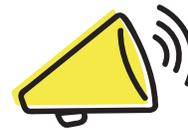
### Working with Players of Different Skill Levels

Modified equipment can make all the difference for inexperienced players. Some equipment you should consider keeping on hand is:

- Red foam or felt tennis balls
- Orange or Green tennis balls
- 25" or 26" racquets
- Throw down lines to help create boundaries for smaller, 60' or 36' courts

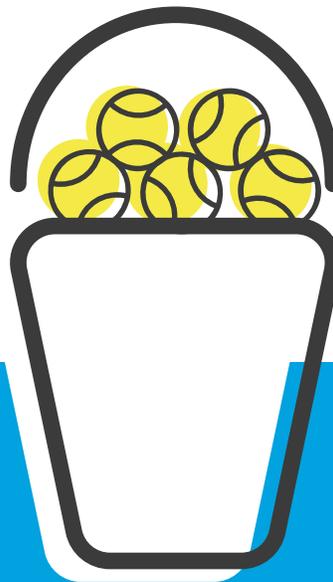
All tennis skills should be taught in a progressive order:

- Simple to complex
- Static to dynamic
- Easy to difficult
- Close to far
- Slow to fast



### COACHING TIP

Modifying your scoring system or changing a set of rules within an activity is all you need to create the environment that's most conducive to learning the desired skill.



Less experienced players should find the rally progression helpful to building the foundation for the desired skill. The rally progression is:

- **Self-rally**
- **Partner rally over the net**
- **Partner rally with increased distance.** This progression can be applied to volleys and groundstrokes and should be utilized until your players are able to successfully rally cooperatively with increased distance

More experienced players who are able to rally with increased distance should be introduced to the **five controls**. The **five controls** are:

- **Direction** (direct ball left or right)
- **Depth** (direct ball deep or short)
- **Height** (direct ball high or low over the net)
- **Spin** (impart desired rotation on the ball)
- **Speed** (hit ball fast or slow)

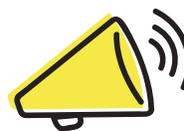
**The foundation of these plans lies in the five controls being introduced in week one and then built upon steadily throughout the course of the season.**

## ROTATIONS

The activities within the practice plans will follow a similar, basic setup for singles and doubles. Keeping the organization and language consistent allows your players to become familiar with the setup which will decrease inactivity during practice as well as allow you greater freedom to roam between courts to observe your players in action.

When deciding on your rotation, you need to identify two things first...

- The type of activity- **Cooperative or Competitive?**  
This will determine how you rotate
- The type of drill- **Singles or Doubles?**  
This will determine how you set the court up



### COACHING TIP

Given the potentially large number of players you're responsible for at one time, these disparities in level can feel daunting to serve. Just remember, your job is to set up the environment that best suits the player and by utilizing rally progression and the five controls, you're on your way!



Establishing a consistent rotation flow early in the season will be helpful for players being able to run activities later on without much oversight from you as well as keeping things safe.

## Cooperative vs. Competitive

**Cooperative** activities are generally used when players are focused on building a desired skill.

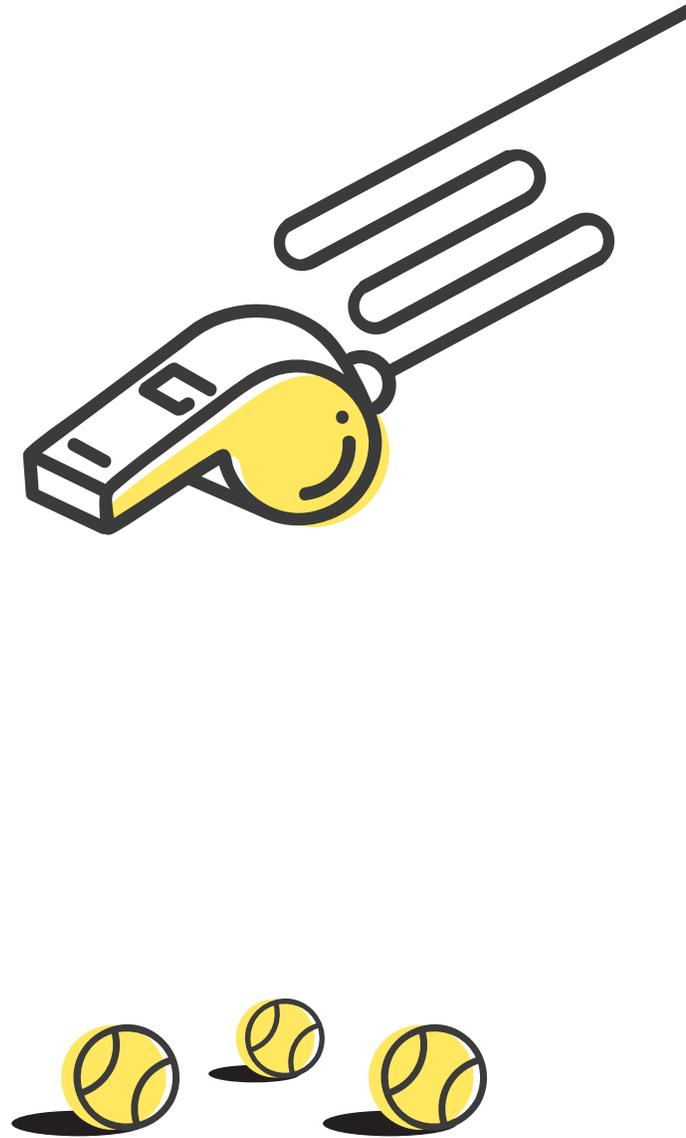
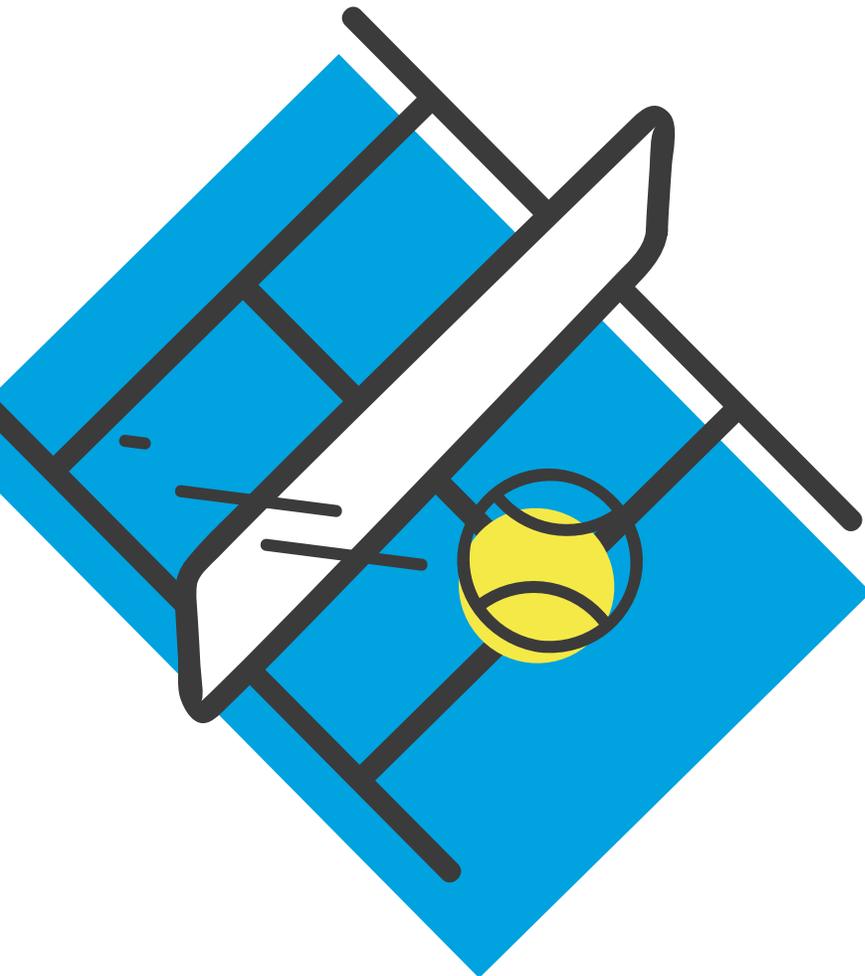
**Cooperative** activities are usually rotated after a certain amount of time or until a certain amount of repetitions are achieved.

**Competitive** activities are generally used when players are focused on practicing skills in a game environment.

**Competitive** activities are usually rotated when one player wins a certain amount of points or after a set amount of points with all players keeping track of points until a specified amount.

Some examples of ways to trigger rotations are...

- Players play for a set amount of time (eg, 2 minutes and then rotate).
- Players play until a player on court achieves a requisite amount of points (e.g., first player to win 4 points triggers rotation).
- Players play for set number of points and have an automatic rotation (e.g., play 3 points and rotate).



# SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN - EXPLAINED

STARTING TIME — ENDING TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

THEME OF PRACTICE \_\_\_\_\_

## Warm-up: Dynamic stretches

All- High skips down, long skips back. Walking side hip stretch down, carioca back. Big arm circles down, little arm circles back. Dynamic stretches should be led by team captains.

## Review previously learned skills:

Using the controls to create an opening



## New skill development:

Time: 10%

B

S-i DL Ping Pong from NML (i) DL Ping Pong from Baseline.

D-36' warm-up (B) 2 up 2 back warm-up.

## Serve and serve return:

Time: 20%

S-Serve index with 5 serves, returner looks to get the ball back in play XC

D-Servers focusing on wide serves and "T" serves, returners with XC return off wide serve and down the line return off "T" serve. Make sure players get to serve and return.

## Drills to reinforce skill development (them of the day):

Time: 20%

C

All- (H) One Ball Live volley to volley.

D

(A) One Ball Live from BL.

Rotate based on numbers.

## Games and/or match play:

Time: 20%

E

S- (A) XC groundstrokes from BL, player must hit ball that lands in alley before they can win a point.

(A) XC groundstrokes from BL clean winner from groundstroke worth 2 points. Rotate based on numbers.

F

D- (E&F) Doubles Match play focusing on returner ball cross court to start point, hitting ball in-between partners. Rotate based on numbers.

## Large group games:

Time: 10%

All- Wipeout

## Wrap-up, static stretches, cool down, announcements, and take-home activities:

Time: 10%

All- Cool-down, review takeaways from practice. Have players share their persistence assignment.

Have players rate their effort on the day. Homework is for players to think of what "resilience" means to them.

- A Time expressed as percentage of practice rather than minutes
- B "S-" and "D-" referring to separate activities done by "Singles" and "Doubles" players
- C "All" indicating this activity is done by all players
- D "(A)" indicate which page of the court setup templates are applied to each activity
- E "XC" Groundstrokes indicate which direction point is conducted and from where the point begins
- F "Rotate based on numbers" reminding you that your number of players on court dictate the rotation

## TERMINOLOGY

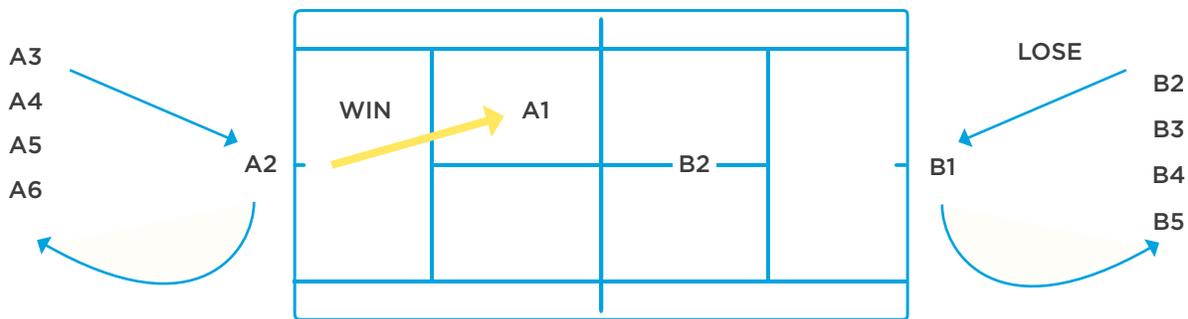
- S:** Indicates that the activity is for Singles players.
- D:** Indicates that the activity is for Doubles players.
- DL:** Down the line. Half-court, straight ahead including doubles alleys.
- XC:** Cross-court. Half- court, diagonal including doubles alleys.
- SL:** Service Line. Back-most boundary of the service boxes.
- FC:** Full Court. The entire court with alleys for doubles activities or the entire court without doubles alleys for singles activities
- BL:** Baseline. Back-most boundary of the court.
- NML:** No man's land. Area between the service line and baseline.
- Deuce Side:** Area to the right of the hash mark when standing on BL looking at net.
- Ad Side:** Area to the left of the hash mark when standing on BL looking at net.
- Groundstrokes:** Forehand or backhand shots generally hit from the BL. In the context of activities within this manual, "Groundstrokes" indicates an activity in which the point begins from the BL for both players.
- Approach Shot:** Shot hit where hitting player is moving forward to get to the net.
- Volley:** Shot where player does not let ball bounce before hitting, is generally struck when player is near the net, and is hit at or below the shoulder level.
- Lob:** Shot where player hits ball high into the air with the intent to either hit ball over opponents head or provide hitter with time to recover from a defensive position.
- Overhead:** Shot where player strikes ball out of the air from above shoulder level and smashes it down onto their opponent's side of the court.
- Outside Stroke:** Either a player's forehand or backhand, whichever is on the side of the nearest doubles alley.

# LARGE GROUP GAMES

## WIPEOUT

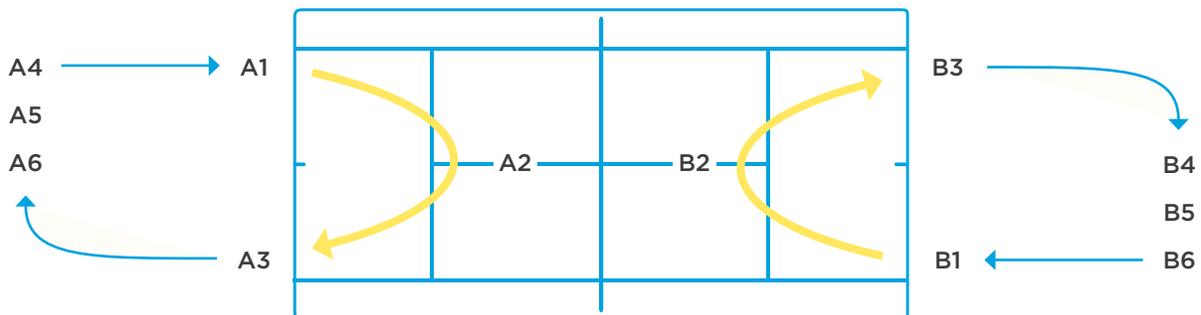
The group is divided into two teams of at least five players each. Each team stands in a line along the back fence on opposite sides of the court. To begin, one player from each team plays a singles point beginning with a self-feed from the baseline. After the point, the winner stays on the court and adds a second player from their team to their side of the court. The player who loses the point goes to the end of their line and the next player self-feeds the ball to the two people on the opposite side.

The game usually seesaws back and forth with teams adding players and then getting wiped out!



## TRIPLES

In this game, players are divided into two teams of three to six players. Each side forms a triangle on their side of the court with one person at the center service "T", and two players behind the baseline. Extra players wait at the back fence to fill in from the baseline after each point. The ball is self-fed by a player on the baseline (the net player is not allowed to hit the first fed ball) and the point is played out using the doubles court. After each point, players rotate clockwise.



# PRACTICE PLAN

START TIME — END TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## THEME OF PRACTICE: ASPIRATION

### Warm-up: Dynamic stretches

Time: 10%

Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B.

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### Review previously learned skills:

All: Review theme of day, why it's important and what players should take away from practice.

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### New skill development:

Time: 10%

S-(C): XC groundstrokes from BL, players must alternate topspin and slice with every other shot.

(C): Repeat DL.

D: 36' warm-up. (B)2 up 2 back warm-up.

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### Serve and serve return:

Time: 20%

S: Serve to target (1/2 or 1/3 court) Returner to focus on deep XC return past service line.

D: Serve to target (1/2 or 1/3 court) Returner to focus on XC return at service line.

---

### Drills to reinforce skill development (theme of the day):

Time: 20%

S-(C): DL groundstrokes from BL, one side can only hit slice and other side can only hit their weaker shot.

(C): Repeat XC.

D-(K&L): FC, I formation with underhand feed from deuce then ad side.

(K & L): FC, I formation with serve from deuce then ad side (net player use signals).

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### Games and/or match play:

Time: 20%

S-(M): DL 2nd serve straight ahead to returner located on SL, returner  $\text{\textcircled{D}}$  volleys and plays point out, 2nd point played by player in serve position feeding lob to returner who now has racquet touching net. Rotate based on numbers.

(C)DL rally and point begins when one player hits ball that bounces inside the SL, play 2 and rotate based on numbers.

D-(E&F): FC, 1 up 1 back servers must serve and volley, returners must chip or lob return. Play deuce point and ad point and rotate.

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### Large group games:

Time: 10%

All: Wipeout

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### Wrap-up, static stretches, cool down, announcements, and take-home activities:

Time: 10%

All: Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B. Review takeaways from practice.

# PRACTICE PLAN

START TIME — END TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## THEME OF PRACTICE: DIRECTION CONTROL

### Warm-up: Dynamic stretches

Time: 10%

Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B.  
Dynamic stretches should be led by team captains.

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### Review previously learned skills:

Players are introduced to the racquet control of the day, direction and being able to control the ball left or right.

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### New skill development:

Time: 10%

All: (i) DL groundstrokes from NML, ping pong rally. (i): Repeat XC.  
(C): DL groundstrokes from BL, ping pong rally. (C): Repeat XC.

---

### Serve and serve return:

Time: 20%

All: Introduce serve index and XC returns, servers try to get their “serve number” out of 5 serves.

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### Drills to reinforce skill development (theme of the day):

Time: 20%

All: (C) DL groundstroke point play from BL. (C): Repeat XC. Rotate based on numbers.

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### Games and/or match play:

Time: 20%

All: (C) XC Serve and point play. Begin taking note of players with similar ability levels. Rotate based on numbers.

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### Large group games:

Time: 10%

All: Team Singles Ping Pong.

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### Wrap-up, static stretches, cool down, announcements, and take-home activities

Time: 10%

All: Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B. Review takeaways from practice.  
Homework is for players to define what “aspiration” means to them.

# PRACTICE PLAN

START TIME — END TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## THEME OF PRACTICE: REVIEW THE CONTROLS

### Warm-up: Dynamic stretches

Time: 10%

All: Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B.  
Dynamic stretches should be led by team captains.

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### Review previously learned skills:

Review the controls.

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### New skill development:

Time: 10%

S-(i): XC groundstrokes from NML, Ping Pong.  
(i): XC groundstrokes from BL, Ping Pong.  
D: Introduce the Doubles 36' warm-up and (B) 2 up, 2 back, warm-up

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### Serve and serve return:

Time: 20%

All: Servers will focus on hitting wide targets, returners focus on returning wide XC.  
Make sure players get to serve and return.

---

### Drills to reinforce skill development (theme of the day):

Time: 20%

All:  
(B): DL one player on SL one player on BL cooperative rally. BL player begins by hitting a lob and SL player hits OH, repeat as many times as possible.  
(B): XC one player on SL one player on BL cooperative rally. BL player hits ball to SL player who volleys back, sequence continues with BL player attempting to hit low over the net and volleyer attempting to volley back past SL.  
Rotate based on numbers

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### Games and/or match play:

Time: 20%

All:  
(C): XC groundstrokes from BL, players focused on moving their opponent wide off the court.  
(C): XC groundstrokes from BL, players rally with slice only, player must approach net when ball bounces inside SL on their side.  
Rotate based on numbers.

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### Large group games:

Time: 10%

All: Beat the Champ Singles on some courts and Beat the Champ Doubles on other courts.

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### Wrap-up, static stretches, cool down, announcements, and take-home activities:

Time: 10%

All: Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B. Review takeaways from practice. Have players share their leadership assignment.  
Homework is for players to think of what “persistence” means to them.

# PRACTICE PLAN

START TIME — END TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## THEME OF PRACTICE: REVIEW CONTROLS AND ENGAGE TACTICS

### Warm-up: Dynamic stretches

Time: 10%

All: Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B.  
Dynamic stretches should be led by team captains.

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### Review previously learned skills:

Review five controls from prior weeks.

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### New skill development:

Time: 10%

S:

(C): XC groundstrokes from BL, players alternate topspin and slice with every other shot.

(C): Repeat DL.

D: 36' warm-up. (B): 2 up, 2 back warm-up.

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### Serve and serve return

Time: 20%

S: Serve Index (1/2 or 1/3 court), returner to focus on deep return past SL.

D: Serve Index (1/2 or 1/3 court), returner to focus on return at service line.

---

### Drills to reinforce skill development (theme of the day):

Time: 20%

S-(C): DL Groundstrokes from BL, one side can only hit underspin and other side can only hit their weaker shot (forehand or backhand).

(C): Repeat XC

D-(K&L): FC, I formation with underhand feed, play point first from deuce side, then from ad side.

(K&L): FC, I formation serve points, play point first from deuce side, then ad side (net player uses signals indicating which way they'll move) Rotate based on numbers.

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### Games and/or match play:

Time: 20%

S- (M): DL 2nd serve straight ahead to returner located on SL, returner half- volleys and plays point out, 2nd point played by player in serve position feeding lob to returner who now has racquet touching net.

(C): DL groundstrokes from BL, point begins when one player hits a ball that lands inside the SL.

D-(E&F): FC, 1 up 1 back, servers must serve and volley, returners must chip or lob return. Play deuce point and ad point and rotate. Rotate based on numbers

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### Large group games:

Time: 10%

All: Around the World

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### Wrap-up, static stretches, cool down, announcements, and take-home activities:

Time: 10%

All- (C): Choose from Stretch Group A or Stretch Group B. Review takeaways from practice; getting comfortable utilizing different tactics to win points.

# STRETCHES

## DYNAMIC STRETCH GROUP A

The dynamic stretches below should be done at the beginning of practice.

### CARDIO/LOWERBODY

#### Karaoke Step Shuffle

- Have players stand on doubles sideline facing the net in ready position. They will then shuffle across the court and alternate one foot in front and one in back all the way across the court.
- Targets lower body muscles and tennis specific movements.
- Sets of 2 up and back down the court.

#### High Knees

- Players start on doubles sideline, and run extended knees upwards as they move across court.
- Should be done twice going up and back court.
- Targets lower body/calves.

#### Toe Walks

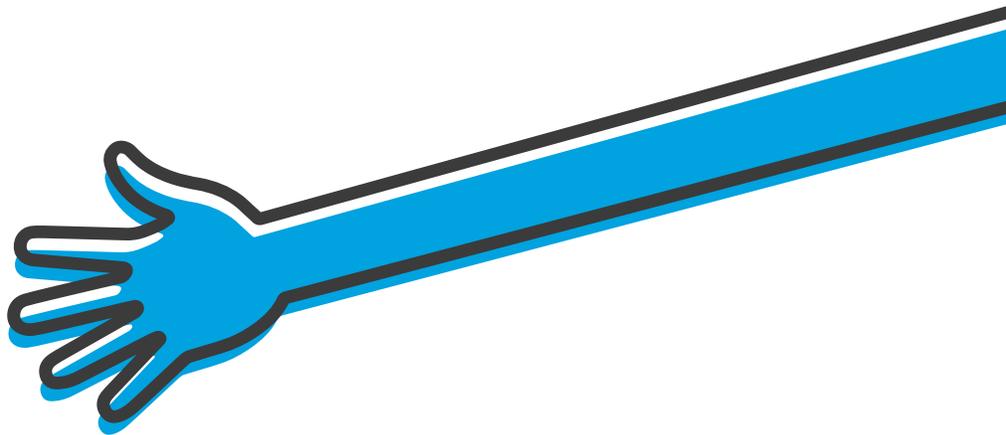
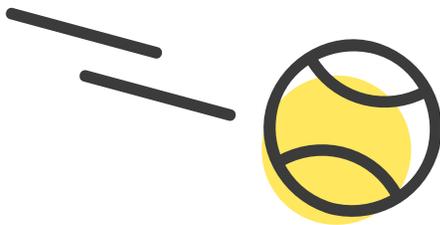
- Walk from doubles sideline to doubles sideline across court (on toes).
- Have players do it twice.
- Targets calf and lower leg muscles.

#### Alley Shuffle

- Player get in ready position facing net, then shuffle back and forth on the doubles sideline only.
- Short little steps, heels not touching. 20 second rotations then have players repeat.
- Targets thighs and lower leg muscles.

#### Butt Kicks

- Quick little steps, doubles sideline to doubles sideline. As players go across the court they kick heels to their back side.
- Players should go up and back court twice.
- Targets lower body (quad/calves).



## DYNAMIC STRETCH GROUP B

The dynamic stretches below should be done at the beginning of practice.

### CARDIO/LOWERBODY

#### Karaoke Step Shuffle

- Have players stand on doubles sideline facing the net in ready position. They will then shuffle across the court and alternate one foot in front and one in back all the way across the court.
- Targets lower body muscles and tennis specific movements.
- Sets of 2 up and back down the court.

#### High Knees

- Players start on doubles sideline, and run extended knees upwards as they move across court.
- Should be done twice going up and back court.
- Targets lower body/calves.

#### Heel Walks

- Walk from doubles sideline to doubles sideline on court (on heels).
- Have players do it twice.
- Targets calf and lower leg muscles.

#### Power Skip

- Players skip across court from singles sideline to singles sideline.
- Explosive movement in an upward motion as they move across court. See how high they can jump as they move across court each step. Should be done twice.
- Targets calf muscles.

#### Knee Hugs

- Players start at doubles sideline and walk across court. As they walk, they pull knee up to chest.
- Alternate legs as players walk across court and have them go up and back doubles sideline to doubles sideline.
- Targets quad muscles.



# HIGH SCHOOL GRIPS – THE SERVE



**PREPARATION**

**TOSS RELEASE**

**LOADING**

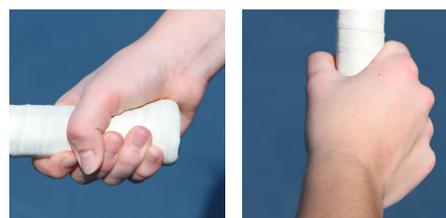
**HITTING**

**CONTACT**

**FINISH**

## Grip

The player should use a continental grip for the serve and overhead. This grip allows players to make contact with the ball at full extension, allows the wrist to relax and aids in creating spin.



## Preparation

The feet should be shoulder width apart with the front foot pointing toward the corresponding net post, right post for right-handers, left post for left-handers, and the back foot parallel with the baseline. The racquet should be supported at the throat with the non-dominant hand and the dominant hand should be in a relaxed continental grip. The toss release should occur above the head and follow in line in front of the forward foot.



Preparation

Toss Release

Loading

## Swing Path

Both arms will drop down and swing up together. The non-dominant hand tosses the ball in position and the racquet head drops down to the hitting position where the tip of the racquet points toward the ground. The racquet arm elbow leads forward and up and the racquet follows, accelerating to the contact at full extension above and slightly in front of the body, finishing down and across the body.



Position

Contact

Finish



TOGETHER WE WILL

**GROW  
THE GAME**

