# DEVELOPING TENNIS PLAYERS

**Ages 4-11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYER AGE</th>
<th>4-6 YEARS</th>
<th>6-8 YEARS</th>
<th>7-10 YEARS</th>
<th>9-11 YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Court and ball</strong></td>
<td>• RED court (36' x 18') or smaller</td>
<td>• RED court (36' x 18')</td>
<td>• ORANGE court (60' x 21') (60' x 27' doubles)</td>
<td>• GREEN court (78' x 27') (78' x 27' doubles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tape as net</td>
<td>• 2'9” net or tape as net</td>
<td>• 3' net</td>
<td>• 3’ net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Red foam and red felt ball</td>
<td>• Red ball</td>
<td>• Orange ball</td>
<td>• Green ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Player-centered environment</strong></td>
<td>Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive, positive with frequent changes of activity</td>
<td>Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive, positive and encouraging with emphasis on learning new skills</td>
<td>Enjoyable, active, inclusive, positive with progressive development of existing and new skill base</td>
<td>Enjoyable, active, inclusive, positive learning and reinforcing of new and existing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coach/ player ratio</strong></td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>1:4:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals to fit stage of development</strong></td>
<td>To develop basic skills of movement, catching, throwing and hitting</td>
<td>To develop athletic skills, technical and game skills for the tennis environment</td>
<td>To develop tennis-appropriate athletic, technical, game and competitive skills</td>
<td>To combine tennis-appropriate technical, tactical, physical and psychological skills for competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Athletic development
- Running, jumping, hopping, twisting, turning, stopping, starting, static balance, catching with two hands
- Agility, dynamic balance, bilateral coordination, skipping, hopping, throwing/tossing and catching away from body with either hand, flexibility, strength.
- Handling the racquet
- Tracking the ball with increased anticipation of bounce position
- Increasing understanding of height, depth and width of ball flight
- Basic forehand and backhand (GPS: Grip, Preparation, Swing Path)
- Overhand serve (grip, stance, arm action, rhythm, contact)
- Service return
- Basic volley
- Developing understanding of pace and spin on ball flight
- Forehand and backhand (stance grip, shape of shot, types of spin)
- Serve (grip, stance, arm action, rhythm, contact, rotation, types of spin)
- Service return: with change of direction
- Approach shot to volley
- Overhead
- Forehand and backhand (racquet speed and change of spin, hit ball at top of bounce or falling)
- Serve (stance, speed, spin on second serve, placement to move opponent, hit ball to rise off court)
- Service return: hit rising or falling ball
- Approach shot to hit high or low volley

### Technical development
- Handling racquet
- Increasing understanding of ball flight (height, depth and width)
- Hitting on forehand and backhand side
- Underhand or overhead serve
- Multi-directional movement, including diagonally backwards with loading and recovery
- Movement, loading and recovery in all directions

### Movement
- Developing balance in different movement patterns
- Forwards, sideways and diagonally forward
- Basic recovery movement
- Love of the sport, teachability, concentration, problem solving, becoming confident, making choices, learning fairness, taking responsibility

### Psychological development
- Trying new challenges, effort, following instructions
- Concentration, willingness to learn, learning to make choices, respectful, understanding rules, coping with winning and losing, learning to solve problems
- Competitiveness, focus, simple goal-setting, self-motivation, confidence, learning to make decisions, developing self-reliance, understanding winning and losing
# PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

## Tactical development
- Groundstrokes consistent to different zones of court
- Serve consistent into service court
- Basic positioning
- Consistency of depth
- Accuracy to move opponent
- Positioning to take ball on fall or on rise.
- Developing groundstroke strength
- Consistency of depth with change of pace
- Ability to change pace and spin
- Serve with accuracy to move opponent
- Able to change direction of ball
- Positioning and recovery
- Developing strengths
- Introduce transitioning to net
- Consistency and accuracy of depth with variety of pace and spin
- Improved anticipation skills of opponent to increase shot options
- Developing understanding of outcome of opponent's actions on ball
- Developing strengths: use pace and direction to move opponent
- Recognition of opponent's weakness on short ball
- Developing ability to control the point

## Game development
- Reactive
- Learning to rally, serve and return serve
- Able to score with help
- Reactive to opponent's shots
- Able to rally, serve and return serve
- Able to score by self
- Reactive to opponents shots with improved shot selection
- Singles: able to hold the baseline
- Doubles: communication, basic positions, use of angles
- Singles: increasingly proactive with decision-making
- Doubles: changing positions, role of the net player, both players to the net

## Social / behavioral development
- Learning to share
- Learning to say thank you
- Like to be with friends
- Are center of their world
- Need variety of short, new and familiar activities
- Learning to cooperate with and help other children
- Learning to consider other people
- Learning through familiar activities
- Learning to compete against other players
- Learning about tennis
- Helping other players in the group and sharing
- Happy to be with their own gender. Able to help and listen to the coach
- Respecting partners and opponents, coaches and officials. Can acknowledge others’ success. Happy to work with their own gender
- Can accept adult opinions as important
- Can verbalize opinions /thoughts and can explain well

# PRACTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice format</th>
<th>Small groups</th>
<th>Small groups</th>
<th>Small groups</th>
<th>Small groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of sessions</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>45 to 60 minutes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>75 minutes group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of sessions</td>
<td>Up to two times per week</td>
<td>Up to 2 sessions with optional additional competition day</td>
<td>Group: Up to three times per week</td>
<td>Group: Up to three times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and team sports and activities that develops agility, balance, coordination, running and sending and receiving skills</td>
<td>Individual and team sports and activities that develops agility, balance, coordination, running and sending and receiving skills</td>
<td>Individual and team sports and activities, with emphasis on enjoyment and skill learning</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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# COMPETITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of competition</th>
<th>Structured, but flexible program</th>
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<th>Maximum 40 competition days per year</th>
<th>Maximum of 60 competition days per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Competition</td>
<td>Parent and child sessions, Cooperative games</td>
<td>Play Days, Team Tennis, Local competition</td>
<td>Team Tennis, Local/state competition, Short sets, timed matches and round robins</td>
<td>Team Tennis, Individual state/sectional competition, 2 out of 3 “short” sets/round robins and compass draws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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