



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TENNIS

Intramurals and Student Tennis Clubs

Overview

The USTA recommends organizers utilize the QuickStart Tennis (QST) play format when working with schools. QST uses short courts, modified equipment, and simplified scoring so children can experience success immediately. This play format can be set up right on school grounds, inside or out, allowing kids in every neighborhood the chance to pick up the lifetime sport of tennis.

Your Role

Anyone can help to start a school tennis club/league: PE teachers, administrators, faculty, parents, volunteers, tennis teaching pros and/or after school providers.

Getting Started

Obtain necessary approvals

- Meet with appropriate school administrators (principal, athletic director, PTA/PTO president).
- Check the school system student activity handbook for any rules and regulations.
- Get required school clearance for all volunteers.
- Determine if the proposed club/league can be a school sponsored and funded event.

Set a schedule and a playing area

- Determine the season - consider weather, school terms, and conflicts with other extra-curricular activities and sports.
- Determine the playing area - tennis can be played in almost any available activity space such as blacktops, gym floors, multi-purpose courts, and even on school fields.
- Obtain insurance to conduct the program as required by school/district.

You will need:

- An indoor or outdoor play area.
 - Most any activity space will do. Existing markings on floors (badminton and volleyball lines) can be utilized. Flat rubber lines, chalk or tape can be used for playing surfaces that are not marked.
- Lightweight nets and portable standards; or makeshift nets or barriers.
 - Use any lightweight net that can cover an 18' to 20' area.
 - A badminton or volleyball net can be used.
 - You can improvise using plastic barrier tape, yellow caution tape, or rope with streamers.
- Junior tennis racquets.
 - Suggested racquet lengths range from 21" – 23" for 36' courts and 23" – 25" for 60' courts.
- Foam and/or low compression tennis balls.
 - Foam balls are best for beginning players on smaller courts and indoor spaces.
 - Low compression/low bounce felt balls are best for the intermediate players on a 60' court.

Play!

The Game

The goal of the QuickStart Tennis play format is to simulate full-size tennis. As a result, play can be either singles or doubles. Overhand or underhand serves can be used. Once in play, the ball can be hit after one bounce or out of the air. All other rules parallel tennis.

Serving

Players receive two attempts to get their serve in to start the point (overhand or underhand).

Scoring

For beginners 8 and under, numerical scoring is recommended (1-2-3-4) with games being seven point tie breaks. If time permits, play two out or three games. For more advanced players and those over 8, use numerical scoring with games being first to win four points and sets being first to win four games.

Organizing Play

There are many successful models for organizing play. These range from drop-in and round-robin formats to structured team play and non-elimination tournaments. We recommend play formats that emphasize participation. Team play formats are a perfect bridge toward no-cut team programs at the middle school and high school level.

- Supervised Drop-in Tennis (“Skate Park” style)
 - o Concept: To provide a safe and open play environment in which kids can participate in self-directed tennis games (e.g. Champ of the Court) or practice skills with their classmates.
 - o How to: Arrange set days and times in which equipment will be set up at school for kids to use with adult supervision.
- Flexible Team Competition
 - o Concept: To allow for team competition in a situation where the student population changes from day to day.
 - o How to: Divide students into teams and play a series of short scoring singles and doubles matches (e.g. 7 point games), or for a designated time (ten-minute matches).
- Structured Team Play
 - o Concept: To provide structured team matches with students remaining on the same team for an entire season.
 - o How to: Students are divided into teams representing their class, their grade, or their school. Team size should reflect the facilities, with the goal of creating matches where every player can remain active. Schedule of matches should allow each team to play each other at least once during the season.

For the official specifications of QuickStart Tennis play format visit: www.QuickStarttennis.com

Grow Your Program

- Get to know P.E. teachers, parents and personnel of the school/s and distribute information
- Offer to assist with P.E. classes and conduct demos using the QuickStart Tennis play format
 - o Through the USTA, kids are introduced to tennis in the P.E. classes, which transition into after school and summer tennis programs including NJTL and USTA Jr. Team Tennis.
- Promote efforts in your school through the local paper, school announcements, and school web pages
- Host a kickoff event and organize players into teams
 - o Offer prizes and refreshments
 - o Utilize parents and volunteers as coaches and organizers
 - o Recruit local middle school and high school players as assistants
- Conduct a season-ending event and provide participation awards and refreshments
- As players advance in skill, help transition players from modified courts to full-court formats. They can join local USTA Jr. Team Tennis leagues (www.jrteamtennis.usta.com). Additionally, many of these kids will also join no-cut middle school and high school teams.