

Station Teaching

One of the most effective ways for introducing tennis to multiple numbers of students in limited spaces is to utilize activity stations. The *USTA Physical Educators Guide for Teaching Tennis in Schools* has a CD of tennis & fitness signs that can accommodate 20–100 students without the need for tennis courts.

Descriptions for each activity are included on the back of the signs for quick reference. The signs are intended to be printed out, laminated, and attached to cones, buckets, walls, etc., for easy viewing. Below is a list of signs that are included in the curriculum:

Tennis Skill Signs (blue border)

- Racquet and ball handling
- Ready position and catch
- Toss, volley, and catch
- Partner bean bag (ball) pass
- Partner rallies over line
- Wall rallies
- Serve and trap
- Short court tennis

Fitness Signs (red border)

- Rope jumping
- Partner ball tossing/rolling/bouncing
- Upper body fitness challenges
- Side shuffle
- Flexibility challenges
- Partner bean bag pass while moving
- Abdominal fitness challenges
- Racquet quickness with partner

One of the advantages of station teaching is that it gives the teacher an opportunity to vary the activities in a class and thus help ensure success for students of varying skills or those with special needs. It also makes it possible to maximize available equipment within a limited space.

Following are some key teaching hints and reminders for station based teaching:

- Set up the tennis station signs around the perimeter of the teaching area.
- Assign groups of 4-8 students for each station. One student in each group can be appointed as a leader to help ensure the activities are conducted properly.
- Put the necessary equipment at each station and ask students to replace the equipment where they found it before they move to the next station.
- It usually takes about 15-20 seconds for students to put back the equipment and move up to a new station.
- Allow 2-3 minutes at each station for students to practice. Place emphasis on working in a responsible manner.
- Move between stations and explain the stations while students are engaged. It is usually counterproductive to sit the class down and explain all the stations; students cannot remember all of the explanations and fidget because they want to get started.
- Ask students do the best they can at each station within the time limit. Students differ in their ability to perform workloads.
- Some teachers find it helpful to play music in the background. When music is playing, students practice at their station. When the music stops, it signals time to move up to the next station.
- In between rotations, the teacher can offer "turbo tips" which can be used to reinforce proper skills, safety, and acknowledge effort.
- Refer to the back of this page for a diagram of stations and descriptions of popular station activities.

We hope you take advantage of the station signs included as part of the School Tennis curriculum kit to create a positive first time experience for tennis in school. For additional resources and information on USTA School Tennis, visit: www.usta.com/schooltennis.

Sample Tennis & Fitness Station Routine

1. Racquet and Ball Handling

- Tap Downs—try and bounce the ball down at waist level
- Bump Ups—try and bounce the ball up eye level without letting the ball touch the ground
- Edgies—try and dribble the ball down at waist level using the edge of the tennis racquet
- Self-Rallies—Alternate bumping the ball off the racquet and off the ground
- Invent a Bounce— Players attempt different ways to dribble or bump the ball – this can even be choreographed to music as a rhythm and skills challenge.

2. Partner Ball Tossing, Rolling, and Catching - Balls can be tossed, rolled, or bounced between partners. Players should keep their fingers up when attempting to catch. For an additional challenge, players can toss balls one at a time or two at a time, while stationary or moving.

3. Toss, Hit, and Catch - One player tosses a ball to the forehand or backhand side of their partner. The ball can either be bumped or volleyed out of the air back to the tosser. Begin with partners three steps apart and have players attempt to make five successful hits and catches before switching.

4. Ready Position and Catch - One player is the tosser and the other player is in ready position with a racquet. The beanbag (or foam ball) is tossed to either the forehand or backhand side of the player in ready position. Their goal is to catch it on the racquet strings and learn to move into position rather than reaching for the ball. Switch positions after five tosses.

5. Wall Rallies – Standing 10-15 feet away, players attempt to rally the ball consecutively against a wall. Rallies can be done individually or in pairs or teams with players alternating hits.

6. Jump Rope - Players can practice jumping rope individually or with partners. For an extra challenge, players can attempt jumping with two ropes at once (“double dutch”) do 360 degree turns, or juggle a ball in the air while their partners turn the ropes.

7. Partner Rallies over Line (or Net) -

Partners work together with a line or jump rope between them to serve as an imaginary net. They bump the ball back and forth using forehands and backhands. To start the rally, players should start close, match up the racquet faces, and take two steps back. Have players try and set the “world record” for longest rally.

8. Racquet Quickness - Partners are about 3 feet apart while balancing their racquets. On signal, they release their racquet and try to catch their partner's racquet before it falls to the ground. If both partners catch their racquet, they each step back one step and repeat the challenge. An additional challenge is to make a full turn after the release and before catching the racquet.

Center Court Play: Additional space can be reserved for players to play games of Team Singles, Team Doubles or other self-directed tennis games (e.g. Champ of the Court, Challenge Court, etc.).

