

PRE-RALLY / RED BALL

COACH'S CURRICULUM

Pre-Rally/Red Ball Practice And Play Plans

PRE-RALLY / RED BALL 03 / RED BALL 02 / RED BALL 01

DEAR COACH,

WELCOME TO NET GENERATION!

On behalf of the USTA, we thank you for supporting Net Generation. You are the key to growing the game, and together, we can shape the future of tennis. Net Generation isn't just a new brand—it's a comprehensive platform and development program for kids ages 5 through 18. By creating a singular platform for tennis that we all can rally behind, and through the support the USTA will offer along the way, we believe we can grow participation, instill the love of the game in future generations, and ensure that tennis remains a vibrant sport in our communities for years to come.

As U.S. Fed Cup and U.S. Davis Cup captains, former professional tennis players, and parents, we are Net Generation ambassadors because we believe this new approach will benefit the growth of youth tennis. We believe that no other sport is meeting the needs of today's discerning parents, players, coaches, and community organizations quite like we will with Net Generation.

By registering and becoming an active part of Net Generation, you will get access to the very best in coaching curriculum, digital tools and resources that make teaching, coaching, planning and playing easier, and marketing resources and support to enhance your programs' visibility. The USTA created Net Generation with you in mind and we hope to hear from you about what is working, what is not, and what materials, curriculum and tools will help you. After all, this is your brand and without your talents as a coach, teacher, and mentor, we cannot inspire kids to get in the game—and stay in it.

This coach's manual is just one item under the Net Generation brand. It's comprehensive, competency-based, collaborative, and packaged conveniently online with additional resources to help you customize your approach to teaching the sport you love.

Again, thank you for being a part of Net Generation! Together, we will shape the future of tennis!

Jim Courier

U.S. Davis Cup Captain
Net Generation Ambassador



Kathy Rinaldi

U.S. Fed Cup Captain
Net Generation Ambassador



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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for registering your to Net Generation. It is great to have you as part of the team where our focus is to have more kids playing tennis more often. Net Generation starts with all of us, and we're here to usher in a new era of tennis in the United States.

Net Generation is the United States Tennis Association (USTA) official youth brand and development program that captures the imagination of parents and children ages 5 through 18. One that taps into the adaptability and creativity children and parents seek when choosing activities.

The following practice and play plans are unique to the USTA and have been developed and designed specifically for you, the coach. In doing so they are:

COMPREHENSIVE

Covers the beginner Red Ball to the advanced Green Ball player.

COMPETENCY BASED

Spells out the skills and knowledge each player should have before moving to the next ball and court size.

COLLABORATIVE

Includes nine levels developed by the USTA Community Tennis and Player Development divisions, USPTA and PTR, and subject matter experts in the field from the U.S. and abroad.

CONVENIENT

Lets you select the method of delivery that works best for you—printed manual, downloadable PDFs, or coaches app.

Inside this manual you'll find four levels of Practice and Play Plans—Pre-Rally, Red Ball 3, Red Ball 2, and Red Ball 1. Each plan consists of eight chapters. We recommend you use each Practice Plan twice before moving on to the next plan. When you finish all the plans, you can start from the beginning again or move certain players to the next level.

Before you get started, take some time to review the necessary equipment, structure of the plans and descriptions of the activities.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

PLAYGROUND BALLS

Large, lightweight balls available at most big-box stores.

RED BALLS

Low-compression red felt and red foam.

RACQUETS

23 inches and smaller.

BALL BUCKETS

40- to 60-quart plastic containers or small plastic paint buckets. The large containers can hold playground balls or red balls, and the small buckets are ideal when players work in small groups and need a limited supply of red balls.

POLY-SPOTS AND THROW-DOWN LINES (TDL)

For targets, recovery spots, court lines, group control, etc.

BEANBAGS

Can be made or purchased.

HULA HOOPS

Available at most big-box stores.

CONES

Nine-inch and half-cones.

NETS

If you don't have an 18-foot mini-net, which is designed specifically for a 36-foot court, you can attach things like tennis tape, rope or pendant banners to a standard net or to objects such as fences, teaching carts, hoppers, chairs/benches or cooler stands.



STRUCTURE OF PRACTICE AND PLAY PLANS

WARMUP

Pre-Rally and Red Ball 3 start with a simple activity that gives players a chance to become engaged and the coach time to make final adjustments for the session. As players progress into Red Ball 2 and Red Ball 1, they start with a hitting warmup, during which they start hitting to get the entire body moving, and prepare for the theme of the day.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Athletic: For Pre-Rally and Red Ball 3, these are fundamental movement skills that work on the ABCs (agility, balance and coordination), along with sending and receiving skills such as rolling, tossing (underhand), throwing (overhand) and catching. Red Ball 2 and Red Ball 1 focus on fundamental skills for the hands and feet for the ABCs, but add more tennis-specific activities.

Tennis: Skills in Pre-Rally and Red Ball 3 chapters serve as building blocks for serve, rally and score. In Red Ball 2 and Red Ball 1 chapters, skills work on tactics, technique and movement.

GAMES

Players are divided into teams to work on the skills covered in each practice.

CHARACTER (ALL LEVELS)

Practices have a character theme that can apply to both tennis and life.

PLAY AT HOME (ALL LEVELS)

After each lesson, players are assigned specific challenges to practice at home. These can be done independently or with a friend or family member.



DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITIES



TYPE

Individual: Independent skill development.

Team: Two or more players.

Cooperative: Pairs or groups focused on improving skills together.

Competitive: Scoring and declaring a winner.

Hand-Feed: How the ball is introduced into the activity; can be by player or coach.

FOCUS

Specific areas to work on.

SETUP

Location of players, balls and equipment.

MISSION

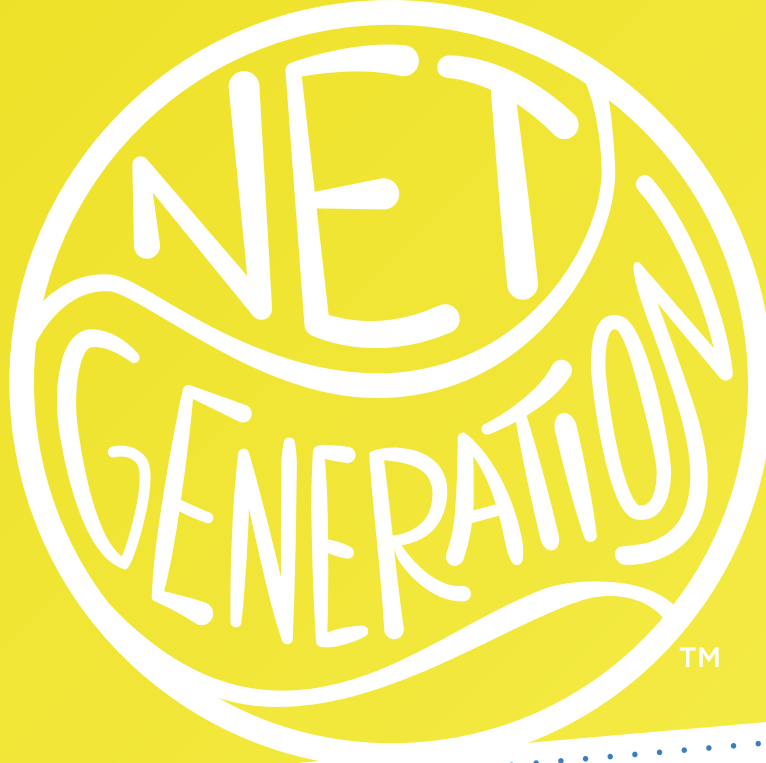
WHAT we want players to do, followed by bullets with specific instructions.

GOAL

HOW we want players to execute the activity, generally related to a specific competency.

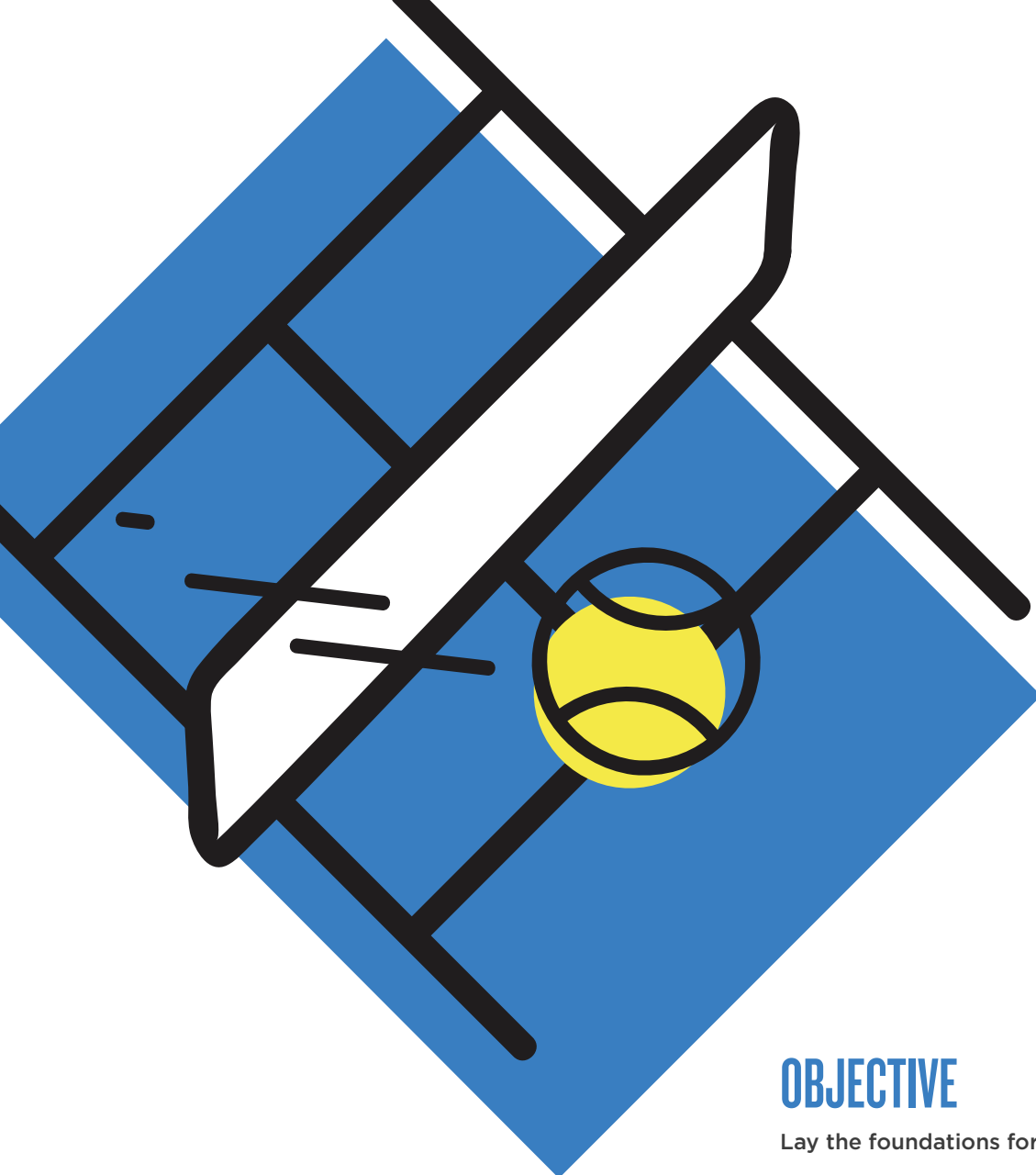
PROGRESSIONS

Specific steps to increase difficulty of the skill/activity, to be used in subsequent practices or to handle mixed abilities.



PRE- RALLY





OBJECTIVE

Lay the foundations for serve, rally and score.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Total: 45 minutes

- Warmup: 8 – 10 minutes
- Character: 3 minutes or less
- Skills (athletic and tennis): 20 – 25 minutes
- Team Challenge: 10 – 12 minutes
- Play at Home: 3 minutes or less

PLANS AT A GLANCE



	Warmup	Character	Athletic Skills Development	Tennis Skills Development	Team Challenge	Play at Home
01 Meet the Ball	Tag Variations	Respect	Ice-Cream Cones	Walk the Dog	Add 'Em Up	Toss to Wall and Catch
			Ice-Cream Cones w/Partner	Walk the Dog w/Partner	Bullseye	
02 Meet My Racquet	Self-Toss	Respect	Obstacle Course	Balance the Egg	Red Light/Green Light	Bungees
			Pizza Delivery	Balance the Egg w/Partner	Tennis Sandwich	
				Bungee Jump		
				Start Your Engines		
03 Control the Ball and Racquet	Messy Bedroom	Respect	Monster Walks with Ball	Walk the Dog Zigzag	Touchdown	Jacks
			Big-Ball Tennis	Walk the Dog Zigzag w/Partner	Survivor	
				Jacks		
04 Forehands and Backhands	Tic-Tac-Toe	Respect	Get Tall/Get Small	Walk the Dog Backhands	Touchdown with Backhand	Jacks with Backhand
			Closest to the Net	Walk the Dog Backhands w/Partner	Survivor with Backhand	
				Jacks with Backhand		
05 Watch Me Rally	Tag Variations	Respect	Jump to the Line	Bungee Flips	Battle Spots	Jacks Flips
			Partner Drop	Jacks Flips		
				Lobster Trap		
06 Rally with My Partner	Messy Bedroom	Teamwork	Rock-Paper-Scissors to a Target	Keep it Moving	Bucket Tap	Wall or Partner Rally
			Hot Potato	Lollipop		
				Hoopla		
07 Serve and Rally	Silly Runs	Teamwork	Hopscotch	Over/Under	Serve Pyramids	Rally with Family or Friend
			Target Throws	Color Call		
08 Tennis Olympics	Tic-Tac-Toe	Teamwork	Relay Races	Tennis Olympics	Tennis Olympics	Bounce Master

CHAPTER 01

MEET THE BALL

Equipment: 18-foot mini-net, caution tape or any type of rope; 19 and 21-inch racquets; playground balls and red balls; beanbags, nine-inch cones, small buckets/containers, poly-spots and TDLs.

I. WARMUP

TAG VARIATIONS

Setup

- Players spread out in defined spaces with four to six in each area.
- Can use cones to establish playing area.

WALKING TAG

Mission

- One player is “it.” Anyone moving must walk.
- Once tagged, move outside playing area, do five repetitions of a fun exercise such as donkey kicks or “I’m a Star” jumps, then come back in.
- Rotate “it” player every minute or less.

Progressions

1. “It” player moves freely (running, etc.); others walk.
2. In a smaller area of play, “it” player walks; others move freely.

SIDE-SHUFFLE TAG

Mission—One player is “it.” Anyone moving must side-shuffle.

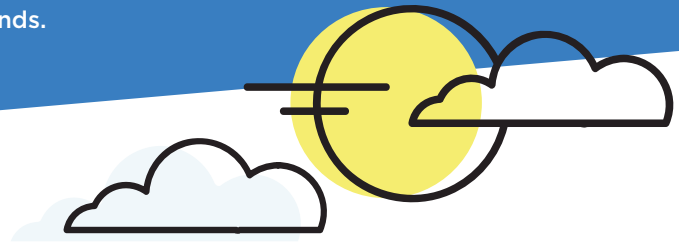
Progression

“It” player moves freely; others must side-shuffle, or vice versa.

II. CHARACTER

RESPECT

- Smile and say hello.
- Introduce yourself to your coach and new tennis friends.



III. ATHLETIC SKILLS

ICE-CREAM CONES

Setup

Players spread out around entire court, each with red ball and cone.

Mission

- Toss, bounce and catch ball in upturned cone.
- Call out different ice-cream flavor after each catch.

Progressions

1. Alternate between catching after bounce and catching in the air.
2. How many scoops can you catch in a row?

ICE-CREAM CONES WITH PARTNER

Setup

One player catches, other tosses.

Mission

- Toss ball up at least head level.
- Bounce and catch in upturned cone.

Progressions

1. Increase height and distance once successful.
2. Catch with opposite hand.
3. Toss with opposite hand.

IV. TENNIS SKILLS

WALK THE DOG

Type: Individual.

Focus: Racquet skills while rolling.

Setup

- Up to four players on one sideline (both sides of net).
- Each player has red ball, racquet and poly-spot.
- Place poly-spots on opposite sideline, aligned with each player.

Mission—Roll ball to poly-spot and return.

- Roll ball with edge of racquet to opposite sideline.
- Stop ball on poly-spot with edge of racquet, roll back to sideline and stop ball again.
- Need help? Use big ball.

Goal—Roll successfully without using other hand.

Progressions

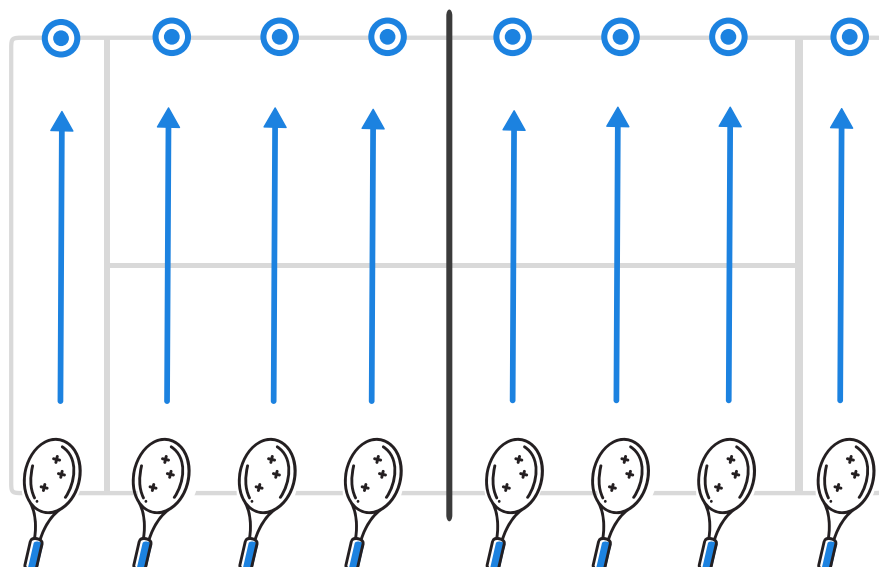
1. Use backhand.
2. Zigzag to spot and back by using both sides of racquet.
3. Let players pick.



TEACHING TIP

Foam balls tend to get “stuck” against the racquet when rolling along ground. Use a red felt ball instead to keep racquet steady.

ILLUSTRATION: WALK THE DOG



WALK THE DOG WITH PARTNER

Type: Cooperative, players in pairs.

Focus: Racquet skills and sending with direction.

Setup

- Players in pairs with racquets and one red ball.
- Pairs spread out on one sideline, two pairs on each side of court.
- Place poly-spot on both sidelines for each pair.

Mission—Roll ball to poly-spot and send back on ground.

- Start on sideline and roll ball with edge of racquet to opposite sideline.
- Stop ball on poly-spot, turn and send ball along ground back to partner, and walk back to starting sideline.
- Partner stops ball with racquet, repeats.
- Need help? Use big ball.

Goal—Send ball along ground with control and hit poly-spot.

Progressions

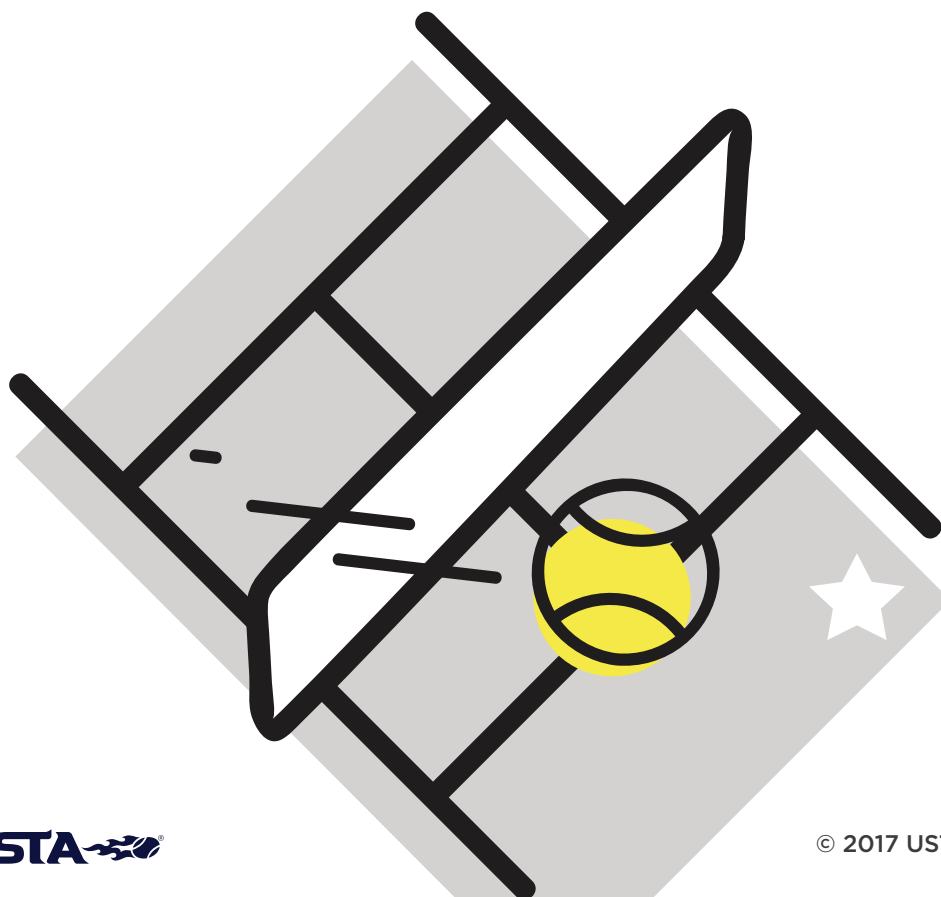
1. Use forehands and backhands.
2. Zigzag to spot using both sides of racquet.
3. Let players pick.



TEACHING TIP

When rolling the ball along the ground with the edge of the racquet, the goal is to keep the ball against the racquet the entire time. When players are “sending” the ball with the racquet, they’re gently pushing the ball to a partner/target using an abbreviated follow-through.

V. TEAM CHALLENGE



ADD 'EM UP

Type: Individual, team.

Focus: Sending with direction.

Setup

- Four to eight players per half-court.
- Align cones or poly-spots six to eight feet inside baseline. Cones should be numbered; poly-spots will have a color.
- Place TDLs on baseline to indicate players' positions, with a supply of balls for each player.

Mission—Hit cones/spots by rolling ball with racquet.

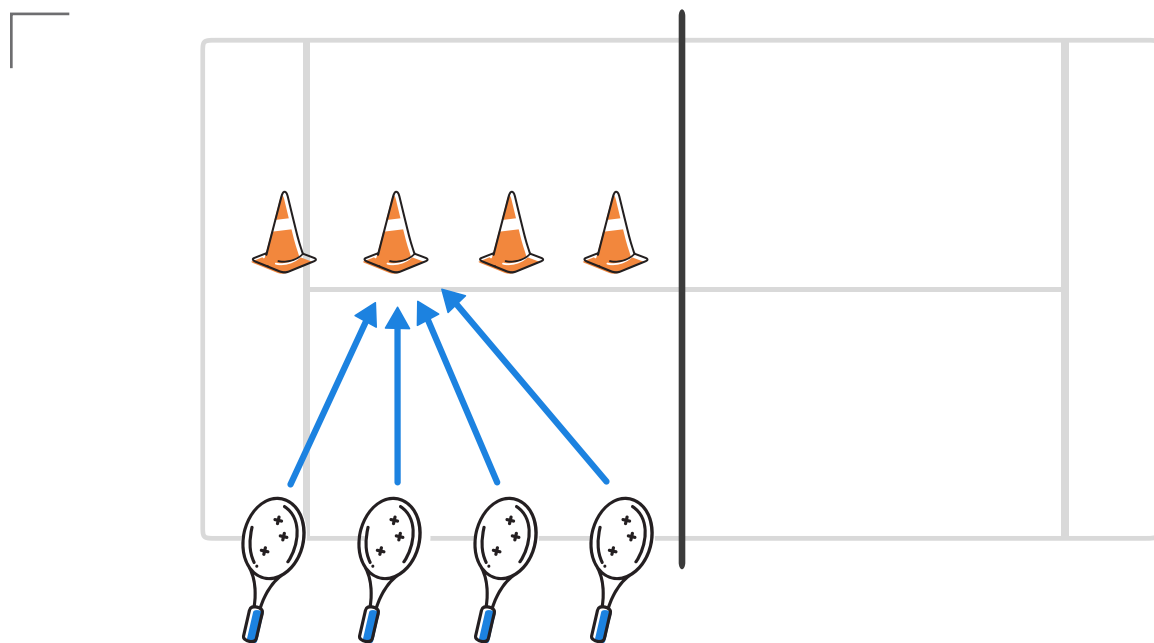
- Players aim at cones/spots in front of them and score points each time they hit one.
- Change positions after a certain number of hits.
- Add up scores as a team to see if they can get to a certain number, or play by time and go for a “team best.”
- Need help? Roll with hand.

Goal—Make adjustments with feet and racquet angle when aiming for different targets.

Progressions

1. Coach or player calls out color/number.
2. Use backhands and forehands.
3. Drop-hit to cones/spots.

ILLUSTRATION: ADD 'EM UP



BULLSEYE

Type: Individual, team activity.

Focus: Sending with direction.

Setup

- Two teams of three to four on each side of net.
- Each team has supply of red felt balls.
- Service box is “big target.” Use TDLs to create another “small target” inside service box (about half the size of box). Place a poly-spot in center of small target.

Mission—Send ball along ground and try to hit bullseye.

- Take turns tapping ball with racquet (palm forward) from baseline toward service-box target.
- Create scoring system for different target areas.
- Add up teams’ scores to see if they can get to a certain number, or play by time and go for a “team best.”
- Need help? Use hands to roll.

Goal—Control racquet with limited motion.

Progressions

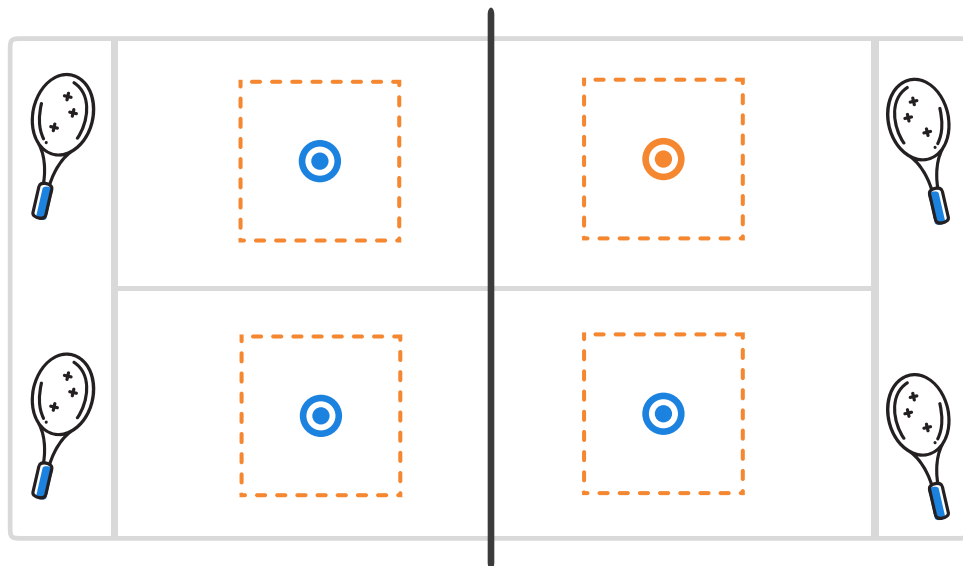
1. Start further behind baseline.
2. Use backhands and forehands.
3. Drop-hit to targets.



TEACHING TIP

To help with scoring, put seven half-cones in a line on one side of the court. For each point scored, turn cone upside down. Goal is to get to seven.

ILLUSTRATION: BULLSEYE



VI. PLAY AT HOME

TOSS TO WALL AND CATCH

Setup

Play with red ball against garage door or any solid wall.

Progressions

1. Toss ball to wall, let bounce, catch with two hands or one.
2. Start with throws, then tosses.
3. Play with a friend and alternate.



TEACHING TIP

“Play at Home” will usually be an activity that has already been covered in practice. Try to keep instructions brief, and more than anything, inspire them to want to play more!