

UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION SCHOOLS PROGRAM

# TENNIS

Drills, Games

And

Activities



TENNIS! LEARN IT IN SCHOOL, ENJOY IT FOR LIFE!

*Drills, Games and Activities* was originally compiled in 1988 by USTA Schools Program Director Betsy Thurmond. These games, drills and activities can be modified for facility, class size or ability. Your facility situation may be blacktop, gymnasium, field or tennis court. There are events for "tiny tots," beginners, advanced beginners and intermediates. Students - tennis players and non-players alike - can enjoy this variety of tennis related games and activities.

This document serves a variety of audiences:

- \* A physical educator for a tennis "field day" or for a physical education tennis unit

- An 🍎 symbol indicates recommended for field day/station tennis

- \* "Field Days" offer voluntary opportunities for children to choose a variety of activities purely for enjoyment, using tennis the way a track and field day would operate.

- \* "Station" or learning-center tennis offers multiple-site skill development activities to students, especially beneficial for classes with various skill levels.

- \* A USTA Clinician or Community Tennis Association conducting a tennis carnival or tennis olympics

- \* USTA/National Junior Tennis League team leaders for practice, instruction or play days

- \* Park and Recreation department tennis programmers for instruction days or a season-ending event

- \* USTA Play Tennis America adult entry-level programs

Many of the activities listed have suggested time limits, equipment needs and how to award points, if conducting a carnival/olympics. We suggest modifying any activity for your situation.

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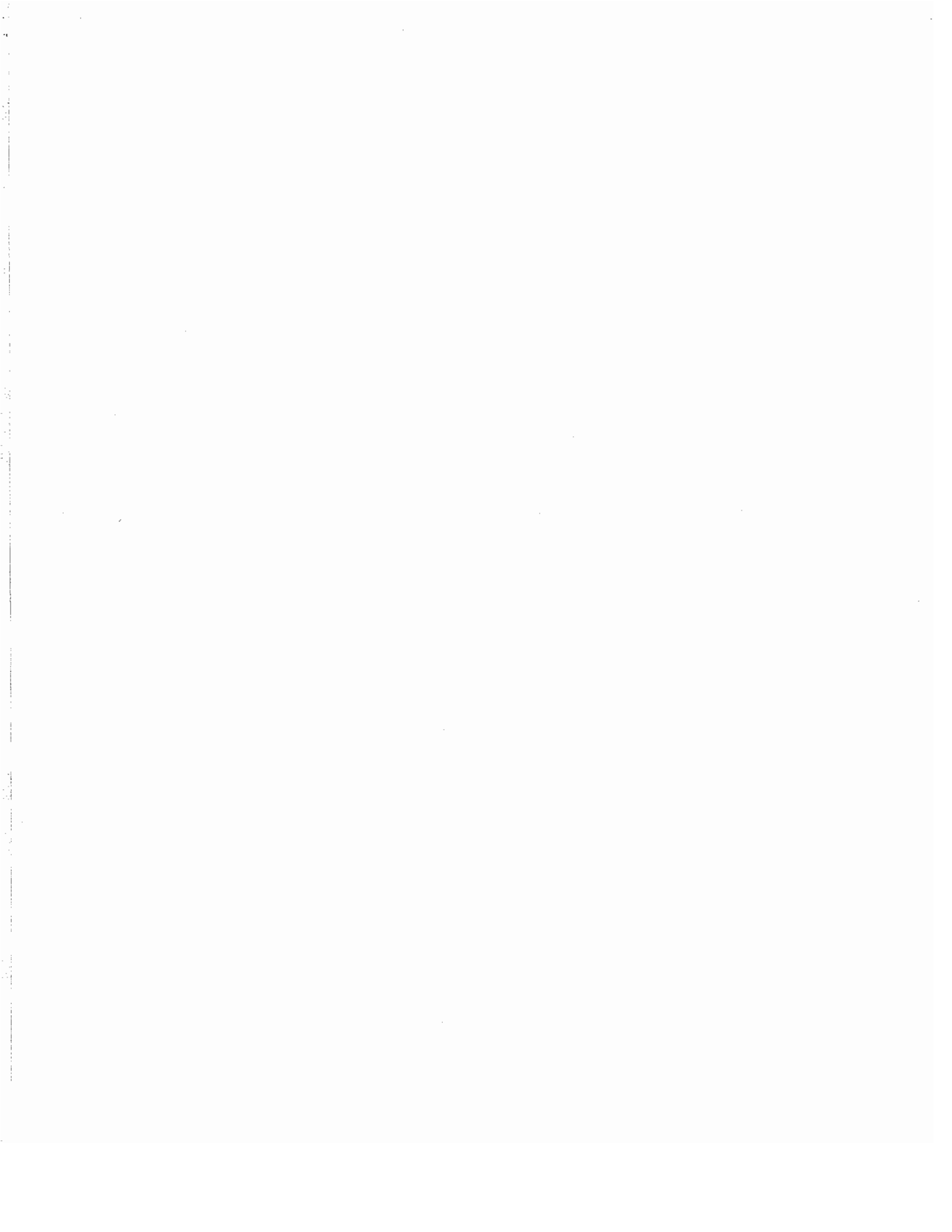
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## ● KNOWLEDGE ACTIVITIES

These can be played after conditioning while the children are catching their breath, as a rainy day activity or even in the car on the way to a match. A good opportunity for kids with lesser playing ability to shine.

### **Name A Pro**

Individuals or team players name someone (a tennis pro) whose name begins with the letter "A". The next person or team must name a pro whose name begins with the last letter of the previously announced name.

**Example:** Ashe, Evert, Teltscher, Rinaldi...

### **Numbers Game 🍏**

Team leader announces a number. Players explain the relationship of that number to tennis.

**Examples:** "2" - number of people on a side for doubles

"4" - number of points required to win a game

"3" - height of net at center

"78" - length of court, year Jimmy Connors won the U.S. Open

### **Know Your Teammates and Name Your Team**

While standing in a circle, team captain and youngsters will introduce one another, trying to remember as many names as possible.

Time limit: 2 minutes

Equipment: none, other than a good memory!

Points awarded: To the teams whose captains remember everyone's name.

**Hint:** Try to use the names as much as possible when doing the events.

## ● TENNIS SKILL DRILL & MIMETICS

Mimetics is a type of shadow activity where form is usually the main objective. Good activity for large number of children; controlled environment.

### **Simon Says**

Rather than playing in the traditional elimination style, ask the children to come up with some other "funny" consequence to "suffer" if player doesn't do as Simon says.

**Example:** Hopping up and down 5 times on 1 foot, pointing one finger to top of one's head and twirling around 3 times, rubbing one's stomach while patting one's head,... the idea is to have the group agree on the penalty.

Team leader calls out signals as follows: "Simon says racket back on the forehand side, Simon says step in, Simon says swing, and ready." Anyone following the last command would have to suffer the consequences because Simon didn't say.

### **Freeze**

Team leader signals for forehand, backhand, serve. Periodically, in the middle of a stroke, the leader calls "freeze." Players must stop and hold their exact grip, stroke and foot position. It's important to be able to maintain one's balance in tennis.

## Shadows

Team leader leads the group in a sequence of strokes, demonstrating, footwork and racket control. This activity can also be used for conditioning.

**Example:** Forehand, backhand, move to the net and hit a short ball, volley, run down a lob, back up to net, overhead, etc.

# ● BOUNCING GAMES & READINESS DRILLS

## Can You? (Excellent for young children, self-paced) 🍎

Children spread out with a ball and racket in hand. Team leader calls out tasks for children to perform.

Can you balance the ball on your racket while standing still?

Standing on your left foot? Your right foot?

While hopping on one foot?

Can you balance the ball on your racket while walking to the net?

Can you balance the ball on your racket while running to the net?

Can you bounce the ball down with your racket?

Can you bounce it up? 5 times? 20 times? more?

Can you alternate your bounces up and down?

**Idea:** With any or all of these skills, "clubs" can be formed, such as the "50 club" (for all those who can bounce the ball 50 consecutive times), the "200 club", etc. (The record is 2,016 consecutive bounces!)

Individual USTA skill tests and awards are especially motivational for the novice player.

## Red Light (Especially good for young children)

Children line up on baseline with a ball resting on their rackets. Leader stands at net. When the team leader calls "green light" children move forwards as quickly as they can while keeping the ball balanced on their rackets. When the leader calls "red light" children must stop with the ball resting on the racket face. Children who drop the ball while moving or trying to stop must start again from the baseline. Team leader may also decide to make anyone seen moving after saying "red light" go back to the baseline also. First to make it to the net wins. Let winner become "it."

**Idea:** Tiny tots may rest the ball in the open throat of their racket. Even this may be a demanding task for the little ones.

## 0-1-2-3 (For young children, fun warm-up with or without a ball)

Team leader demonstrates the appropriate action for each number.

0 - "easy jog" in place

1 - "high step" in place (jog with knees high)

2 - "jitterbug" in place (quick feet)

3 - "up to net" (run to net and back)

Children perform appropriate actions as team leader calls out different numbers. This activity has many variations.

**Idea:** Ask children to balance a ball on their racket while doing the action.

## Tennis Sandwich

Standing behind the baseline, children make a tennis sandwich by placing a tennis ball between each of their rackets ending with a ball on top (tiny tots need not finish with a ball on top). At "go" they walk (or run if capable) to the net and back. First team to cross the baseline without dropping a tennis ball wins.

Idea: Remind students to choke up or use two hands for added control.

## Sliders

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing the net. Place a hula hoop (or preferable a flat target) on the ground near the service line. The team "captain" should stand behind the target. At "go" the first player from each team will attempt to "sweep," "putt," or "slide" the tennis ball, which is lying still on the ground, to the target. Player #1 then hands the racket to player #2 in line, and the team captain will roll the tennis ball back to the second player, who stops the ball and attempts the same feat, etc.

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment: 1 ball and 1 racket per team

Points awarded: 1 point each time the target is hit

## Obstacle Course

Students roll balls with their rackets through an established course - or simply through an area with cones, hoops or other objects. May also be done with racket dribbles.

# ● RELAYS

## Sidestep Relay Race (Tennis Olympics style)

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing the net, ready for a relay race. At the whistle, the first players on each team will race to the net and back whereupon the second team player will go, etc.

Instead of running forward as they are accustomed to doing, however, the youngsters will try to move in a gliding "sidestep" without crossing their feet (a tennis player would do this while trying to move back to the center of the baseline while waiting for his/her shot to be returned by opponent.)

Time Limit: as long as it takes

Equipment: none, other than fancy feet

Points awarded: 1st place - 15; 2nd place - 10; 3rd place - 5

## Dribble Relay

Each youngster dribbles ball with racket while running to a spot, on or off court, turns around and then runs back while carrying the ball and racket.

Variations: 1. They might do "downs" to the net, and "ups" back...

2. Instead of a ball pass or "tag", require a drop-hit of the ball by the active relay member to the next person in line when he/she is approximately 10 feet from teammates. The next person will catch the ball and then begin the next sequence by dribbling... Emphasis should be on control of the ball, rather than speed.

3. Line up an equal number of players on both sides of the court. You can have each team dribble the perimeter of one side of the court. Race team against team, or try to beat the clock!

Idea: Extra interest can be added by recording the time and noting top records as in track and field.

## Team Dribble Relay 🍏

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing the net. The first 2 team members have tennis rackets. At the whistle, the first team member will attempt to dribble a tennis ball with a tennis racket (downs) to the service line and back, whereupon the second team member will go using the same ball. Player #1 will hand his or her racket to player #2, etc.

Time Limit: As long as it takes

Equipment: 1 ball per team, 2 rackets per team

Points awarded: 1st place - 15; 2nd place - 10; 3rd place - 5

## Pass the Ball Relay

Children line up in a single file line with their teammates. Players who are first in line stand with the ball balanced on their racket. When the team leader calls "go" the ball is passed from racket to racket to the last person in line. The contest can end there or that person can run to the beginning of the line and continue relay. Pass the ball until original person is in front of the line.

## Inchworm (Variation to Pass the Ball)

Children line up shoulder to shoulder with their teammates at the net. The one closest to the net has the ball. When the team calls "go" the ball is passed from racket to racket. After passing the ball each child runs behind his/her teammates to the front of the line to wait for the ball. The first team to "inch" all of its members across the baseline wins.

## Tennis Brigade

Two or more teams of 5 to 7 players each from a line. A box or hopper of balls is placed at one end of the line. When the team leader says "go" the player next to the balls picks one up, places it on his or her racket and passes it onto the racket of the next player. The balls are passed down the line. The last player then drops the ball into another box. Teams can play for time, or until a certain number of balls are passed.

Make sure that youngsters don't try to hold the ball on the racket strings with the non-racket hand while passing it on to the next player.

Variation: The player next to the balls picks one up, places it on his/her racket and passes it to the next player by popping it up in the air. The ball must bounce once before it is hit by the next player in line. All of the balls are passed down the line. Teams with fewer players should receive an extra ball.

## Ball-On-Racket Relay

Half of the team lines up on one side of the net and other half on the other side. The first person on each team approaches the net balancing the ball in the center of the racket. First teammate on the other side of the net also approaches. Object is for the youngster to pass the ball from his/her racket to his/her teammate's racket on the other side of the net without dropping the ball. If the ball is dropped, a miss is recorded by the referee. Youngster receiving the ball on the other side of the net must relay it back to his/her line. The process repeats. When all players are finished, the team sits down on the court. Team with the least number of points wins.



# ● RALLY GAMES

## **Handball** (A more advanced bouncing activity)

Mark off a small court using the doubles alley as the playing area. Place a racket across the alley, using it as a net. Have two youngsters play games using and learning rules and scoring. To increase playing stations, use chalk to mark off 6' square courts in a blacktop area.

## **Inky-Dinky Tennis**

Played service box to service box. The net is lifted. Children position themselves as in a regular game, with the same serving and scoring rules. Game is played by rolling the ball on the ground. Once in play, it is anyone's ball, but the ball must cross between the net posts before it is hit by an opponent. You may also use a piece of chalk and an open space in lieu of a court.

## **Mini-Tennis**

Doubles or singles. Use only the service court area. Backcourt area is out of bounds. The serve must be underhand. May use ping-pong scoring.

**Idea:** Hold a "king of the hill" type of competition using short court tennis. The players are spread out over a series of courts and play points for a set amount of time. At the end of each time period, the winners advance to the next court and the losers move down a court. Keep the winners playing on one side of the net and losers on the other. The champion is the player who remains at the top of the hill (i.e. - on court #1) for the longest period of time.

## **Little Game of Tennis** (Good for more advanced novices & intermediates)

Partners stand on opposite sides of net in service court areas facing each other rallying easily. Ball has to bounce inside the service box area. See who can keep it going the most times over the net. Tell youngsters to hit the ball as easily as possible. Shoot for a goal of 10, 15, 20 consecutive times. Keep score.

**Variation:** Have each youngsters hit three "ups" with a bounce in between, and on the third bounce hit it over the net. Youngster on other side lets it hit, and then he/she hits three "ups" with a bounce in between and returns it across the net. Put five children on each side of the net and have them alternate.

## **Rally For Time**

Players try to rally one ball for a set period of time, such as three or four minutes. The goal of the game is to hit the ball as many times as possible, in the specified time period, while still keeping the ball in the singles boundaries (or service boxes), and playing it on one bounce.

**Idea:** Two players comprise a team. The team keeps track of the number of balls hit in the specified period. The team with the most hits within the time period wins.

## **2-Ball Rally**

As the name suggests, two balls are in play at the same time. Each player starts at the baseline (or service line), and both put a ball into play at the same time. The object of the game is to keep the balls in play as long as possible. The boundaries for the game are the regular singles lines (or service boxes), and each ball must be hit after one bounce. Each pair (team) can count the number of times they are able to hit the 2 balls, or they can rally for time with the winning team being the ones that keep both balls in play the longest.

## Alley Rally Game 🍏

This is played in pairs, requiring two rackets and three balls. Two balls are placed approximately 4 feet apart on the ground. To determine the proper distance, students may place 2 rackets tip-to-tip on the ground and place a ball at each "end" of the rackets. (Use the alley lines if playing on a tennis court). Be sure that the pairs have plenty of space between them, and that they line up so they may all hit in the same direction, for safety reasons and to avoid confusion.

Each student stands next to (not behind) a ball facing a partner. The third ball is put into play gently with a bounce hit. The object is to hit partner's ball. Each time one of the players hits his/her partner's ball, award one point to the team. See who gets the most hits during a specified time limit, or play games to 5, 7, 9, 11.... You can even play a simple round-robin tournament.

Tell the children to "bump," "tap," or "just touch" the ball. Try to get them to direct the ball "up" rather than straight head. No spiking or hitting down. First shot (serve) does not count if it hits the ball.

**Idea:** If outdoors on a windy day, use the alley lines as targets, or mark a target on the ground with tape or chalk.

**Variation:** Place 1 ball in the middle of the alley, partners try to hit it with a 2nd ball or they count how many times they are able to alternate hits over the ball on the ground without hitting it.

## Zip-Zip-Zip

Class is divided into pairs. Pairs line up on one side of the court. The object is to rally the ball back and forth, on one bounce, while moving towards, and then around the net. Each pair must work its way down the alley, negotiate a 90 degree turn at the net, (one player can practice "ups" while the other one runs around the net post and complete the exercise by moving down the alley on the far side of the net from where they started. Unsuccessful teams go back to the start.

**Variation:** If you have more than one court, divide pairs into teams. First team to get all players to the opposite baseline wins.

## One Bounce

Players are divided into pairs. The object is to begin a short-court rally and gradually move back until both players are on the baseline. Once there, they reverse the process and move back to the net. Players can take only one step after each hit. First team to make it to the baseline and back to the net without any misses wins. Or see how many times each pair can complete the task during a specific time limit.

## Around The World 🍏

Class is divided into two equally sized teams on opposite sides of the net. The groups should line up one behind the other on opposite baselines. The first person in one line drop-hits the ball to the first person on the other side of the net, and then must run around the court past the right net post to the end of the line at the other side of the court. Inexperienced players should use the "short" version of this game. Only the four service courts are in bounds, or use chairs and rope to organize multiple mini-nets. The goal of the class should be to hit as many consecutive balls as possible. The group should be encouraged to work together toward a common goal (a good time

to introduce the lob.). Or they may wish to play the traditional version of this game where a player is eliminated after his/her second miss.

## **Four Square**

Label service boxes 1 through 4 (deuce boxes 1 or 3 - add boxes 2 or 4). Assign 1 player to each box. Player stand behind the service line of their respective boxes ready to play. Additional players stand in line at the next post closest to square #1 ready to enter game. Player in square #4 always starts play with a drop-hit (2 chances) into either square 1 or 2. Ball should be returned over the net and play is continuous until someone hits out of the service boxes or into the net. The player who makes the error goes to end of the waiting line. All other players advance up to the square where the player who committed the error was standing. Players above this position retain their spots.

**Variation:** If space is limited, you can construct four additional 4 square courts. Using a piece of chalk, map out four squares in the backcourt; a net is not needed. You may want to have these players perpendicular to the other court's play so as not to interfere with its players.

## **Forgot-My-Racket Doubles**

The same as conventional doubles with one exception. Each team shares only one racket. Each point begins with a groundstroke and players exchange the racket after every shot. Teams sign up and challenge the existing pair on court to a tie-breaker. The winning team stays on court to face the next challenger.

## **Forgot-My-Racket Beat-The-Pros Mini Tennis**

All pros line up behind the other halfway between the baseline and the service line, facing the net. Only the first pro in line will have a tennis racket. All students will line up one behind the other opposite side of the net also halfway between the service line and baseline. Each student will have his/her own tennis racket. The first two players in each line will step forward to the service line.

Using only the service boxes, the student will start the rally with a drop-hit and quickly run to the end of his/her line. The pro will attempt to hit the ball back and quickly hand the racket to the pro next in line while proceeding to the end of the line. The second student will continue the rally against the second pro, etc.

**Variation:** Try to see how many times you can keep the ball in play. After missing the first time, try to better score the second time. Keep score the first team to get 11,15, 21, points wins. Or do the same event as an elimination game. Pros may need to play their hardest. Try to make it exciting and aim your shots carefully. This game can also be played full-court with advanced players.

# ● **TEAM GROUNDSTROKE GAMES WITH TARGETS**

## **Anything Goes With Targets**

Divide class into small groups. One member will be the tosser. Place a hula hoop (or some other fairly large target), about 10 feet from the net. Tossers stand behind the hoop. Teammates stand on the other side of the net opposite the tosser one behind the other. At "go" the tosser sends the team ball to his/her first player. Player gets the ball under control by hitting easy "ups" while approaching the net. At the net he/she turns sideways, lets the ball bounce, then taps it over the net trying to hit the target. Ball landing in the hoop awards 1 point for the team. The team tosser stops the ball and tosses it to the next person waiting in line. Award one point each time the target is hit. Play to a specified score or time limit.

**Variations:** Use larger targets for beginning players. Have them put their own ball in play with a drop-hit. Better players return ball after only one bounce. Move the targets back as the players improve.

## **Tennis Bowling 🍏**

Two sets of empty tennis cans are set up like bowling pins near the service line on one side of the net. On the other side are two teams of players. The teacher feeds alternate balls to the first person on each team, who tries to knock down "pins." The first team to knock down all of its pins wins.

## **Team Drop-Hit To Target on The Wall**

Pin a banner on the fence or tape a target to the curtain. Teams line up on the baseline facing the target. At "go" the first team member drops the team ball and gently hits it at the target. He/she then retrieves it and gives it to the next person in line who attempts the same feat....

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment: 1 ball and 2 rackets per team

Points Awarded: 1 point each time the target is hit.

## **Target Hitting**

Set targets (e.g. cardboard boxes, towels) on one side of the court. Two teams will compete against each other. Each team takes a position near the baseline. One racket and a basket of balls for each team is placed on the service line in front of each team. A target is placed on the opposite side near the service line. At "go" the first player on each team runs to and picks up the team racket, drop-hits a tennis ball and aims for the target. After each turn, the player replaces the racket on the service line. The next teammate in line cannot move until the previous player runs past the baseline. Play continues for a specified amount of time with the highest score winning, or until one team has hit the target 10 times.

**Variation:** Have kids hit only forehands, or only backhands, or one of each. If they get really good, move the targets farther from the net, or teacher should feed a ball to the player who must return it on one bounce.

## **Alley Target Groundstrokes**

The captain stands on one side of the net in the center of the service court. All others are behind the center mark. The captain will feed one ball to the forehand and one to the backhand. Each team member will try to hit down the line shots so that they land in the alley (one point). A target can be placed in the alley and 3 points may be scored for each target hit. Winners have the highest total after 2 minutes.

## **Fred Perry Court**

A target game - one side of the singles court is divided into eight squares of equal size. Each square is numbered with the highest numbers reserved for the area nearest the baseline. The object of the game is for the player to hit the ball to the designated square of the court. Players can either drop-hit the ball, or hit a ball put in play by a coach or other helper.

Points can be assigned to each box and each player can keep track of his/her own score. Teams can be formed and can compete against other teams. Each team member would have one or two hits to score points for his/her team. The object is to accumulate the most points.

# ● TOSSING/CATCHING ACTIVITIES

## **Toss and Catch**

Partners stand opposite each other, one at the net (tosser) and the other one on the service line (hitter). Tosser throws a ball underhand to the hitter who tries to hit it directly back to the partner. If the catch is successful, hitter moves back halfway between the service line and the baseline. If the second shot is caught successfully, hitter moves to the baseline. First pair that gets three in a row wins.

**Variation:** Each time 3 consecutive catches are made, team gets 1 point. Highest total after specified time limit wins.

## **Throwball Tennis**

Players simulate point play in singles, except they throw the ball over the net (overhand or underhand) rather than using rackets. Players may catch the ball either in the air or after the first bounce, and win points if the opponent does not catch the ball or throws it into the net.

You can also play throwball doubles. Keep the entire group involved by shuttling doubles teams into the match after every two points. Throwball tennis develops hand-eye coordination, throwing skills, court movement techniques, and point play concepts.

## **Underhand Throw to Target**

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline facing the net. Place a hula hoop on the ground halfway between the baseline and the service line. One player (captain) stands behind the hoop. At "go" the first player from each team will attempt to toss the team tennis ball underhand into the hoop. The captain will try to catch the ball on one bounce and send it back to the next player in line who will attempt the same feat...

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment : 1 ball per team

Points Awarded: 1 point for each ball caught on one bounce, or 2 points awarded for each ball that lands in or hits the hoop.

## **Forehand Toss-Hit-Catch**

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing the net. The team captain will stand near the service line (closer to the baseline if the players are younger or more inexperienced). The first team member in line will have a racket, the team captain will have the team ball. At "go" the captain will toss the ball underhand to the first player, who will attempt to tap the ball into the air so that the captain may catch it on the fly. Player #1 will hand the racket to team member #2, who will attempt the same feat, etc....

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment: 1 racket and 1 ball per team

Points Awarded: 1 point for each ball caught on one bounce by the captain, 2 points for each ball caught without a bounce by the captain.

## **Backhand Toss-Hit-Catch**

Same as above, but with backhand "bumps"

**Hint:** Have the children start with the racket resting on the opposite knee so they will concentrate on the contact zone and won't swing wildly.

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

## ● PAIR ACTIVITIES

### **Drop-Hit-Catch Practice In Pairs**

Catchers should stand with their backs to the walls around the circumference of the gym or court. Hitters will stand about 10-15 feet away from the catcher, drop the ball and gently hit it to their partner. In order to encourage controlled hitting, students should be rewarded for a successful sequence.

### **Drop-Hit-Catch Game**

Each successfully caught ball is worth one point. Hitter and catcher switch roles every five points. First teams to score 21 wins.

## ● LARGE-GROUP GROUNDSTROKE GAMES

### **Anything Goes**

The game is exactly that. The traditional boundaries of the tennis court are ignored and the ball is in play until it rolls -- the ball may be played off the fence, off the net, outside the court - anywhere! At the lowest level, individuals or teams have as many as 12 attempts to get the ball over the net. As they improve, the number of attempts is reduced. Initially, they serve underhand anywhere into the court, then they serve into one half of the court, and finally they learn to serve overhand into the service box. Beginning players are encouraged to hit "ups" until they are close to the net, then turn sideways to the net for a conventional forehand over the net. A point is scored only if an opponent fails to get the ball "up" before it starts to roll. Play to a specified score or time limit.

### **Tennis Workup**

All players line up on one side of a court, or on side of a volleyball net adjusted to tennis height (use 2 lines if the class is large). Teacher will feed one ball to each student in succession (forehand or backhand, from a short-court position.) Students must hit the ball into a designated area, such as the doubles court. Players who miss the shot must set their rackets at the net and come around to the feeders' side. There they become fielders. Subsequent players must not only hit the ball into designated areas, but must avoid any of the fielders catching their shot before it bounces. Successful catchers may return to the hitting line. Play continues for a set time or until only one hitter remains. (If more than one court is in use, last hitter can be designated as feeder.)

**Variation:** Let the "tiny tots" catch the ball on one (or more) bounce(s) while advanced players must "catch" or stop the ball on the racket strings.

### **Tennis Baseball**

Many versions exist, but the general principle is the same. It can be played on a tennis court, on a gym floor, or anywhere a net can be set up. One half of the class is the batting team, and the other half is in the field. Here are some possible rules:

1. Batter stands on the "T" of service line. Designated pitcher (usually a teacher or coach) stands on the opposite side of the net.
2. Single is a ball clearing the net and landing inside the service line.
3. Doubles is a ball clearing the net and landing in the backcourt.
4. Triple is any ball that is touched and dropped by a fielder.
5. Home run is a ball landing in the alley or some other designated area.
6. For higher skilled players, "racket catches" can be substituted for hand catches.

## **Advanced Tennis Baseball**

Divide the class in half. Have one team at bat, another across the net fielding. Pitcher throws ball underhanded to batter's forehand or backhand. Batter tries to hit ball across net and into certain parts of the court that are designated as a single, double, triple and home run. The fielding team tries to hit ball back to batter. If ball is returned into singles court to the batter, batter must try to return the ball again. A hit is registered if the fielding team cannot return a shot by the batter. Last shot made by batter determines if hit counts as a single, double, triple or home run. When court space is limited, the game is also excellent in a field or playing ground using "catches."

## **"Crazy" Tennis or Tennis Volleyball**

Class is divided in half; the two teams stand on opposite sides of the net. Students are spaced in rows, starting about eight feet from the net to well behind the baseline. Balls can be hit in the air, or after one or more bounces. As long as the ball is bouncing it is in play. However, each shot's first bounce must land inside the doubles area. The teacher puts a ball into play to alternating sides. Play to a specified score or time limit. A point is scored when a ball is hit outside of the doubles area, or when a ball begins to roll before it is returned.

### **Safety Rules:**

1. All shots must be hit "up", even volleys and overheads... no spiking. Volleyball net may be heightened to assure this.
2. Hitters can only take one step in any direction (like the traveling rule in basketball).
3. Players in the back row may not send the ball across the net; they must pass the ball forward to another teammate instead.

**Variation:** Have "tiny tots" throw the ball rather than hit it with a racket. Or they may pass the ball from teammate to teammate until they are able to throw it over the net. Advanced players are not allowed to let the ball touch the ground.

**Idea:** Rotate players just as you would in volleyball.

## **Vic-O-Rama**

This game is great for a large group and one court. Divide group into two teams - A & B. "A" puts the ball in play with an easy drop-hit and plays the point out, using the singles court with "B". The winner stays and adds a second person to the winners' side of the court. The loser goes to the end of his/her team's line and the next person becomes the player.

**Example:** A1 plays B1, A1 wins the point. B1 goes to the end of the "B" line while A2 joins A1 on the court. Team "A" must play into the singles court; B2, the next in line, can play into the doubles court. If team "A" wins, A3 is added to the court to play against B3. If B3 wins, he/she adds B4 to his/her court and plays A4. A1, A2, and A3 all return to the end of their line. Play continues until all of one team is on the court and wins the last point. This game could be played with 20 people per side on a single court.

# ● **INDIVIDUAL TARGET GROUNDSTROKE GAMES**

## **10 - The "Perfect" Game**

Divide one side of the court into four areas by extending the center line back to the center mark. Number the boxes as follows: #1 - the deuce box, #2 the add box, #3 the box directly behind the deuce box; #4 the box directly behind the add box. Teacher feeds balls. Each student will hit 4 balls. First ball is aimed to square #1, second ball to square #2, etc. Student scores the same

number of points that corresponds with each successful hit, so that hitting all 4 boxes in order will result in a perfect score of "10" Can be played with forehands or backhands.

Variation: Put hoop target in center of each square. Double points for hitting target. Let beginning players start with a drop-hit.

## **Tennis "Horse"**

Like playground basketball's "pig" or "horse" - same applied to tennis. One side of court is divided into 4 areas and numbered as in the "Perfect" game. The players can either drop-hit a ball or the teacher may feed balls. First player in line calls out forehand or backhand, and which square he/she is hitting to. If successful, next player in line must hit same stroke to same target. Players imitate until one misses and then the next player picks a new shot and target. The player who makes the error collects a letter and the game continues until a player has made enough errors to spell out "horse."

Variation: Play as teams. There is no limit on team size, but to avoid having long lines of players waiting for their turn, it is recommended that each team have no more than eight players. When using this game in a team situation, longer words should be used. Otherwise it is possible for the game to be over before each player gets a turn.

## **Groundstroke Target Contest**

Appropriate targets (laundry baskets, towels, boxes, racket covers, hula hoops, inflatable tubes, tennis ball cans, cones, disks), are placed throughout the court. Each participant is then fed five groundstrokes per turn by the permanent feeder. Players take home prizes that correspond to the target which they have hit. Award better prizes for the smaller targets or the ones placed in more difficult areas to reach without the ball going out of bounds. For safety purposes, do not place the prizes on the court and risk having someone get hit as he/she retrieves his/her prize.

## **Tennis Basketball 🍏**

A series of large target areas are designated or made on activity area, either on the floor or wall (mats work fine). Students are divided into small teams of two-five students. Each student will dribble the ball with the racket from a starting line to a second line, where he or she will stop, let the ball bounce and "shoot" towards target. Try shooting into baskets, hula hoops, wastebaskets, boxes, etc.

## **Feed and Pick Up**

Pros should go to the other side of the net with a hopper of balls. Teams line up one behind the other opposite their pro or designated feeder, just behind the service line (baseline for advanced players). Feed one ball to each child; empty out all of the tennis balls hitting forehands and backhands. At the whistle, the children scramble to pick up as many balls as possible and give them to their respective team captains. Captains pile the balls on their own rackets and count them. Award 1 point for each ball picked up.

# ● VOLLEY GAMES

## **Team Volleys At Target On Ground**

Teams will line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing the net. The team captain stands behind the target which has been laid out on the floor (or use a hula hoop). The first person in each line will have a racket; the team captain will have one ball. At "go" the team captain will gently toss the ball underhand to the first player who will attempt to bump (volley) the ball so that it lands into the target. The player then hands the racket to the second player in line and



runs to end of the line. All players attempt the same feat until time runs out or a specified score is reached.

Time limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment: 1 ball and 1 racket per team

Points Awarded: 2 points for each successful hit of the target or 1 point for each ball caught by the captain on one bounce.

Variation: Have the teams start in volleying position and hit their volleys over the net at a target placed somewhere on the other side.

## Ring Around The Rosy

Players make single file line at the "T" while the teacher stands in volleying position on the other side. At "go" the first player runs 3 steps, hops up and lands in the ready position (split-step), the teacher will then toss or feed a gentle forehand volley to the player. The players are encouraged to "block" or "bump" the ball towards the teacher, or at a target set down near the center of the court just behind the service line. After hitting the volley, the player follows the tip of his/her racket and circles back to the end of the line while the next player comes forward to hit. After a while, change to backhand volleys.

Hint: Have the children call out their names as they hit the ball.

## Continuous Volley Game

Each team should have no more than 12 players. The object of the game is for the team to hit as many volleys in a row as possible. The entire team forms a single file line at the net. A team captain starts by gently hitting a ball to the first player in line. The player hits a volley and immediately goes to the end of the line to make room for the next player. The team keeps this up until an error is made by the captain or a team member. The boundaries for this game are simply one service square, and each player's volley must bounce first in the designated service square before the captain may return it. The team with the most "in" volleys after two minutes wins.

## Consecutive Volleys

Team captains volley to members of their team over the net. Players form a single file line facing the captain. They hit one volley and quickly return to the end of their line so the next player in line can hit. Count highest total of consecutive volleys in two or "x" minutes. Or divide the class in half on either side of the net. The lines begin in the volleying position. Players hit one volley and return to the end of their line. The lines move continuously. Class goal is to hit as many volleys without missing as possible.

## Alley/Target Volleys

The captain stands on one side of the net in the center of the service court. All others are behind the "T". The captain will feed one ball to the forehand volley and one to the backhand volley. Each team member will try to hit down the line volleys so to land in the alley (one point). A target can be placed in the alley and 3 points scored for each target hit. Winners have the highest total after 2 or "x" minutes.

## Hockey Sack Tennis 🍏

In groups of 4-6, students form small circles and attempt to keep ball in play by bumping it up from one racket to another. Players cannot hit twice in a row. Competition can be added by counting consecutive hits. Less skilled players can use a balloon.

# ● VOLLEY/GROUNDSTROKE PRACTICE

## 21

Players form two lines at the back of the tennis court or make-shift court. Teacher will feed one ball to the first student in line "A" who attempts to hit a groundstroke. If it lands in the court, player gets 2 points. Player must run immediately to the net to hit a second feed before it bounces. A successful volley gives the player 1 point. Player gets volley even if first shot is missed. As soon as player from line "A" finishes, player from line "B" goes. Players must keep track of own scores. First one to 21 points without going over 21 wins (makes players concentrate on the score).

### Approach, Volley and Retrieve

Captain feeds balls to each person in line at the baseline. Players hit a groundstroke and immediately move up for a volley. Score one point for each successful shot and retrieve both balls which should be placed in a box placed against the fence on the opposite side of the court (i.e. - away from the active area of play.)

# ● SERVING GAMES

### Overhand Throw at Target

Pin a target (towel, banner) to the fence or make a square on the back curtain with tape or chalk. Teams line up one behind the other on the baseline, facing their target. At "go" the 1st player from each team moves to the designated area (perhaps marked by an "x" on the ground), and attempts to throw the team tennis ball overhand at the target. The player will then retrieve the team ball, hand it to the 2nd team member who will move to the "x" and attempt to hit the target, etc.

Time Limit: 2 or "x" minutes

Equipment: 1 ball per team

Points Awarded: 1 point each time the target is hit.

### Team Serving

Divide the class into 2 teams which form 2 straight lines behind the baseline. Place a basket of balls on the service line at the "T." At "go" the first 2 players from each team race to the service line, pick up a ball, and serve into appropriate service boxes. Point is scored for a good service. Servers then race back to teammates. Second team member cannot go until first member crosses the baseline. Designate one member of each team as captain to keep track of accurate serves. Continue until basket of balls is empty, or until specified time period is up.

**Idea:** You might want to allow little ones to hit serve into either service box, or let them use a drop-hit. Move "tiny tots" as close to the net as necessary to guarantee success.

**Variation:** Divide the class into teams of 5-10 students. Each team will attempt to hit a serve from the baseline into the proper service court. Team members serve one at a time then run around to retrieve his/her ball; First team to hit 11 successful serves, or the most good serves in 1, or "x" minutes wins. Place targets into service boxes and award bonus points if hit.

### Target Serving 🍏

Players serve at targets placed in various locations on the court. You need not be limited to the service areas. Targets can range from laundry baskets to tennis balls. As a general rule, the lower the skill level of the players, the larger the targets. Award greater points for hitting

smaller targets or the ones placed farther away. Team accumulating the most points within a specified time limit wins.

Variation: Serve to targets on the wall (at least net height) or through a suspended hoop. Suspend hoop from basketball net, "shoot" at the top of the key circle.

### **Serve and Return Game**

Divide two teams in half; one half will be servers and the other will be returners. Servers stand diagonally across the net from their team's returners. At "go" the first two servers will serve a ball to their own receiving teammate who will attempt to return serve directly back to the server. If the serve is able to reach out and touch the return without taking more than one step, team will earn one point. The second team server and the second team returner will then step up to attempt the same feat while first servers and returners will go to the end of their respective lines. Team with most points after 2 or "x" minutes wins.

### **Serve and Volley To Target**

The captain returns all serves while each player serves, moves quickly to the net and volleys the return to a target. Make a large target and score one point for each hit.

### **Fast Serve Contest**

Very popular! Obtain a radar gun from your local high school or college (or invite local police to judge contest with own radar gun). Players then have their serves timed using the radar gun. Compile the highest score in each of the following categories: men's, women's, boys' and girls', by age division. The fastest serve can win, or the person who comes closest to guessing his/her service speed may win. Or perhaps award a prize to the slowest serve of the day.

## ● **GROUNDSTROKE CHALLENGE GAMES**

### **Champs and Challengers**

This is a work-up game in which players attempt to unseat the champion. The champion starts off at one baseline. On the opposite side of the net are four players. Three are stationed at the net while the "challenger" is on the baseline. Extra players are lined against the fence behind the challenger. The coach (standing at net post) starts the rally with a ball fed to the challenger. The champion then plays one point against the four players opposite. If the champion wins, the volleyers remain, and new baseline challenger is introduced. If the champion loses, then the volleyer closest to the feeder runs around and becomes the new champ. The baseline challenger becomes a volleyer while the two remaining volleyers shift towards the feeder (and one position) close to the championship position). A score can be kept, with a point earned every time a champion vanquishes a challenger.

### **Monarch of the Court**

This is a progressive work-up game in which players play one-point matches. The goal of the game is work one's way to the "top of the hill" and stay there by beating challengers. Each player will need a racket and an ample supply of balls should be distributed to each court. This game demands one or more tennis courts.

Champion will always be the server. Two serves are allowed. Champion receives a point only when he or she defeats a challenger. If more than one court is in use, points can only be scored after a player has worked his/her way to the top of the hill. Players waiting to challenge should wait by the net post. Then they can simply step onto the open side of the court while the champion gets balls ready to serve.

For rotation among a number of courts use the following: at the beginning of the game, place two players on each court. Designate one court as the champion's court. All winners move towards this court. Losers on all courts except the champion's court will remain and serve the next point. Loser on the champions' court will go the end of the line and the beginning of the rotation.

## ● SPECIAL

### **Beat The Pro**

Contestants challenge the pro to a 12-point tiebreaker. A local pro or high school/college player will be a good pro. Any contestant winning the tie-breaker wins 5 points.

### **Can't Afford A Racket Tennis**

Play "crazy" tennis using anything but a tennis racket. Examples of rackets: frying pan, book, heavy plate, magazine, top of cookie tin, top to saucepan, cutting board, tennis trophy plate, album cover, daily minder, box of cereal (unopened), hard seat cushion, show, briefcase, wooden sign, etc.

### **Kamikaze Tennis Trivia**

Permanent feeder stands with two participants near the net on one side of the court (volleying position). Contestant stands at baseline on the other side. Feeder hits the contestant five balls from side-to-side. If the contestant returns them to the participants they may return it.

After 5 balls, the drill stops, and the contestant is asked a question on tennis trivia. With a correct answer, he/she may continue the drill for five more balls until the next question; an incorrect answer disqualifies the contestant.

The player with the most correct answers, and the most side-to-side running, wins the contest. As players answer more questions, and do more running, they may consider missing questions on purpose!

## ● DIFFICULT!!

### **Tennis Trick Court**

Players completing any five of the following nine tricks win a prize.

1. Serve over the net with eyes closed (three chances)
2. Turn ball over on racket, without ball leaving racket
3. Ten edgie dribbles
4. Juggle three tennis balls for 1 minute
5. Behind the back volley
6. Hit two balls simultaneously with partner for 10 hits
7. Forehand with eyes closed (partner toss, three chances)
8. Hit 10 "downs", 10 "ups" while holding racket between your legs
9. A trick of your choice

Players completing six or more tricks win a bonus prize.

### **Snake Game**

Fast-moving game and works with best with six or more courts (or fewer if divided in half). A different activity is done on each court (or half) with the difficulty of the activity increasing with each court. Players start on one court and attempt to move through all the courts by performing each activity successfully. If an error is made, the must start again on the first court.

Activities for the various courts can include hitting one ball over the net and into the singles court, serving to the proper service court, rallying ten balls in a row from the baseline, hitting an overhead from behind the baseline, etc. Only your imagination will limit the variety of activities.

The most obvious competition is to determine a winner of the game by how many times a player has completed an entire circuit of activities in a specified time period. A team competition can be set up and each team can be awarded points for each player of a team who successfully completes a circuit.

Keep in mind that the longer the snake, more time will have to be allotted for the competition.

## ● **CONDITIONING & FOOTWORK**

When doing conditioning drills, attention should be given to the footwork that will help improve a player's agility, coordination and balance. The more that conditioning and footwork drills can be made into races and games, the better. Whenever you can, make these drills fun!

### **Line Touch**

Children form a line parallel to the doubles sideline. At "go" they sprint to the doubles sideline, touch it, return to home position. then sprint to center service line, touch it, return to home position; sprint to far doubles sideline, touch it, return to home position. Can continue for designated number of courts. May do this as a relay race with 3 kids per team. First child sprints to the center line, 2nd to the far singles sideline, and 3rd to the far doubles sideline and back.

**Variation:** Each player puts three balls on a racket along the sideline. To start, players pick up one ball and sprint to place it on the center line, then sidestep back to get another ball; sprint to center line, sidestep back for third ball; then repeat it other direction (picking up balls at center line and returning them to racket at sideline) until all balls are back on racket. This can be race between teams.

### **Double Ball Drill** 🍏

Children place balls on court as designated by team leader. At "go" players pick up the first ball, and place it on their rackets as quickly as possible, then they sprint to the second ball, put it on their racket, and sprint for the third. Continue until all balls are placed on the racket. To extend the drill, team leader can request that balls be returned to their original position in the same manner.

### **Jitterbug**

Players take a ready stance and move feet as fast as they can (jitterbug). The team leader or another player will be in front, also doing the jitterbug, while turning to face different directions. The players will turn in the same direction as the leader. This can be done in the alley of the court and after 5 or 6 changes of direction, have players sprint to opposite alley and continue jitterbug drill upon arriving. Repeat drill 4 times.

### **Half-Court Tag Game**

Children are divided into two teams, one team on each side of the net. Each team selects a player to go on the other side of the net to tag all of the players on the other team before the opposing "it" player tags the players on his/her team. Players are not allowed to run outside the tennis court or they are out. Sit down when tagged.

## **18-Second Drill**

Children form a line parallel to the baseline. On "go" they sprint to the baseline, touch it, and sprint back. Continuing the sprint, they touch the service line, sprint back, and then sprint to the net and back to home position. All players try to cross baseline on the last sprint home in less than 18 seconds total.

## **Carioca**

Players face the net from the baseline and carioca to opposite sideline. To carioca, step side, step back, step side, step front, etc. Touch line with two hands and carioca back. This could be done in relay form, or with a group going at the same time.

## **W-Drill**

Starting in the left alley, first player in line sprints to net, then moves diagonally to center mark, forward to center strap of net, diagonally back to baseline corner, forward in the alley, and around the outside boundary lines to original position. All players follow the pattern and can start as soon as the player in front of them touches the net in the right alley.

## **T-Drill**

Drill is done by forming a "T" while running. Start at center of the service line (The "T").

1. Run forward to net, backpedal to start area (take care not to lean back too far and fall)
2. Run to right singles line, sidestep to start area
3. Run forward to net, backpedal to start area
4. Run to left singles line, sidestep back to start area

**Variation:** Have 2 players (or teams), on opposite sides of net run against each other to see who can finish first. At each stopping point (singles line, center), hit a volley.