

Tennis for Kids



Introducing Your Child to Tennis
45-Minute Lesson Plan



By **Scott Baxter**

Kids & Tennis Go Together

Although tennis has a reputation as an elite sport, and one that is difficult to get started with, parents interested in helping their children stay in shape and develop social skills should take a serious look at the benefits of tennis.

Many children who are intimidated by popular team sports or who are more self-sufficient prefer tennis to other activities. This booklet is intended to provide an easy approach to introducing your child to tennis, in a fun way, in just 45 minutes. If you follow the steps your child will have a great first experience with tennis that could easily lead to a lifetime love of the sport.





Why Tennis? Let us count the ways...

- **An Individual Sport** Tennis can be a team sport, but it is predominantly an individual activity that suits some people more than team sports.
- **Physical Development** Few sports combine the all-around development of physical skills like tennis. These skills include hand-eye coordination, agility, balance and speed.
- **Mental Development** Tennis does wonders for building self-confidence. Playing the game requires developing focus and concentration, visualization, and strategic thinking. Kids will develop a good sense of sportsmanship as they win some and lose some. They'll also learn the importance of perseverance and endurance.
- **Social Development** Because tennis is a one-on-one game in most cases, players must be engaged directly with their opponents, and in the case of doubles, three other individuals. In team sports, kids are often dealing with an anonymous group of strangers at each game; tennis calls for developing rapport through conversation, mutual respect, and empathy.



- **Accessible** Free tennis courts are readily available in almost every community's parks and schools, so joining a country club is definitely not a requirement! And there is not much equipment needed beyond a good racket, which come in all price ranges, new and used, and a decent pair of sneakers.
- **Sport for Life** When choosing an activity for your child, think about the longevity of the sport. Many of the most popular school sports, like soccer, basketball, football, field hockey, etc. are both physically demanding and require a large group of people to play. It's hard, if not impossible, for most college students and adults to stay involved in those activities. Tennis, on the other hand, only requires two people to play and it can be as physical as you want it to be. It's not uncommon to see a group of seniors playing tennis at the local park. You certainly won't see them playing football!

The 45-minute lesson plan that follows will give you a chance to work on your child's motor skills in an engaging way, and at the same time get them interested in tennis!

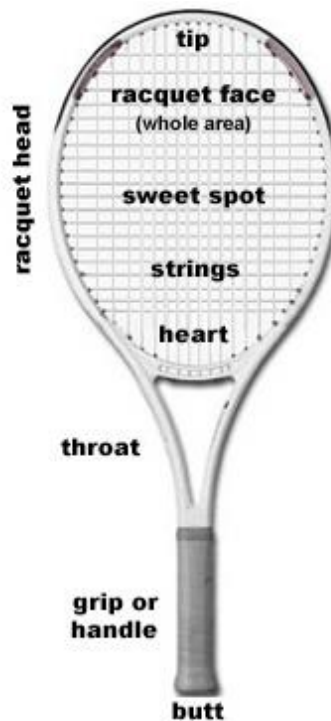
This simple progression is designed for anyone to "teach"—not just tennis professionals. All you need are **2 rackets, 2 balls, and a tennis court**. If you don't have a tennis court, use your driveway or any open space.

The key is to keep it simple, the drills short, and make it fun!

Getting Started – Tennis 101

When you see + or ++ (plus signs) I've added a tips on how to make the exercise more challenging

Anatomy of a Racket



Begin Without a Racket

Toss n' Catch

(5 minutes)

1. Stand across from each other, one person on the doubles sideline and the other person on the singles sideline.

Underhand toss the ball back and forth 10 times.

+Start at the baseline and move sideways down the doubles and singles sidelines towards the net, tossing the ball underhand at the same time.

++Use two balls. You will have to practice communication at the same time. For example, say “1-2-3 toss.” Both toss the ball at the same time and catch the other person’s ball. Add the sideways movement if possible.

Sky's the Limit

(5 minutes)

2. Stand across from each other with the net in between you. Toss (or hit with your racket) the ball high in the air to your child and yell a number. That number tells them how many times the ball must to bounce before they can catch it.

+To work on their body positioning in relation to the ball, add a rule that they have to be behind the ball facing you when they catch it.

X Marks the Spot

(5 minutes)

3. Make a center mark (or, recovery spot). Keep the net in between you and toss the ball to one side. When the ball bounces, you both say “bounce” and as your child catches it, you both say “catch”. After they catch the ball, they have to recover back to the center mark.

+When you toss it to the right, they have to catch the ball with just their right hand. Toss the ball to the left, and they have to catch the ball with only their left hand.

With a Racket

Kid’s tennis rackets range from 19 to 26 inches in length for players between 3 and 12 years old. It’s very important to get the correct size racket otherwise they won’t be able to hit the ball, which will result in them not wanting to play. When looking for a starter racket, the general rule is the length of the racket should be the distance from fingertip to ground when standing upright. If it’s not exact, always go smaller rather than bigger.

Round of Applause

(5 minutes)

4. Each of you put the tennis racket on the ground in front of you. Start by tossing the ball up in the air. Before catching the ball, clap once. After you master one clap, try two and so on.

+You can be creative and clap behind your back or under your leg or even spin around before catching the ball.

Sweet Spot

(5 minutes)

5. With the racket in front of you, bounce the ball off the strings of the racket and catch it. Aim for the center of the strings, or the “sweet spot”.

+You can add movement by bouncing the ball off the strings of the racket and moving around the outside of the racket at the same time. Change directions.

++Do the same drill, but use only one hand to bounce and catch the ball. Add movement around the racket.

Walk the Dog

(5 minutes)

6. Have your child pick up the racket. With the ball on the ground, have them push the ball around the court trying to keep the ball on the lines.

+Set up cones or some obstacles for them to go around and through.

Around the World

(5 minutes)

7. Holding the racket with their palm facing the sky, put the tennis ball on the strings. Have them try to roll the ball around the “face” of the racket without the ball falling off the strings.

+Have them change direction every time you clap.

Red Light, Green Light

(5 minutes)

8. Put your child on the baseline while they balance the ball on the strings. Play the game “Red Light, Green Light” to the net. (Red light means stop, green light means go). If the ball falls off their strings, they have to start at the beginning.

Bounce and Hit

(5 minutes)

9. At this point, your child is probably dying to actually hit the ball. Have them stand sideways with their racket back. Holding the ball as far away from their body, have them simply drop the ball from their hand and say “bounce” when it bounces, and “hit” as they make contact.

+Stand across from your child to give them a target. Every time you catch the ball, it’s 1 point. Play to 5 points.



Now that your child has improved their hand-eye coordination and has an interest in tennis, schedule a private tennis lesson with a PlayYourCourt professional to help them learn the proper strokes. It's surprisingly affordable and convenient.

Want to make it even more affordable? Create a small group with your child's friends and have a fun lesson all together. Remember, our instructors will come to the court of your choice.

[Find a PlayYourCourt professional near you.](#)

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About the Author

Growing up in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Scott Baxter had a prolific junior career, achieving rankings as high as 150 nationally before going on to play Division I College Tennis at the University of Maryland.

While Scott now spends the majority of his time running PlayYourCourt.com, for which he is the founder and CEO, he has an extensive background in teaching that involves success at all age levels, especially with children.

Scott has coached thousands of children in his career and sculpted many of them from beginners into college tennis players.

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