



Tennis for Tiny Tots Lesson Plans

The objective of the Tennis for Tiny Tots program is to provide a variety of pre-tennis activities for kindergarten and primary age children. The program may be used as a pre-tennis module on a tennis court, or can be used in a school gym as a foundation for the learning activities in the Tennis for Schools program*.

Most of the activities listed here are individual in nature to cater to the abilities and developmental characteristics of children at this age level (roughly 2 ½ to 4 ½ years old). It is also meant to maximize practice opportunities for the students. Modules are designed to not exceed 45 minutes.

This guidelines document identifies key pre-tennis activities and incorporates them into the designated time of instruction. Throughout this time, students will learn and practice each aspect of pre-tennis fundamentals, including:

- Movement Activities
- Manipulative Activities
- Striking a ball with the Hand

Note: The activities in this section suggest using balls of varying sizes. In a gym environment, instructors may want to consider using beanbags in place of the balls (for the tossing and catching activities), at least initially until the students demonstrate a basic level of control. This will assist with class management and safety because missed balls will bounce through the activity space, whereas beanbags tend to hit the floor and not move.

* The Tennis for Schools program is a curriculum developed by Tennis Canada and the Ontario Tennis Association (OTA) for grades 1-8. More information can be found at the following link:

[Ontario Tennis Association \(tennisontario.com\)](http://tennisontario.com)

How to use the lesson plans and checklists

This document is a compilation of introduction to Tiny Tots tennis, lesson plans, and checklists. Instructors should read the lesson plans to find detailed information on tasks and the timing of these tasks in a group environment (on court or gym). The checklists should be laminated and referred to by Instructors while teaching to ensure all teaching points are covered.

At the end of the session, students are given the day's marked checklist summary, which includes homework, to take home for review and practice with parents. This assures parents that quality pre-tennis instruction is being delivered. Parents should be encouraged to have their kids complete the homework, which helps create student success.

Day 1 Movement

Activity	Movement	Refer to Movement Activities Checklist
Fun Tennis Warmup	5 mins	Skipping and clapping. Shoulder and hip rotation.
Moving forward	5 mins	Move throughout the activity space in a forward direction, stopping on command. Encourage the use of a one-two stop.
Moving forward and Backward	5 mins	Practise moving in a forward and backward direction. Eyes look where you are going
Moving Sideways	5 mins	Using a shuffle step, practise moving sideways. Instructor must demonstrate the shuffle step.
Changing direction	5 mins	Move throughout the activity area. On the signal from the coach, change the direction in which you are moving.
Changing direction based on court position	5 mins	Begin by standing on a line on the floor. On the signal, begin moving; when you come to another line change the direction you are moving (forward, backward, sideways). Look up to make sure you do not run into anyone.
Moving with shuffle steps	5 mins	Move in a large zigzag pattern throughout the court/gymnasium using a shuffle step. Watch instructor's hands to see which way you should move.
Moving and stopping quickly	5 mins	From a home position, run forward as fast as you can for eight steps. Stop quickly. Run back to your home position. Repeat several times. Make sure you are running as fast as you can and are stopping quickly, with control (not falling but remaining on your feet).
Breaks	1 break	At discretion of coaches.
Finish	-	Hand out marked checklist summary/homework for review and practice

Day 2 Throwing and Tossing

Activity	Manipulative	Refer to Manipulative Activities Checklist
Fun Tennis Warmup	5 mins	Skipping and clapping. Shoulder and hip rotation.
Review Day 1	10 mins	Refer to Movement Activities checklist
Drop ball and catch after bounce	2 mins	Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, arms bent at the elbows, ball in hands. Drop the ball directly out in front and catch it. (<i>To catch, place one hand on either side of the ball with your fingers spread.</i>)
Throw ball and catch after bounce	2 mins	Now bounce the ball hard so that it bounces higher than if it were simply dropped. Catch the ball.
Toss ball straight up and catch	2 mins	Using an underhand motion, toss different-sized balls in the air, and catch them yourself. Vary the distance, beginning by asking the students to toss the ball to approximately eye height and work up to about 1 metre above the head. Toss: Hold the ball in your hand at shoulder height, palm facing up, and gently toss it to the desired height. Catch: With your baby fingers together, fingers spread, reach to meet the ball (don't let it drop into your hands); close your hands around the ball so it doesn't fall out."
Toss ball out front and up then catch	2 mins	Now try tossing the ball at arm's length so you have to reach out in front to catch it.
Toss ball further out front and up then catch	2 mins	When you are comfortable catching the ball in front of you, toss the ball so you have to move a step or two to get underneath it to catch it. For example, toss the ball slightly out front, to the left or right, and perhaps even backward. At first, toss the ball so you can easily move to get underneath it – you do not want to have to reach too far. After several tries, toss the ball so you have to move and reach to catch it.
Toss and catch a different ball	2 mins	Try tossing and catching a different ball. <i>TIP: If students were using a beanbag and showed control, get them to repeat with a ball.</i>

Toss and catch different-sized balls with a partner at 1 metre apart	2 mins	<p>Toss and catch different-sized balls with a partner. Students stand 1 metre from a partner. Using soft balls of various sizes, students toss and catch a ball using an underhand release. The receiving partner waits with “ready hands.”</p> <p>Ready hands: elbows bent, fingers spread and pointed towards their partner, eye on ball.</p> <p>Tosser: begin with ball in hand slightly below hip, swing arm slightly back and forward; release ball between the waist and chest. Aim for partner’s ‘ready hands’.</p>
Toss and catch different-sized balls with a partner at 2 and 3 metres apart	2 mins	<p>Gradually increase the distance between the students.</p> <p><i>TIP: Ready hands, reach for the ball, bring ball into chest.</i></p>
Throw the ball so your partner has to move	5 mins	<p>Throw the ball so your partner has to move one or two steps to the left, right, forward, and backward. Make sure partner moves to catch before it bounces.</p>
Throw the ball so that it must bounce once before partner catches it	10 mins	<p>Throw the ball so that it must bounce once before your partner catches it.</p> <p><i>TIP: Students must explore how hard to throw the ball so it will bounce before it gets to their partners.</i></p>
Breaks	1 break	At discretion of coaches.
Finish	-	Hand out marked checklist summary /homework for review and practice

Day 3 Striking Activities with a Balloon

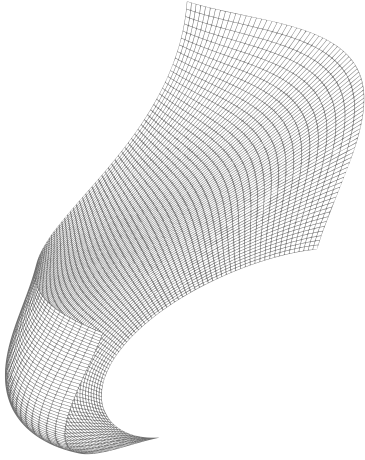
Activity	Striking	Refer to Striking by Hand checklist
Fun Tennis Warmup	5 mins	Skipping and clapping. Shoulder/hip rotation.
Review Days 1 & 2	10 mins	Refer to Movement/Manipulative checklists
With a Balloon:		
Keep a balloon in the air	5 mins	Keep a balloon in the air. Tap the balloon with the palm of your hand. After some practice, try using the back of your hand. After some practice, try alternating front and back of the hand.
Keep a balloon in the air without moving	2 mins	Keep the balloon in the air without having to move more than one step.
Squat down low and keep striking the balloon	2 mins	Squat down low and continue to strike the balloon under control
Move from a low position to a standing position while striking	2 mins	Move from a low position to a full standing positioning while striking and controlling the balloon
Strike the balloon so that it goes high and low	2 mins	Strike the balloon so that sometimes it goes high and other times it goes low
Walk and keep the balloon in the air	2 mins	Walk and keep the balloon in the air. <i>TIP: Students must push the balloon slightly in the direction they wish to move</i>
With a partner, hit the balloon back and forth	10 mins	With a partner, hit the balloon back and forth. <i>TIP: Try to keep the balloon high, above your partner's shoulders, to make it easier for your partner to hit the balloon back</i>
Breaks	1 break	At discretion of coaches.
Finish	-	Hand out marked checklist summary /homework for review and practice

Day 4 Striking Activities with a Ball

Activity	Striking by Hand	Refer to Striking by Hand checklist
Fun Tennis Warmup	5 mins	Skipping and clapping. Shoulder and hip rotation.
Review Days 1 & 2	10 mins	Refer to Manipulative Activities checklist
With a Ball		
Strike a ball against a wall with your hand	5 mins	Holding a soft ball, stand a few feet from a wall. Strike (hit) the ball toward the wall with the palm of your hand.
Strike a ball against a wall at different levels (low, medium, high)	5 mins	Strike the ball to the wall at different levels (low, medium, and high)
Strike the ball against the wall, let it bounce once, and catch it	5 mins	Strike the ball against the wall, let it bounce once, and catch it.
Strike the ball against the wall at different levels, let it bounce once, and catch it	5 mins	Experiment with striking the ball at different levels and letting the ball bounce once before catching it.
With a partner, take turns striking the ball against the wall.	10 mins	With a partner, take turns striking the ball against the wall. Let the ball bounce once before striking it. See how many times you and your partner can strike the ball against the wall without losing control or stopping. <i>TIP: Be ready: Bend your knees, keep your heels off the floor slightly, and be ready to move!</i>
Breaks	1 break	At discretion of coaches.
Finish	-	Hand out marked checklist summary/homework for review and practice



Tennis Fundamentals: **Tiny Tots** Activities Checklists Summary

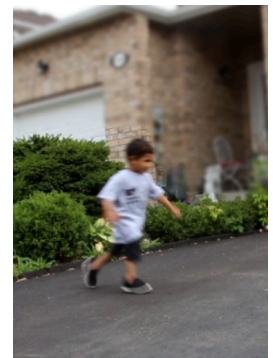
<h2>1. Movement Activities</h2> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving forward/backward on command • Shuffle step sideways • Change directions using lines on command • Running quickly forward/backward/stopping 	<h2>2. Manipulative Activities</h2> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropping and bouncing the ball • Tossing and catching the ball • Throwing and bouncing the ball to a partner
<h2>3. Striking with the Hand</h2> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balloon/Sponge Ball tossing activities • Bouncing ball on wall activities • Striking ball with hand against wall • Hand-striking ball with partner activities 	
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">  </div> <div style="flex: 2;"> <p>Homework to do everyday. Use a soft ball.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Reps: Drop a ball, let it bounce and catch it. Bend your knees • 10 Reps: Toss a ball into the air then catch it. • 10 Reps: Same as above - this time toss higher and hold your tossing arm straight up and catch with same arm (very difficult). • 10 Reps: Throw and bounce a ball with a partner • 10 Reps: Strike the ball with your hand against a wall • 10 Reps: Use your hand to strike the ball with a partner </div> </div> <p>www.cambridgetennisclub.ca</p>	



Tennis Fundamentals: **Tiny Tots** Movement Checklist

Movement Activities

1. Move throughout the activity space in a forward direction, stopping on command. Encourage the use of a one-two stop.
2. Practise moving in a forward and backward direction. Eyes look where you are going
3. Using a shuffle step, practise moving sideways. Instructor must demonstrate the shuffle step.
4. Move throughout the activity area. On the signal from the coach, change the direction in which you are moving.
5. Begin by standing on a line on the floor. On the signal, begin moving; when you come to another line change the direction you are moving (forward, backward, sideways).
6. Move in a large zigzag pattern throughout the court/ gymnasium using a shuffle step.
7. Watch instructor's hands to see which way you should move.
8. Beginning in your home space, run forward as fast as you can for eight steps. Stop quickly. Run back to your home position. Repeat several times. Running as fast as you can and stop quickly, with control (not falling but remaining on your feet).



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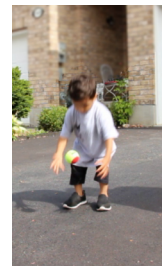
Adapted from Tennis For Schools <https://www.tennisonario.com/outreach>



Tennis Fundamentals: **Tiny Tots** Manipulative Checklist

Manipulative Activities

1. Stand with legs shoulder-width apart, arms bent at the elbows, ball in hands. Drop the ball out in front and catch it.
2. Now bounce the ball hard so it bounces higher than if it were simply dropped.
3. Using an underhand motion, toss different-sized balls in the air, and catch them yourself. Vary the distance, beginning by asking the students to toss the ball to approximately eye height and work up to about 1 metre above the head.
4. Now try tossing the ball at arm's length so you have to reach out in front to catch it.
5. When comfortable catching ball in front, toss the ball so you have to move a step or two to get underneath it to catch it.
6. Try tossing and catching a different ball.
7. Toss and catch different-sized balls with a partner. Stand a metre from a partner using soft balls of various sizes.
8. Repeat the above, gradually increasing the distance.
9. Throw the ball so your partner has to move one or two steps to the left, right, forward, and backward. Make sure partner moves to catch **before** it bounces.
10. Throw the ball so that it must bounce once before your partner catches it.



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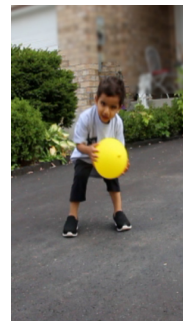
Adapted from Tennis For Schools <https://www.tennisonario.com/outreach>



Tennis Fundamentals: **Tiny Tots** Balloon Striking Checklist

Striking Activities with Balloon

1. Keep a balloon in the air. Tap the balloon with the palm of your hand. After some practice, use the back of your hand. After some practice, try alternating front and back of the hand.
2. Keep the balloon in the air without having to move more than one step.
3. Squat down low and continue to strike the balloon under control.
4. Move from a low position to a full standing positioning while striking and controlling the balloon.
5. Strike the balloon under control at different spots around your body (to the sides, reaching out front, behind).
6. Strike the balloon so that sometimes it goes high and other times it goes low.
7. Next, try walking and keeping the balloon in the air. Push the balloon slightly in the direction you wish to move.
8. With a partner, hit the balloon back and forth. Keep the balloon high, above your partner's shoulders, to make it easier for your partner to hit the balloon back.



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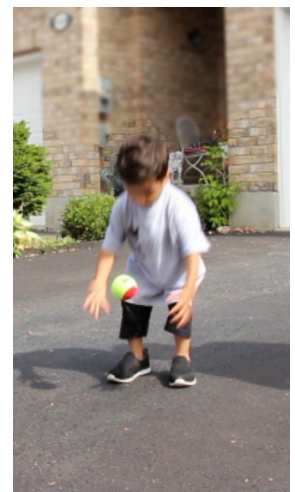
Adapted from Tennis For Schools <https://www.tennisonario.com/outreach>



Tennis Fundamentals: **Tiny Tots** Ball Striking Checklist

Striking Activities with Ball

1. Holding a soft ball, stand a few feet from a wall. Strike (hit) the ball toward the wall with the palm of your hand.
2. Strike the ball to the wall at different levels (low, medium, and high).
3. Strike the ball against the wall, let it bounce once, and catch it.
4. Experiment with striking the ball at different levels and letting the ball bounce once before catching it. Is one level easier or more difficult than another?
5. With a partner, take turns striking the ball against the wall. Let the ball bounce once before striking it. See how many times you and your partner can strike the ball against the wall without losing control or stopping.



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