

**A Parent's Guide to
Beginning**

TENNIS

FOREWORD

Dear Parents:

I am pleased that you are considering tennis as an activity for your son or daughter. It is a sport that can be played throughout your child's lifetime regardless of age or ability.

This booklet, *A Parent's Guide to Beginning Tennis*, is designed to assist you and your child in understanding and enjoying the sport. It will guide you through the various stages of your child's tennis development and provide you with practical tips and information on all parts of the game. Being an informed parent will enrich your child's tennis experience.

A Parent's Guide to Beginning Tennis is divided into eight sections which outline the value of tennis, what you need to know to get started, and how to make your child's experience a positive and lasting one.

This guide is the first in a series of books for parents. The next, *A Parent's Guide to Competitive Tennis* will assist you should your child wish to pursue the game beyond the recreational level.

Enjoy the guide; enjoy tennis, and most of all enjoy watching your son or daughter grow as a human being, through tennis.

Ari Novick
Director, Coaching Development
Tennis Canada



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tennis Canada gratefully acknowledges Janet Petras for her contributions to the production of this manual. Her steadfast dedication and patience throughout the development, design and writing of this manual was integral to the creation of this informative guide for tennis parents.

I am confident that parents throughout Canada will find this guide to be helpful in assisting them with their understanding and their children's enjoyment of tennis, the sport of a lifetime.

Ari Novick
Director, Coaching Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
Foreword	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
How to Get the Most Out of Your Guide	5
❶ <i>WELCOME TO TENNIS: YOUR CHILD'S SPORT FOR LIFE</i>	6
Why Sports?	
Why Tennis?	
❷ <i>HAVE FUN AND BE POSITIVE</i>	9
Create a Positive Experience	
Tips to Help Build Self-Esteem through Tennis	
❸ <i>GET STARTED: JUST PLAY!</i>	11
What Does Your Child Need?	
How to Play?	
Rules, Scoring and Etiquette	
Where Can My Child Play?	
❹ <i>TENNIS IN YOUR COMMUNITY</i>	20
What Tennis Activities are Available?	
What is a Tennis Program?	
Choosing a High Quality Recreational Tennis Program	
❺ <i>COMPETITION: KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE</i>	25
Put Winning into Perspective	
Handling the Ups and Downs	
❻ <i>TENNIS FOR LIFE</i>	27
❼ <i>GLOSSARY OF TENNIS TERMS</i>	28
❽ <i>RESOURCES</i>	30
Provincial Tennis Associations	
Tennis Canada	
Other Resources	
<i>REFERENCE NOTES</i>	32

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GUIDE

A Parent's Guide to Beginning Tennis is loaded with valuable information, tips and resources. It is divided into eight key sections as follows:

1. Welcome to Tennis: Your Child's Sport for Life
2. Have Fun and Be Positive
3. Get Started: Just Play!
4. Tennis in Your Community
5. Competition: Keep it in Perspective
6. Tennis for Life
7. Glossary of Tennis Terms
8. Resources

Welcome to Tennis: Your Child's Sport for Life (Section 1) illustrates the benefits to your child of participating in sports and especially tennis.

Have Fun and Be Positive (Section 2) provides tips that you can use to ensure your child's tennis experience is a positive and lasting one.

Get Started: Just Play! (Section 3) outlines everything your child needs to get started including types of activities, equipment, facilities, and rules.

Tennis in Your Community (Section 4) discusses recreational tennis programs, lessons, and choosing an instructor.

Competition: Keep it in Perspective (Section 5) provides an introduction to competitive tennis and it's benefits.

Tennis for Life (Section 6) summarizes the lifelong benefits of tennis for you and your child.

The Glossary of Tennis Terms (Section 7) is a handy list of common tennis terms.

Resources (Section 8) provides a list of provincial and national contacts through which you can obtain further information on any tennis topic.

There is something for every parent in *A Parent's Guide to Beginning Tennis*. Please enjoy it and keep it as a handy reference as your child develops through the sport.

1. WELCOME TO TENNIS: YOUR CHILD'S SPORT FOR LIFE

Why Sports?

Sport participation can be your child's key to an active and fulfilling life. Through sport your child can:

- *Be physically active*
- *Express him/herself*
- *Be with other children*
- *Experience positive role models*
- *Feel good about him/herself*
- *Learn life skills*

Sport programs are for every child whether able-bodied, physically or mentally challenged. Give your child the opportunity to grow and learn through sport.

Physically, your child may gain:

- *Higher levels of fitness*
- *Better health*
- *Improved motor skills*
- *An appreciation of healthy living (i.e. non-smoking)*

Psychologically, your child may experience:

- *Fun*
- *Affiliation*
- *Skill Development*
- *Excitement*
- *Independence*
- *Confidence*
- *Friendships*
- *Challenge*
- *Self-esteem*
- *Improvement*
- *Success*

Socially, your child may learn:

- *Cooperation*
- *Communication*
- *Courage*
- *Achievement*
- *Perseverance*
- *Fairness*
- *Lifelong interest in physical activity*
- *Improved school achievement*
- *Intrinsic motivation*
- *Social values*

Clearly, there can be positive benefits for your child in sport.

Why Tennis?

Tennis can be your child's sport experience. Some sports offer better environments in which to learn and grow. Tennis is one of them.

Your child will love tennis. It's fun, active, healthy, easy to play, and simple and affordable to begin. Canadians love the sport too. In 1997 over 4.3 million played at least once. ^①

Tennis is fun. And having fun is the key to your child pursuing an active and healthy lifestyle. Tennis is social. It can be enjoyed with friends and family members. Tennis is a team or individual activity. Your child can enjoy playing singles with a friend or doubles with three friends, or practicing in solitude against a wall.

Tennis is for everyone. It is for people of all abilities. A physical disability is not a barrier as wheelchair tennis is a popular and growing part of the game. Young people with varying physical or mental challenges enjoy tennis.

Tennis is easy to learn with the proper equipment and guidance. Beginning tennis, and playing during the outdoor season, is inexpensive. Tennis is everywhere. It is readily accessible at public courts, parks and recreation departments, schools, and clubs.

Tennis is safe. It provides less risk of life threatening injuries as compared to many other sports.

Tennis teaches. It provides the opportunity to develop many valuable life skills including:

- *Commitment*
- *Confidence (Self-worth)*
- *Leadership (responsibility and independence)*
- *Emotional Stability*
- *Sociability*
- *Teamwork*
- *Physical well-being*
- *Dedication to physical activity*
- *Respect*
- *Tenacity*
- *Discipline*

Tennis empowers your child and teaches about self-esteem, fair play, self-discipline, organization and time management. Your child can learn how to have realistic goals and strive to excel.

Tennis provides opportunities. It can lead to earning a university degree through tennis participation, or even becoming a successful tennis coach, club manager, or sport administrator.

Tennis provides limitless opportunities. It can be your child's sport for life.

2. HAVE FUN AND BE POSITIVE

“Self-esteem isn’t everything, it’s just there’s nothing without it”^②

Create a Positive Experience

Be sure your child's first tennis experience is a positive one. If you don't, and it isn't, it may affect his/her self-esteem, interest in physical activity, and enjoyment of tennis.

What is self-esteem?

Very early in life, your child develops an inner picture or a self-image. Your child may develop positive feelings and acquire a sense of importance and self-worth. Self-esteem is the way in which your child sees and evaluates him/herself-either positively or negatively.

How do I affect self-esteem?

Your child's self-esteem is initially shaped by you...the parent. Your verbal and non-verbal reactions, praise and criticism, smiles, facial expressions, and hugs help to influence your child's level of independence and sense of achievement. When your child is given lots of praise and positive reinforcement, he/she has a better chance to develop high self-esteem.

How does sport affect self-esteem?

Sport may provide your child with many opportunities to experience success and failure. A healthy sport program may provide your child the opportunity to grow up to be better adjusted, more confident, and better able to cope with stress and new challenges.

How does tennis affect self-esteem?

Tennis provides your child with opportunities to learn new skills and assess his/her capabilities. This experience can either positively or negatively affect your child's self-esteem.

What can I do to create a positive experience?

As a figure of authority, you have an enormous capacity to make your child feel good about him/herself. The first step is to know and understand why your child is participating. Ask your child.

Your child is most likely participating to:

Have Fun
Learn new Skills
Be with Friends

Once you know why your child wants to play, it is your responsibility to ensure those needs are met.

Next, examine your reasons for your child's participation. Are they the same as your child's? If they differ, then change your reasons; otherwise your child's tennis may not be a positive and lasting experience for your family.

Tips to help build self-esteem through tennis

Here's how you can help!

- Praise your child often. A pat on the back means a lot. Praise effort, learning new skills, cooperation and good behaviour
- Encourage your child
- Talk to your child. Ask for input and invite questions
- Give responsibility
- Use a smile, nod or wink as acknowledgement
- Ensure the activity suits his/her level of physical and emotional development
- Show confidence in your child

How do I know if my child has low self-esteem?

Low self-esteem may be the cause when your child:

- Avoids a task or challenge without even trying, or gives up at the first sign of frustration
- Cheats or lies to prevent losing a game or doing poorly
- Shows signs of regression, acting baby like, or very silly
- Becomes controlling, bossy, or inflexible to hide feelings of inadequacy
- Makes excuses ("the teacher is dumb") or downplays the importance of events
- Withdraws socially, losing or having less contact with friends, as school grades decline
- Experiences changing moods, exhibiting sadness, crying, angry outbursts, frustration or quietness
- Makes self-critical comments, such as "I never do anything right" or "Nobody likes me"
- Has difficulty accepting either praise or criticism
- Becomes overly concerned or sensitive about other people's opinions
- Seems strongly affected by negative peer influence, adopting attitudes and behaviours like a disdain for school, cutting classes, acting disrespectfully, shoplifting, or experimenting with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs
- Is either overly helpful or never helpful at home

③

Tennis can be so positive. Make sure you know why your child is playing and then praise, praise, praise. See tennis through your child's eyes.

3. GET STARTED: JUST PLAY!

How do my child and I begin?

Starting tennis is simple. You don't need to go anywhere. Begin in your backyard, driveway, or basement. Or play in a nearby schoolyard, against a wall, or on a tennis court. Play with your child and work on the basics. This is great quality time for you and your child as you enjoy the out-of-doors, exercise, and spend time together. Even if you have never played yourself, it is a wonderful activity for both of you to explore. Suggest your child invite a friend along to learn too.

What Does My Child Need?

Basic Equipment

Tennis requires very little equipment to begin. However, proper equipment is important to ensure safety and enjoyment. All that is required is:

- *One pair of non-marking, flat-soled athletic shoes*
- *One tennis racquet*
- *One can of tennis balls*
- *One T-shirt*
- *One pair of shorts*

Is there any equipment that will make it easier to learn tennis?

The key is for your child to have fun and experience success early. To ensure this, tennis has developed a scaled-down version of the sport that includes junior racquets, smaller mini or half-sized courts, and foam or intermediate balls.

Junior Racquets

Under Age 6:

Your child can use a wooden paddle, plastic racquet or ping-pong mallet. The goal is to make striking or rolling the ball as easy as possible.

Ages 6-12:

Your child can use a junior racquet. It is shorter and lighter, has a smaller grip size and is easier to handle and maneuver. Junior racquets can be purchased in most sport stores for as little as \$25. They vary in length (19-26 inches) so be sure to choose one that your child can swing and hold easily. Stay with it until your child can easily maneuver a regular racquet (27 inches and up).

Ages 13-18:

If your child begins tennis as a teenager, a junior racquet may not be required. Affordably priced starter racquets (\$20-\$40) can be purchased at most sports stores. Simply tell the salesperson that you are looking for a beginner racquet.

Mini or Half-size Courts

A smaller court makes the game more fun and realistic. About half the size of a regular tennis court is ideal to start. If you are on a tennis court, use the area between each service line on both sides of the net (the service boxes). If you are at home or in a schoolyard, try marking out an area that is about 11 metres by 8 metres (38 feet by 27 feet). Use a bench, or tie a rope between two chairs, to mark the net at about 5.5 metres from each end.

The mini or half-court makes it easier for your child to control the ball, have rallies, and have fun.

Foam or Intermediate Tennis Balls

A foam tennis ball is like a nerf ball and can be used indoors or on a mini or half-court. It is safe and can be hit hard without travelling a great distance. This is perfect for your child who may like swinging wildly but still wants to keep the ball in the court area.

An intermediate tennis ball is similar to a regular one but a little softer. It is excellent for outdoor tennis on a mini or half-court. Again, it doesn't travel as far or as quickly as a regular ball which makes learning the basics easier.

Finally, keep it simple to begin. Get the basic equipment and find a playing area or court near you. But most of all....***Have Fun!***

How to Play?

How can I help my child learn the basics?

Play with your child and give lots of praise. Try the following activities:

Stage One: Get Used To The Racquet And Roll The Ball On The Ground

- Explore various ways of holding the racquet
- Roll the ball on the ground with the racquet
- Roll the ball over to a friend

Stage Two: Control The Ball On The Racquet

- Keep the ball on the racquet
- Pass the ball from one racquet to another without dropping it
- Keep the ball on the racquet while moving about
- Maintain control of the ball on the racquet while being hindered

Stage Three: Control The Ball On The Racquet After A Bounce

- Toss the ball with one hand and catch it, or at least touch it, with the racquet
- Drop the ball from one hand and catch it with the racquet after it bounces
- Let the ball fall from the racquet and catch it or hit it after one bounce
- Pass the ball back and forth with a racquet let it bounce once each time

Stage Four: Hit Upwards - Volley

- Bounce the ball on the racquet
- Hit the ball upward

Stage Five: Hit Upwards - Groundstrokes

- Bounce the ball on the racquet and on the ground
- Bounce the ball on the ground
- Take turns bouncing the ball by hitting it upwards

Stage Six: Get Used To Receiving The Ball

- Block the ball with one's racquet
- Block the ball coming from various directions

Stage Seven: Hit The Ball From A Self-Fed Ball

- Hit the ball in a specific direction
- Hit the ball a specified distance
- Hit the ball in a target area

Stage Eight: Hit The Ball From A Fed Ball

- Hit a tossed ball upward
- Hit a tossed ball into a target area
- Bounce the ball back and forth between partners as many times as possible
- Exchange the ball using only one racquet

Stage Nine: Rally At A Very Short Distance

- Exchange the ball as often as possible over an obstacle using only one racquet
- Exchange the ball as often as possible, bounce it between each stroke, each partner using a racquet

Stage Ten: Towards Mini Tennis

- Exchange the ball with a racquet as many times as possible over an obstacle
- Make it difficult for an opponent to return the ball hit into his/her court

Are there any activities to use against a tennis wall?

Exercises on a wall

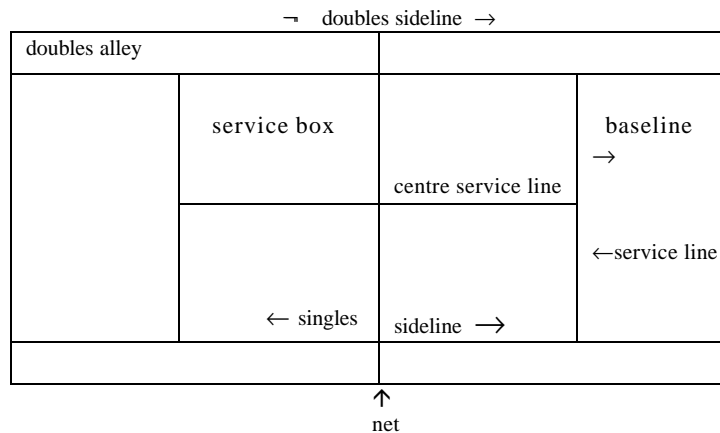
- Hit the ball so it strikes the wall in a precise spot
- Hit the ball so it strikes the wall or a target at various heights
- Bounce the ball off the wall
- Exchange the ball, bounce it off the wall, each partner using a racquet

For more information on these or other exercises please contact your local tennis instructor or provincial tennis association to obtain the *Skills Development Manual*.

Rules, Scoring and Etiquette

What are the basic tennis rules?

Tennis will be more enjoyable if you and your child understand the basic rules, code of conduct, and etiquette. Let's start with the court and its design.



How many times may the ball bounce?

- A ball may be hit before it bounces or after one bounce (except when receiving a serve when there must be one bounce).

When is the ball in or out?

- A ball landing on any part of the line is considered in

Scoring: Game, Set, and Match

Generally, a player must score 4 points to win a **game**. The server's score is called first and the server is to announce the score before starting each point. The scoring system is:

<i>No Score</i>	=	<i>Love</i>
<i>1st Point</i>	=	<i>15</i>
<i>2nd Point</i>	=	<i>30</i>
<i>3rd Point</i>	=	<i>40</i>
<i>4th Point</i>	=	<i>Game</i>

For example: When player A (the server) has won one point and player B has won two points, the score is 15-30 (server's score first). If A has three points and B has none, the score is 40-love.

When the score is tied at 40-40 (3 points each), it is called *deuce*. One player must then score 2 consecutive points to win the game. The player who wins the first point after deuce is said to have the *advantage*. The score is called either *advantage server* (or 'ad in') if the server won the point or *advantage receiver* (or 'ad out') if the receiver won the point. If your opponent wins the point after you have the advantage, then the score returns to deuce.

The first player to win 6 games with a margin of two wins the **set**. If the score is 6-6, a tiebreak is played to determine the set, 7-6. A **match** is usually the best 2 out of 3 sets.

On-Court Tennis Etiquette

Here are a few pointers!

- Make your line calls promptly and clearly
- If the ball touches any part of the line, it should be called good
- If your racquet touches the net during a point, you lose the point
- If you catch a ball or it hits any part of you or your racquet before it bounces, it is assumed to have been good, even if the ball touches you when you are out of bounds or if the ball is heading out of bounds
- In order to walk on a court without disturbing adjacent courts, wait (usually at the back of the court) for the point to be completed on the court that you will be passing; then quickly move to the next court
- If an errant ball comes on your court or one of your balls goes on an adjacent court, wait for your neighbours' point to be completed before returning the ball or calling for your ball

For the complete rules, contact your provincial tennis association to obtain a copy of *Rules of the Court*.

Where can my child play?

Where do I find a tennis court?

There may be lots of tennis facilities right in your community. Contact the ones nearest you to see what they have to offer. Here are some general guidelines:

Public Court:

An excellent place to go and play, practice and enjoy tennis. It doesn't usually cost anything. Some may have organized tennis programs or practice walls. Try it! Take the whole family!

Parks & Recreation Department:

Another place to play, or join into an organized tennis program. Many programs are affordably priced, have tennis coaches, and may provide a good introduction to the sport. Generally, recreational programs are offered and geared toward children of all ages and ability levels.

School:

Some schools may offer tennis as part of their physical education curriculum. Others, at the high school level, may have tennis teams and compete against local area schools. If there isn't a program at your child's school, consider requesting that one be started.

Tennis Club:

Tennis clubs vary in size, cost, facilities and clientele. Most offer programs for children of all ages and ability levels which may include lessons, round robins, tournaments, house leagues, and social activities. If you are a member of a tennis club then your child may benefit from these. Some also have public hours. Sometimes free or low cost introductory lessons are available. See what is available.

Is tennis in the summer only?

Many tennis clubs offer summer tennis only while others are open on a year-round basis.

Summer Tennis

Services vary but generally, a summer tennis club may offer:

- 2-6 courts
- Seasonal operation, usually from April to October
- Low one-time fee usually covers all court costs
- Volunteer run organization
- Small or no clubhouse
- A tennis instructor
- A tennis program for children

Year-Round Tennis

Year-round tennis clubs also comes in many shapes and sizes. Some have both indoor and outdoor courts while others have indoor courts only. Some are covered by permanent structures while others use temporary bubbles.

What is a bubble?

A bubble is a temporary, dome-shaped structure made of a flexible material that covers the tennis courts. Some bubbles are removed for the summer months to create an outdoor tennis club while others remain standing all year. Generally court and program costs are affordable and the services may include:

- 2-6 courts
- A professional manager
- A tennis instructor
- Annual dues plus pay-as-you-play court fees
- Small clubhouse/reception area

What are the different types of permanent year-round clubs?

A permanent structure creates permanent, year-round tennis courts. The programs, services, and amenities vary along with the program, court, and membership fees. Here are four general categories:

Tennis-Only Facility:

- Generally 4-20 courts
- Range of tennis services and activities
- Tennis professional (coach and administrator) and manager
- Annual dues and court fees
- Snack bar

Multi-Sport Facility:

- Generally 4-20 courts
- Range of services and activities
- Large and professional staff
- Range of annual dues and court fees
- May be an initiation fee in addition to monthly dues
- Fitness and dining areas

Country Club:

- Generally 6-20 courts
- Variety of tennis services
- May be other services in addition to tennis
- Tennis professionals
- May be an initiation fee in addition to monthly dues
- May be court fees

Exclusive Country Club:

- Generally 6-20 courts
- Variety of luxury services
- Often other major sports (golf, curling)
- Tennis professionals
- High initiation fees and monthly dues
- Usually no court fees

Is there an "all whites" clothing rule in tennis?

Very few tennis clubs require all white tennis clothing.

As you can see, there are many types of tennis facilities to choose from. Remember that in addition to tennis clubs, tennis can be enjoyed by your whole family at a public court for little or no cost.

4. TENNIS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What tennis activities are available?

The game may be enjoyed with or without taking lessons, with or without competing, and with or without joining a tennis club. Nearly half of the children and teenagers playing tennis report playing most frequently on city or public park courts. ^④

Your child can play with friends or try organized activities or both. Here are some of the tennis activities that may be available.

Public Courts/Parks & Recreation Departments:

- (a) Free play with friends and family
- (b) Recreational programs: leagues, round-robins, socials
- (c) Competitive/instructional programs: group or private lessons
- (d) Summer/sport camps

Schools:

- (a) Physical education classes
- (b) School team: For the more competitive child who wishes to attend team practices and compete against other school teams.
- (c) Summer/sport camps

Tennis Clubs:

- (a) Recreational programs: leagues, round-robins, socials
- (b) Competitive/instructional programs: group or private lessons
- (c) Summer/sport camps

What is a tennis program?

A tennis program is a set of organized group tennis activities that may have a recreational or competitive focus. Recreational programs focus on learning the basics of the game and enjoying it with friends and family. Competitive programs focus more heavily on skill development with the goal of competing in local, regional, or provincial competitions. Your child can move between the two streams at any time.

This guide's primary focus is on recreational programs. For more information on competitive programs, please contact your provincial tennis association to obtain the Tennis Canada publication titled *A Parent's Guide to Competitive Tennis*.

Choosing A High Quality Recreational Tennis Program

How do I know what is the best tennis program for my child?

In order to make the best program choice consider the following:

- A) Program Focus
- B) Instructor
- C) On-Court Activity
- D) Facility
- E) Cost

A) Program Focus

Make sure the program focus matches the ability level of your child and his/her reasons for playing. To be sure, simply ask the program instructor or manager, or review the program brochure.

B) Instructor

An instructor is a powerful role model and has the ability to empower your child, foster self-esteem and create a lifelong interest in physical activity. Your child's first instructor may be the most important of all, as his/her influence may be a lasting one. A child is impressionable and a suitable and qualified instructor must be chosen with care.

What qualities make a good instructor?

You want an instructor who is an excellent communicator and is:

- **Knowledgeable:** about healthy child development, and tennis
- **Enthusiastic:** about tennis, effort, and improvement
- **Friendly and Caring:** about safety, enjoyment, and self-esteem
- **Professional:** about leadership, dress and appearance, punctuality, politeness, preparation
- **Certified:** by Tennis Canada

What is a certified instructor/coach?

Tennis Canada provides a coaching certification system for interested instructors and coaches. A certified professional has a greater likelihood of having a sound philosophy of coaching, high ethical standards, and a solid understanding of skill learning, growth and development, and the needs of your child.

Tennis Canada's certification system is part of the National Coaching Certification Program, which is governed by the Coaching Association of Canada. It includes six levels: two for recreational level instructors/coaches and four for competitive level coaches as follows:

Recreational Level

- * Instructor
- * Coach 1 (Assistant Coach)

Competitive Level

- * Coach 2 (Club Level Coach)
- * Coach 3 (Provincial Level Coach)
- * Coach 4 (National Level Coach)
- * Coach 5 (International Level Coach)

Certified coaches complete technical, practical, and theoretical learning components, must recertify every four years, and agree to a Coaching Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics includes respect for participants, responsible coaching, integrity in relationships, and honouring the sport.

As the first tennis experience is so important, ensure that your child benefits from a certified instructor/coach. Your child deserves the best.

Should I Coach My Own Child?

You may be a certified tennis coach yourself or simply want to be the one teaching your child the basics. At the beginning or recreational level, this may be a positive experience for both of you.

However, if your child becomes interested in competitive tennis, then it is most likely in his/her best interest to employ a separate coach. If you are the coach, then your child may compare how you treat him/her versus the rest of the class, may want all of your attention, or expect special treatment. As your child matures, the risks may become even greater. Your child will be attempting to establish his/her independence, develop a self-concept and form new relationships. This can be challenge and confusing for your child when forced to relate to you as a parent *and* a coach

Usually, your child will benefit more in the long term from the influence of a separate coach.

C. On-Court Activity

If you are satisfied with the program focus and instructor, then observe the on-court activity for a few minutes and note the following:

- **Amount of Fun**
You want to see all the children having lots of fun, learning and smiling often.
- **Activity level**
There should be plenty of movement and activity. You don't want children spending time waiting in lines or picking up balls.
- **Organization**
The class should be well organized with one activity flowing easily into the next. The coach must maintain a reasonable degree of order in a cooperative manner and also handle any inappropriate behaviour.
- **Safety**
The environment must be safe, without any obstacles in the path of the children who are running or hitting.
- **Instructor/Student Relationship**
The coach and the children should relate well to each other.
- **Level of other students**
The ability level of the children in the class should be roughly equal. There will always be some differences in ability levels but there must be some balance too.

How do I know if the instructor is teaching my child the right skills?

Here are some general guidelines for the skills to be taught at each age and ability level. Remember that these guidelines focus on a recreational level player. Always begin at stage one, regardless of the age your child starts tennis.

Stage 1: Ages 5-8

Emphasis on fun, striking skills, coordination, cooperation, and games.

Stage 2: Ages 9-11

Emphasis on fun, progression from mini-tennis to full-court tennis, basic stroke development, games, other sports activities, and socializing.

Stage 3: Ages 12-14

Emphasis on fun, overall stroke development, in-house competitions, other sports activities, and social activities.

Stage 4: Ages 15 +

Emphasis on fun, gamestyle development, in-house or inter-club competitions, tactics, other sports activities, and social activities.

D. Facility

Make sure the courts and lighting are in good repair, the facility is clean and safe, and the staff is trained in first aid and an emergency action plan.

E. Cost

Program costs vary depending on the type of facility, length and frequency of sessions, and whether it is summer or winter tennis. Here is a general guideline:

Entry Level

\$25-\$100/summer

\$200-\$2,000/winter (depending on number of hours/week)

Once you are satisfied with the program focus, instructor, on-court activity, facility and cost, then you are set to enroll your child into the program.

5. COMPETITION: KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE

What do I need to know about competition?

Your child will be exposed to various forms of competition within a tennis program or simply in playing with friends. It may be as simple as counting the number of bounces of the ball on the racquet.

Competition may be very rewarding, providing your child's stage of growth and development is respected, and winning is kept in perspective.

How do I know if the competition is right for my child?

It is right if it focuses on:

- **Fun**
- **Effort**
- **Skill development**
- **Team activities**

It is NOT right if it focuses solely on:

- **Winning**

Put Winning into Perspective

Is winning important?

Remember your child's reasons for participating. Was winning one of them? Most research indicates that winning ranks about 10th in the list of reasons.

Keep that in perspective and make sure winning is not on the top of your list either! The first question to ask your child after finishing a tennis activity should be "Did you have fun?" or "How did you play?" not "Did you win?" or "What was the score?" Remind your child that you are proud of when effort is displayed, backhands are hit, and fair play and co-operation are shown.

What can I do if my child is overly focused on winning?

Emphasize fair play to be sure your child focuses on the development of positive life skills, and less on the outcome. The principles of fair play are to:

1. Respect the rules
2. Respect the officials and their decisions
3. Respect your opponent
4. Give everyone an equal chance to participate
5. Maintain self-control at all times

Teach your child these principles and always exhibit them yourself.

Handling the Ups and Downs

Your child is going to make mistakes, play poorly, have friends who are better players and lose tennis contests. As defeat is going to be a given at times, learning how to handle it becomes a valuable skill.

How you handle the ups and downs will be the model for your child. Your child not only notes what you say, but also what you don't say. Non-verbal messages such as a look of disgust or disappointment often mean more than words.

Stay positive for your child's sake.

What if my child wants to compete more?

Your child may express a desire to compete more formally, outside of the tennis program setting. There are a variety of competitive activities at the local, provincial, and national levels. For a more in-depth review of competitive tennis, please contact your provincial tennis association to obtain the Tennis Canada publication titled *A Parent's Guide to Competitive Tennis*.

6. TENNIS FOR LIFE

Recreational tennis activities can be enjoyed throughout your child's life. Tennis may introduce your child to new friends, greater health and fitness, a summer job, acquisition of life skills and an improved quality of life. In fact, tennis is a microcosm of life with its joys and challenges. Your child will learn how to create the joys and handle the challenges.

As your child becomes an adult, tennis may open doors to new friends and potential business connections, or to a coaching or administrative career. It will also help to maintain good health, fitness and quality of life.

Please introduce these lifetime opportunities to your child through tennis.

7. GLOSSARY OF TENNIS TERMS

Ace: A ball that is served so well that the opponent fails to touch it with his/her racquet

Alley: The area between the singles and doubles sidelines on each side of the court. The singles court is 4.5 feet wider for doubles by the addition of the alley.

Backhand: If you are right-handed, a backhand is a shot you hit on the left side of your body.

Baseline: The line parallel to the net, which defines the outer-most edge of the court.

Double Fault: The failure of both service attempts to be good. The player who double faults loses a point.

Doubles: When two people play against two other people.

Drop Shot: A very soft shot hit just barely over the net. You hit a drop shot to get your opponent up to the net.

Fault: A served ball that does not land in the proper court.

Foot Fault: Touching the baseline with your foot before making contact with the ball on a serve.

Forehand: If you are right-handed, then the forehand is a shot you hit on the right side of your body.

Game: The part of a set that is completed when one player or team wins four points, or two consecutive points after deuce.

Grip: The way you hold a racquet. There are three standard grips: eastern, continental, and western.

Groundstrokes: Strokes made after the ball has bounced, either forehand or backhand.

Head: The part of the racquet used to hit the ball including the frame and strings.

Instructor/Coach: An individual who teaches tennis.

Junior: A child under the age of 18.

Let: A point played over because of interference. A serve that hits the top of the net but is otherwise good.

Lob: A shot that you hit with any stroke high and deep into your opponent's court. You typically use a lob to get the ball past an opponent when he/she is at the net.

Match: A match is usually 2 out of 3 sets.

Mixed Doubles: Doubles play in which a man and a woman (or a boy and a girl) team up to oppose another man and woman.

Overhead: A shot hit over your head while you are at the net.

Passing Shot: A forehand or backhand that is hit past an opponent who is at the net.

Seed: A player's rank in a tournament.

Serve: A stroke, made from over your head, which you use to start each point.

Service Line: The line parallel to the net, that defines the outer-most edge of the service area.

Set: When a player or team wins six games by a margin of two (i.e. 6-2, 6-4, 7-5).

Singles: When one person plays against one other person.

Tennis Professional: An individual who is a certified tennis coach and has experience in other aspects of the game like administration and club management.

Tie-break: A system used to decide a set when the score is 6-6.

Volley: A shot that you hit before the ball bounces, usually at the net.

8. RESOURCES

PROVINCIAL TENNIS ASSOCIATIONS

Tennis New Brunswick

P.O. Box 549
Moncton, NB
E1C 8L9
(506) 853-7578
(506) 857-8240 fax
n6nbtan@nb.aibn.com

Ontario Tennis Association

1185 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 412
North York, Ont.
M3C 3C6
(416) 426-7135
(416) 426-7370 fax
jboyce@tennisontario.com

Tennis BC

1367 West Broadway, Suite 204
Vancouver, BC
V6H 4A9
(604) 737-3086
(604) 737-3124 fax
tom@tennis.bc.ca

Tennis NFLD

Provincial Recreation Centre
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NFLD
A1B 4J6
(709) 576-0902
(709) 576-7493 fax
nfldtennis@nf.aibn.com

Tennis Saskatchewan

2205 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Sask.
S4P 0S4
(306) 780-9410
(306) 525-4009 fax
tennis.sask@dlcwest.com

Sport North Federation

Box 336
Yellowknife, NWT
X1A 2N3

Tennis PEI

5 Wynwood Crescent
Charlottetown, PEI
C1A 8S5
(902) 566-5051
(902) 368-4548 fax
sport.pei@pei.sympatico.ca

Manitoba Tennis Association

200 Main Street, Suite 303
Winnipeg, Man.
R3C 4M2
(204) 925-5660
(204) 925-5703 fax
tennismb@escape.ca

Federation Quebecoise de Tennis

285 Faillon Street West
Montreal, Quebec
H2R 2W1
(514) 270-6060 ext. 606
(514) 270-2700 fax
dg@tennis.qc.ca

Tennis Alberta

Percy Page Centre
11759 Groat Road
Edmonton, Alberta
T5M 3K6
(780) 415-1661
(780) 427-0524 fax
director@oanet.com

Tennis Nova Scotia

P.O. Box 3101, Parklane Centre
Halifax, NS
B3J 3G6
(902) 425-5450
(902) 425-5606 fax
jamie@tennishalifax.com

NATIONAL TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Tennis Canada

3111 Steeles Avenue West
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 3H2
Ph: (416) 665-9777 or 1-800- 263-9039
Email: commctn@tenniscanada.com
www.tenniscanada.com

OTHER RESOURCES

High Five Program

A Program of Parks & Recreation Ontario
1185 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 406
North York, Ontario
M3C 3C6
Ph: (416) 426-7142
Email: highfive@prontario.org

The Parent-Player Tennis Training Program

Jim Loehr and E.J. Kahn III
The Stephen Greene Press, Pelham Books 1989

The NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete

NCAA
Ph: 1-800-638-3731
www.ncaa.org

Parent's Guide to Girls Sports

Women's Sports Foundation
Eisenhower Park
East Meadow, N.Y. 11554
U. S. A.
Ph: (516) 542-4700

Straight Talk about Children and Sport

Coaching Association of Canada
1600 James Naismith Drive
Gloucester, Ontario K1B 5N4
Ph: (613) 748-5624, Fax: (613) 748-5707
Coach@coach.ca // <http://www.coach.ca>

REFERENCE NOTES

- ① Pollara Study (July 1997) *Tennis Participation in Canada*, p. 1
Executive Summary
- ② Binder, D. (1993) *Fun 'n Motion Resource Kit*, p 3.
- ③ LeBlanc, J. & Dickson, L. (1996) *Straight Talk about Children and Sport*, p. 95
- ④ Pollara Study (July 1997) *Tennis Participation in Canada*, p. 1
Executive Summary