



TENNIS PLAYDAYS

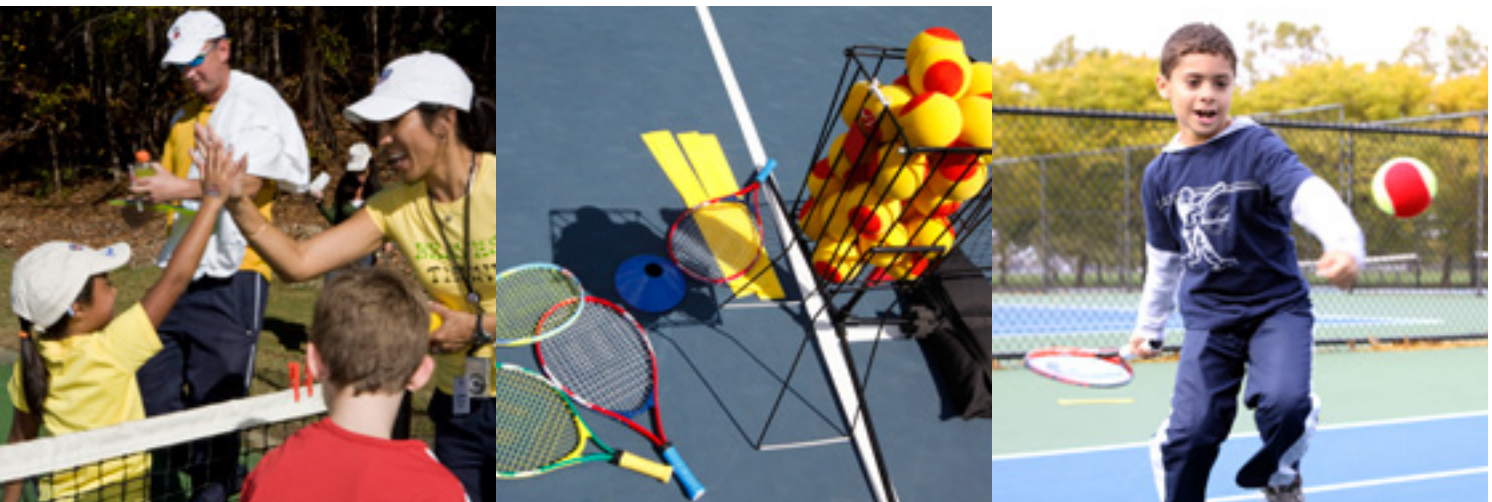
STARTUP MANUAL
FOR 10 AND UNDER TENNIS

A PLAY DAY IS

a great way for kids 10 and under to play tennis in a fun, non-threatening, non-elimination, competitive environment. It is a wonderful way to get ready for that next step of playing USTA Jr. Team Tennis and USTA junior tournaments. With equipment sized right and play that is appropriate, kids build confidence, improve their skills and stay active. Over the duration of a few hours, a Play Day allows kids to experience serving, rallying and scoring in an informal competition.

Players participate at their level against opponents of similar skills. The emphasis is on participation, effort and sportsmanship, as opposed to highlighting the achievements of certain players. These low-key competitions are organized in formats that allow children to play again and again, whether they win or lose.

A Play Day can be held at a school, park, tennis facility, or local YMCA or Boys & Girls Club, where an organizer and volunteers can create a fun tennis event for kids 10 and under. Matches are short in duration, players are grouped by ability and game modifications allow each child to experience success. The kids play multiple matches both with and against a variety of players, serving, rallying and scoring over a net. Organizers provide a fun atmosphere with prizes, refreshments and participation awards. It also is a great opportunity to promote local tennis programs in the area.



SETUP

A Play Day can be designed to accommodate all skill levels. It is important that every child in these events has fun and leaves with the desire to play more. It is possible to group children according to ability if you know how much playing experience they have or if there is a warm-up period where players can be observed and then placed in an appropriate group.

The following divisions of play are suggested for organizers:

8 and Under Division

Coach Toss

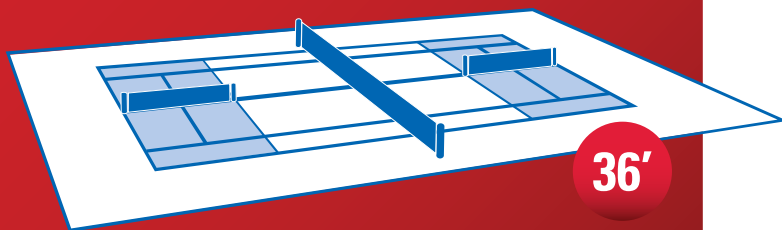
A coach or volunteer is responsible for dropping the ball in front of the player or tossing it in from the side to begin the rally. Players will be assisted with scorekeeping by coaches/volunteers.

Modified Serve

Players are responsible for starting the ball in play with an overhand serve or an underhand serve, or even starting the ball with a drop hit. All of this is done without help from the coach. The first serve is attempted from the proper distance. Players can stand closer to the net on the second serve to get the ball in play. Players may need help keeping track of score.

Players Serve

Players are responsible for starting the ball in play with an overhand serve, without help from the coach. The first and second serves must be attempted from the proper distance and players are responsible for keeping track of score.



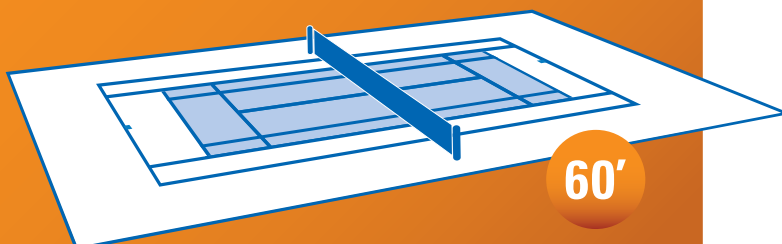
10 and Under Division

Player Serve ... With Modification

Players are responsible for starting the ball in play with an overhand serve. The first serve is attempted from the proper distance. Players can stand closer to the net on the second serve to get the ball in play, or they can possibly drop hit the serve. Players are responsible for keeping track of score. Another potential modification for inexperienced players is to have them play in the services boxes with a red foam ball.

Player Serve

Players are responsible for starting the ball in play with an overhand serve, without help from the coach. The first and second serves must be attempted from the proper distance and players are responsible for keeping track of score.





PLAY FORMATS

Non-elimination formats provide a safe, fun experience for kids to further develop their skills. These include round robins, compass draws or even a less formal method of matching two players of similar ability each round. It can be individual or team play, singles or doubles.

Round Robins

A round-robin event is a great way for an organizer to separate players into appropriate ability levels and give everyone an opportunity to play multiple matches with different players. Once participants have been separated into groups by skill level, each player will play every other player in his or her group.

Round-Robin Format for Players of Different Abilities

All participants are split into small groups of four to six players and placed into brackets, according to ability. In each bracket, every player plays one match against every other player in the bracket. The winner is determined by which player has the most individual wins or by who wins the greatest total number of games. If there is an uneven number of players in the round robin (e.g., three or five), each player will be required to sit out one round.

Round-Robin Format with Playoffs

Another type of round robin is to have players complete all their matches within their bracket, then regroup the players based on their finishes. That is, the first-place finishers will form a new bracket, as will the second-place finishers and so on. The playoff format helps level out the playing field and directs players into groups of similar abilities.

Round-Robin for Team Play

Put all players into teams (try to keep teams equal in terms of ability). Place each player in the team from 1 (Strongest) to 4 (Least strong). Organize so that all the No. 1 players from each team play in Round Robin Box 1 (e.g., Red 1, Blue 1, Green 1, Yellow 1), all the No. 2 players from each team play in Box 2, all the No. 3 players from each team play in Box 3, etc.

PLAY FORMATS

Compass Draw

Compass draws follow the traditional tournament model but give players who lose matches multiple opportunities to play. This is a wonderful format to give players an opportunity to play a lot of matches without being eliminated. It also can accommodate different ability levels in one draw. At the end of each round, the winners continue advancing in the draw in the traditional fashion, while the losers move to other points on the compass to form a new satellite tournament. If the ability level of the players is known, place the top players on opposite ends of the draw.

Team Events

Two Teams

Split the group into two groups. For each round, assign players from one group to play against players from the other group. Points won are counted for the team.

Multiple Teams

Separate the players into teams of even numbers, trying to keep teams equal in terms of ability. The teams then play against each other with games or points counting for the team total. After the first match, the teams will rotate to play again against a different team.

Scoring

Players can play for a designated period of time, a designated number of points or for a designated number of games before getting new partners and/or opponents. Using a timed format helps ensure play starts and stops on time and allows for maximum rotations of players.

Adjust the scoring to the level of the players. Scoring for kids 8 and under could be points, games or the 7-point tie-break that is played in sanctioned tournaments. Playing best two-out-of-three 7-point tie-breaks will last 15 to 20 minutes.

Scoring for the 10-and-under division could be points or no-ad games. Adjust the scoring used for the ability of the players and the time available. The scoring for 10-and-under sanctioned play is two out of three short sets (to 4 games) with a 7-point tie-break played in lieu of a third set. A full match using this scoring will last 30-45 minutes.





ORGANIZING A PLAY DAY

The most important elements in a Play Day are good planning and organization, lots of action and possibly music and ... fun!

Here are some tips to make your Play Day a huge success:

Set the Date

- Check the calendar for available dates
- Look at potential conflicts (i.e., what else is going on in your area that might compete with your event?)
- Check on court availability
- Can the event be run at a time to boost upcoming or existing programming (clinics, summer camp, other Play Days, USTA Jr. Team Tennis, USTA junior tournaments, etc.)?

Determine the Budget

- Your expenses will help determine the cost to participants and/or the amount of sponsorship money needed
- Possible expenses:
 - Court fees
 - Balls
 - Nets or barrier tape
 - Tape for marking off courts
 - Gifts for participants
 - Participant awards
 - Food and beverage
 - Prizes
 - Off-court activities (face painting, music, etc.)
 - Possibly bundle the cost into existing instructional programming

ORGANIZING A PLAY DAY

Get the Word Out

- Send out entries, post fliers or set up online registration
- Contact schools, parks and rec programs, clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Work with your local CTA
- Send out e-mails, post updates on Facebook and Twitter
- Register the event on tennislink.net (if possible in your section)
- Inform teaching professionals and program leaders in your area

Recruit Volunteers

- Parents
- Local tennis players
- High school/college students
- CTA volunteers
- Tennis professionals
- Tennis enthusiasts

What You Will Need

- Nets, caution tape or pennant banners
- Masking tape to mark off court lines
- Red foam and/or red felt balls, orange balls
- Extra racquets for anyone who does not have the correctly sized racquet
- Awards and prizes for participants
- Food/snacks and drinks
- Boom box if using music
- Participation awards
- Off-court activities for children not playing



Running the Tournament

- Day of the event – set up early!
 - Set up courts (go to 10andUnderTennis.com for more details)
 - Set up a welcome desk – one person taking names and one person greeting players
 - Have drawsheet and round-robin sheets available if needed (available on 10andUnderTennis.com under “downloads”)
 - Equipment – balls, extra racquets
 - Volunteer orientation – if this has not already been conducted
 - Food, drinks/water and ice

Day of the event (continued)

- **Player Orientation**
 - It is important to hold a brief meeting with the players in each age group before they go on court for the first time; remember, most of these kids and their parents will have no tournament experience and will be unfamiliar with tournament protocol
 - Check racquet length to make sure all kids are playing with right-sized equipment
- **Parent Orientation**
 - This will be the first experience for many adults with 10 and Under Tennis
 - Parents will need to be educated just like the players; see the Parent Orientation Sheet for more information on what should be covered
- Have a volunteer for each court with following duties:
 - Make sure all players are on the court for the first match
 - Start matches on time
 - Help with scoring if needed
 - Record scoring after each match and send both players to the score recorder or check-in desk
 - Stop a match when time is called or play is finished and help players get to the next match
 - Let the tournament organizer know if there are any mismatches in ability
- Set up a table with snacks
- Have off-court activities for non-playing participants
 - This could include non-tennis activities such as face painting, Wii tennis, obstacle courses or tennis activities such as a skill challenge or king of the court
- During the event, circulate, watch matches, encourage the children and engage the parents in conversation. Get to know people and let them get to know you — this will impress parents and increase the likelihood that they will register their children in future events.
- Talk less about the result and more about the performance, or at least ask, “How did you play?” before you ask, “Did you win?”
- Make the awards a fun ceremony to end the event. Recognize each child individually with a Certificate of Participation. Children love to be in the spotlight! Giving awards for those who win is a great idea, but if that is done make sure to also recognize sportsmanship and effort.

Post-Event

- Send a recap with pictures to your local newspaper, section and district
- Access the good and the bad of the event
- Ask for feedback from participants, parent and volunteers

For the official specifications of 10 and Under Tennis using the QuickStart Tennis play format visit 10andUnderTennis.com

PARENT ORIENTATION

- I. **Introduce yourself and your role(s):** Be brief and introduce other key people helping with the event. This orientation should only last 10 to 15 minutes. If possible, have the players involved in an activity while talking to the parents.
- II. **Explain the philosophy of 10 and Under Tennis:** It is the “play to learn” philosophy. Each child’s development should be looked at as a process instead of a race to the 78-foot court with the yellow ball. Just because a child can rally on a 78-foot court doesn’t mean he or she can learn and develop a complete game on that court.
- III. **Define the QuickStart Tennis (QST) play format:**
 - a. This format for play is likely different than the tennis they may have seen or experienced.
 - b. Tennis now is sized right for kids just like other youth sports.
 - c. The specifications are designed to be age-, skill- and attention span-appropriate for children.
 - d. Pass out 10 and Under Tennis parent guides.
- IV. **Describe appropriate equipment:** Talk about what racquet should be used on which courts and why. Also explain that you will be asking their child to play with the appropriately sized racquet for the court.
 - a. Racquets are shorter and lighter, enabling kids to swing and maneuver the racquet and have the ability to change the direction depth, speed and spin of the ball more effectively.
 - b. Balls are lighter and move through the air at a slower pace. Since children have slower reaction times, they will be able to get to and return more balls.
 - c. The court size is smaller and is scaled to a child’s size, just like other youth sports.
 - d. Scoring is modified and matches are shorter so children will avoid injuries. Shorter matches are also more appropriate for a child’s attention span.
 - e. Playing on a right-sized tennis court and using the correct ball are important elements in the success of your child in the sport.
- V. **Rule Change:** As of January 1, 2012, all USTA- and ITF-sanctioned competition for children 10 and Under will be played using the 10 and Under Tennis specifications.
- VI. **Describe the format for the event:** The goal for the event is for players to gain an understanding of the fundamental rules of tennis and to give them an introduction to competitive play.
- VII. **Parent roles:** Designate a parent viewing area outside of the court area. Talk about what is important for the kids — playing fair, trying hard and meeting new friends. All the children will play multiple matches whether they win or lose. The most important things the parents can do is encourage their children and ask questions at the end of the day like “Are you having fun?” and “Would you like ice cream or yogurt?”
- VIII. **Promote the idea of being a good youth sport parent.**
- IX. **Encourage take-home tennis and promote other play opportunities:** Talk about the importance of take-home tennis as a way to encourage children to continue with tennis. If you have clinics starting or other play opportunities scheduled, let them know about it.
- X. **Promote other events at your facility or community:** That includes Play Days, Tennis Festivals, USTA Jr. Team Tennis, USTA junior tournaments and instructional programs.