

UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION'S

# PARENT SUPPORT GUIDE





# GAME ON!

## WELCOME TO TENNIS, FITNESS, AND FUN

Being a parent of a child that plays sports is no easy task and is a much larger responsibility. Considering the parenting chores of clothing, feeding, loving, supporting (materially and emotionally), and educating your children, the added responsibility of being a sporting parent includes financing your children's sport, providing the necessary sporting attire, transporting them to practices and competition, volunteering your time, and guiding them through the emotional roller coaster that is apparent in youth sports. Other factors to consider are the toll on the family financially and emotionally, your marriage, the opportunity costs you and your family incur, and your own needs and interests.

In this parent support guide, the objective is to offer a strength-based approach to parenting in organized youth sport. Initially, we offer supporting information to you as a parent of a child (or children) participating in youth sports. The reasoning behind this is that as the governing body of tennis nationwide, we want to encourage multi-sport participation at a young age. We sincerely hope you have already chosen tennis or are open to allowing your child to have tennis as one of their youth sports.





We see parents as a resource to enhance **children's performance, enjoyment, motivation,** and overall **positive youth development.** The parent-child sports relationship is essential because when children perceive their parents to be supportive, they experience increased enjoyment and motivation, higher levels of performance, and an improved parent-child relationship. With the strategies and tools outlined in this support guide, we hope that you, as a parent, will be empowered to assist coaches and sport practitioners in creating a positive learning environment for your young athlete(s). We believe your child will potentially fall in love with youth sports in general (and tennis specifically) due to the many health benefits, individual and team formats of participation, and the ability to play for a lifetime.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA), the national governing body of tennis, wishes to provide you with information, insights, and tools you as a parent will need in order to raise not only great athletes but also great people. This resource will help make your child's sport experiences a positive one and encourage them to play tennis (and other sports) for a lifetime.





# YOUTH SPORTS

Playing sports can be a unique environment in which to raise children. The benefits they receive from athletic participation are plentiful. Children experience the brilliant benefits of physical health and activity, including exercise, fitness, vitality, and mastery. Children also learn more about themselves, including how to think, how they feel, how they conduct themselves and perform in a variety of sport-related settings.

Psychological and emotional areas in which sports assist children, to name a few, include:

- Understanding their passions
- Commitment
- Confidence
- Focus
- Discipline
- Resilience



The knowledge gained through sports experiences can play a significant role in how children grow and whom they become as adults. An active life can shape their self-identity, self-esteem, goals, and future directions their lives take. Sports can also impact children's social development. The opportunities young athletes face in terms of teammates, coaches, teamwork, competition against opponents, and rival teams can have a considerable effect on how they learn to communicate, respond to conflict, and develop relationships as they progress toward adulthood. The mentorships they build with coaches and the friendships that transpire with teammates can leave a lasting impression. More importantly, the relationship you develop with your child can leave them with a lifetime of family memories and also provide the foundation for lifelong connection based on love and common interest. Playing sports, children develop the ability to learn and practice, and they ingrain essential physical, personal, and social skills in preparation for adulthood. Sports, in general, can resonate deeply with children.



## 50 Reasons to Play Sports

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Increases confidence                 | Develops focus                       |
| Develops stronger bones              | Improves reflexes                    |
| Builds friendship                    | Improves academic performance        |
| Develops Stronger joints             | Teaches life lessons                 |
| Builds character                     | Improves immune system               |
| Helps to control weight              | Improves brain functioning           |
| Improves self-esteem                 | Teaches children about winning       |
| Reduces obesity                      | Improves sleep                       |
| Improves the quality of life         | Teaches children about losing        |
| Develops resilience                  | Improves decision making             |
| Teaches children about values        | Increases energy levels              |
| Teaches respect                      | Improves posture                     |
| Improves cognitive functioning       | Improves learning                    |
| Improves mood                        | Helps children to achieve goals      |
| Reduces anxiety                      | Helps children to experience success |
| Improves blood flow                  | Improves memory                      |
| Reduces stress                       | Develops creativity                  |
| Improves fitness                     | Promotes fair play                   |
| Reduces depression                   | Promotes social interaction          |
| Teaches teamwork                     | Develops autonomy                    |
| Teaches life lessons                 | Increases attention                  |
| Improves body image                  | Builds strength                      |
| Improves breathing                   | Reduces fatigue                      |
| Boosts brain power                   | Helps to develop coping skills       |
| Helps children to learn from failure | Helps children have fun              |

123

Playing sports is just plain fun. Sport is a form of organized play, and children love to play. The simple act of playing sports, whether running, jumping, throwing a football or baseball, kicking, hitting a tennis or golf ball, impacts children in such a wholesome and untouching way that is evident in their smiles and laughter.

Playing sports is a beautiful way to help your children grow into successful, happy, and accomplished people.



## I LOVE TO WATCH YOU PLAY! ROLE OF A PARENT

### VALUES

The values you as a parent convey to your children provide a lens through which they view their sport participation. With that in mind, we recommend that you are thoughtful, deliberate, and proactive in introducing your children to values. These values will lead them to fulfill an enjoyable athletic experience, a positive lifelong relationship with sports, and a strong influence of sports in their personal and social development outside of sports.

In terms of your child's sports involvement, their values will dictate how they think. For example, if you impart the importance of effort and fun over winning, they will focus on those values when they approach competitions, just like if you prescribe the values of winning over trying their best.

The thinking that transpires from the values your young athletes hold will produce specific emotional reactions when they participate in their sport. Keeping with the previous example, if the emphasis is on effort and fun, they will likely experience emotions like excitement and pride as they approach competitions.



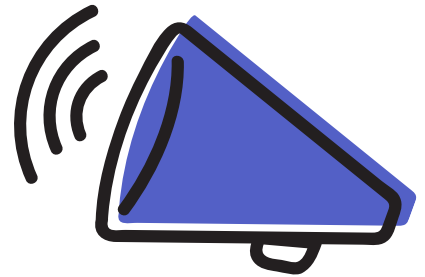


*Sports can play a big role in teaching values and principles. It can be a huge development tool for life. Just think, teamwork, leadership, work ethic, and trust are all part of the game and are also all factors in how we make the most of our lives.*

— Cal Ripken Jr., Hall of Fame baseball player.

The values that your children show and express in their sport participation will clearly define the following statements:

- This is who I am.
- This is what I value.
- This is what I stand for.
- This is what guides my sports participation.
- This is how I will behave.
- This is what I want out of my sports participation.



The following list of values will serve your children as they get involved in their active lives and leave youth sports experiences behind them:

- |                                  |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Honesty                        | • Teamwork        |
| • Commitment                     | • Patience        |
| • Strong work ethic              | • Perseverance    |
| • Pursuit of personal experience | • Resilience      |
| • Love of sport                  | • Best effort     |
| • Fun                            | • Embrace failure |
| • Respect of self and others     | • Balance in life |
| • Sportsmanship                  | • Physical health |
| • Humility                       |                   |

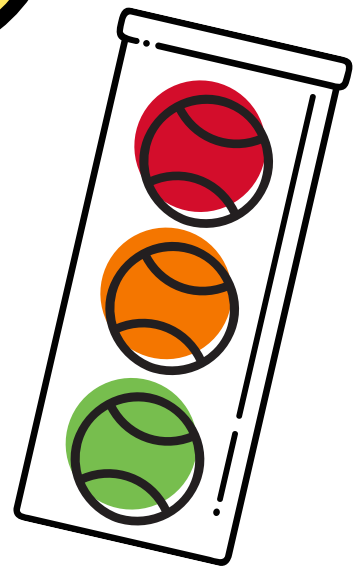
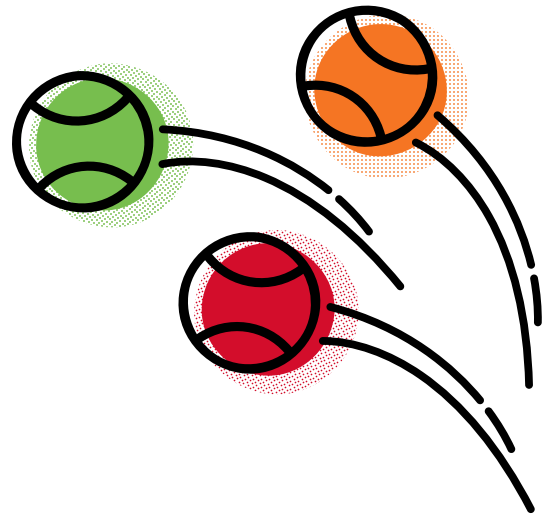


A suggestive way to introduce your children to the importance of healthy sport values is to also identify unhealthy values in sport and assist them in distinguishing the differences between positive and negative values. Some negative values:

- **Winning is the ultimate goal**
- **Bravado**
- **Selfishness**
- **Machismo**
- **Winning at any cost**
- **Demeaning the opposition**
- **Pursuit of fame and fortune**

To understand what values you have as a parent and what you communicate with your children regarding their sport experiences, pose the following questions to yourself:

- **What values were you raised on in terms of sports participation?**
- **What do you value in your child's sports participation?**
- **How do you spend your money and time related to sports?**
- **Will the values you've identified bring your children meaning, satisfaction, and enjoyment in their athletic lives?**



### **Parent Tip:**

Know the value your child places on sport participation and performance, as well as how they define success. Comparing your own goals with your children's goals could prevent disconnection and/or confrontation.

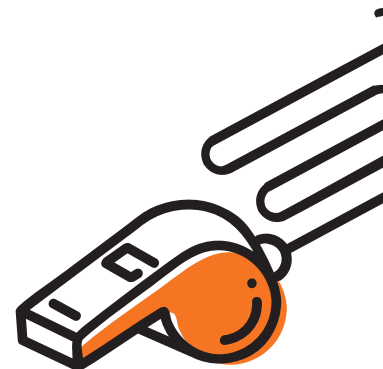


# IS EARLY SPECIALIZATION REALLY NECESSARY?

Early specialization involves intensive year-round training in a single sport from a young age. Research shows that specialization too early causes overuse injuries, burnout, and dropout rates, and unexpectedly, a decrease in overall athletic development. Experts state that early specialization can also lead to emotional and family costs. Other research findings have explained that multi-sport participation can result in more well-rounded athletes, greater long term success, and more importantly, lifelong enjoyment of and participation in sports.

Early accolades do not necessarily guarantee success later in children's lives, as the examples below demonstrate:

- Tim Duncan (Five-time NBA Champion) started swimming and only later changed to basketball.
- Alex Morgan (Olympic soccer player) only started playing soccer when she was 13 years old.
- Clay Matthews (Super Bowl Champion and six-time NFL Pro Bowl selection) was not given an athletic scholarship until his junior year.
- Roberta Vinci (Professional tennis player) reached a Top 10 ranking for the first time at the age of 33.
- Angelique Kerber (professional tennis player), became the oldest first-time number one ranked player in tennis at 28 years old.



## PRESSURE ON PARENTS

In this day and age of superstars like LeBron James, Michael Phelps, and Michelle Wie, there is pressure on parents to specialize early, and if they choose not to, their child will never become a superstar. It is with this theory in mind that youth sports are currently not positioned for the benefit of children and having fun. Programming in youth sports has become big business, as they are catering to the dreams parents have for their children as opposed to what is best for their children. An entire industry has materialized that comprises of private coaches, after-school sports programs, and summer sports camps relaying the message that early specialization is required for young athletes' long term success.

### Parent Tip:

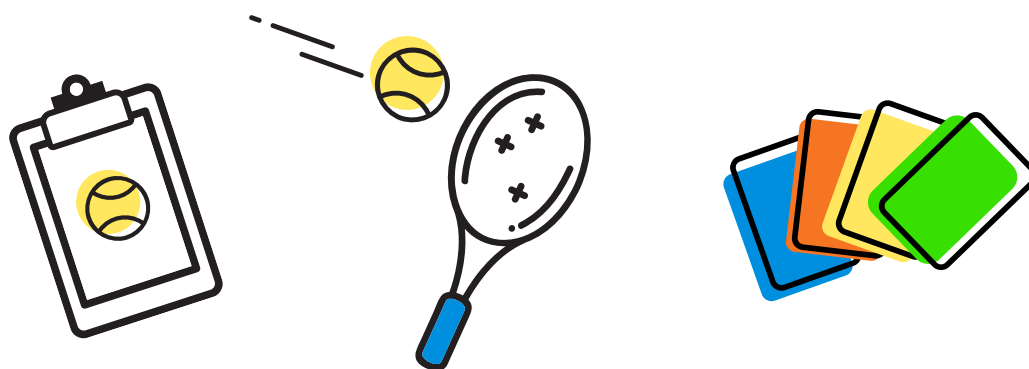
Your child is more likely to become a teacher, fireman, entrepreneur, or lawyer than a professional athlete. It is important, then, that you clearly understand what you want your child's organized youth sport participation to yield. Check in with them from season to season to ensure you are pursuing the same goals as them!

# WHICH ROAD TO TAKE

You may find that your child possesses the drive within him/herself to specialize in one sport and that he/she has a real passion. In this case, as a parent, it is recommended to guide that enthusiasm and energy in a way to keep their thirst for that sport but also ensure physical and mental balance with rest and recovery.

If specializing in one sport, you should ask the question of whether it is best for your family. The impact is not only on the child but also you as a parent and other siblings. There are three resources to consider: time, cost, and energy.

- **Time** — What is the opportunity cost? If not at sporting events, what could the family be doing?
- **Finances** — Could the money spent on sports participation be best used somewhere else?
- **Energy** — do you want to spend your energy in your child's specializing pursuits?
- **Family** — what are the potential ramifications for other siblings in your family if you are dedicating time to the child that is specializing?
- **Rest and Recovery** — are strategies being taken to prevent injuries and illness?



It is hoped the above information is framed for you to make the appropriate decision in terms of early sport specialization. At the end of the day, if you would like your child to stay healthy and play sports for a lifetime, expert opinion and research shows that multi-sport participation before the age of 12 is the appropriate choice.

## Parent Tip:

Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, tennis icons, both played youth soccer before concentrating on tennis in their teens.





# BUILDING THE FOUNDATION TO PLAY TENNIS FOR LIFE!

## UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is the national governing body for tennis in the United States. A not-for-profit organization with more than 700,000 members, it invests 100% of its proceeds in promoting and developing the growth of tennis, from the grass-roots to the professional levels. The USTA was created to standardize rules and regulations and to promote and develop the growth of tennis in the United States.

## NET GENERATION

The USTA has created a youth brand called Net Generation. Net Generation is a celebration of a game where no one sits on the sidelines. Tennis is easy to learn and tailored for all ages and abilities, giving kids a game that will help them build friendships and learn skills they will use for life. Net Generation aims to connect tennis providers with players in a safe environment that focuses on engaging more kids in sports in order to get them playing for a lifetime. To achieve this, all providers are required to complete a Safe Play background screening that the USTA subsidizes. The USTA's willingness to pay for each Net Generation provider's Safe Play background screening demonstrates the importance of protecting our youth in sports in this day and age.

Net Generation's mission is to spread the love of tennis to a new generation by empowering those that will teach them. Coaches, organizers, and teachers can gain access to the expertise of the USTA as they work with leading experts worldwide to develop new play formats, curricula, and digital tools. Net Generation is innovating to reach a new generation and a new era of tennis.

# NET GENERATION AS AN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The guiding principles of Net Generation conform to an American Development Model (ADM) that is positioned as the aligning tool for all of USTA's stakeholders. From skill development to competition perspective, the ADM aims to achieve its objectives of stemming early specialization, developing multi-sport athletes, and increasing physical activity in youth. As the USTA refines its Long-Term Athlete Development plan, the ADM will form a critical component in how the USTA embraces core athlete development principles. The long-term goal is to allow American youth to utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle and to create opportunities to maximize their full potential. These key principles, tailored to the sport of tennis, include:



## **Universal Access**

Make sure playing tennis is safe, accessible, local, and affordable.



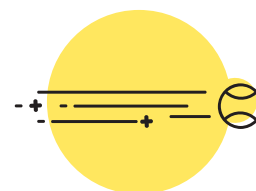
## **Developmentally Appropriate Coaching and Play**

Emphasize movement skills through developmentally appropriate coaching and play.



## **Educate Coaches and Officials**

Ensure coaches and officials engaged with all ages and abilities are trained.



## **A Clear Development Pathway**

Integrate tennis into physical education programs in schools and recreational community programs, and transition into age- and skill-based programs and play opportunities.



## **Support Multi-sport or Multi-activity Participation**

Build athletes through a multi-sport approach within tennis programming and cross-promotion with other sports and activities.



## **Fun and Player-Centered**

Focus on creating a fun, positive, engaging atmosphere within a team culture rather than wins and losses.



## **Parent/Player Guidance, Education, Health, and Transparency**

Provide parents and players the information they need to guide their healthy tennis development.



# WHY SHOULD YOUR CHILD PLAY TENNIS?

Tennis is one of the most popular sports worldwide, with millions playing every year. One of the advantages of playing tennis is that it can be played for a lifetime. Senior players from 90 years old and over are playing tennis, as can be seen with the staging of competition with that age group.

A sample of the overall benefits of tennis participation in addition to typical health benefits:

- A non-collision sport
- A great way to meet people and spend time with friends
- Suitable for all ages and skill levels
- A game that can be started at any age
- A game that can be played for a lifetime
- Played all over the USA
- Gives a total body workout
- Has built-in rest periods
- Involves cognitive function
- Provides low lactic acid buildup, resulting in low levels of perceived exertion

The potential health benefits of consistent tennis participation are:

- Increased aerobic capacity
- Lowering of body fat
- Lowering resting heart rate and blood pressure
- Improved reaction times
- Improved muscle tone, strength, and flexibility
- Reduced stress
- Lower cardiovascular risk & mortality rates
- Increased bone health



# MODIFIED EQUIPMENT

Using modified equipment is a fun way to start tennis and makes it easy for children to play the game, develop good technique and tactics, and a love for the sport.

Using these slower balls helps players to develop the most efficient technique and to be able to implement advanced tactics that in most cases, could not be performed using the Yellow ball on the full court.

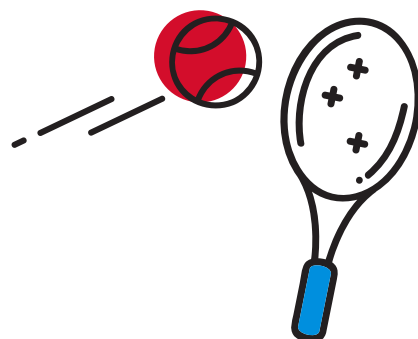
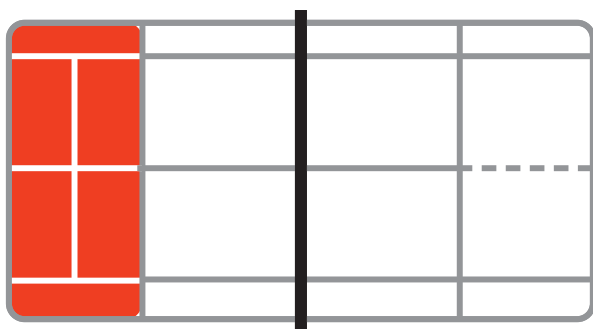
With smaller courts, shorter racquets, and lower bouncing balls, youth players will achieve greater physical activity and feel successful at tennis right from the start. Tennis is a game that can be played at home in the driveway with the whole family or with friends on any flat, safe surface.

*I grew up playing with slower balls, and I could easily swing through the shot, and the balls didn't fly all over the place.*

— Roger Federer,  
20 time Grand Slam winner

## GET STARTED. RED BALL.

The tennis journey starts with red. Red balls can be made of foam or felt, are larger, bounce lower, and travel slower than the standard yellow ball, making it easier to learn and acquire skills.



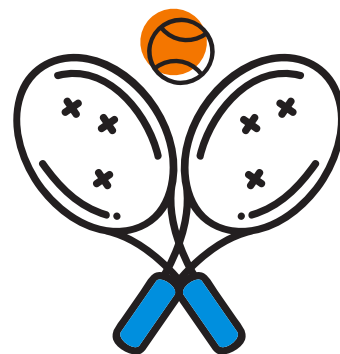
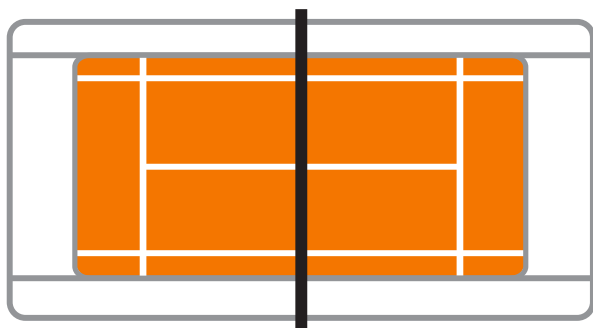
**Court sizes 36' x 18'**

Red Courts are short and narrow, making it easy for players to focus on learning the fundamentals of the game.



# MOVING ON. ORANGE BALL.

Orange balls travel through the air a little faster and farther than the red ball, but are the same size and still bounce lower than a green or yellow ball.

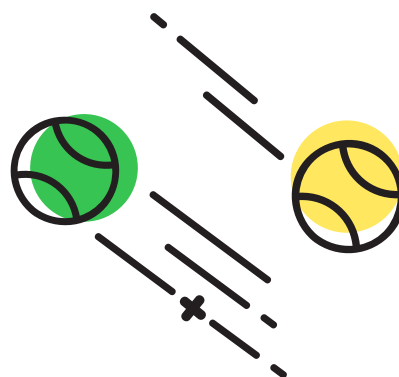
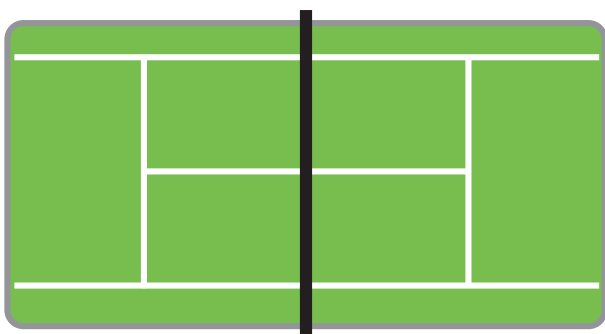


**Court size: 60' X 21' - OR - 60' X 27' (Doubles)**

Slightly smaller than the full-size 78' court, Orange Courts are ideal for players who are still developing their athletic, technical, and competitive skills.

# LEVEL UP. GREEN AND YELLOW BALLS.

Green balls have a slightly reduced bounce compared to the yellow ball, making the transition to a full-size 78' court much easier.



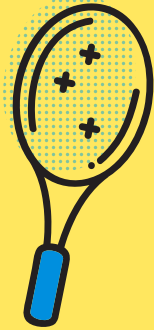
**Court sizes: 78' X 27' - OR - 78' X 36' (DOUBLES)**

At this stage, while continuing to improve their tactical and technical skills, a player's size does not hinder their ability to cover a full-size tennis court.

# RACQUET SIZES



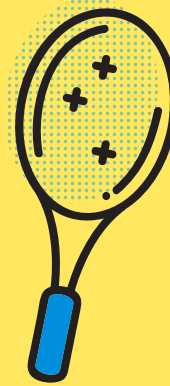
19"



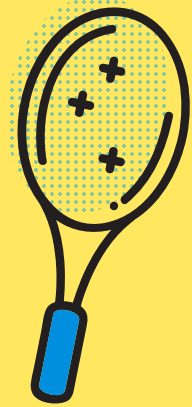
21"



23"



25"



26"

Recent research gathered more insight into the perceptions of players, parents, and coaches of a modified equipment program.

Players like playing with modified equipment, including shorter and lighter rackets and shorter courts, because it:

- Allows them to play the game more effectively
- Encourages fun regardless of hitting partner
- Enables them to improve their skills
- Is easier

Parents believe that modified equipment:

- Is designed for their kids
- Instills confidence in their kids
- Allows for more success with their kids
- Allows their kids to have more fun

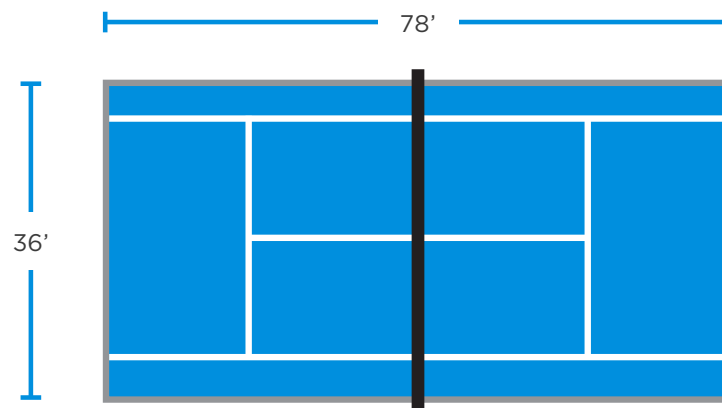
Coaches believe that modified equipment:

- Facilitates player-centered development
- Helps with learning to play the game
- Serves as a necessity for all coaches to adopt for their sessions
- Promotes partner activities and engagement
- Is conducive to more team competition

# PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

A tennis match can be played by either one player on each side - a singles match - or two players on each side - a doubles match. To start a point, the server has two serves to use an overarm motion to hit the ball and land in the diagonal service box. A singles match has the players using the inner side tramlines of the court and a doubles match using the outer tram lines.

A tennis court has the below dimensions and can be played on different types of surfaces, including grass, clay, hard, and indoor.



## SCORING

You need to score four points to win a game of tennis. The points are termed as 15 (1 point), 30 (2 points), 40 (3 points), and the fourth would result in the winning point, and the end of the game. If the scores are levelled at 3 points each (40-40), this is known as deuce. When a game reaches deuce the player must win by two clear points.

BEGINNER	0	1	2	3	• Game is over with 4th point won
INTERMEDIATE	0	15	30	40	• Game is over with 4th point won (no-ad scoring)
ADVANCED	0	15	30	40 40-40	• (Deuce-must win 2 points in a row to win game)



# PARENT BEHAVIOR AT COMPETITIONS

Parents! Children love you watching them play tennis competition. Your behavior at competition makes a big difference in their experience. As a suggestion try the following practical tips.

- Take the time before, during, and after your child's practices and competitions to reflect on your parenting behaviors
- Ask your spouse or partner, or other parents to provide feedback on your behavior around competitions.

	WHAT CHILDREN DON'T WANT FROM PARENTS	WHAT CHILDREN DO WANT FROM PARENTS
BEFORE COMPETITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments focused on child's performance</li> <li>• Communicating expectations about winning</li> <li>• Tactical advice with no knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping athlete be physically prepared</li> <li>• Attend to child's needs for mental preparation</li> </ul>
DURING COMPETITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimidation towards opponents</li> <li>• Drawing attention towards themselves</li> <li>• Criticizing/coaching child or team</li> <li>• Disputes with officials, coaches, or parents</li> <li>• Contradicting coach instructions</li> <li>• Repeating instructions</li> <li>• Booing opposing team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Etiquette and compliance with guidelines</li> <li>• Positive tone and body language</li> <li>• Control over emotions</li> <li>• Praising good performance</li> <li>• Encouragement after poor execution</li> </ul>
AFTER COMPETITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticism of performance</li> <li>• Blaming outcomes on referee or others</li> <li>• Focusing on negatives of performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive feedback on effort and attitude</li> <li>• Realistic feedback</li> <li>• Give feedback when child is ready for it</li> </ul>

**THE  
FUTURE  
OF TENNIS  
IS HERE**





TOGETHER WE WILL

**GROW  
THE GAME**

