

EMPOWERING FUTURES, ONE ACE AT A TIME

ACE 2 DEUCE  
CTA / NJTL

# 2024 VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



*Journey to*  
**EMPOWERING FUTURES, ONE ACE AT A TIME**

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# I INTRODUCTION

## Mission Statement

Ace to Deuce Community Tennis Association (Ace2Deuce CTA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to ignite positive transformation in the lives of children aged 4 to 18 in underserved Jackson and surrounding communities through the dynamic fusion of tennis, education, and social development. We strive to cultivate well-rounded individuals who not only excel on the court but also embrace essential life skills. By participating in our free and low-cost NJTL (National Junior Tennis and Learning) programming, Ace 2 Deuce CTA kids demonstrate greater self-control, self-esteem, and self-awareness, preparing them for success.

Tennis is a lifetime sport that teaches lifelong skills. Ace2Deuce CTA's goal is to continue removing the physical and financial barriers to tennis by renovating or creating courts on underused play spaces and bringing our staff, volunteers, equipment, and programs directly to where our students reside. Ace2Deuce CTA cultivates each child's strengths while helping develop skills, values, and relationships for future success.

We will continue with an off-court curriculum this year that enhance social and emotional learning (SEL) capacities, ensuring that the youth not only excel academically and athletically but also develop the emotional resilience and social acumen needed for a successful and fulfilling life. Ace2Deuce CTA envisions every child around Jackson communities and surrounding areas engaged in healthy exercise and stimulating activities to develop their fullest potential.

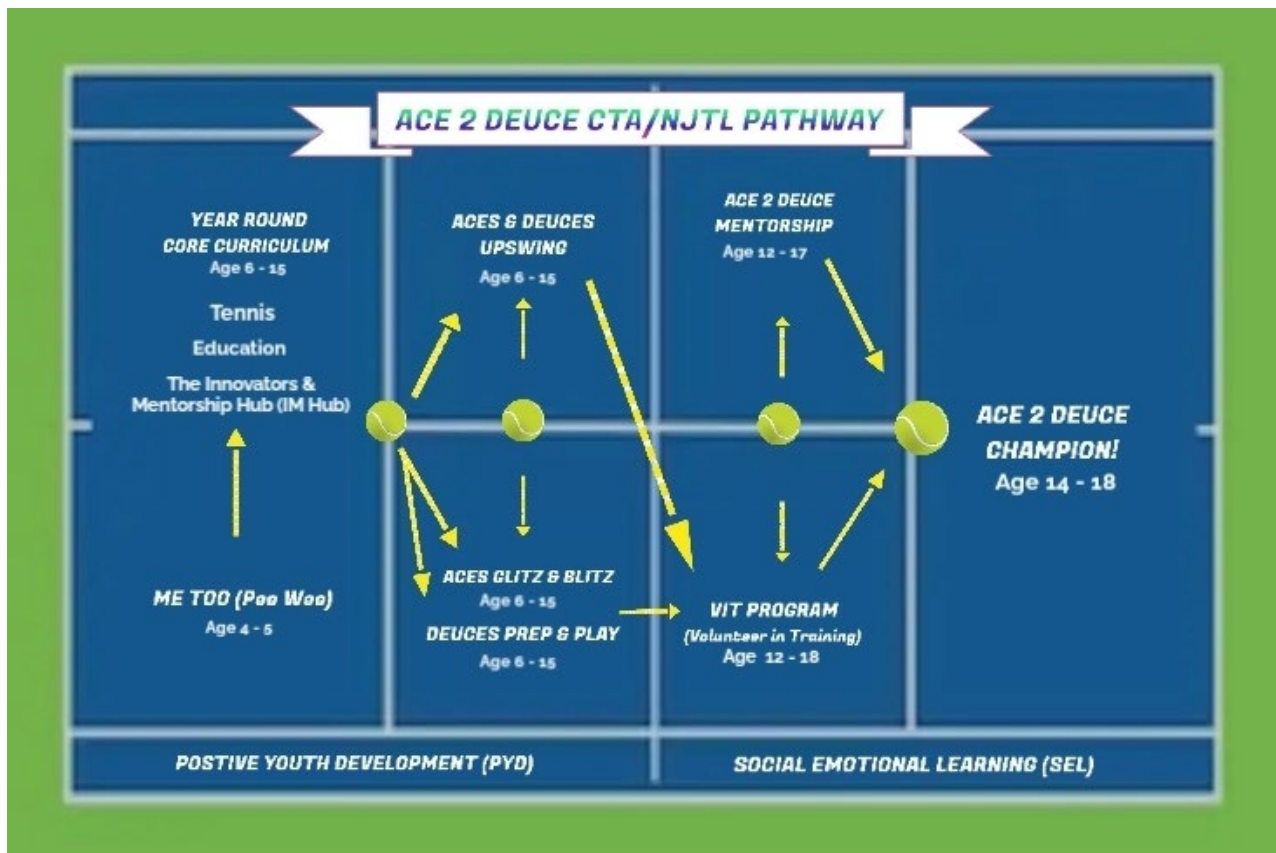


## The Ace 2 Deuce CTA/NJTL Pathway

Ace2Deuce CTA has a range of programs for students of all abilities. The Summer Program Curriculum brings tennis to kids at 2 different city facilities in the Battlefield and Grove Park neighborhoods. Designed for children between 4 and 17, this is the entry level of the Ace2Deuce CTA pathway, a set of programs that give our kids the chance to grow and learn through every age and developmental stage, preparing them for higher education and/or employment. In addition to the Summer Program, select students can participate in our Upswing program, which features advanced training and opportunities for competition. Girls can also join Aces Glitz & Biltz, an all-female clinic that encourages regular physical activity



and the development and maintenance of self-respect, self-confidence, and a positive self-image. Boys can also join Deuces Prep & Play, an all-male clinic that provide instruction for every level of play and the fundamentals: Footwork, Grips, Strokes and Strategy. Both Camps are offered multiple times per year. Ace2Deuce CTA also provides opportunities for instruction throughout the year, including fall, winter, spring, and summer. Through this ambitious pathway, Ace2Deuce CTA provides tennis and educational programming up to three days a week to kids at the Battlefield site. Because of this, volunteers have many opportunities to help students with educational needs, develop their potential as tennis players, and citizens throughout the year, including fall, winter, spring, and summer. If you have a flexible schedule during the work week and would like to be a part of the other nodes in our pathway, please let us know.



## II GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

### Ace 2 Deuce CTA/NJTL Safeguarding Policy

To be in line with the best practices set out in the Safeguarding Children in Sport Guidelines published in 2016, we have updated our child safeguarding policy. You can find much of the relevant content in this handbook, but our official policy can also be found [here](#).

### Punctuality

Volunteers are expected to arrive at their respective sites no later than 30 minutes prior to the start time to allow for set up and to be briefed on the day's activities.



Neither athletes nor volunteers participate in class if they are extremely late to class (use your judgment and be a role model)

### Background Check

Before you take to the courts as an Ace2Deuce CTA volunteer, you will be required to complete a comprehensive background check. Upon completion, you will be notified if your background check has been approved or denied. Background checks need to be renewed every three years.

### USTA's Safe Play Program

Ace2Deuce CTA is an [NJTL organization](#), which means we must follow its applicable rules and regulations. One of the NJTL requirements is to complete the USTA's Safe Play compliance process and background check (different from the Ace2Deuce CTA background check described above, this is part of the USTA's [Net Generation](#) program).

To start the process, [you can click here](#). If this is your first time, please choose "Get Safe Play Approved" and follow the instructions. If you have done this before, you can click "Check Status" to find out if you need to renew. The renewal process takes roughly 15 minutes.

Once you have completed Safe Play and received a 16-digit NCSI number from the USTA, please email it to LaPeria Jones at [volunteer@ace2deucecta.org](mailto:volunteer@ace2deucecta.org). Or, you can screenshot your status page and send it. It should look like this:

# You Are Safe Play Approved

Thank you for completing the Safe Play Program and for your commitment to keeping our sport safe for all of our athletes. As a reminder, you will have to renew your NCSI Background Check every two years and your Safe Sport Education and Training annually. We will send you reminders for when you need to complete these steps.

For your reference, you can find your expiration dates below.

SafeSport Training	Expiration 03/14/2024
Safe Play Policy	Expiration 03/14/2024
NCSI Background Check	Expiration 03/28/2025

## Conflicts

### PREVENTION OF AND HANDLING MINOR CONFLICTS

Many conflicts can be avoided by employing preemptive behavior strategies. The key is to clearly set expectations. Explain to athletes what is expected of them before each activity. In your explanation, keep it positive so they understand what to do in order to participate.

*“I need everyone to line up behind the red cone. Those lined up behind the red cone will be able to participate and have fun. Otherwise, you will be asked to move to the end of the line or perhaps sit out.”*



Every volunteer will have a different style of dealing with minor conflicts between students. The key is consistency and clear, direct communication. We want to create a positive

environment, so be sure that your actions contribute to that environment (i.e., keep language and tone in the affirmative of what to do (as opposed to what not to do).

## HANDLING MAJOR CONFLICTS

If a small conflict continues to escalate or if a major conflict occurs, it is important to alert the Site Leader to the situation. Remember to remain calm. Do not put yourself at physical risk or attempt to detain a child in a physical manner unless you are specifically trained to do so. If the safety of another child is at risk, safely intervene in any way you can. If there is an extreme emergency (e.g., a fight that cannot be safely broken up, or a weapon is present) direct a volunteer to call 911, direct other volunteers to attend to the safety of the other students by bringing them to a predetermined safe spot and use your best judgment. Be prepared to enact the emergency medical plan detailed below.

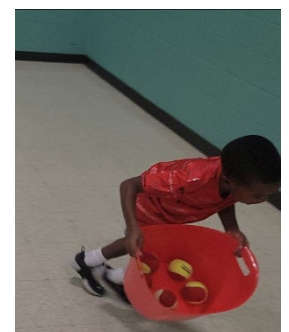
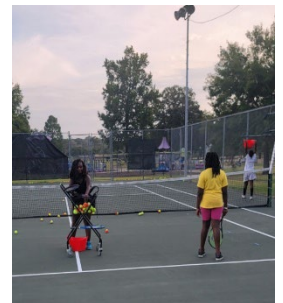
If a student walks away from the court, alert the Site Leader immediately.

## Ace2Deuce CTA/NJTL Social Norms

The social norms are instilled primarily to create physical safety on the court, emotional safe spaces and valuable life lessons.

The established social norms are:

- **Students must hug their rackets** when waiting in line, when a shot is being demonstrated or when a staff member/volunteer is talking to a group of students.
- **Clear any stray balls on the court or behind the students.**  
Reminding students to clear the balls reinforces good habits.
- **When asked to pick up the balls, students must collect balls on their rackets** and place them in the baskets/hoppers as opposed to throwing them or picking them up with their hands. *Talking with students during this process is a great way to build relationships.*
- **Organizing the court and using targets and cones properly** makes us look professional, makes the lesson more productive, and keeps everyone safe.
- **Respect for others**
- **Active listening ([check out this graphic!](#))**



- **Teamwork**
- **Positive reinforcement**
- **Encouragement of effort**
- **Growth mindset - mistakes are OK**

## **Dealing with Injuries**

Our number one objective is to do everything possible to ensure the well-being and safety of our kids. Injuries are rare but do occasionally happen. When they occur, follow the procedures below.

**Non-serious injuries (Scrapes, splinters, bee stings etc.):** First aid supplies are available at each site. Have students clean their own scrapes (while providing instruction and explanation) and put on their own Band-Aids if possible. Ice can be brought to the site by the Program Manager. Explain to students how to apply it.

**Serious Injury Procedure (Broken bones, severe bleeding, etc.):** Follow the Medical Emergency Plan.

**Head Injuries:** If a student receives any blow to the head, the student should sit out the rest of the class. Notify the Program Manager immediately who will inform his/her parent(s) accordingly.

## **Medical Emergency Plan**

In the event of an emergency/accident within our program the following guidelines should be adhered to:

1. **Assess the situation:** Is it truly an emergency? Is the victim breathing, conscious, bleeding severely, moving, in severe pain, etc.?



2. **If any of the above warrants the situation as serious, TAKE CONTROL!**
  - a. Provide reassurance to the victim. Demonstrate confidence.
  - b. Direct other children in the group to sit and wait in a specific location, away from the victim, be visible.
  - c. Stay with the victim.
  - d. Direct staff/volunteer to call 911.
  - e. 911 will put the person through to emergency dispatch. The person making the call should be able to provide the following information:
    - Location from where they are telephoning
    - Location of victim
    - Condition of victim, e.g., severe bleeding, unconscious, diabetic
  - f. Paramedics should be on the scene in several minutes.
3. **If the situation warrants action prior to the arrival of the paramedics** more extensive than reassuring and/or calming the victim, the site leader should:
  - a. perform only those steps or for which the individual is trained on. For example, for severe bleeding, apply direct pressure.
4. **Report all accidents to the Program Manager** who will notify the parent(s) accordingly.

## **A NOTE ABOUT CALLING 911**

If you are using a cell phone to call 911, you will need to be able to explain where you are. Be sure to learn street names and landmarks.

## **STUDENT EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

**All Staff will have the emergency contact information for each child.** This includes parent/guardian names, emergency contact phone number, and health concerns. This information is considered "privileged" or "private" meaning you must not allow other kids access to it. You must read through this information otherwise you will not be aware of important child details such as allergies.

## Escorting Children

Please adhere to the following policies when walking children to the restroom or another site. You are responsible for the safety and well-being of the children you are escorting. You must always be accountable for all the children in your group.

1. **There must be at least two adults with a group of 5 or more children.** One coach will lead the group and one will follow all the children at the rear. If a third coach or parent is available, they will help at bike and road crossings by stopping traffic while the group crosses.
2. **Before leaving with the children take a headcount** and call roll from the roster. If at any time during transport the group becomes spread out, stop, collect all the group together and account for all the children. After all children are accounted for, continue with your route.
3. **If at any time you believe you are missing a child, take roll, have all children sit down** and “hold” in a safe area with one staff. Second staff will take a cell phone and immediately re-trace your route. If the missing child is not located immediately, a second staff will alert the Program Manager of the situation, action, and progress.
4. After the group has reached its destination, **staff will again take a roll and a head count** as they are checked-in to a new location.

## Interacting Safely with Children

To ensure that all children are safe and comfortable with the adult members of the organization, **no adult should ever be alone with a child.** Another volunteer or staff member should always be able to see all interactions with the student. In addition, please use common sense when hugging or touching children. Interactions should never even give the appearance of wrongdoing. Any inappropriate contact should be immediately addressed, and the Program Manager should be alerted.

## **Interacting with the Community**

Ace 2 Deuce CTA/NJTL's mission includes strengthening the larger community. Because of this, it is vitally important for us to create and maintain an environment that welcomes not just students and families but all residents in and around Battlefield Park and Grove Park in the neighborhoods we serve. Please consider yourself to be an Ace 2 Deuce CTA/NJTL ambassador. If any member of the public approaches you for information about our programs and activities, please be courteous and answer their questions to the best of your knowledge. If you are busy teaching students, or are unable to address their questions or concerns, please direct them to the relevant site leader, program manager, or other Ace 2 Deuce CTA staff member.

## **Important Phone Numbers**

LaPeria Jones - Program Manager & Executive Director- Cell 601-526-3988

MEA South Medical Primary Care Plus Clinic (601) 371-0400

Minor Medical Care (601) 372-1117

TrustCare (601) 487-9199

University of MS Medical Center Hospital (601) 984-1000

St. Dominic Memorial Hospital (601) 200-2000

MS Baptist Medical Center Hospital (601) 968-1000

Merit Health Central Hospital (601) 376-1000

For any severe injury or emergency, call 911.

# III ORGANIZATION AND CLASS STRUCTURE

## Class Format

Each tennis site is led by a Site Leader and an Educational Coordinator. Site Leaders run the site and are responsible for classes, volunteers, and tennis. Educational Coordinators handle all the off-court sessions, administrative tasks, and community engagement.

## SITE PREPARATION

Site Leaders and Educational Coordinators arrive early to prepare equipment and get the site ready for the students. Volunteers arrive early to assist. When they arrive, the Site Leaders will review their assignments (there may also be email communication regarding this during the week depending on the program).

## WARM-UP

We begin every class with five minutes of walking, light jogging, jumping jacks or side shuffling. Relay races are also a very good way to warm up and get the students excited about the session, plus a good opportunity to work on hand-eye skills. The purpose of the warm-up is to raise your body temperature, prepare your heart and lungs for exercise, and improve overall muscle function. The goal should be to reach the point of light perspiration.



## STATIONS

After the warm-up, the Site Leader will assign students to groups that will travel to volunteer-led stations. The stations will have different activities and games. These activities and games will be devised by the Site Leader during the week (using Net Generation) and volunteers will have prior knowledge of them before class begins.

## END-OF-TENNIS-SESSION GAME

Volunteers and students will hit the courts at the end of the tennis session for games.

Students and volunteers will clean up the courts before the off-court session.

### **OFF-COURT SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)**

The Educational Coordinator will gather students and volunteers for the off-court session. Students may have a snack and water.

### **END OF CLASS**

The end of class is a time to recognize athletes' advancements and achievements, as well as positive behavior. This time should be used as an incentive to all athletes, especially those who need encouragement. End every class with a game and an "all hands in" cheer "on the count of 1,2, 3, Battlefield Tennis!" for example.

## **Surveys and Assessments**

We are now using professionally tested surveys to measure the social and emotional learning of our students. They may be administered on site (or via email) for our children to complete. Our volunteers should help create a comfortable environment. It is important that we gather as much information, directly from our students, as possible. There may be a PRE-survey at the beginning of a program and a POST-survey when the program is concluding.

There are currently no formal tennis assessments that are done for each student. The Executive Director is exploring this option and considering each type of program accordingly.

## **Active Participation**

### **ON COURT**

You are the role models for these students. If you seem bored, they will seem bored. If you are tired, they will be tired. They are always watching you, even if it doesn't seem like it. So it's very important that while you are at the court, you are always participating. What this looks like:

- Running your station with enthusiasm!
- Escorting kids from station to station with energy



- If numbers are low, participate in the station as though you were a student.
- Continually interacting. While students wait in line, help them with their grip or stroke. Or comment on their progress.
- Stand and give encouragement!

## **PARTICIPATING IN OFF-COURT CONVERSATIONS**

All volunteers are expected to participate and reinforce our Off Court ideas. What this means:

- Answer questions that the Educational Coordinator asks if the kids don't have the answer.
- Volunteering your own experiences
- Serving as models or participating in scenarios
- Being expressive, funny, goofy when appropriate

## **REPETITION IS KEY TO LEARNING**

Any chance you get, reinforce the ideas that we talk about in Off Court. Consider these examples:

- A student says it's too hot: Ask the student if they are being "resilient."
- A student hustles after a ball: "Way to be gritty!"
- A student comes to class eating chips: "Is that a healthy choice? Where's the nutrition label?"

## **PARTICIPATE IN THE Ace2Deuce CTA COMMUNITY**

We try to be a tight-knit community. To that end, we hold socials and other events that can bring us together as a group. We hope you will be a part of that! It's a great crew. Also, we really want to hear your ideas about how our organization can improve. We want to continue to reach more kids, deepen our impact on their lives, and give back to the community. If you have thoughts about how we can do that or if you want to join the Volunteer Committee, let LaPeriall "Lp" ([volunteer@ace2deucecta.org](mailto:volunteer@ace2deucecta.org)) know!

## Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Positive youth development, or PYD, is the process of developing the “soft skills” young people need to get along as they grow up: to manage themselves as they engage with the world; build and maintain relationships; and treat setbacks and challenges as learning experiences to prompt growth. Studies have shown that sports-based programs are especially effective in helping develop young people’s social and emotional learning (SEL).

Ace2Deuce CTA coaches promote the SEL of our young people by providing both foundational and fortifying experiences. If we focus on just a few best practices, we can increase the SEL capacities of all our students.

### FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN PYD

1. **Engage authentically:** Coaches should take the time to get to know students by listening and understanding who they are – their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions. We should value our students’ opinions, show we’re interested in their lives outside the program, and make them feel safe and supported.
2. **Promote peer bonds:** Coaches should help students work with peers in teams and groups, creating safe spaces for students to learn with and from one another. Our emphases on rallying, fun, and fair play – and avoidance of rote drills with students standing in line – are key. Coaches should try to involve students in decisions on activities for the session and encourage students to help others with their techniques and approaches to the game.

### FORTIFYING EXPERIENCES IN PYD

1. **Share power:** Coaches should work to ensure that students’ voices and opinions matter, and that young people feel connected, engaged and included as true contributing members of their programs - and therefore of their communities and society.

2. **Challenge growth:** Coaches should encourage students to take risks and perform beyond their own expectations.
3. **Expand interests:** Coaches should encourage students to try new things, broaden their horizons, learn about other cultures and perspectives, and explore their own identities.
4. **Manage goals:** Coaches should trust students to set and manage goals that are important to them and that build on their interests.
5. **Build team:** Coaches should make students feel known, valued and supported.

Our coaches and volunteers have reported that they are looking for more time, resources and support in order to carry out these best practices. Ace2Deuce CTA is determined to improve in these areas, from training to lesson planning to on-court performance. We welcome suggestions from our volunteers about how we can improve their confidence and capacities in positive youth development.

## How to Talk to Kids

Learning to talk to kids effectively takes some practice. But we put together a few tips for how to effectively engage with our students.

- **Get close to them** (not in their space, but near eye-level). If you are tall, possibly get down on one knee so you are face-to face with them.
- **In handling small conflicts, ask questions to help you understand where the student is coming from.**
  - ❖ Why did you do it that way?
  - ❖ What would you have preferred?
  - ❖ Explain to them your reasoning and do not be afraid to be honest: "John, we did it this way because we have five kids on the court and we want to make sure you are each getting the most out of this lesson. When there are fewer kids we can do it that way."
- **In general, build trust by sharing your own background and being open and honest (discuss these questions during ball pickup)**

- ❖ Where did you grow up?
  - ❖ Where you live and with whom? Roommates, a dog etc.
  - ❖ Where did you go to school?
  - ❖ What was your major?
  - ❖ What did you like and dislike when you were in school?
  - ❖ What are your hopes, dreams, goals, and aspirations?
- **Questions to ask to get to know kids:**
    - ❖ How was school this week?
    - ❖ What is your favorite subject?
    - ❖ How is tennis class going?
    - ❖ Do you have siblings?
    - ❖ What do you do after class?
    - ❖ Also, any questions that are related to our off-court topics are highly encouraged.
    - ❖ Be aware when asking these questions and do not make assumptions about family, free time, or lifestyle. For instance, don't assume that every child lives with their parents; don't assume that they have traveled. But don't assume that they have not, either.
- **Common miscommunication pitfalls to watch out for:**
    - ❖ "Projects" is a loaded word. We use "housing developments."
    - ❖ Do not focus on or compliment material things, which can make other kids feel bad. Instead, compliment good attitudes, kind gestures, improvement, helpfulness, etc.
    - ❖ The phrase "these kids" is also loaded and can make people feel like "others." Just take off the "these."
    - ❖ Rather than asking about "mom" or "parents," use the term "someone you respect."
    - ❖ In general, be reflective.
- **Things to watch out for:**
    - ❖ More than 3 or 4 kids in a line.

- ❖ Rackets being swung while in line.
- ❖ Kids who look bored or discouraged. (You may take them out of line and work with them individually).



## **IV RUNNING DRILLS AND GAMES**

Volunteers are crucial to teaching our children the basics of tennis. During the on-court session, you will be charged with following the site leader's lesson plan and working with groups across a range of ages and skills. This requires an understanding of some key concepts, from grips to swing patterns to the parts of a serve (see Section VI below). But more important is the management of stations. Studies have found that kids stick with tennis when they are allowed to have fun and rally with friends. Because of this, the management of drills and games is often more important than communicating technical details.

Some lesson plans will explain every detail of a drill or game, and they will anticipate contingencies. However, a typical plan will allow you a lot of leeway to gear the drill to the level of your group. Here are some basic tips for how to manage a group of kids safely and effectively.

### **Community Tennis as Developmental Tool**

Ace2Deuce CTA brings tennis to the kids, and this provides a perfect basis from which to teach our students how to play and love the game. We believe that wherever you stand, you're on the court: we pop up nets in open spaces, we throw down temporary lines, we hit against walls - and this prepares us to play on professional-sized, 78-foot courts. And we size the game to our students, using smaller courts and less-pressurized balls in order to empower them to play on their own. We encourage all of our volunteers and coaches to watch the USTA's video tutorial on community tennis, which explains how to teach young students in engaging and enjoyable ways and provides more resources from the USTA's Net Generation program. You can find that video [through this link](#).

### **Empower Players to Rally**

While not all students are capable of sustaining a rally over the net, if we redefine our concept of rallying, we can give kids the tools they need to have fun with each other. So let's expand our definition: rallying is one or more students rolling, tossing, or hitting the ball back and forth with each other. So the more we encourage students to rally, the more

we promote peer-to-peer bonding. (However, students don't need a partner to rally: [click here for a video demonstrating a self-rallying game!](#))

For our beginning and younger students, this often means working without a traditional net. Set up dots for students to stand on and see if they can roll the ball accurately to each other with their hands. If they can get a predetermined number in a row, can they move on to tossing back and forth with one bounce? How about doing it while side shuffling to different dots?

- Once they hit a milestone, students can try to roll the ball back and forth using the racket. At first, it's best to let them trap the ball between the strings and the ground, then roll it back. Once they can do this with some regularity, they can try to roll it back and forth without trapping the ball first. [Click here for a video of how to do a rolling rally.](#)
- From here, you can move students, so they are across the net from each other. Can they toss back and forth? Can they gently drop-hit to each other, then catch and drop-hit back? Depending on their abilities, you can move them closer to each other or further apart.
- One fun game students can play with coaches or among themselves is the lobster trap game. Here, students can use one or two rackets, trapping the ball between racket and hand (or racket and racket), then tossing back. This can be done with no net, or over cones, and eventually over a net. [Click here to check out a quick video from Net Generation on how to run a lobster trap progression!](#)

The use of progressions is one way that we can accomplish one of our most important tasks:

## **Keeping Kids Engaged**

Try as much as possible to have students work in pairs so that they can hit the ball to each other or feed each other. The more parts of the drill or game they are responsible for, the more they learn crucial skills necessary to rallying.

Of course, there are times when it's appropriate to set up drills where you're feeding a group. Here are a few ways to consider organizing your stations:

- Set up targets for students to aim at. This will allow them to understand how to alter their swings. They also enjoy setting up their own targets; allowing them to do so is a way of sharing power and establishing peer-to-peer bonds. [Click here to see how an instructor set up a target zone.](#)
- With groups of six or fewer, it is often possible to set up dots parallel to the net, so each player is facing you. While you can only feed one player at a time, the other players can be in the ready position and shadow swing when you feed the ball. Make sure to place the dots far enough apart so kids aren't close to hitting each other with backswings or follow-throughs.
- You can also set up a circuit so that players are continually moving but not in a single-file line. For example, if you have a group of six kids, three dots can be staggered in the back court, and three in the front. Designate one dot the "hitting dot." The player who gets to this dot in the circuit will hit the ball or balls, then circle to the back dot. The other players will move to the side or forward to the next dot, constantly moving through the circuit until it's their turn to hit.
- Even if you feel that a single-file line or lines is best for a particular drill, you can set up ladder drills or other activities between shots. For instance, after a student hits a ball or balls, he or she can hop through a ladder on the way to the back of the line. If for some reason you have a very large number of children in a group, you can divide them into two subgroups, with one just doing ladder drills while the other one hits balls.
  - [Check out this video of students moving through a circuit between hitting shots](#)
- If you can't avoid a single-file line, make them move as fast as possible. One way to do this is through "peel-off drills." Students are in a single file. The first player split steps, and you hand feed to the side. As soon as that student moves to hit the shot, the next student moves forward immediately to split step. After a hit, the player circles to the end of the line. This moves quickly, so students do not get bored. Just make sure to set up dots and cones so students take wide loops to get back into line and can stay out of each other's way. You can have more than one line, if that helps spread the kids out.
  - [Here's a video of a peel-off drill for intermediate and advanced students.](#)

- If you have extra volunteers, consider the following: another feeder, someone to monitor and keep control, a coach between shots, an extra player to be a role model and have fun or all the above!

Whatever type of drill you use, most of our feeding drills are done best when you:

## **Feeding: Underhanded, and as Close as Possible**

Like any other piece of advice, we understand that there are times when it's better to feed from across the net, or to use a racket instead of an underhand toss. But there are many reasons to be on the same side of the net as your group: easier to be accurate; no need to raise your voice; more opportunities to teach; easier to alter your toss, depending on the player's ability; easier to control the group's shape and behavior. When feeding, always toss underhanded. Give the ball enough arc for players to have time to judge it. In this sense, tosses should be as much up in the air as forward.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but you should set yourself up directly in front of your players – sometimes the closer the better. This way, the ball can be fed as if it were coming from the opposite side of the court. Your safety is important, but don't be afraid to get relatively close to the players. They will hit the ball to the side of you.

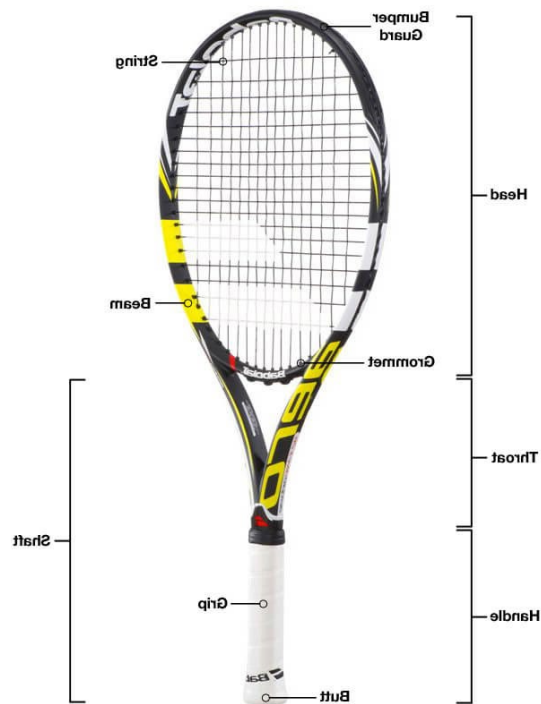
As a drill progresses, you can move away from players or to the other side of the net.

Whatever the drill or game, please be sure to emphasize that all players – whether hitting or waiting their turn – must be in the ready position with their feet moving. Energy – yours and the players' – is central to success on the court.

**For more resources**, please download the Net Generation app, which has lesson plans and activities by age and ability ([click here for the Net Gen app](#)). [You can also find a wealth of documents to download on the USTA website if you click here \(password required\).](#)

## V. Tennis Terminology and Skills

**Parts of the Racquet** is important to familiarize yourself with the varying parts of the racket and what each part is called. Consistency is key when talking to the students about tennis and the equipment they will be using. To the left is an image with the basic terminology.

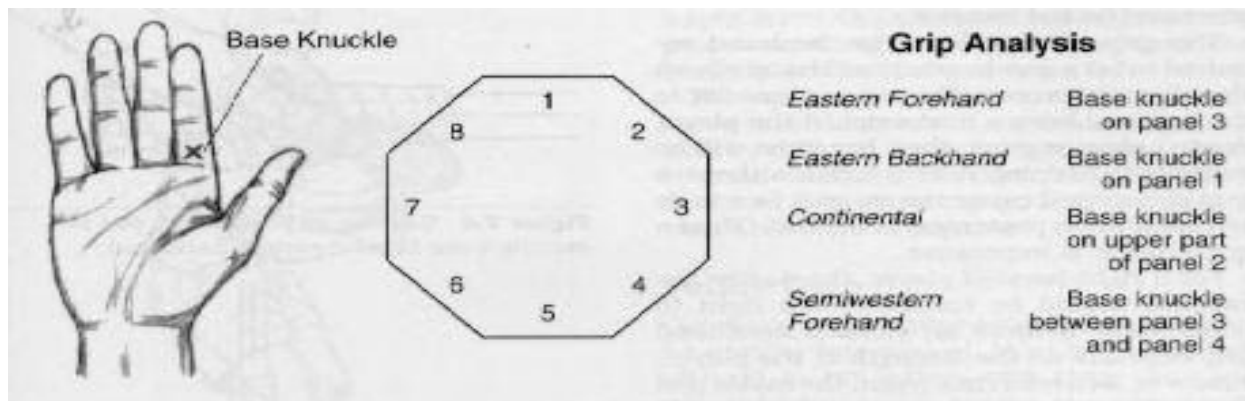


### Grips

**It is very important that our students are taught the correct grips for each stroke** as this will enable them to improve and enjoy the sport. The most important grips that you will need to be familiar with are the continental grip, eastern and semi-western grip (forehand) and the two-handed backhand grip (as some students develop they may use a one handed backhand and if so training will be provided to teach that).

Grips can be identified and taught by identifying which bevel your index knuckle and heel pad fall on. The grip is divided into 8 bevels as illustrated below.





Here are some images to illustrate the grips that we will be teaching our students;

### Continental Forehand



### Eastern Forehand



### Semi-Western



### Two-handed Backhand



## Teaching the Basics

*With every stroke in tennis, it is essential the student is in the ready position!*

### FOREHAND (REFER TO GRIPS)

Depending on the age and ability the student will either use an Eastern or Semi-Western forehand grip. The older and stronger the student then the more likely they will be able to adapt to the Semi-Western which is the preferred grip for generating topspin.

The fundamentals are:

1. Pivot with outside foot and shoulder turn (this begins the take back of the racket)
2. Take the racket back completely using shoulders and arm
3. Swing to contact (making sure the racket drops down during the swing)
4. Follow through bringing racket across the body
5. The swing path is continuous and should not pause once it begins

## BACKHAND (REFER TO GRIPS)

**The two-handed backhand should be taught to all students.** The bottom hand should be in the continental grip and the top hand rests where it is comfortable but the racket face must not be “open.” Sometimes a helpful tip is to tell the student to use their non-dominant hand as the guiding hand (ie if you are right handed you squeeze with your left hand during the swing).

The fundamentals are;

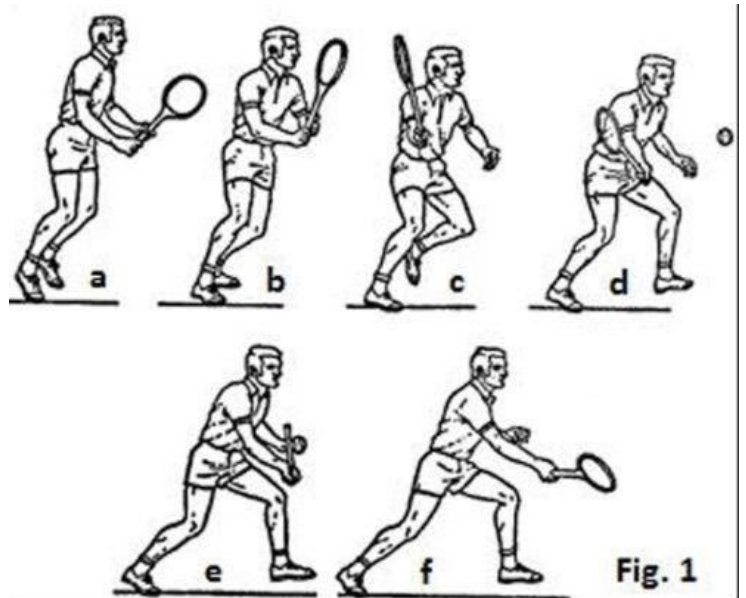
1. Shoulder turn which begins the racket take back
2. Once shoulder turn is complete you will be able to take the racket back fully and be sideways
3. Swing to contact by rotating body and dropping your racket down and swinging forward
4. Contact point is in front of the body and waist high
5. Racket finishes above shoulder after follow through

## VOLLEYS (REFER TO GRIPS)

The continental grip is used for both forehand and backhand volleys. For younger students we teach the two-handed backhand volley and as they get stronger the single handed backhand volley will be introduced.

Fundamentals of the volley:

1. The racket is higher in the ready position compared to the ground stroke ready position
2. As the ball comes to either side the shoulder turn will begin the motion of the volley
3. Once the racket has been taken back level to the shoulder the student should “step and punch” making contact in front of their front foot
4. On contact the racket should stop and be above the wrist.



## SERVE

In our tournaments and in our drills, we feed our students to begin the point however we do introduce and teach the serve in our sessions. The continental grip is used for the serve, students will find this frustrating at first but it's crucial to stress the importance of this grip as it will allow them to hit various spins and generate racket head speed once they have learned it.

Below is a simple progression when introducing the serve to students:

1. **Self-Toss, Reach and Catch:** In a sideways stance, toss the ball overhead with the opposite hand, reach up, and catch with the dominant hand (fully extended).
2. **Self-Toss onto Racket:** Place the racket on the ground so the head of the racket is a little in front of their feet—toward the opposite serving box. Have students throw the ball in the air and try to make it land on the racket.
3. **Leave the racket on the ground** and put the ball in the “strong” hand. Have students throw the ball into the opposite serving box and explain that this is the motion for the racket when you serve.
4. **Self-Toss, Reach and Tap (with hand):** In a sideways stance, toss the ball overhead with the opposite hand, reach up, and tap the ball with the dominant hand. The partner should catch the ball off 1-2 bounces and tap it back in the same manner.
5. **Self-Toss, Reach and Tap (with racket):** With the racket held in a natural throwing position and side to target, athletes toss the ball overhead, reach up, and gently tap the ball at point of contact. Standing a few feet away, partners react to the ball and trap it against the racket after a few bounces. Encourage pairs to work together to achieve as many successful serves and traps as possible.
6. **Serve, Return, and Trap:** The ball is gently served to the returner who hits it back to the server. The server traps the ball waist high on the strings. Repeat 4 times and switch roles.

7. **Advanced kids only - Serve, Return, and Rally.** One partner gently serves the ball to the other athlete who returns the serve. The athletes work on keeping the ball in play cooperatively. Points can be earned for each successful serve, return, and rally. After two attempts, the other partner serves. Athletes can increase distance upon each successful 4 ball rally.

*If you would like more information on teaching methods and tennis related drills, please speak to LaPeriall Jones (Program Managers) and they will be more than happy to relay them to your Site Leader or to assist with any tennis-related question.*



Thank you for being a part of the Ace2Deuce CTA team!  
We are excited for the season ahead. It wouldn't be possible without you, the amazing volunteers we are lucky to have!