

# Red Ball Tennis

## Considerations and activities for developing red ball tennis players.

### Red demands of the game

Unlike at higher levels, the smaller Red Court and slower, larger red ball provide a unique set of challenges and opportunities for players. The consistent bounce of the red ball and the smaller playing area mean players must focus on precise movement and balanced shot preparation.

### Key demands:

- The red ball flies slower and has a consistent bounce between knee and rib cage height.
- The court is relatively narrow, requiring minimal lateral movement and limited backward movement.
- Players can usually move, stop, and balance in preparation for each shot.

### Red – Tactical Awareness

**Players at this stage are developing basic tactical awareness. Practices should aim to build these fundamental skills:**

- Directing the ball down the line.
- Directing the ball cross-court.
- Re-directing the ball to hit away from the opponent.

### Red – Technical Skills

**Training at the red level focuses on developing simple, effective techniques that form the foundation for future skills.**

**Skill Development needs to be based on:**

- Early reaction and movement.
- Good balance and rotation.
- Consistent contact points between knee and mid-chest height.
- Some open racket face skills for lower balls.
- Serves and volleys hit above shoulder height, depending on age and capacity.
- Smooth transition from back to forward swing on groundstrokes.
- Shoulder rotation to support stroke production.

## Reception Drills for Red Level Players

### Drill 1: Self Rally

- **Cue:** "Bounce – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Enhance hand-eye coordination and control.
- **Instructions:** Players bounce the ball on their racket, alternating between hitting it up and letting it bounce on the ground.

### Drill 2: Partner Throw and Catch

- **Cue:** "Catch"
- **Purpose:** Develop tracking and catching skills.
- **Instructions:** Players throw a ball to each other and catch it with their hands, focusing on accurate throws and catches.

### Drill 3: Rolling Rally

- **Cue:** "Splat – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Introduce basic rally concepts with a rolling ball.
- **Instructions:** Players roll the ball to each other across the court, focusing on controlling the speed and direction.

### Drill 4: Drop and Hit

- **Cue:** "Drop – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Improve coordination and timing.
- **Instructions:** Players drop the ball and hit it after the bounce, aiming to control the direction and height of the shot to a target area.

### Drill 5: Sponge Ball Rally

- **Cue:** "Ready – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Simplify rallying by using a sponge ball.
- **Instructions:** Players use a sponge ball instead of a ball to practice rallying, focusing on maintaining a gentle and controlled rally.

### Drill 6: Partner Tap

- **Cue:** "Move – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Develop gentle and controlled hitting.
- **Instructions:** Players stand close to each other and gently tap the ball back and forth, aiming to keep the ball alive.

## Skill Builders for Red Ball Players

### Ball Balance:

- **Objective:** Improve racket control and balance.
- **Instructions:** Players balance the ball on their racket strings while walking around the court.

### Bounce and Catch:

- **Objective:** Develop hand-eye coordination and catching skills.
- **Instructions:** Players bounce the ball on the ground and catch it with their hands, repeating the process.

### Target Practice:

- **Objective:** Enhance accuracy and control.
- **Instructions:** Players aim to hit a target on the court, such as a cone or a hoop, focusing on precision.

### Racket Tap:

- **Objective:** Build racket control and touch.
- **Instructions:** Players tap the ball with their racket strings, alternating between tapping it up and letting it bounce on the ground.

### Dribble relay:

- **Objective:** Develop coordination and teamwork.
- **Instructions:** In teams, player dribble the ball back and forth through a designated course using their rackets.

### Rolling Rally with Cones:

- **Objective:** Improve accuracy and control.
- **Instructions:** Players roll the ball to each other, aiming to pass it through a set of cones placed on the court.

## Activities for Red Ball Players

### Balloon Tap

- **Objective:** Improve hand-eye coordination and control.
- **Instructions:** Players keep a balloon in the air by tapping it gently with their racket. This helps them develop a soft touch and control.

### Cone Target

- **Objective:** Enhance accuracy and control.
- **Instructions:** Set up cones on the court. Players aim to hit the ball to knock over the cones. This activity helps with aiming and precision.

### Rolling Rally Race

- **Objective:** Develop coordination and teamwork.
- **Instructions:** In pairs, players roll the ball to each other while moving towards a finish line. The goal is to keep the ball moving without stopping, promoting continuous play and movement.

### Catch and Throw Tennis

- **Objective:** Build basic tennis skills using throwing and catching.
- **Instructions:** Players throw the ball over the net and their partner catches it before throwing it back. This helps develop tracking and catching skills essential for tennis.

### Ball Relay

- **Objective:** Improve speed and coordination.
- **Instructions:** Players dribble the ball with their racket around a series of cones or markers, then pass it to the next player in their team. This promotes agility and control.

### Bounce and Hit

- **Objective:** Enhance timing and coordination.
- **Instructions:** Players bounce the ball on the ground once and then hit it to their partner. This helps with timing and the ability to judge the bounce.

### Follow the Leader

- **Objective:** Develop movement and footwork.
- **Instructions:** One player leads while the others follow, mimicking their movements around the court. This drill helps with learning court positioning and movement patterns.

### Circle Rally

- **Objective:** Improve consistency and control.
- **Instructions:** Players form a circle and try to keep the ball in play by hitting it to each other. The goal is to maintain the rally without the ball rolling.

#### 4 Constraints Led Approach Sessions for Red ball tennis.

*Individual – Task – Environment. We create the problems, players find the solutions.*

##### Session 1: Basic Movement and Shot Preparation

**Objective:** Develop the ability to move efficiently and prepare for shots with proper balance.

**Introduction:** Explain the importance of balanced movement and how it affects shot preparation on a smaller court.

**Warm-Up:** Partner footwork drills, where one player leads the movement and the other mirrors it, focusing on quick stops and balanced positioning.

##### **Main Activity:**

**Objective:** Players practice moving to the ball, stopping, and preparing for the shot with their partner.

##### **Partner Movement Drill:**

- **Cue:** "Left" or "Right"
- **Instructions:** One player acts as the "leader" and calls out directions (left or right). Both players must move to the designated side, stop, and simulate a shot. Players take turns being the leader.

**Modified Game:** Partners stand on opposite sides of a small marked area. One player tosses a ball to the other, who must move, stop, and hit the ball back to a target area. Points are scored based on how well they balance and prepare before the shot. Switch roles after a set number of tries.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Discuss how moving in sync with a partner helps improve shot preparation and balance.

## Session 2: Early Reaction and Hand-Eye Coordination

**Objective:** Improve early reaction to the ball and hand-eye coordination.

**Introduction:** Discuss how reacting early to the ball's direction helps in better shot preparation, especially when working with a partner.

**Warm-Up:** Partners toss and catch balls to each other, focusing on quick reactions and clean catches. Progress to using rackets to tap the ball back and forth.

### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players work in pairs to practice reacting early to the ball's movement and adjusting their position accordingly.

#### Reaction Relay:

- **Cue:** "Bounce – Catch"
- **Instructions:** Partners stand opposite each other and take turns tossing a ball for the other to catch after one bounce. The goal is to react as early as possible, moving to catch the ball. Switch roles frequently.

**Modified Game:** Partners rally using a small sponge or foam ball. The challenge is to move and react quickly to keep the rally going. Points are awarded for longer rallies with smooth, quick reactions.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Review how early reactions improve overall play and how working with a partner can enhance these skills.

### Session 3: Accuracy and Control in Hitting

**Objective:** Enhance accuracy and control when hitting the ball.

**Introduction:** Talk about the importance of aiming and controlling the ball to specific areas on the court, especially when playing with a partner.

**Warm-Up:** Partners work together on tapping the ball softly to each other, aiming for specific targets on their partner's side of the court.

#### **Main Activity:**

**Objective:** Players work in pairs to focus on hitting the ball to targeted areas on the court with accuracy.

#### **Target Hitting Partner Drill:**

- **Cue:** "Aim – Hit"
- **Instructions:** Partners take turns hitting balls to each other, trying to place the ball on specific targets (e.g., cones, marked areas). After each hit, the partner must attempt to return the ball to another target area.

**Modified Game:** Partners play a game where they score points by successfully hitting the ball to a target area and receiving the ball back to another target. This encourages both accuracy and controlled returns.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Discuss how aiming and controlling shots in a paired setting can lead to better teamwork and game outcomes.

## Session 4: Basic Tactical Awareness

**Objective:** Develop basic tactical awareness by learning to direct the ball effectively in a partner setting.

**Introduction:** Explain the concept of directing the ball to different areas of the court to challenge the opponent, especially when playing against a partner.

**Warm-Up:** Partners warm up with a “Follow the Leader” drill where one player directs the movement and the other follows, emphasising quick changes in direction.

### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players work in pairs to learn how to direct the ball down the line, cross-court, and away from their partner.

#### Directional Partner Drill:

- **Cue:** "Line" or "Cross"
- **Instructions:** Partners rally, taking turns calling out and executing either down-the-line or cross-court shots. The partner receiving the shot tries to return it in the opposite direction (line to cross or cross to line).

**Modified Game:** Partners play a tactical game where they try to direct the ball away from each other. Points are awarded for successfully moving the opponent around the court and maintaining control of the rally.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Reflect on how working with a partner to develop tactical skills can enhance both players' understanding of court positioning and shot selection.