

LESSON 9: SERVE AND RETURN TACTICS

Grade-Level Outcomes

Primary Outcome

Lifetime activities: Demonstrates competency and/or refines activity-specific movement skills in 2 or more lifetime activities (outdoor pursuits, individual-performance activities, aquatics, net/wall games or target games). (S1.H1.L1)

Embedded Outcome

Physical activity knowledge: Identifies issues associated with exercising in heat, humidity and cold. (S3.H3.L1)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- successfully serve inside the correct service box three out of five times.
- successfully return serve three out of five times.
- successfully place a serve to two out of three locations in the service box.

Equipment and Materials

- Tennis rackets: 1 per student
- Tennis balls (various densities): at least 5 per student pair
- Cones: at least 6 per court

Introduction

Tennis is a game that's usually played in the warmer weather. What kinds of issues do you need to think about when it's hot or humid while you are playing? [Answer: hydration, cooling, sun protection (Embedded outcome: S3.H3.L1.)] Be sure you keep those in mind throughout the module and when you're out playing on your own. Today, you will be learning basic serve and return tactics. Tactics are a way to gain an advantage over an opponent during a game.

Instructional Task: Serving Consistency

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students pair up and stand on either side of the center mark on the baseline (four students per court). One pair serves five balls to their corresponding service boxes, attempting to get at least three balls in. The other pair stands to receive the serves and collects each ball as it is served. Once one pair has finished serving the other pair serves. Students switch serving locations after each full rotation.

Guiding questions for students:

- What is the difference between a first serve and a second serve?
- What is the best characteristic of a good first serve? (Answer: consistency of at least 70 percent)

Extension

Students set a higher goal for consecutive serves.

Refinement

Challenge students who are consistently getting the serve inside the service box to hit the ball deep in the service court.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students choose a goal for consecutive serves after achieving three out of five and modify the goal as needed.
- Students may choose to use the punch serve or full-swing serve.

What to Look For

- Students are getting the ball into the service box.
- Students are using a moderate pace on the ball, or “dinking” it in.
- Students are following through completely.

Instructional Task: Return of Serve**■ PRACTICE TASK**

Students pair up and stand on either side of the center mark on the baseline (four students per court). One pair serves four balls to their corresponding service boxes. Students should serve the first two balls hard and the second two balls soft. The other pair stands to receive the serves. For the first two serves, the receivers should try to get the ball in play. For the second two serves, the receivers should try to place the balls deep cross-court. Once one pair has finished serving the other pair serves. Students switch serving and receiving locations after each full rotation.

Guiding questions for students:

- What is the best way to return a hard first serve? (Answer: Block the ball back; get it in.)
- What is the best way to return a softer second serve? (Answer: Attack with best stroke; hit deep to corners.)

Extension

Students perform the same task except they randomize the type of serve (hard versus soft).

Refinement

To block a hard serve successfully, students may need to be reminded not to take a backswing and just use the server's power to get the ball over the net.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students may choose to change partners.
- Students may choose to use the punch serve or full-swing serve.
- Students may choose a lower-density ball if having difficulty.

What to Look For

- Students are using an abbreviated backswing for hard serves.
- Students are using a full stroke for soft serves.
- Students are getting the ball back into play.

Instructional Task: Serving Placement**■ PRACTICE TASK**

Students pair up, with one pair on each side of the court at the baseline (four students per court). Position three cones (outside corner, center, upper T) in the deuce service box on one side of the court and the ad service box of the opposing side. Each pair takes a turn serving three balls (one to each cone) to the corresponding service box. After a student finishes serving, she walks to the other side of the court to retrieve her balls and serves to the opposing service box. This rotation continues until the task is ended.

Guiding questions for students:

- Where should you try to place your serves?
- What helps determine this? (Answer: position of opponent; strengths and weaknesses of opponent)
- Where should you place the serve if your opponent . . . ? [Describe different scenarios.]

Refinement

Specify a specific order and change it up periodically to encourage greater contextual interference.

Student Choices/Differentiation

Students may choose to use the punch serve or full-swing serve.

What to Look For

- Students are directing the path of the racket toward the target.
- Students are following through completely.
- Students are maintaining a good toss.

Instructional Task: Singles Games

■ PRACTICE TASK

Groups of four students play modified singles games. In each game, two students play a no-ad game while the other two students perform a peer assessment of the serve and return tactics from today's lesson. The server rotates after each game, and students trade off after every two games. Players focus on using the serve and return tactics practiced earlier in the lesson.

Refinement

Once in game play, students may attempt to swing away on the return of serve. Provide feedback to increase use of blocking on hard serves.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students may choose to change partners.
- Students may choose to use the punch serve or full-swing serve.
- Students may decide what type of ball they want to play with.

What to Look For

Students are effectively using the tactics of serving consistency, returning serve, and serving placement.

Formal and Informal Assessments

Informal assessment and peer assessments

Closure

- What three tactics did you learn today?
- How would you use these tactics in a game?
- What other kinds of tactics do you think might be useful?
- Keep practicing the skills at home if you can, and the next lesson you will be playing singles. You will also take a knowledge test on the rules, terminology, and strategies of tennis.

Reflection

- Were students maintaining proper serving technique during the practice tasks?
- Were students able to use the tactics effectively during play?
- Were students able to control the placement of the serve?

Homework

- Watch some video clips of tennis matches on the school's physical education website. Determine the first-serve percentage of the players and where they tended to place their serves.
- Review for the knowledge test next class.

Resources

United States Tennis Association: www.usta.com

Fuzzy Yellow Balls: www.fuzzyyellowballs.com

Internet search terms: "serve and return," "serve and return tactics," "serve placement"