

LESSON 6: GROUNDSTROKES AND 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 Outcomes

Working with others: Uses communication skills and strategies that promote team or group dynamics. (S4.H3.L1)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- perform baseline rallies using a variety of groundstrokes.
- perform basic tactics (returning home, creating open space) during baseline rallies.

Equipment and Materials

- Tennis rackets: 1 per student
- Tennis balls (various densities): at least 3 per student pair
- Poly spots: at least 2 per court

Introduction

Today, you will be practicing groundstrokes and learning basic tactics used during baseline rallies. Tactics are a way to gain an advantage over an opponent during a game.

Instructional Task: Groundstrokes in Baseline Rally

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students pair up and stand across from each other on the service line on one side of the T (four students per court). Pairs rally cooperatively using forehands and backhands.

Extensions

- Students move back to the baseline and continue to rally cooperatively.
- Students set a goal for consecutive groundstrokes and continue to rally.
- One student on each side of the court stands at the center mark while the other student stands at the fence. The two students at the center mark start a cooperative rally using the whole singles court. After every shot, students at the center mark trade places with students at the fence.
- Students perform the same task but set a goal for consecutive groundstrokes.

EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S4.H3.L1 The extensions for this task present an opportunity to teach students about communicating and cooperating to reach a goal. If they don't, they will not make many consecutive hits.

Refinement

Students may revert to an abbreviated stroke when they try to keep the rally going. Provide corrective feedback to reinforce swinging through the ball. If students are struggling to get to the ball in time to set up, remind them to use proper footwork.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students choose a goal for consecutive groundstrokes and modify the goal as needed.
- Students may choose to change partners.
- Students may choose to start with lower-density balls.

What to Look For

- Students show correct form on forehand and backhand strokes.
- Students are bringing the racket back early.
- Wrist and arm are straight at the point of contact.
- Swing path is low to high.

Instructional Task: Creating Open Space With Shot Selection

■ PRACTICE TASK

Demonstrate cross-court and down-the-line shots.

Students pair up and stand across from each other on the baseline near the alley (four students per court). One student starts a baseline rally with a drop-hit forehand. (Students rotate the server after each rally.) Students on one side of the court may hit only cross-court, and students on the other side may hit only down the line (using forehands or backhands, as appropriate). The rally continues until a student places the ball incorrectly, the ball is hit into the net, or the ball is hit out of bounds. Students change roles (cross-court versus down the line) after every four rallies.

Guiding questions for students:

- How could you win a point during a baseline rally? (Answer: Hit to open space.)
- How can you create open space? (Answer: Pull opponent off the middle of the court.)
- How do you pull the opponent off the middle of the court? (Answer: Hit deep in the corners.)

Extension

Repeat the task except students set a goal for consecutive shots.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students may choose to start with lower-density balls.
- Students may choose a goal and modify it as needed.
- Students may review video clips of cross-court and down-the-line shots in match play.

What to Look For

- Students are hitting deep with topspin.
- Students are using proper technique to direct the ball down the line or cross-court.
- Students are preparing early to hit the ball with proper footwork.

Instructional Task: Return Home

■ PRACTICE TASK

On one side of the court ("home" side), position poly spots on each side of the center mark about 2 feet (0.6 m) apart. Students form groups of four: One student on each side of the court stands at the center mark, while the other two students stand at the fence. The student on the home side of the court starts a rally by drop-hitting a forehand. The student on the other side returns the shot to one of the corners of the singles court using a cross-court or down-the-line shot. The home-side

student must return the ball and get back to home (between the polyspots) as quickly as possible to recover for the next shot. Once the point is over, the two students who were playing rotate to the other side of the court while the other two students, who were waiting at the fence, take their places and start a new point.

Guiding questions for students:

- How could you defend against an opponent when you are pulled out of position? (Answer: Return “home” [center mark].)
- What should you be looking at as you recover?

Extensions

- Students waiting at the fence count the number of times the hitter returns to home during the point.
- Repeat the task, but students keep individual scores from the points they win.

Refinement

Have students focus on the depth of their shots by placing targets just inside the baseline at the corners of the singles court.

Student Choices/Differentiation

Students may choose to start with lower-density balls.

What to Look For

- Students are getting “home” before the next ball is hit.
- Students are hitting effectively to the corners.
- Students are using appropriate footwork to get to the ball and set up for the shot.
- Students are using appropriate technique for their groundstrokes.

Instructional Task: Groundstroke Games

■ PRACTICE TASK

Groups of four students play modified singles games. On each court, two students play a no-ad game while the other two students perform a peer assessment that focuses on tactics. The server drop-hits a forehand to the other side, and the other player returns the ball using a groundstroke. Once the ball has been successfully returned, the point is played out and scored like a real game. The server rotates after each game, and students trade off after every two games. Students must try to use the tactics practiced earlier in the lesson.

Extension

Students use a device to record the modified games and evaluate the tactics used during play.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students may choose to change partners.
- Students may decide what type of ball they want to play with.

What to Look For

- Students are effectively using the tactics of creating open space and returning home.
- Students are able to hit the ball where they want to (e.g., cross-court, down the line, deep).

Formal and Informal Assessments

Informal assessment and peer assessment on tactics

Closure

- What two 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 learning the punch serve.

Reflection

- Were students maintaining proper groundstroke technique during baseline rallies?
- Were students able to use the tactics effectively during play?
- Were students using proper footwork to get to the ball, set up, and return to home?

Homework

- Direct students to video clips of tennis matches on the school's physical education website.
- Ask students to identify examples of the two tactics learned in class and any others that they notice.

Resources

One-hand versus two-hand backhand: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gs94l0wKpM

United States Tennis Association: www.usta.com

Fuzzy Yellow Balls: www.fuzzyyellowballs.com

Internet search terms: "forehand," "backhand," "cross-court shot," "down-the-line shot," "ready position," "return home"