

## 10 practices for parents to help their child have a head start on the tennis court!

These simple exercises are easy ways to develop your child's concentration, coordination, movement and balance.

1. **Ready position.** Stand with feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, (like a ready position or goalkeeping position). Drop the ball with one hand and catch with two hands at waist height. If you say bounce when the ball bounces and catch when you catch it helps your concentration.  
Children are great at copying so make sure you don't start with bad habits!
2. **Underarm - Overarm.** Get your child to copy the throw you choose so they focus on watching your arm movements. This could be aimed at different targets for example into a bucket for underarm (close by), or overarm (further away) knocking down water bottles. Encourage a moment to take a deep breath and focus, before throwing to help with a better aim. (This represents the serve).
3. **Throw & Catch.** Stand 2 approx. metres apart and throw with one hand, underarm and catch with two hands. Ideally with one bounce, but it doesn't really matter to start with, as long as they can hold onto the ball to throw it back. (This represents a rally). For very young children you could sit on the floor with your legs open and roll the ball between you.
4. **Move, Catch & Throw.** As players develop their skills, put out markers a couple of metres apart for you and your child to try to roll the ball past each other. You can either stop it with your feet and kick it back, or you can both try throwing it past each other and have to catch it after one bounce before it goes past into the goal. This develops a sense of time and space as well as coordination. Encourage an underarm throw, then getting back into a ready position quickly.

5. **Both hands to catch and throw.** Try gently throwing the ball up with one hand to about head height and catching with the other and back again. If this is too difficult, throw with the NON dominant hand and catch with both hands, then pass back to the throwing hand. Using both hands is helpful for serving.
6. **Balance on one leg.** Try balancing on one leg for 5 seconds, then change legs. No wobbles! Turn this into a hop on one leg for 5 hops then change legs for 5 hops. This helps to build leg strength.
7. **Side stepping.** Fix a central point and facing each other 1 metre apart side step 3 steps one direction and recover 3 steps back. Take it in turns who chooses the direction of movement and try to stay facing each other.
8. **Reaction test.** Have 2 objects of different colours 3 metres apart, stand face to face in the centre between the objects and someone calls the colour and you have to touch the colour first and recover to the centre.
9. **Racket skills.** Balance a ball on the strings, can you roll the ball around the edge of the frame without it falling off and then reverse the direction? Always have the strongest hand at the bottom of the handle, using two hands is fine.
10. **Racket catch.** Use the racket like a hand to catch the ball on the strings after one bounce. Then throw the ball back from the racket strings. Use the other hand to help if necessary.