

# Activities to practice away from class

## Body awareness

1. Drop ball and catch holding the finish in a forehand groundstroke position. Make sure front heel and toe are down solid and back toe is down with heel flopped over.
2. Toss the ball in the air, catch and in a forehand groundstroke position. Make sure front heel and toe are down solid and back toe is down with heel flopped over.
3. Repeat 2 adding movement and tossing the ball in a variety of ways.
4. Toss a ball or hit a serve. Hold the finish assuring the feet did not move and chase the toss.

## Racquet and ball awareness

1. Place ball on racquet and attempt to roll it around the racquet without letting it fall off the racquet. Flip the racquet over and try with palm down.
2. Balance the ball on the racquet with palm up and try touching other hand to the ground, touch knees to floor, walk, skip, gallop, or any movement.
3. Keep flipping the racquet over and the balance the ball while trying the following: pat your knee with the off and; while moving, do a full turn and keep walking; walk forward and then backward 5 steps, move racquet as high and low as possible.
4. Toss a bean bag with the opposite hand and catch it on the racquet. Toss it a few feet away, move to it, and catch it with the racquet. Work with a partner, tossing and catching on the racquet. Move further away.
5. Ball tap downs. At waist level, bounce the ball down and catch with opposite hand. Continuously bounce ball down. Do the same while moving.
6. Ball bump ups. Bump the ball up and catch. Bump up continuously to eye level; bump up while alternating sides of racquet. To develop better control and to create a challenge, a circle of about 2 feet in diameter could be drawn on the pavement as a target.
7. Bump self rallies. Drop the ball on the floor, bump it up with the racquet, trap it with the opposite hand. Bounce the ball up 5 times; let it bounce, repeat. Alternate bouncing off the ground and up in the air.
8. Bump up with partner. Partners stand close to each other and bounce the ball up to eye level, then let ball bounce on floor onto a target. Repeat bounce up. Add movement and get in good position for your turn. Once some level of success is attained, the next stage is to create two target areas a few feet apart. These targets should be on either side of a line, and the rally will go back and forth between the two targets placed three or four feet apart on the court. Create games. For example, keep track of consecutive hits and consecutive hits on the targets.
9. Player starts by sending the ball with a push along the ground from the designated start line to the finish line. The player then performs footwork in relation to the ball while it is rolling.
  - a. 1st time: Stay right behind the ball while its rolling
  - b. 2nd time: Stay in front of the ball
  - c. 3rd & 4th times: Circle the ball (clockwise and counter clockwise)

## Bouncing games

1. Bounce ball down
2. Bounce ball up, letting it bounce on the court after each hit
3. Bounce ball down on the edge of the racquet
4. Bounce ball up, keeping the ball in the air
5. Bounce ball up, alternating sides of the racquet
6. Bounce ball up, alternating sides but add a hit up on the edge between hitting on both sides
7. Bounce ball high
8. Bounce ball low
9. Bounce ball while on one knee
10. Bounce ball while sitting on the court
11. Bounce ball while lying on the court
12. Bounce ball in a circle around the body
13. Bounce ball in a Figure 8 around the legs
14. Bounce ball down while hopping on one foot
15. Bounce ball up while hopping on the other foot
16. Bounce ball up, with the racquet between the legs
17. Bounce ball up, with the racquet around the back
18. Toss the ball up and catch it on the racquet without it bouncing on the strings
19. Balance the ball on the strings and turn the racquet 180 degrees without the ball falling off the strings
20. Spring quickly in a circle while balancing the ball on the strings

## Roll, Toss, Catch

1. **Roll ball into a goal.** Throw ball in air and against a wall and catch in a cone or household object. Set up a target- throw foam ball at it.
2. **Roll and Catch.** With one ball for each pair, players should stand 10 feet apart. The player with the ball (Player A) rolls the ball to either side of the partner (Player B), and Player B moves so she can catch the ball directly between her feet. Player B should shuffle into position and squat down, keeping her back straight to catch the ball. Player B then rolls the ball back to either side of Player A, who also catches the ball and rolls it back. To add some variation, have players use two balls and have them both roll and catch at the same time.
3. **Toss and Catch.** Player A underhand tosses the ball so that it bounces on the court, and Player B catches the ball with one hand with the fingers pointing up. This will force both players to move quickly to get their hand below the ball so the fingers are up, similar to the position of the hand when making a volley. For a greater challenge, have both players toss and catch two balls at the same time.
4. **Roll the ball to a partner standing 6-8 feet away.** Start with one ball and then do two balls at the same time.
  - a. One player underhand tosses; one player catches the ball after one bounce.
  - b. One player with two balls in her hand tosses two balls positioned side by side (horizontal position). Her partner catches balls on one bounce or two bounces.

- c. One player with two balls in her hand tosses two balls stacked on top of each other (vertical position). Her partner catches the balls after one or two bounces.
5. **Toss and Trap.** Player A tosses an underhand throw to partner who traps the ball holding the racquet at its throat with the non-dominant hand and with the butt of the racquet against the stomach at the “belt buckle.” Repeat this activity trapping on the other side of the body. This time all traps are done on the backhand side of the racquet.
6. **Toss, Turn and Trap.** Player A uses a higher underhand toss to Player B, who has his back to the feeder (Player A). The feeder calls out the partner’s name and the partner (Player B) turns 180 degrees, locates the ball and moves to trap the ball against his strings. Have each pair do this five times, and then change tossers and trappers.
7. **Sky Ball.** Cooperatively throw overhand back and forth with a partner. To gain a point, a player must start from a serve position and throw the ball higher than the level of their head. Their partner must catch it after one bounce waist high. No point is gained if the ball bounces twice or if the ball goes out of the designated play area.
8. **Toss and hit.** Players start with one ball in each hand in a serve position. Using a service toss, the player lifts a ball into the air and then, using a throwing action, throws the ball in the racquet hand at the tossed ball. Every hit of the tossed ball gains a point.
9. **Lobster Trap.** Player A uses an underhand toss to either side of Player B, who is in a ready position with two racquets. The player with two racquets (lobster) traps the ball with both racquets on one side or the other, then drops the ball and returns a left-handed or right-handed drop-hit forehand, depending on the side he trapped the ball. Change tossers and “lobsters” after five tosses.
10. **Movement Cycle.** Place two markers at a hitting spot and the recovery position (Home Base). The players throw the ball to the partner’s hitting marker. Thrower must recover using side-shuffles before their throw bounces. They must “beat the bounce” and also be balanced and ready before their ball bounces on partner’s side of the court. Players catch the ball in a balanced sideways position (exploring FH & BH sides) and only at waist level. This reinforces the concept of the ideal contact point. Bodywork: By using two hands on the ball and sending it with a body rotation, players practice turning their body during groundstrokes (using an oversized ball like a soccer ball enhances the activity).

## Wall Tennis

Hitting balls off a wall, a basement wall, or garage door has been a starting point and an excellent method of practice.

1. Progress to rallying. Drop and hit and catch. Drop and hit and keep rally going on one side of the body, then advance to hitting on both sides.
2. Start with a serve and rally until you miss, then begin again with the serve.
3. Hit a groundstroke, approach and a volley. Begin with a serve.
4. Setting up a modified court in the driveway or on a playground with chalk lines. Make games. Hit on one side of line only, alternate sides, hit in front and behind lines. If possible, a temporary net. Use rope or caution tape.
5. Make a target on the wall about 4 feet above the ground. Aim all types of shots at the target. See how many serves hit the target.
6. With a partner, play a variety of games. For example, should see how many forehand groundstrokes they can hit. The players should concentrate on the backhand ground stroke and see how many

consecutive backhand ground strokes they can hit. Players should graduate to alternating by hitting one forehand and one backhand. See if they can keep the ball in the air after it hits the wall for a continuous volley. Try for 10 volleys in a row, using both forehand and backhand volleys. Place a target on the wall and hit at the target, keeping score of how many out of 20 hits or how many in a row.

**Koosh Ball Pass.** Have parents, older siblings, friends, relatives, etc., pass a Koosh ball back and forth with the player. As the player gains success, have her move back and toss the Koosh ball and catch it on the strings. See if the player can move back two or three steps. Have her toss the ball low and high, and be creative in how the ball is caught on the strings.

**One Bounce – Two Bounce.** The adult or older partner tosses a foam ball up in the air and calls out “One,” “Two,” “Three” or even “Zero.” The player must allow the ball to bounce that number of times before catching it and tossing it back to the adult.

**Throw Ball.** Have the child and an adult rally with a playground ball by throwing and catching over a line/net in the driveway or any other flat surface. You can allow multiple bounces and let the child move closer to the line/net for better success.

**Lobster Trap.** This activity is done in pairs. The players stand 8 to 10 feet apart, with one player holding two racquets, one in each hand, and the partner with one ball. The player with the ball (the tosser) makes an easy underhand toss and the player with the racquets (the lobster) catches the ball after the bounce by trapping the ball between both racquets. After trapping the ball, the player drops the ball from the racquets and hits the ball back to the tosser. Encourage the “lobster” to trap the ball at the side of his body so it is easy to make the drop and hit from a sideways position. Change tossers and “lobsters” after five tosses.

**Applause.** Use a foam or playground ball. The adult tosses the ball up and the child claps and catches the ball after the bounce. Do the same with two claps and three claps before the catch. See if the coach and player can clap between the toss and catch without a bounce. Can you do two claps before the bounce? Three claps?

**Jacks.** The player tosses the ball up and lets it bounce, bumps it up with the racquet one time and catches it—“onesies.” The player then attempts to tap it up twice—“twosies”—and so on until they reach “fivesies”—or five in a row.

**Rally: Player and Adult.** Player rallies with an adult on any flat surface with foam ball. Alternate hitting up after one bounce and trying to keep the ball from going outside a defined area, such as an area in the driveway, sidewalk or playground. Add over a line or low obstacle such as a racquet bag or any low barrier made by items from the house or garage.

**Ball Drop.** Players are in pairs facing each other. One player has one ball in each hand and his arms extended at shoulder level. The player drops one ball and the other player has to run and catch the dropped ball after one bounce. Switch partners after three drops. To increase the difficulty, have players move one step farther away after every successful drop, bounce and catch.

**Mirror.** Players stand facing a partner. One player is the leader and the other is the follower. The leader can move any way he or she wants and the partner must mirror the actions. Do the same while tossing a ball back and forth.

**3-2-1 Juggle Rally.** Players are paired up with one player on either side of the net. One player self-rallies (tap up and bounce) the ball three times and hits it over to her partner. The partner does the same three-ball self-rally and hits the ball back over to his partner. The next time the players self-rally twice, and finally once, before hitting it over the net. Do this on both the forehand and backhand sides.

**Step-Back Rallies.** With a partner, each player is two steps away from the net. One player begins with a drop hit to the partner, who returns that ball, and the pair rallies the ball for four hits. After four hits, both players take one step back and repeat the rally drill, trying to keep the ball in play for four consecutive hits. Every time they successfully rally four in a row, they each move back a step. If either player makes an error, each player moves forward a step and tries to rally four in a row again before moving a step back.