

MLC Tennis Hot Shots – Term 1 lesson planner

Week: 1–4

Lesson time: 60 minutes

Stage: Green

The aim of this series is to increase awareness of the court zones and targets, build attacking and defensive skills, and use all these skills appropriately.

Note that “Skipping” is used in the warm-up as a pulse raiser and general coordination drill and then followed by “Catch me if you can” to develop speed. Sprint drills should only be done when the body is warmed up properly.

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Warm-up 1	Skipping and Catch me if you can	Warm-up 2	Skipping and Catch me if you can	Warm-up 1
Racquet warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups	Racquet Warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups	Racquet Warm-up
Intro	Intro to objectives	Review	Crosscourt Warrior	Review
Activity 1	Crosscourt Warrior	Activity 2 Review	Serve Star	Activity 3
Activity 2	Serve Star	Activity 3	Court Shapes	Activity 1
Activity 1	Crosscourt Warrior	Activity 2	Serve Star	Activity 3
Play	1 Serve Tennis	Play	3 Serve Tennis	Play

Content

Warm-up 1	Warm-up 2	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Skipping	Catch me if you can	Crosscourt Warrior	Serve Star	Court Shapes
Purpose	Purpose	Purpose	Purpose	Purpose
Develop whole body coordination, endurance and footwork.	Develop reaction speed and speed over a short distance.	Develop attack and defend skills. Attack the short ball by changing direction. Defend crosscourt.	Learn to attack and defend from the serve and return.	Understand the court and target zones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L Shape – promotes deep hitting and short angles • Half Court – develops consistency, depth and pace • Black Hole – develops understanding of players’ strengths and weaknesses.

Skipping

Level:	Green stage
Purpose:	Coordination, endurance and footwork
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will not find a professional tennis player who doesn't have a skipping rope in their kit bag. The coordination between upper and lower body added to the great footwork and endurance work out offered by skipping makes it one of the best warm-up drills for tennis. • Skills include two legged jumping and alternating single leg hops with the emphasis on keeping on the toes and short contact time with the ground.
Coaching notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the rope is the correct length for each child. When they stand on the centre of the rope the handle should reach just under the armpits. • Try to keep the hands still and arms a comfortable distance from the body. • To help a player to start, try holding the rope out to the side with both handles in one hand. Turn the rope and time a small jump to the noise of the rope striking the floor.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Try to skip while running. ii. Skip while moving sideways and carefully backwards. iii. Skip at different speeds and rhythms.

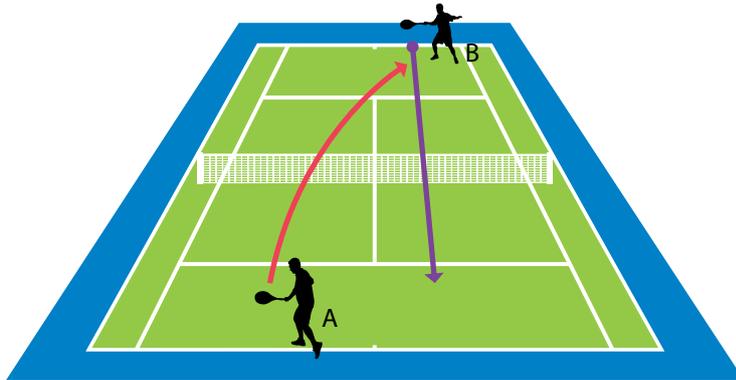
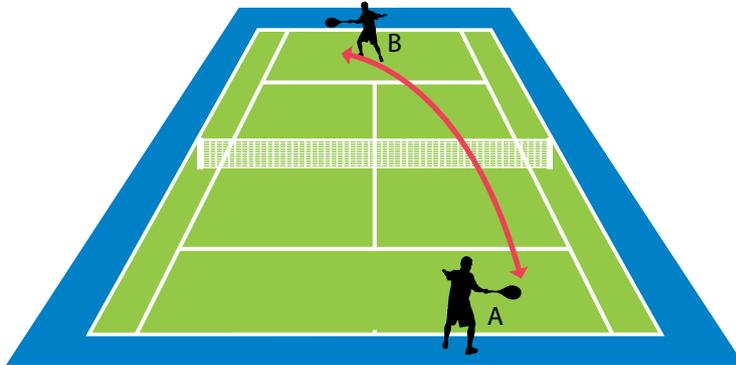
Catch me if you can

Level:	Green stage
Purpose:	Develop running technique and speed
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair players. Player A starts on the singles line, Player B starts on doubles line. • At the coaches "Go", Player A must sprint to reach the opposite sideline, while Player B chases to catch them. • Player A starts in increasingly difficult starting positions to give Player B a chance to catch. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » start in "starting block" position » start facing their chaser » start kneeling down » start squatting down like a frog » start lying down in a push-up position. • Player B always starts in the ready position. Change player roles after different variations.
Coaching notes:	Short bursts of speed and quick reactions are very specific to the fitness needs of tennis.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Start in the centre of the court and use a command to specify which players run and which chase. ii. Players must run to the outside tramline to be safe. iii. Progress this to make the player stop on the outside tramline to ensure that they balance properly.

Crosscourt warrior

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Develop attack and defense skills, attack the short ball by changing direction and defend crosscourt



Instruction:

- Two players start a rally with an underhand feed.
- Player A (“The Warrior”) must hit every ball crosscourt, while Player B has the option to hit down the line or crosscourt depending on the situation of the rally.
- Player A must concentrate on keeping the quality of their stroke, denying B the chance of an easy up-the-line winner, and focus on a “warrior” attitude to get to every ball.
- Player B must wait for the right ball to change the direction of the shot, understanding the risk of “pulling the trigger” at the wrong time.
- First to seven points wins the set.

Coaching notes:

- Players work hard to maintain the intensity to compete in this drill.
- Try to ensure that the decision-making process for the attacking player is clearly explained and discussed throughout.

Progression:

- i. A second player can be introduced to partner Player B to increase the difficulty for Player A.
- ii. Player B can only change direction after a minimum of five shots to concentrate on building the point.

Serve star

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Learn to attack and defend from the serve and return

Progression 1: spin and variety **1 Serve Tennis**

Server only has one serve to start the point. Look to work on:

- improving the second serve
- starting the point positively but reducing risk, particularly hitting the serve deep
- attacking attitude from returner on return of serve.

3 Serve Tennis

- Server is allowed three faults before losing the point.
- Encourage the serving player to go for the corners and increase the pace on the serve.
- Play first to 11 with the server being awarded two points if they serve an ace or unreturnable serve – this forces the return of serve player to also concentrate extra hard.

Progression 2: counter from the serve

Return the canon

- Two players set up opposite one another: Player B returns in the deuce court, Player A serves from the service line.
- Ensure a mixture of serves including fast down the middle and at the body, sliced wide and kicked up high. Serve from both the deuce and advantage courts.
- If forced into a defensive position Player B should return deep down the middle. Points can be played out, or just focus on the return.

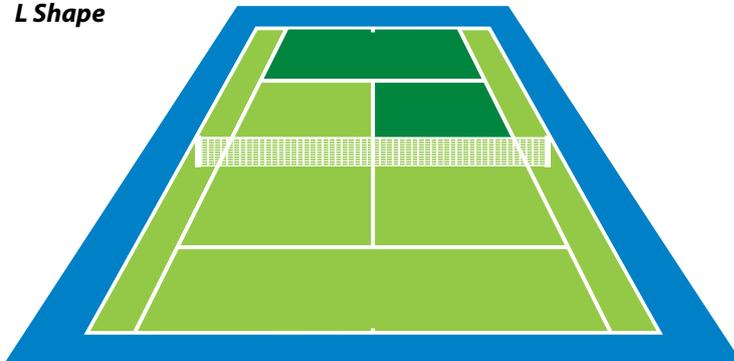
Coaching notes: While at green stage players may not have the physical capabilities to serve a “kick” serve, curving the ball with side spin, hitting a faster flatter serve, and a higher, deeper and safer topspin serve are achievable.

Court shapes

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Court awareness: understanding court geography and hitting accurately to target zones

L Shape



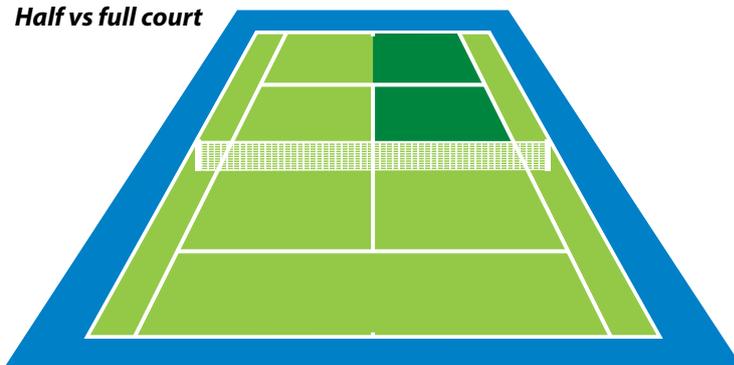
Instruction:

Changing the court shape will challenge players to automatically build technical skills to meet the tactical demands. It helps them understand the angles of the court.

L Court – the backcourt plus one service box

By opening up one service box the short angle is an effective shot, in addition to deep balls to the back court. Extra topspin is needed to create the extra angle.

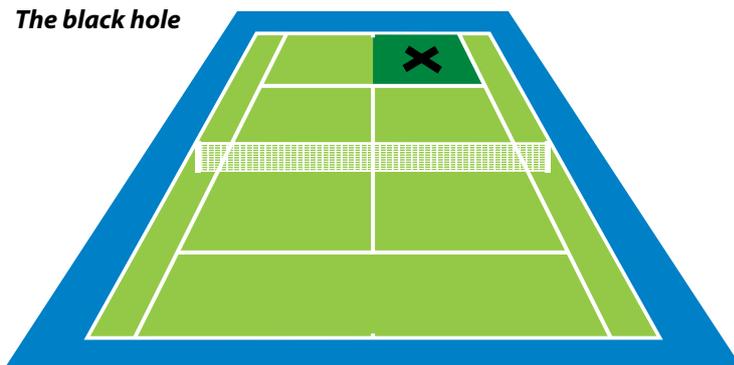
Half vs full court



Half court versus full court

One player hitting to the half court must focus on hitting consistently to the same court keeping depth and pace. The other player can mix up their shots and move the ball around.

The black hole



The black hole

Players can select one-quarter of the court their opponent cannot hit to. The player who loses the point blocks one quadrant of the court – based on their weakness or their opponent's strengths. In the court demonstrated to the left, this example has blocked the opponent from hitting deep to the backhand.

Coaching notes: While these court shapes will help players improve their technique and tactics, only with the coach's expert guidance will this be a quick and effective process.

MLC Tennis Hot Shots – Term 1 lesson planner

Week: 5–8

Lesson time: 60 minutes

Stage: Green

The aim of this series is to develop a greater awareness of tactical options: changing gears, spin, tactics and reading the action of the opponent.

Note: “Big Ball Tennis” should be used as the pulse raiser before performing the 30-second lateral drill.

Lesson 5		Lesson 6		Lesson 7		Lesson 8	
Warm-up 1	Big Ball Tennis and 30-second Lateral	Warm-up 2	Big Ball Tennis and 30-second Lateral	Warm-up 1	Big Ball Tennis and 30-second Lateral	Warm-up 2	Big Ball Tennis and 30-second Lateral
Racquet warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups	Racquet warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups	Racquet warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups	Racquet warm-up	Choose from the stroke warm-ups
Intro	Intro to objectives	Review	Drive, Loop, Chip	Review	Wildcard Serve	Review	Trouble
Activity 1	Drive, Loop, Chip	Activity 2	Wildcard Serve	Activity 3	Trouble	Activity 1	Drive, Loop, Chip
Activity 2	Wildcard Serve	Activity 3	Trouble	Activity 1	Drive, Loop, Chip	Activity 2	Wildcard Serve
Activity 1	Drive, Loop, Chip	Activity 2	Wildcard Serve	Activity 3	Trouble	Coach’s Choice	Choice from 3 Activities
Play	Two points lost for net error	Play	3 Serve Tennis	Play	Combos	Play	Doubles with serve and volley

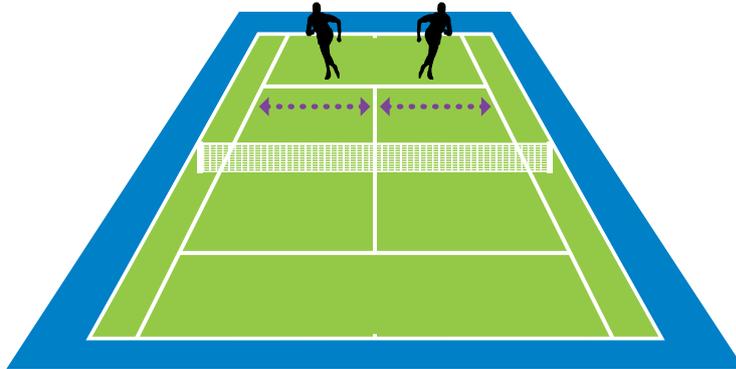
Content

Warm-up 1	Warm-up 2	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
30 sec Lateral Test	Big Ball Tennis	Drive, Loop, Chip	Wildcard	Trouble
Purpose Lateral movement. Low centre of gravity.	Purpose Develop controlled dynamic rotation.	Purpose Develop variety through trajectory and spin. Adapt it to the shot they receive, and observe their opponent.	Purpose Develop tactical understanding of the options on serve and return.	Purpose Increase player’s perception of their opponent. Understand the situation their opponent is in, i.e. comfortable, under stress etc.

30-second lateral test

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Developing lateral movement, low centre of gravity



Instruction:

- Players set up in the service box between the centre and singles lines.
- On the coach's "GO" they must shuttle between the side and singles lines, touching each line with their hand and face the same way all the time (i.e. they are not running in circles).
- A partner can count how many lines they touch in a 30-second test (not counting if they don't reach the line).

Coaching notes: Record your young athletes results over time and chart their improvement in this great agility test.

Big ball tennis

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Develop dynamic control of posture while rotating and bending

- Instruction:**
- Level 1: players start on opposite service lines. Using a soccer ball or similar, players throw two-handed, catching after a bounce and throwing back from the side that they catch it from.
 - Level 2: each time a player catches the ball they must reach back and touch it to the ground behind them then push through the legs and whole body to throw as they stand back up. This should create a dynamic whole body action.
 - Level 3: players move to the ball, balance on one leg to receive it and throw back off the same leg. Discuss with players the leg that is easier to balance on.

Coaching notes:

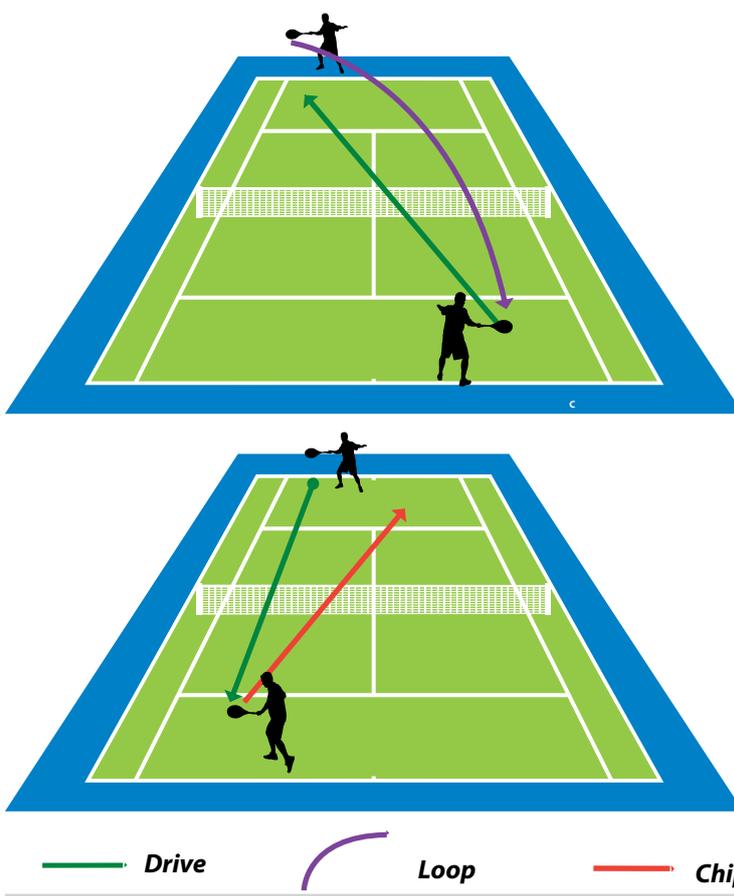
- Encourage players to finish in a stable position with the palms facing forward on the finish (like pushing down a wall) on level 1.
- Try to keep the head up when bending on level 2.

- Progression:**
- Take this from a cooperative drill to a competitive one.
 - Play as a doubles game – players must do alternate catches and finish with a double high five with their partner after throwing. This must be done on the side of the follow through.

Green stroke warm-ups	Teaching points (Use a combination of these service box warm-ups)
1 6 steps	A simple rally but players must take six steps between each shot.
2 Alternator	Players must hit alternate forehands and backhands.
3 One-leg wonder	Players must strike each ball standing on only one leg to promote better balance.
4 In and volley	One player hits alternate groundstroke and volley patterns – complete 10 shots and swap roles.
5 Bump it	Players must hit the ball into the ground to get it over the net. Can be played both competitively and cooperatively.
6 Half-volley King	Every ball must be half volleyed.

Drive, loop, chip

Levels:	Green stage
Purpose:	Develop ability to vary spin and adapt to different shots from the opponent



Instruction:

- Two players start a rally with an underhand feed.
- They must adapt their spin depending on the shot they receive from their opponent.
- For example:
 - » for a high bouncing ball – loop
 - » a ball that pushes them back – loop
 - » for a comfortable waist-high ball – drive
 - » a ball that they can be aggressive on – drive
 - » for a low-bouncing ball – chip
 - » a ball they have to stretch for – chip.

Coaching notes: This drill develops advanced rallying concepts with players reading the characteristics of their opponent’s shot and adapting their shot accordingly.

- Progression:**
- i. Players call their intention before they hit the ball (as early as possible). This will show the speed they perceive the incoming shot and give the coach a good indication of their reception skills. This may start with calling either “loop” or “drive” and progress to “chip” once they are comfortable.
 - ii. Players call out the shot that their opponent is going to play based on the ball that they sent to them to develop this into an anticipation drill.

Wildcard serve and return

Level: Green stage

Purpose: Variation: winning plays using serve and return patterns

- Instruction:**
- Coach prepares for this lesson by preparing business-card size cardboard tags. On these cards the coach prints or hand writes different shots, patterns or tasks.
 - Randomly hand out the cards to the competing students – who score bonus points if they successfully complete the task during open match play.
 - Examples:
 - » return winner
 - » service winner – wide
 - » service winner – down the middle
 - » wide server – make the returner step over the singles sideline
 - » deep cover – make the returner stay back behind the baseline
 - » big forehand – serve wide and hit a forehand to the open court
 - » deep back attack – return deep to the back third of the court
 - » serve and volley.

If the player wins the point using their task they call out “wildcard” and receive bonus points.

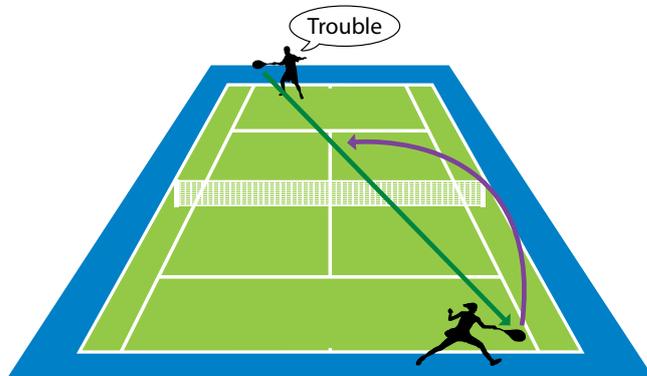
- Coaching notes:**
- Consider using different colours and making this game as fun as possible. By teaching students to plan with the serve and return you help them to start to take control of the point and you will be developing a more complete player and force them to work at skills practiced during lessons.
 - An alternative to preparing individualised cards would be to use playing cards and use the face cards, i.e. Ace = service winner, King = return winner, Joker = serve and volley.

- Progression:**
- i. Easier tasks might be set for less-experienced players, for example:
 - » hit to areas marked on the court (1/2 service box)
 - » have three serves for each point to practice the tactic more
 - » play as a cooperative situation rather than a competitive one.

Trouble

Level: Green stage

Purpose: develop anticipation skills – specifically predict a weak return



Instruction:

- Two players start a rally with an underhand feed.
- During a rally they should seek to gain the advantage in the exchange and keep a keen eye on their opponent for signs of stress.
- As soon as they see their opponent is:
 - » in poor position
 - » off balance
 - » likely to hit the ball at an awkward height
 - » stretched wide etc.

They should call "Trouble".

Coaching notes:

- As players progress and ball speeds get higher, the court is too big to cover. At the elite level players read cues from their opponent's body position, preparation etc. to anticipate where the ball will go.
- This drill will increase the young player's understanding of their opponent and develop their anticipatory skills.

- Progression:**
- i. Once "Trouble" is called – the attacking player can assume an aggressive court position and keep the pressure on the stressed opponent.
 - ii. Once "Trouble" is called the point must be finished within three shots by either player.

Green play options	Teaching points
1 1 serve tennis	Play where the server has only one fault. Players can work at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the second serve • starting the point positively but reducing risk • attacking attitude on return of serve.
2 3 serve tennis	Play where the server is allowed three faults before losing the point. Players can work at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aiming for the corners and increasing the pace on the serve. Award the server two points if they serve an ace or unreturnable serve – this forces the return of serve player to concentrate extra hard.
3 Court shapes	Play points where competitors are only allowed to hit into designated court shapes e.g. L court, half court versus full court, the black hole etc.
4 Crosscourt return	Play points where the return must go crosscourt. This will work at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • return players effectively selecting targets for their return • the server being able to dictate from the first shot of the rally.
5 2 points lost for error into net	Play where the players hitting errors into the net are penalised two points. Players can work at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing clearance over the net • simultaneously increasing depth and topspin • playing attacking shots with reduced risk.
6 2 points for net winner	Play awarding two points to any player who can successfully approach the net and hit a winner volley or overhead. Look to work at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tactical use of the approach shot – coming in behind the right shot • effective volleying including closing in for a put away.
7 Combos	Players are given a bonus point for making their opponent hit a combination of shots. For example, they are given a bonus point for making their opponent hit a forehand then a backhand, or a ground stroke then a volley.
8 Doubles serve and volley	The best doubles teams are dominant at the net! The key skill is to get both players at the net so that full control is taken over the point. The instruction is simple – the server must follow their serve to the net. Can be progressed to singles at higher skill levels.

For more MLC Tennis Hot Shots Deliverer resources, go to hotshots.tennis.com.au

