

MLC Tennis Hot Shots – Term 1 Lesson Plans

Week: 1–4

Lesson time: 30–60 minutes

Stage: Red

The aim for this series of lessons is to build the skills to rally. At the core of this is practicing both “sending” and “receiving” skills. While this is a hard challenge for young children, remember that tennis can be rolling the ball along the ground (with or without racquets), throwing and catching using a cone, one player hitting with a racquet, the other catching and throwing.

Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 3		Lesson 4	
Warm-up 1	Change	Warm-up 2	Ready and Run	Warm-up 1	Change	Warm-up 2	Ready and Run
Intro	Intro to objectives	Review	Rolling Rally	Review	Build a Rally	Review	Red Serve
Activity 1	Rolling Rally	Activity 2	Build a Rally	Activity 3	Red Serve	Activity 1	Rolling Rally
Activity 2	Build a Rally	Activity 3	Red Serve	Activity 1	Rolling Rally	Activity 2	Build a Rally
Activity 1	Rolling Rally	Activity 2	Build a Rally	Activity 3	Red Serve	Coach’s Choice	Choice from 3 Activities
Play	Rolling Rally <i>Count the highest rally in a set time or if a player rolls the ball out of the defined area they lose a point.</i>	Play	Build a rally <i>Control the ball in a small space with a partner. If a player hits the ball out they lose a point.</i>	Play	Serve and Rally <i>Commence the points with a serve (underarm) and play out the point in a defined court.</i>	Play	Serve and Rally <i>Commence the points with a serve (underarm) and play out the point in a defined court.</i>

Content

Warm-up 1	Warm-up 2	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Change	Ready and Run	Build a Rally	Rolling Rally	Red Serve Progression 1
Purpose Develop lateral movement skills, changes of direction and ready position	Purpose Develop basic coordination through a variety of different running tasks – high knees, long strides, on toes etc. and balance when stopping	Purpose Develop reception skills – left and right, forehand and backhand and promote a low centre of gravity Self Rally – Using the knees to lift the ball and maintaining racquet face control Partner Rally – Adjust racquet face to send the ball to partner	Purpose Bungee – Racquet face control and understanding bounces	Purpose Under wonder Learn to start the point. Develop the underarm serve.

Change

Level:	Red stage
Purpose:	Develop lateral movement skills, changes of direction and ready position
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players line up in an athletic ready position, facing the coach. The coach is standing at the net. • The coach points in the direction that the players must sidestep. • On the command of “change” players move in the opposite direction. Each time the coach says “change” the players push off with the outside foot and move in the opposite direction.
Coaching notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that players maintain good posture and keep their head at the same height as they move. • Encourage them to push off the outside foot to change direction. • Keep the head still and eyes focused forward on the coach.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Add a second command like “turn” where players must keep moving in the same direction but face the opposite direction. ii. Ask players to add a crossover step if the change is made outside a set marker. iii. Add more commands for different movements.

Ready and run

Level:	Red stage
Purpose:	Develop basic coordination between arms and leg including dynamic and static balance
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players run between the different specified lines on the court. • The coaches set various modified running techniques. • Consider fast or slow; giant strides or little shuffles; forwards, sideways or backwards; running and then stopping in ready position on the coaches instruction; stopping and balancing on one foot.
Coaching notes:	Be sure to turn your “coach’s eye” to your students’ running technique, ensure good posture and alignment in the direction of the run, arms and legs working together and good balance when asked to stop, balance etc.

Rolling rally

Level:	Red stage
Purpose:	Develop reception skills – left and right, forehand and backhand, and promote a low centre of gravity
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players start facing each other on opposite doubles lines, their court area can be a full red court. • They push the ball back and forth moving to trap the ball on the ground “SPLAT” (either forehand or backhand); and roll back with their racquet. The trap must be in front between themselves and their partner.
Coaching notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This game will teach players to judge the correct distance from the body they need to contact the ball. • The players should trap the ball in front of the doubles line to create a contact point in front. • A rolling stroke can incorporate good technique including grip (wrist behind racquet), knee bend and controlling the “push” (no swing). • The 3 o’clock or 9 o’clock position on the racquet must be next to the ground.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. After trapping the ball, the player kicks the ball back with the inside of their foot instead of hitting it. ii. Designate the direction the ball should be rolled (cross or down) and enforce recovery to create lots of lateral movement. iii. Create a “goal” between the players and make a game of it – scoring for ball hit out or missed etc.

Build a rally – bungee jumping

Level:	Red stage
Purpose:	Basic racquet face control in order to facilitate ball control
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players are placed around the court with the ball balanced on their racquets – making sure they understand the boundaries of the court and that they are clearly set. • At the coach’s call of “BUNGEE!” the players roll the ball off their racquet, let it bounce and then catch it on their racquet strings by trapping it with their hand.
Coaching notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure players keep their racquet face flat and level and bend the knees when they roll the ball from their racquet, getting under it and tracking the ball flight with their body. • Work towards players using a continental grip.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Players play with a partner, taking it in turns to roll the ball off the racquet and catch it. ii. Players catch with their racquet only, no hands.

Build a rally – self/partner rally

Level: Red stage

Purpose: Build a rally, control the racquet face

Instruction:

- Set the players up in a defined area appropriate to their age and ability with a ball and racquet.
- They must hit the ball up, controlling the ball inside the set court area with one bounce only.
- Score one point each time they achieve a five-shot rally.
- Place a marker in the centre of the set area to form a focus that players try to have their ball bounce on (bonus point if achieved).

Coaching notes:

- While the racquet is not aligned to hit the ball forwards like a forehand or a backhand – the coach can emphasise contact point around waist high and a flat and level racquet face to control the ball. To do this they must have a good knee bend and start to drive the shot with their body and not with their wrist.
- Work towards players using a continental grip.

Progression:

- i. Put two players in the set area and have them hit alternating shots, using both sides of the racquet.
- ii. Add a net and get the players to hit the ball over the net by slightly adjusting their racquet face (one player can throw/catch and the other can hit to begin).

Red serve

Level: Red stage

Purpose: Learn to start the point with a simple action

Progression one: develop underarm serve

- Under wonder**
- Working in pairs, players throw over the net back and forth, coach looks at stance – both arms moving together.
 - Start the motion with both arms together (like a serve), coach looks at arms separating smoothly over a short distance to create rhythm.
 - Introduce targets left and right, making the partner move and then recover to position and return.
 - Give each partner a ball that they throw alternately with a partner, developing rhythm and timing.
 - Combine a low toss with an underarm forehand swing to achieve an underarm serve.

Progression two: coordinate both arms

- Overarm throw**
- Working in pairs, throw over different lengths making sure non-throwing arm works in opposition to the throwing arm.
 - Throw as high as possible, stretching the non-throwing arm up.
 - Concentrate on player stance and remaining balanced.

Bullseye

- Players hold a ball in each hand – they lift with left hand (toss) and throw overarm with their right arm (for right-handed players).
- They aim to throw the ball in the dominant hand under the ball tossed with the non-dominant one.
- More importantly for the coach they are coordinating the toss with an overarm motion.

Cylinder serve

- Player serves overarm from a normal stance – the swing can be shortened but the coordination and rhythm between the two arms should remain.

Progression three: coordinate upper and lower body

- Stretch serve**
- Players start in a position three racquet lengths from the net (very close). They must serve the ball over and in.
 - For each successful serve they step back one racquet length.

Coaching notes:

- Teach the students to start the point themselves from the earliest possible time. Children who rely on the coach to start the rally (feed) all the time will not be able to practice away from the coach.
- Underarm throwing and serving is ideal for red stage players as they begin, and can move to overarm as they develop.

Mirrors

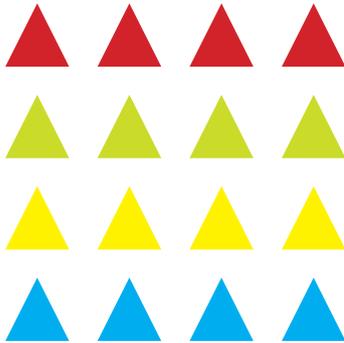
Level:	Red stage
Purpose:	Develop lateral movement and cooperation
Instruction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players start in pairs facing each other in a ready position ready to move sideways. The doubles alleys can be used as an anchor point if you have a full court. • Both arms are out in front with the palms out almost touching each other. • Practice cooperatively at first and then allow one player to lead movement, while the other has to “mirror” their partner, reacting to their changes of direction. • All movement is sideways at this stage.
Coaching notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While moving sideways ask the students to keep their head and shoulders level, not bobbing up and down. • Adjust the width of the activity so the players are regularly changing directions.
Progression:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Players move sideways while chest passing a soccer-sized ball between each other. ii. Players move sideways and reach the end of the court and twist and throw the soccer-sized ball in a forehand and backhand motion. iii. Players move sideways throwing two tennis balls between themselves.

Cone code

Levels: Red stage

Purpose: Developing and adapting footwork

Instruction:



- Use different coloured cones set up across the court at two-metre intervals as illustrated. Red stage starts with just two different colours and introduces an extra colour after the previous ones have been mastered.
- Each different colour represents a different footwork pattern, for example:
 - » Red = Split step
 - » Green = Circle the cone
 - » Yellow = Hop three times
 - » Blue = Sidestep
- The coach should gradually introduce and demonstrate each pattern and emphasise that between each cone the players must take tiny balancing shuffle steps and then perform the skill when they reach the cone.

Coaching notes:

- Once players have mastered the skill, try to encourage them not to look down but to use their peripheral vision to know where the cone is.
- Ensure that the split step is done as an elastic movement rather than a stop.
- Ensure that the cones are spaced to allow players to move fluidly through them.

- Progression:**
- i. Use an alternating pattern of cones.
 - ii. Mix up the colours in different rows so that players must constantly change and adapt their footwork. It is a great challenge for the students and forces them to think at the same time as developing their footwork.

Cone catch

Level: Red stage

Purpose: Judge the flight of the ball to catch it as it falls

- Instruction:**
- Two players work together over the net.
 - Cooperatively underarm throw the ball in a rally over the net.
 - Players hold a cone like an ice-cream cone, and attempt to catch the ball in the cone.
 - Swap positions after five catches or play a competitive game with another pair.

- Coaching notes:**
- This game teaches the students to catch the ball around waist height as it is dropping (it is hard to catch in any other situation). Players will have to judge the depth, height and direction and move appropriately and position themselves for the catch.
 - Players who are successful in catching in front of the body should be encouraged to catch to the side of the body and in front.

- Progression:**
- i. One player can be hitting and the other cone catching.
 - ii. Use different balls and court lengths; or throw and hit to increase or decrease difficulty.

Serve star

Level: Red stage

Purpose: Develop basic overarm serve. Include serve and return sequences

- Instruction:**
- Use a basic three-ball drill starting with a serve, followed by a return then the server hits a second shot and the ball is caught by the returning player who then takes on the role of the server.
 - Both players serve from the deuce court and then from the Ad court.
 - Can start with throwing or an underarm action and then can be developed into an overarm.

- Coaching notes:**
- Start with a smaller version of a full swing, keeping the coordination between the two arms and simple rhythm.
 - The returning player should show good intensity and ready position.
 - Gradually increase the size of the action.
 - The server should impact the ball above their head and keep the action simple.
 - Emphasise the string pointing in the direction of the intended target.

- Progression:**
- i. Add target areas for more accuracy on the serve.
 - ii. Add an intended target for the returning player.
 - iii. Add more strokes to make it a five-ball drill rather than a three-ball drill.
 - iv. Use throwing and catching to first establish the pattern or to make things easier.

Battle cones

Level: Red stage

Purpose: Develop accuracy from a simple contact point



Instruction:

- Place three-plus cones in a group as illustrated.
- Players commence a cooperative rally concentrating on accuracy.
- The aim of the game is to hit your partner's cones. If you are successful you add your partner's cone to your bunch.
- The winning player will be the one who collects all their partner's cones; or is the one who has collected the most cones in the time limit.

Coaching notes: Target nature of the game will teach the players to control their swing length and align their racquet face to hit an accurate shot.

- Progression:**
- i. Use different balls and court lengths to increase or decrease difficulty.
 - ii. Play crosscourt.
 - iii. Can be done throwing and catching for younger students.
 - iv. Change the number or cones, or split the cones to create two targets.

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