

# INSTANT RALLY PROGRESSION

**OBJECTIVE:** To give players the skills to rally cooperatively with one another instantly. Students will be taken through a fun progression that will improve their ability to rally by controlling height, distance, and direction of the ball as well as help them track the ball and move into the appropriate position. By teaching players how to rally successfully, we enable them to experience the game of tennis!

## 1. Groundstrokes: Forehand (and Backhand) Rally Progression with foam balls or low-compression balls

Use clear visual demonstrations for each progression.

- a. **Racquet handling skills** - Ups (palm up). Self-rally by hitting the ball head-high and letting it bounce on the court.
- b. **Self-Rally on Target:** Self-rally by hitting the ball head-high and letting it bounce on the court, trying to land it on a flat target or line. Players should practice rallying the ball palm up.
- c. **Partner Rally on Target:** Two players rally the ball (“eye high”) trying to land it on a shared target.
- d. **Partner Rally over a Line:** Standing a few steps apart, players rally the ball (“eye high”) over a line. *Targets can be placed in front of each player to help with placement.*
- e. **Partner Rally over a Net: Forehand Rally.** Players match up racquets on the forehand side and take two steps back before attempting to rally. Matching up racquets helps get the player sideways to the target with the racquet face in the proper position to make contact. Players should take one step back for each successful 4-ball rally.

## 2. Volley: Volley progression

- a. Volley catch :
  - i. partner tosses ball underhand to catch eye height
  - ii. Step with opposite foot and catch
- b. Use racquet over line or net to bump back to partner

## 2. Serve: Rally Progression with Serve and Return (partners or teams):

- c. Conduct a brief visual demonstration of a simple toss, tap, and follow through and a controlled return of serve. Proceed with the following progressions
- d. *Throwing & catching (Players alternate throwing overhand to each other and catching the ball)*
- e. *Service toss and catch (Players stand sideways to the net, toss the ball straight in the air and try and catch the ball with their extended arm)*
- f. *Toss, tap, and freeze (Players toss the ball to the height of the outstretched racquet, touch the ball gently, and freeze at impact—arm should be fully stretched out)*
- g. Toss, tap, follow through; Returner traps ball from server (Server taps ball to returner. Returner adjusts to the ball and traps it on the racquet strings). \_ off one bounce \_ off two bounces.
- h. Serving and returning (set up distance and direction targets)—players take turns serving and returning to each other, first trapping the return and progressing to a continuous rally
- i. *Serve and trap - serve, return, trap - serve, return, rally*

## COACHING CLUES AND CUES

### A. Rally Situations:

- i. Off the bounce (ground strokes)
- ii. Out of the air (volleys)
- iii. Initiating the point (serves and returns)

### B. Ball Controls: Height, Distance, Direction, Speed, Spin

### C. Technical (Sending) Cues:

- i. shake hands grip
- ii. side to target
- iii. point of contact near front foot (waist high); for volleys, racquet head should be pointed up
- iv. Allow for range of acceptability (grips, stance)

### D. P.A.S. principles: (path of swing; angle of racquet face at impact, and speed of swing affects ability to control height, distance, and direction)

### E. Lesson/Practice Formula

- i. Fun Warm-up (movement, tracking and rallying activities)
- ii. Theme of the day (based on observing players in point play)

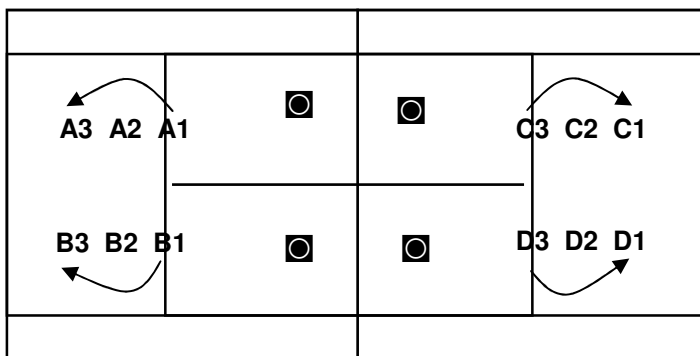
- iii. Playing situation (to reinforce theme)
- iv. Fun Wrap-Up (large group activity)

**F. Modifications for less skilled players:**

- i. shorten distance of playing area
- ii. slow the ball down (foam, low compression, bean bags)
- iii. make it lighter (e.g. balloons)
- iv. make it bigger (foam balls, beach balls)
- v. adjust size of striking implement (hand paddles, short paddles, junior size racquets)
- vi. roll the ball rallies
- vii. bounce the ball rallies (4 square)

**Skill Developers/Rally Reinforcers:** Improve tracking, movement, and ball control with a racquet.

- a. Allow multiple bounces or require multiple bounces to facilitate tracking skills.
- b. To improve timing when receiving the ball, have players call out “bounce-hit.” “Bounce” is called out when the ball hits the ground, and “hit” when the ball is struck with the racquet.
- c. **Toss-hit-catch:** One player tosses the ball underhand and the other player hits it under control back to the tosser, who catches it.
- d. **Self feed and trap:** Players take turns drop-hitting the ball to each other and trapping the ball on their strings off the bounce.
- e. **Self feed-hit-trap:** Player A bounce hits the ball to Player B. Player B hits the ball back to Player A. Player A traps the ball on the strings off the bounce and repeats the sequence.
- f. **Juggle Rally:** Players hit a ball to each other. If a player isn’t in good position to hit the ball, she can hit it up to herself (juggle) and then hit it to her partner. Each player can juggle the ball as many times as needed until they are in position to return it to their partner.
- g. **Lobster Trap:** Players find a partner. Player A holds one racquet in each hand (“lobster claws”). Player B tosses the ball to Player A, who traps it between the strings of both racquets. Player A then lets the ball drop and hits it back to Player B.
- f. **Team Rallies** (another option for handling large groups)
  - i. Players hit a shot and quickly rotate behind their team (see diagram below)
  - ii. Set up distance and direction targets with spots or throw-down lines and award bonus points when targets are hit during play.



Targets indicated by ●

- g. **Wall Rally:** Players attempt to rally the ball against a wall and set a personal best for longest rally. Players can be required to alternate hitting forehands and backhands.

Note: Targets can be taped against the wall for players to aim at. Two players can rally together by alternating hits towards the target area.

- h. **Target Hitting:** Players practice drop hitting or serving balls to target areas attached to the wall or fence, such as hoops or banners.