

FREE TRAINING GUIDE

4-Week Beginner Tennis Programme

Go from complete beginner to rally-ready in one month — with expert drills from Singapore's premier tennis academy.

baseplaytennisacademy.com

How to Use This Guide

This 4-week programme is designed for complete beginners or anyone returning to tennis after a long break. Each week builds on the last, introducing new skills while reinforcing the fundamentals you've already learned.

- **Frequency** 2–3 sessions per week. Each session takes 45–60 minutes.
- **Equipment** A racket, tennis balls, and access to a court. A ball hopper helps.
- **Footwear** Proper tennis shoes — never running shoes, which can cause ankle injuries on court.
- **Progress** Don't skip weeks. Each drill prepares you for the next level.
- **Mindset** Consistency beats intensity. Focus on form, not power.

Programme At a Glance

Week	Focus	Key Skills
1	Grip, Stance & Basic Groundstrokes	Eastern grip, ready position, forehand rally
2	Serve Fundamentals & Footwork	Continental grip, trophy pose, split step
3	Rally Consistency & Court Positioning	Cross-court rally, depth control, recovery
4	Match Play Tactics for Beginners	Point construction, serve + 1, return strategy

WEEK 1

Grip, Stance & Basic Groundstrokes

Learn the foundation of every tennis shot you'll ever hit.

Week 1 is all about building the right habits from day one. The most common mistake beginners make is gripping the racket incorrectly — a habit that becomes harder to break the longer you leave it. These five drills will lock in the correct grip, stance, and contact point for your groundstrokes.

DRILL 1

1

The Eastern Forehand Grip Check

Objective: Establish the correct grip before hitting a single ball.

How To Do It:

- Hold your racket with your non-dominant hand and point it sideways.
- Place your dominant hand on the strings and slide it down to the handle.
- Your index knuckle should sit on bevel 3 (at the 3 o'clock position).
- Shake hands with the racket — it should feel natural, like a handshake.
- Repeat 10 times until you can find the grip without looking.

Reps / Sets

10 repetitions — grip check only, no hitting.

Coach's Tip

"Don't squeeze. A tight grip kills your wrist snap and leads to tennis elbow. Hold the racket like you're holding a bird — firm but gentle."

DRILL 2

2

Ready Position & Split Step

Objective: Train your body to always be in the right position before the ball comes.

How To Do It:

- Stand at the service line, feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Hold your racket in front of your body at waist height.
- Have a partner or coach call "now" randomly — jump and land on both feet simultaneously (this is the split step).
- Explode left or right depending on where they point.
- Reset to ready position after each movement.

Reps / Sets

3 sets x 10 split steps. Rest 30 seconds between sets.

Coach's Tip

"The split step should happen the moment your opponent makes contact with the ball — not when you see where it's going. Time it early."

DRILL 3

3

Shadow Forehand Swings

Objective: Build muscle memory for the forehand swing without the pressure of hitting a moving ball.

How To Do It:

- Stand sideways to an imaginary net, left shoulder pointing forward (for right-handers).
- Start with your racket back — non-dominant hand on the throat for support.
- Swing forward, brushing "low to high" through the contact zone.
- Finish with your racket over your left shoulder — the full follow-through.
- Do NOT rush the swing. Focus on the shape, not the speed.

Reps / Sets

3 sets x 15 slow swings. Hold the follow-through for 1 second each time.

Coach's Tip

"If your wrist breaks before contact, you're swinging too hard. Slow down until you can feel the strings face the target at contact."

DRILL 4

4

Dropped Ball Forehand

Objective: Your first real hitting drill — learning to control contact with a stationary ball.

How To Do It:

- Stand near the service line. Hold the ball in your non-dominant hand at waist height.
- Drop the ball and let it bounce once.
- Hit a relaxed forehand into the service box — aim for the middle of the court.
- Focus on the contact point: the ball should meet the racket just in front of your lead hip.
- Don't worry about pace — prioritise control and consistency.

Reps / Sets

3 sets x 10 balls each hand. Collect balls after each set.

Coach's Tip

"Watch the ball all the way onto the strings — literally see the moment of contact. Most beginners look up too early to see where the ball goes."

DRILL 5

5

Mini-Tennis Rally

Objective: Put everything together in a live rally situation — inside the service boxes.

How To Do It:

- Find a partner. Both of you stand inside the service boxes, one on each side.
- Start by dropping and hitting gently to each other.
- Keep the ball in play as long as possible — count consecutive shots.
- Focus on control, not pace. The slower and more consistent, the better.
- Try to beat your record each session.

Reps / Sets

Three 5-minute rally blocks. Rest 2 minutes between each.

Coach's Tip

"If you can't keep a rally going for 5+ shots, move closer to the net. There's no shame in starting at the net tape — the pros do it too."

Week 1 Checklist

- Can find the Eastern forehand grip without looking
- Performing the split step before every shot
- Shadow swing has a full, complete follow-through
- Consistently making contact on dropped ball forehands
- Sustaining 5+ shot rallies in mini-tennis

WEEK 2

Serve Fundamentals & Footwork

Add the most important shot in tennis — and the footwork to reach every ball.

The serve is the only shot in tennis you fully control. No opponent, no reaction time — just you, the ball, and the racket. Week 2 introduces the flat serve from scratch alongside the footwork patterns that will get you in position for every groundstroke.

DRILL 1

1

The Trophy Pose

Objective: Learn the correct service motion checkpoint — the "trophy" position.

How To Do It:

- Stand sideways to the net, feet shoulder-width apart.
- Hold the ball in your left hand at waist height, racket in your right.
- Toss the ball straight up with your left hand — it should go about 30cm above your reach.
- As the ball rises, bring your racket back into the "back-scratch" position: elbow up, wrist loose, racket pointing down behind your back.
- Pause here — this is your trophy pose. Check: weight on back foot, arm up, racket behind.

Reps / Sets

15 repetitions of toss + trophy pause. No hitting yet.

Coach's Tip

"The toss is everything. If your toss is inconsistent, you'll never have a consistent serve. Practice the toss alone — 20 tosses per session — until it's automatic."

DRILL 2

2

Serving From the Service Line

Objective: Learn the feel of a proper serve from close range before moving back.

How To Do It:

- Start at the service line — much closer than usual.
- Use your trophy pose motion and serve into the opposite service box.
- Focus on contact above and slightly in front of your head.
- Snap your wrist at contact for topspin — this is what makes the ball dip into the box.
- Aim for the "T" (centre of the service box) to maximise margin.

Reps / Sets

3 sets x 10 serves. Alternate deuce and ad side.

Coach's Tip

"Don't try to hit hard. A slow, well-struck serve lands in the box every time. A fast, poorly-struck serve doesn't. Build the motion first, then add pace."

DRILL 3

3

Ladder Footwork — Side Shuffle

Objective: Develop lateral movement speed across the baseline.

How To Do It:

- Set up 4 cones or water bottles in a line, 1 metre apart.
- Start at the left cone. Side shuffle (do not cross your feet) to the right cone.
- Touch the cone, shuffle back to start.
- Keep your weight low, knees bent — your head should stay at the same height throughout.
- Gradually increase speed as you become comfortable.

Reps / Sets

5 lengths x 3 sets. Rest 45 seconds between sets.

Coach's Tip

"Never cross your feet during side shuffles — it kills your balance and risks ankle injury. The inside foot leads, the outside foot follows."

DRILL 4

4

Cone Recovery Drill

Objective: Practice sprinting to a wide ball and recovering to the centre.

How To Do It:

- Place a cone 1.5 metres to the right of where you're standing.
- Sprint to the cone, touch it, then recover to the centre mark.
- Shadow a forehand swing at the cone (your "shot"), then shuffle back.
- Alternate: right cone, left cone, right cone etc.
- Increase cone distance as your movement improves.

Reps / Sets

10 repetitions each side x 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds between sets.

Coach's Tip

"The recovery step is just as important as reaching the ball. Every point, return to the centre of the baseline — not where you hit from."

DRILL 5

5

Serve + Move Drill

Objective: Combine your serve with immediate court recovery.

How To Do It:

- Serve from the baseline (full court now).
- After contact, immediately shuffle to your baseline centre mark.
- Have a partner feed a ball to your forehand — play the point out.
- This simulates a real match: serve, recover, play the next shot.
- Focus on your recovery split step as your partner receives.

Reps / Sets

10 serves each from deuce and ad side. Play out each point.

Coach's Tip

"Your split step on the return should happen as your opponent's racket makes contact — not when you see where they're aiming. Train the timing, not the reaction."

Week 2 Checklist

- Toss is consistent — ball goes up straight, no spin
- Achieving the trophy pose comfortably
- Getting serves into the box from the service line
- Side shuffle stays low — head at constant height
- Recovering to centre mark after every shot

Rally Consistency & Court Positioning

Stop making unforced errors and learn to control a rally.

Week 3 is where the game really starts to click. You have the grip, stance, and basic motion. Now it's about developing rally consistency — keeping the ball in play — and understanding where to aim. Statistics show that most recreational points are won by the player who makes fewer errors, not the one who hits harder.

DRILL 1

1

Cross-Court Forehand Rally

Objective: Build consistency on the highest-percentage shot in tennis.

How To Do It:

- Both players stand near the baseline on the same side of the court (deuce side).
- Rally cross-court forehand to forehand.
- Aim for the middle of the court with 1 metre of net clearance.
- Count consecutive shots — your goal is to beat your record each session.
- Every time you go wide or into the net, start the count again.

Reps / Sets

Three 8-minute blocks. Track your highest consecutive rally each block.

Coach's Tip

"Cross-court is always the highest-percentage shot. It's longer (diagonally) and clears the lowest part of the net (the middle). Beginners who rally cross-court consistently win more than those who try flashy winners."

DRILL 2

2

Depth Control — Cone Target

Objective: Learn to control ball depth, not just direction.

How To Do It:

- Place two cones 1 metre inside the baseline, at both singles sidelines.
- Rally groundstrokes, aiming to land the ball behind the service line.
- Award yourself a point for every shot that lands between the service line and baseline.
- Keep a running total for 10 minutes.
- Gradually move cones closer to the baseline as you improve.

Reps / Sets

10-minute session. Target: 15+ depth points per session.

Coach's Tip

"Depth is your best weapon as a beginner. A deep ball gives your opponent less angle, more time pressure, and forces them further back. Aim deep every time."

DRILL 3

3

21 Rally Game

Objective: Compete against a partner to build pressure and consistency simultaneously.

How To Do It:

- Both players start at the baseline. Rally cross-court to each other.
- Each shot that lands in bounds (behind the service line) = 1 point.
- An error (net or out) = 0 points, and you reset the rally.
- First to 21 points wins.
- Variation: Only count shots that land in the back half of the court.

Reps / Sets

Best of 3 games per session.

Coach's Tip

"This is the closest thing to match pressure you can create in practice. When someone is winning, they tighten up — watch for that mental pattern in yourself and learn to breathe through it."

DRILL 4

4

Approach Shot + Net Finish

Objective: Learn the classic 3-shot combination: rally, approach, volley.

How To Do It:

- Feed starts a cross-court rally from the baseline.
- When a ball lands short (inside the service line), move forward and hit a firm approach shot.
- Continue to the net and play out the point with a volley.
- Focus on hitting the approach shot down the line (not cross-court) to take away the angle.
- Finish with a simple, controlled volley — no need to hit winners.

Reps / Sets

20 repetitions — 10 forehand approach, 10 backhand approach.

Coach's Tip

"Move through the ball on your approach shot — don't stop your feet to hit it. Keep moving forward as you make contact. Stopping kills your momentum and balance."

DRILL 5

5

Full Baseline Rally With Targets

Objective: Full-court rally with specific aiming zones to build tactical awareness.

How To Do It:

- Set up cones to mark four quadrants of each baseline half.
- Both players rally, calling out which quadrant they're aiming for before hitting.
- Award 2 points for landing in the called quadrant, 1 point for landing in the court.
- Play first to 20 points.
- Increase the challenge: require cross-court AND deep for 2 points.

Reps / Sets 20-point game, best of 3.

Coach's Tip

"Calling your target before you hit forces you to think one shot ahead — which is the beginning of tactical tennis. Most beginners react. Great players plan."

Week 3 Checklist

- Sustaining 15+ cross-court forehand rallies
- Landing 15+ depth points per 10-minute session
- Playing the 21 game without frustration or rushing
- Approaching the net confidently after short balls
- Calling targets before hitting in the 4-quadrant drill

WEEK 4

Match Play Tactics for Beginners

Play your first real match with a game plan — not just hope.

Week 4 puts everything together in match-play scenarios. You'll learn the three simplest tactical principles that will immediately make you a better match player — and apply them in practice games. The goal is to finish this week having played at least one full set against an opponent.

DRILL 1

1

Serve + 1 Pattern

Objective: Win free points with the most reliable tactical pattern in tennis.

How To Do It:

- Serve out wide to the deuce side (to your opponent's forehand).
- They return cross-court (the high-percentage return).
- Your next ball (the "+1") goes to the open court — they've moved to return, leaving space.
- Drill this as a pattern: serve wide → receive cross-court return → hit to the open court.
- Switch: try serving to the "T" and attacking the short ball that comes back.

Reps / Sets

20 repetitions of each pattern (wide serve and T serve).

Coach's Tip

"The "+1" doesn't have to be a winner. Hit it with pace and depth to the open court. Let the pattern create the opportunity — don't force a winner on ball two."

DRILL 2

2

Return of Serve Practice

Objective: Learn to neutralise the serve and put it back in play.

How To Do It:

- Stand 30cm behind the baseline to give yourself more reaction time.
- Focus only on getting the return deep and cross-court.
- Use a compact backswing — the serve does the work, you just redirect.
- If the serve is wide, step in and chip it back cross-court.
- If the serve is to the body, turn sideways and punch it back.

Reps / Sets

30 returns — 15 from deuce, 15 from ad side.

Coach's Tip

"As a beginner, your only goal on the return is to start the point. Don't try to win the point on the return — just get it back deep. The rest of the point is where you win."

DRILL 3

3

Point Construction: 3-Shot Plan

Objective: Play points with a plan for the first 3 shots rather than reacting.

How To Do It:

- Before each point, decide your 3-shot sequence (e.g. serve wide → open court → come to net).
- Execute the sequence regardless of what your opponent does.
- Evaluate after each point: did you execute the plan? Did it work? Why?
- Rotate through 4 different 3-shot patterns across the session.
- Play games to 7 points, resetting and choosing a new 3-shot plan each game.

Reps / Sets

Four 7-point games. One 3-shot plan per game.

Coach's Tip

"You won't always execute the plan perfectly — that's fine. The habit of planning before the point is more valuable than any individual tactic."

DRILL 4

4

Error Reduction Game

Objective: Win by making fewer mistakes — the single biggest skill separator at beginner level.

How To Do It:

- Play a full set (first to 6 games, win by 2).
- After the set, both players count their unforced errors (shots they missed without pressure).
- The winner is whoever had fewer errors — regardless of actual score.
- Discuss what caused the errors: rushing, wrong target, grip pressure?
- Play a second set with error reduction as the primary goal.

Reps / Sets

Two sets. Track unforced error count per set.

Coach's Tip

"At beginner and intermediate level, 70% of points are won by the player who makes fewer errors — not by the player who hits harder. Your first tactical goal should always be to avoid giving away free points."

DRILL 5

5

First Match: Full Set Challenge

Objective: Play your first full competitive set against a partner.

How To Do It:

- Find an opponent at a similar level.
- Play a full set using proper scoring (love, 15, 30, 40, deuce, ad).
- Apply your Week 4 tactics: serve + 1, cross-court returns, 3-shot plans.
- After the set, review: which tactical patterns worked? Which shots let you down?
- Set a goal for your next session based on what you discovered.

Reps / Sets

One full set. Optional: warm up with a 5-minute mini-tennis rally.

Coach's Tip

"Winning or losing your first match matters far less than playing it with a plan. Every match teaches you more than any drill — embrace the mistakes and learn from them."

Week 4 Checklist

- Executed serve + 1 pattern successfully 5+ times
- Getting 20+ returns in play per 30-serve practice session
- Planning 3-shot sequences before serving
- Finishing a set with fewer than 15 unforced errors
- Played your first full competitive set — any result

You've completed the 4 weeks.

This programme has given you the fundamentals. But there's a limit to how far self-directed practice can take you. The fastest way to improve is working one-on-one with a coach who can see exactly what you're doing wrong — and fix it.

Ready to take your game further?

Baseplay Tennis Academy offers private and group lessons for all levels in Singapore. Our coaches use the same LTA British and Spanish methodology behind this guide — personalised to your unique game.

Enquire about coaching today:

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