This Study Guide is designed to help you prepare for the PTR Adult Development Workshop. It is very important that you read and understand the information before you attend the Workshop, so that you are fully prepared. The clinician will assume you are familiar with all the information and so will not repeat all of it. The Study Guide information is also needed for you to successfully complete the post course and Stroke Analysis questions.

You will need to invest at least four hours to prepare prior to attending the Workshop.
Introduction

This Study Guide has important information about coaching Adult beginners and improvers. The revised PTR Adult Development workshop is designed to help you coach these two groups of players. It is not intended to train you to coach performance level adults. There are a number of reasons why you should take time to read this Study Guide before you attend the workshop. 1. It is part of the Adult Development course itself, 2. The clinician will base the training on the contents of this Study Guide, but all of the information in it will not be covered. 3. As part of the certification process you will need to answer online questions. Many of the answers to these questions are in the Study Guide.

The information in both the Study Guide and the workshop is also useful preparation for the PTR Level 3 and Master of Tennis (Adult Development) programs. Should you be successful in attaining the Professional level in the Adult Development Certification, you may wish to apply for the Level 3 program at a later date.

You may be aware that PTR has conducted Adult Development Workshops and Certifications for many years in many nations around the world. This revision has been developed to both maintain the integrity, methodology and philosophy developed by Dennis van der Meer for the original certification, and to meet the need for PTR to be consistent with best and current practice worldwide in coach education and tennis. As an example, the introduction of slower balls and different court areas has enabled many more beginner adults to learn to play quickly and with great enjoyment.

The workshop training emphasizes the importance of coaches knowing, understanding and applying the principles of working with adults in their coaching. These are very different principles from those that apply to working with children or performance players. The workshop also includes session structure and an ideas for coaching successfully – success being defined as recruiting and retaining more adults in tennis!

Throughout the workshop you will be prepared and continually assessed in a step by step manner for certification. The Study Guide and the Adult Development workshop together give you information and processes to help you coach for adult beginners and improvers successfully.

Anne Pankhurst
PTR Education Consultant January 2015

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SECTION 1
THE ADULT TENNIS PLAYER
The Characteristics and Abilities of Adults

Mentally, emotionally and socially, adults:
- Are able to concentrate on a single activity for long periods of time and can pretend to be interested even if they are not!
- Have much specific tennis and general experience that enables them to try new ideas and activities in a 'comfortable' and appropriate environment
- Have made the decision personally to learn and/or play tennis in their spare time so high quality programs that are enjoyable and purposeful are essential for them
- Are able to set goals for themselves and also measure their own improvement.
• Are able to make decisions quickly
• Have the self-discipline to work at improving their skills.
• Can recognize the level of their own ability in relation to other players.
• Are able to socialize with a diverse range of players, but will generally prefer to work with players of their own ability.

Physically, adults:
• May be less fit than they would like to be
• May have long term injuries and/or health conditions that affect their skill base
• May get tired quickly and will know when to take a break
• Often need to develop their athletic skill base in terms of basic:
  ▪ Agility
  ▪ Dynamic balance
  ▪ Strength and core strength
  ▪ Flexibility
  ▪ Linear, lateral and multi-directional speed
  ▪ Endurance

The warm up is a good time to highlight these skills both generally and in relation to technical and competitive skills. The physical skill base is linked to the player’s ability to perform technical skills.

Adults as Learners

The following considerations about adults as learners are important for coaches:

1. They have different learning preferences: many are happy to just be given a demonstration, but many will want explanations and then want to ask questions.
2. Whatever their age and ability, they are capable of learning and improving.
3. While it is often said that children are not mini adults, it is also true that adults are not mature children! They learn differently, with the result that the way in which they are coached should be specific to them as a group. In simple terms this is because adults have been learning for a long time and have extensive experience of many activities.
4. They are more realistic about their abilities - but this may limit their learning.
5. They have abstract thought processes and so can understand context and how one issue can link to another in a different context.

However, the following are key principles that coaches need to understand. They will help adjust their coaching for the adult learner.

1. *Adults can sense when the information is important and therefore understand that they should know it.*

   This means that the coach has to highlight the key points so that the adult is aware how these will affect their ability to learn and perform the task.

2. *The perception that the adult has of his/her own ability to learn a specific topic will affect the learning.*

   Many adults have a pre-conceived notion of what they can do and what they think they will be able to learn. They may then decide that a specific skill is not one they wish to learn, (perhaps learning to play a drop shot and so they will opt out).

3. *The previous experience the adult has.*

   This means that a successful previous experience will give the adult confidence, but a poor one could easily give him/her doubts about what to do.


   The coach could assume that adults will want to learn everything because they have signed up to coaching, but this could change if the environment is not conducive to them; because the style of coaching the coach adopts is not what they are expecting or wanting.

5. *The motivation the adult has to learn.*

   Many factors could affect motivation once the program has started: a lack of success in other Sessions or a too challenging an environment will decrease motivation. Similarly, success will give confidence, increase motivation and help future learning.

6. *The ‘mix’ of the adult’s personality, the situation and what the adult perceives to be the purpose of the Session.*

   Often the adult wants to improve a specific stroke – for example the backhand volley - in order to be a better doubles player, and then the challenge of doing so will be taken on! Many adult players book a Session with the coach in order to get a good ‘hit’. Then any instruction has to be more subtle. Such players want to play points and then water breaks become a good time to give them a few ideas that could improve a specific aspect of their game.
**Different Learning Styles**

Many adults learn verbally, and there will be a greater range of learning styles than there is with children. The majority of adult tennis players can learn visually (by copying what they see) or kinaesthetically (by ‘feeling’ the movement patterns). Adults also learn by trial and error, using previous experience and refining the technique as they ‘work out’ what to do.

The coach must realize that his/her own learning style may not be the preferred learning style of the players. The coach should then adapt and teach in a variety of ways so that the players make faster progress.

**What Adults Like and Dislike about Coaches and Coaching**

Adults have very clear preferences about how coaches should behave and how they should be treated. Many of them will carry over the professional ethic that they have in their own work place to their leisure activities. They will expect to be treated professionally and with respect at all times. Many will have busy lives and will not be prepared to ‘waste time’ in any way because they will often have ‘made time’ to come to coaching and so need and want to get the most from that time.

The research is very clear that adults LIKE coaches who:

1. Start and finish on time AND who focus on them throughout the coaching session
2. Have planned both the session and the different activities within it
3. Are clearly committed to the coaching role, are always professional and knowledgeable, while taking the adult’s experience and expertise into account
4. Are able to demonstrate what is needed and then explain in simple terms what the player has to do
5. Can develop and maintain a positive group environment that demonstrates mutual respect for each player
6. Understands the needs of individuals and responds to different situations appropriately.
7. Communicate at all times clearly and positively – but does not shout!
8. Has energy and enthusiasm.
The Adult Coaching Environment

The coaching environment is ‘the background’ of the coaching situation and will greatly influence whether an adult comes to coaching in the first place, but more importantly whether he/she stays and then returns. Most of all, adults want to feel ‘comfortable’ in the environment. Research shows that they:

1. Want an inclusive and friendly environment, where they can make new friends.
2. Want to have fun and enjoy what they are be doing, but want this to be balanced with ‘serious engagement’ that enables them to improve and so feel more competent.
3. Want the coach to cater for them, (despite the wide range of abilities in a group) and give everyone personal and equal attention.
4. Need to feel they can commit as much or as little time to tennis as they are able and there is no pressure on them to change if they do not want to.
5. Value the social aspect of taking part in the sport.
6. Want to have a share in decisions about the timings of practice and competitive opportunities.
SECTION 2
COACHING SKILLS

Ethics and Professional behaviour.

Successful coaching of adult players, just like coaching of any level or age of player, depends on the development of sound interpersonal relationships and rapport. There are also ethical standards that coaches must meet. The coach needs to:

1. Put the player’s needs first
2. Modify their own behavior in response to the player(s)
3. Be very aware of, and be able to, control their own ego
4. Demonstrate high standards of personal behavior at all times
5. Treat every player in a consistent and fair manner at all times
6. Be on time and well prepared
7. Keep the cell phone out of sight and hearing: the people in front of the coach should be the only ones that matter
8. Set appropriate goals with individual players: adults especially can work to goals or targets
9. Focus on players’ strengths and what they can do, while noticing their weaknesses and gradually improving them, by helping them understand what to do, NOT what not to do.

Communication Skills with Adults

Successful coaches are always excellent communicators. It goes with the territory! They are in the people business so they need high quality and adaptable formal and informal communication skills. Communication on the tennis court takes place verbally and non-verbally.

**Verbal skills** (WHAT is said) increases in importance and relevance when working with adults (as distinct from children or teenagers).

There are some important aspects of giving verbal information to adults.
• Words must be appropriate, i.e. understandable and relevant to the individual
• The coach can (but does not necessarily need to!) use a wider vocabulary and give more technical information
• Explanations should be concise, to the point and linked to a demonstration more often than not
• Open questions should be used to check the players’ understanding and get their opinion.

Paralanguage (HOW something is said) is important with any age group because people pick up inferences quickly and from different things. For example:

- Voice tone and speaking speed should be interesting and varied, to keep the listener’s attention.
- The volume should be appropriate to the audience and the situation. Shouting is not necessary, except perhaps in an emergency.
- Hand gestures and facial expressions can add to or detract from what is said, especially if they do not ‘match’ what is being said.

Non-verbal skills are important because many adults learn from what they see. For example:

- Being a good listener is important and is coaching skill. However, listening must also be active and indicate interest: looking at and perhaps leaning towards players helps.
- Obvious enthusiasm and energy, both facially and in body language, is essential.
- Professional behaviour at all times is essential because players watch, take note and form opinions.
- Cell phones are a major barrier to communicating with those in the session and using one indicates that other people (who are not even present!) are more important. Calls should NOT be made or answered in a coaching session

- Quality and relevant demonstrations are especially useful for beginner adults, because players can quickly copy and ‘model’ the action. However, with experienced adults they need not be so frequent because many skills are already in place and adults are very capable of interpreting verbal information.

  Some ‘rules’ for demonstrations are:
1. The WHOLE stroke or movement should be shown several times before it is broken down into parts. Players need the big ‘picture’ of what to do and they should try the whole action several times before any attempt is made to break the whole action into different parts. The principle in coaching skills is whole – part – whole
2. Other adults could be used to demonstrate: they often present a model that the player feels is possible.
3. The players’ attention should be directed to the important elements of the skill – but with a maximum of 2 points at one time!
4. Every player should be in a position to see the demonstration. Give space to those who are kinaesthetic learners because they need to ‘practice’ the action as they watch.

- Some players learn by trial and error. They benefit from trying out and modifying actions by themselves: they just need time and encouragement from the coach as they do so.

**Feedback** to adults is a very important coaching skill. Feedback during the session should:
- Be immediate, brief, relevant and to the point
- Focus on what the player has been done well
- Give positive suggestions for improvement
- Be both visual and verbal
- Relate to the performance, not to the player.

**Motivating** adults will sometimes be necessary, especially when they are new to the game and the group and are nervous. Both intrinsic (from self) and extrinsic (from another person) motivation is necessary for success.

Coaches need to:
- Set individual goals for and with each player to give the confidence to become competent
- Praise effort as much as ability.
Organization in the Adult Environment

Good coaches are well organized. They are able to organize players and the session.

**Planning the session.**
Adults expect the session to be well organized. They are often busy and professional people themselves and so are well able to recognize poor and short term organization and planning. They will expect to be able to enrol for a coaching program in advance, for each session to start on time with all the equipment they need on the court and then finish on time. They also become ‘creatures of habit’ and will not be happy to find the time and even the day of a regular program to be moved in the middle of the program! However, they will also welcome the opportunity to join a different group on a different day/time if they are unable to attend on their normal day/time,

**Planning the content of each session** is vital for continued adult involvement and interest. Adults want to maximise their time and so are keen to use all the time available. They will quickly pick up when the coach is not prepared and will either make their feelings felt or simply stop coming for coaching.

(Learning how to plan programs is part of the PTR Level 3 Adult and Level 5 Master of Tennis (Adult) program).

- Every practice session should have clear (and stated) for the group.
- Practices/ activities in the session must be organized quickly, safely and efficiently to maximize time.

**Therefore:**
**Before** each coaching session the coach must plan the session, basing it on the work completed in the previous session and the goals for each player.

**During** each coaching session, the coach must know the correct % of time to be given to the different activities. BUT, the coach needs also to be very flexible and ready to adapt and adjust to what is actually happening in the session.

**Knowledge of the game**

Every coach has a responsibility to **keep up to date**; to know the techniques, movement patterns and tactics of the modern game, and to keep an eye on developments in equipment.
They also need to know and understand the tactics for singles and doubles and for different surfaces.

Finally, the techniques and tactics of the men’s and women’s game are different. Often male coaches forget (or do not know!) how women play the game and often try to coach tactics and strategy in the same way as they do for the men.

SECTION 3
COACHING KNOWLEDGE
Coaching adult beginners

In order to attract and retain adults to tennis it is important for the club and the coach to understand what adults actually want from their involvement in the sport. ITF research indicates that adults know what they want and what the barriers are that have prevented them playing tennis before or allowed them to leave the sport.

In terms of starting to play, the average beginner adult wants:

- to enjoy him/herself
- to feel welcome
- an enjoyable social environment. The size of the group should be small enough so that he/she can make friends (8-12 people make up a good sized group).
- to learn something new or improve what they can do
- to get fitter, so the tennis session must include movement and exercise
- to play when it suits them (so ‘rolling’ classes held 2 or 3 times a week, instead of once a week would help most beginner adults get to at least 1 session on a regular basis)
- to feel competent when serving, returning and rallying the ball, know the rules, know how to score and know where to be on the court (positioning).
- to have access to ‘user friendly’ competitions (so a rating would be an advantage).

Knowing what has prevented adult from taking up tennis before is also useful in deciding how best to attract and keep them in the game. Research by the ITF shows that they usually have not taken the step to learn to play tennis because they:

- did not know anyone of a similar standard to play with
- thought tennis was too hard
• thought it was necessary to join a club to play, because parks and leisure facilities did not provide coaching
• remembered a previous experience of tennis and how little they enjoyed it
• did not want to invest in expensive equipment
• thought tennis did not provide enough exercise.

Further, the research has found that:

1. there are not enough coaches who want or are able to teach beginner adults
2. marketing and promotion has been poor
3. the follow up opportunities after the initial coaching are limited or non-existent.

To coach adult beginners successfully, it is important for the coach to have specific skills and abilities. These include:

• being familiar with, and able to understand, the philosophy and processes of adult BEGINNER programs
• having a personal philosophy that values adult beginner programs
• being able to establish a rapport with mixed ages and abilities of adults
• knowing how to progress different activities to just the right level of challenge
• the ability to overcome challenges such as persuading adults that playing with slower balls on different sized courts can be very advantageous
• knowing when to move a player to a faster ball and larger playing area without the player losing confidence and performance levels
• being organized, professional and friendly
• being able to help players individually and in a group
• being able to teach basic tactics
• knowing what the next step for each adult will be and being able to point the player in the right direction.

For the revised Adult Development workshop, PTR has taken note of the ITF Tennis Xpress program that introduces new adults to tennis, or attracts those who have already played before, back into the game. During the workshop, some of the ITF Tennis Xpress program will be delivered so coaches are familiar with the concepts. In addition parts of the PTR program will be delivered. Coaches should note that the basic structure of the lesson (page 19) will include a warm up and cool down, but the main part of the lesson will be program based.
Both programs have factors that, if used collectively, can remove or reduce the concerns that adults have cited as reasons for not playing tennis before.

**The objective of ITF Tennis Xpress is for adults to be able to play a fun match with tie breaks with a green ball by the end of the course.** Some key issues are listed below:

1. The program is for **small** groups of adults so that the social and fun requirements of the participants can be met.
2. Players learn to serve, rally and score from Session 1, using the orange (or even red) or green ball on a smaller ‘court’, so that they can play and understand the game very quickly.
3. The coaching is game based and teaches singles and doubles tactics so that they can serve, rally and score quickly.
4. Adults learn to play in 6 weeks, thus indicating that tennis is not hard to learn.
5. Although beginner adults are new to tennis, they may have skills that can be transferred from other activities. Some may be returning to the game and others may have young children playing. Older adults who may be less mobile will benefit from playing on smaller courts.
6. The ball is key to the success of Tennis Xpress, but coaches need to be prepared initially at least for ‘old fashioned’ attitudes towards their use by adults.
7. The Tennis Xpress course is 9 hours in length: it is usually split as 6 x 1.5 hours or 6 x 1.5 hours + .5 hours playing unsupervised, but other variations are workable!

The suggested structure of an ITF Tennis Xpress program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>ITF Course Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | 1-1.5 | • Course welcome and introduction  
• Why slower balls/objectives of the course/Intro to game situations  
• Learn to Rally-Basic Techniques/Developing consistency from the baseline (Red ball)  
• Developing a basic serve and return (Red Ball)  
• Learning/Playing with Tie Break scoring (Red Ball) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range (Points)</th>
<th>Progressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2     | 1.5 – 3        | • Consistency from the baseline (Red/Orange)  
• Moving the opponent from the baseline and maintaining good position (Red/Orange ball)  
• Serve and Return (Red/Orange Ball)  
• Playing with Tie Break scoring |
| 3     | 3 – 4.5        | • Moving the opponent from the baseline and maintaining good position (Red/Orange ball)  
• Moving the opponent using a basic serve and return (Red/Orange ball)  
• Understanding court positioning in singles  
• Learning to score in a set/match |
| 4     | 4.5 – 6        | • Learning to play from the net in singles (Orange/Green ball)  
• Combining different game situations in singles (Orange and Green Ball)  
• Learning to play basic doubles as a team /doubles court positioning (Orange/Green ball)  
• Playing one up, one back formation (Orange or Green ball)  
• Serve and return in doubles (Orange ball) |
| 5     | 6 – 7.5        | • Learning to play from the net in doubles (Orange/Green ball)  
• Playing Singles and Doubles with normal scoring (Orange or Green ball) |
| 6     | 7.5 – 9        | • Playing a singles and doubles competition experimenting with different game situations and game styles (Orange/Green)  
• Signposting the participants to follow up competition and/or coaching in the club |

**PTR INSTANT TENNIS**

Instant Tennis is another way to introduce basic ball control skills and strokes to beginner adults. In just a few minutes, players can be hitting the ball in a rally situation or playing a game. The first six progressions can be used to give complete beginners the ability to self-start the ball and begin a rally. Players work with a partner during Instant Tennis.

The progressions are as follows:
1. Partners hold the racquet like a frying pan and each gently bounces a ball off the strings: first toward the sky and then alternating hitting up with ball bouncing off the ground.
2. Partners now share one ball, alternating bouncing the ball off the strings. Ball bounces between hits.
3. Partners place one ball or cone on the ground as a target. They now alternate bouncing the ball up off the strings, trying to have the ball hit the target.

4. Two targets are now placed on the court. One on the singles side-line and the other directly across on the doubles side-line. Players stand directly across from each other, move forward and press their racquets together for a forehand. This will cause the player to hold an eastern forehand grip. Partners back up and now gently rally, aiming for their partner’s target.

5. Partners now move across the net from one another, placing the target two or three feet from the net. Players press racquets together before beginning to reinforce the proper grip. They must now rally over the net attempting to hit their partner’s target ball.

6. Players now rally without target balls, trying to hit 10 or more consecutive hits.

7. One player now comes close to the net holding his hand out like a policeman stopping traffic. His partner gently bounce-hits to the partner’s hand. Player bumps the ball back and they attempt to keep a rally going.

8. Net player holds the racquet at the throat as s/he volleys.

9. Net player holds the racquet halfway down the handle.

10. Net player now holds the racquet at the grip (full length)

11. Repeat progressions 7-10 with partners reversing roles.

12. One player comes close to the net holding his thumb and fist out to the left side of the body. The partner gently bounce-hits to his thumb. Player attempts to touch the ball with thumb or knuckles.

13. Player holds racquet with thumb behind strings. Partner bounce-feeds the ball and they attempt to keep the ball in play.

14. Player moves hand halfway down handle, still with thumb behind. Partner plays mini-groundstrokes while player hits backhand volleys.

15. Net player holds the racquet at the grip (full length).

16. Repeat progressions 12-15 with partners reversing roles.

17. With the same backhand grip, net player backs up from the net and bumps easy backhand drives while the partner plays easy forehands.

18. Players now switch roles.

19. One player comes to the net and extends his racquet toward the sky with the edge facing the net. Partner gently bounce-feeds a lob and player attempts to touch the ball to the edge.

20. Without changing the grip, player turns the hand forward so the ball will strike the strings.
21. Player drops the racquet behind the back and then reaches up to touch the ball at contact point.

22. Player now turns sideways in a serve stance and extends the left hand toward the sky. Player now reaches to contact the ball from this position.

23. Repeat progressions 19-22 with partners reversing roles.

24. Each player now steps back three to four meters from the net. Players alternating hitting gentle serves (stopping at point of contact) to each other.

25. Now one player serves a ball and the two players rally in the service boxes. Players switch after an error.

Coaching improver adults

Session Structure

Previous sections have discussed the importance of planning sessions. This section highlights the importance of the structure of each session. Every session should have a consistent framework that helps adults improve both their technical and tactical skill base in a systematic and comprehensive manner. This is because tennis is ultimately a game and so players need both technical AND tactical skills to play and improve. Tennis is an ‘open skill’ game, meaning that the technical skills have to be adaptable because, apart from the serve, every shot is different in some way to every other. The basic technique of each stroke therefore needs to be sound, but adaptable.

The session structure should reflect the way the game is played: each session should be based on an open - closed – open structure that enables the coaches to coach players towards playing a better game.

In each part of the session, the coaching behaviour will be different:

1. Initially the coach needs to OBSERVE what the players are doing, and then
2. ANALYZE what the players are doing in the game and work out what they most need to learn or improve to be a better player, then
3. TEACH the players what to do and how to do it, then
4. DEVELOP the skill being learned by helping the player use it in a game so that they know when to use it, then
5. EVALUATE and encourage the players’ performance.

So the coaching process follows this structure:
**Coaching Process**

**Open – closed session process**

- OBSERVE the game situation - *open*
- ANALYZE what the players do – *semi-closed*
- TEACH skills to improve the game- *closed*
- DEVELOP the skill in the game – *semi open*
- EVALUATE the performance- *open*

---

**The Length of the session**

Typically, a session for adult improvers will be between 60 and 120 minutes. The percentage of time devoted to the different ‘parts’ of the session is not fixed and will vary from group to group: many adults want to spend more time playing the game and improving their skills as they do so. Others want a longer part of the session to be ‘closed’ so they can work the techniques that they are in the process of learning or adapting. In either case the skill of the coach is in knowing what to do when. The session plan below outlines what the coach needs to plan. It is followed by some detailed information on each part of the session.
# Session plan for adult improvers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time and length of session</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of players</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment needed</th>
<th></th>
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</table>

**Objective for the session** (linked to previous session and to Development Plan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Coaching Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warm up and racquet warm up: suitable for age and ability</td>
<td>Observe and encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Game Situation (open)</td>
<td>Observe and analyze specific skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill development (closed)</td>
<td>Teach skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Game / Competitive Development (semi open to open)</td>
<td>Develop and evaluate skills in game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cool down: static stretching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of players;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of own coaching:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session Content: Warm Up

The coaching role is to observe and encourage

A physical warm up should always be the first part of the session and the coaching process and is especially important with adults. Clearly each activity in the warm up MUST be appropriate to the age and level of the players and coaches must take their previous experience and physical ability into account. It is better to err on the side of caution and certainly to ask each person about the level and intensity of warm up that is suitable for them. Making the warm up into a group activity often gives the opportunity for players to mix with others. It should also set the ‘tone’ for the session. The intention of the activities should be to get each participant warm, with raised heart rate and an increased range of motion in order to reduce the likelihood of injury. Some activities should link to the technical and tactical skills in the session plan. Using racquet and ball exercises for some activities also makes it more fun for the players and enables an easy transition to the next part of the session.

Session Content: Game Situation

The coaching role is to observe and analyze specific skills

This part of the session is the second part of the coaching process. It should consist of a game based practice that links to the goals for the session, concentrates the player’s attention on the session content and is enjoyable. This game situation part of the session also enables the coach to let the players play while observing and assessing them in an ‘open’ situation, prior to working on some element of their skill. It also enables the players to understand the context of what will follow and the importance of improving different technical skills to play the game better. The situation chosen should therefore link to the session objectives. Sometimes coaches concentrate so much on technique that developing the game itself is almost ignored! Technique is only useful if it improves the game. In singles there are five game situations and players will always be in one of them. So the technical part of the session can develop from the ‘real’ game and not from a drill that bears little relationship to the game itself. In tennis a player is always either:

1. Serving
2. Receiving
3. Rallying from the baseline with an opponent
4. Approaching the net in order to volley
5. Playing the opponent who is approaching the net in order to volley.
These five situations are therefore a very useful coaching tool because they become the framework for coaching different techniques of the game: different skills ‘fit’ into different situations. In coaching terms, using the different game situations after the warm up enables the coach to assess a specific skill in an open (and game realistic) environment, before developing it in the closed (technical) environment.

Therefore, in the game situation after the warm up, the coach needs to set up one or two specific activities for the player to practice the technical skills used in that situation. Then the players will have a clearer understanding of why what they learn in the closed technical part of the session has been chosen by the coach.

**Session Content: Skill Development**

*The coaching role is to teach and improve technical and/or movement skills.*

Some adults will not want this next part of the session to last very long, if at all! They would rather just play a game of singles or doubles. However, helping them develop better technical skills will help them to play a better game. This part of the session should be a CLOSED situation, using feeding either by players to each other or by the coach to individual players in turn (while players are working with each other). The content should be based on the assessment by the coach of the technical abilities seen in the OPEN game situation in the previous part of the session.

Many adults will have a long established skill base that will require considerable change to make the stroke efficient and/or effective. Not only is it very difficult to change long established technical movement patterns, but improver adults are often reluctant to do so, fearing they will lose whatever skill levels they have. In this case the coach and the player should consider a few issues.

1. How important it is to the player to have a much better technique: if the player is happy with his/her present level of play then change may not be a an acceptable idea: the player, NOT THE COACH, must want to change.

2. Is the shot effective, but not efficient: the first means change should be thought about very hard and perhaps not attempted, but the second means that change could prevent injury, so should be attempted.

3. Should the existing stroke be left in place, but a completely new one added to the repertoire! On many occasions with adult improvers, this strategy works!

Each game situation includes different technical skills and it often helps for adults to be reminded that improving skills helps them play a better game. As examples:
• **Serving** requires the player to have at least two serve techniques: a basic first serve and a second with some spin. So increasing pace and spin would be useful.

• **Receiving the serve** requires forehand and backhand groundstrokes, ball recognitions and appropriate technical and footwork adjustments for the first and second serve.

• **Rallying** requires forehand and backhand groundstrokes with the use of control, spin and pace, as well as different movement patterns in relation to the baseline and side-lines.

• **Approaching the net and net play** requires movement and approach shots, volleys, ½ volleys, swing volleys and overheads.

• **Playing the opponent who is approaching the net** requires groundstrokes as passing shots, lobs and different movement patterns.

A new skill or an improvement to an existing one is most easily and typically developed first in a **closed** situation. Then the player progresses to a **semi open** situation (more game like drills) and finally returns to the **open** situation of competitive play. If the skill still ‘works’ in the game the player is well on the way to learning it.

Thus it is clear that to coach well, every coach must know the actual parameters of each stroke, and understand to what extent the finer points of that parameter can be learned or improved by a particular player at a certain age and level of ability.

The technical parameters of the principal strokes are set out below.

### Technical Parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stroke</th>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Detail of parameter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVE</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Continental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ball Toss</td>
<td>Straight up with arm fully extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stances (footwork)</td>
<td>Balanced: back foot either back or up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of ground (ground reaction force)</td>
<td>Use of back / both legs to drive up to the ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knee flexion</td>
<td>The knees bend in sync with the ball toss and then extend up to the ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hip, trunk and shoulder rotation</td>
<td>Hips, trunk and shoulders rotate away from the ball and against the feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position of racquet arm at end of take back</td>
<td>The racket arm is bent, prior to acceleration upwards and forwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shoulder over shoulder</td>
<td>The forward shoulder moves down as back leg/rear shoulder move up and forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact point</td>
<td>The racquet hits the ball slightly in front and to the side of the body with the arm fully extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow through</td>
<td>Across body to decelerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETURN OF SERVE</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Between eastern and semi western on forehand, as appropriate. Single or two handed backhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and racquet take back</td>
<td>Ready position. Racquet head above hand with straight or loop shape of shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit turn - rotation of body</td>
<td>Of hips and shoulders against feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance</td>
<td>Split step and then move back, laterally or forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact point</td>
<td>In front and to side of body, depending on grip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through</td>
<td>In relation to the stroke.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREHAND</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Between eastern and semi western</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and racquet take back</td>
<td>Ready position. Racket head above hand, shallow loop shape of shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit turn - rotation of body</td>
<td>Of hips and shoulders against feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stances</td>
<td>Square; Semi-open; Open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact point</td>
<td>In front and to side of body depending on grip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through/finish</td>
<td>Between shoulder and waist height</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKHAND</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Double handed: bottom hand close to continental/top hand close to eastern. Single handed: eastern backhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and take back</td>
<td>Ready position. Racket back above hand with straight or shallow loop shape of shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit turn – rotation of body</td>
<td>Of hips and shoulders against feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stances</td>
<td>Square; Semi-open; Open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact point</td>
<td>In front and to side of body depending on grip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through/finish</td>
<td>Between shoulder and waist height</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLLEY</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Close to continental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Ready position with racquet slightly to b/h side, the forwards with racquet head up. Short take back and follow through</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit turn – rotation of body</td>
<td>Of trunk and shoulders against feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance</td>
<td>Load onto outside foot, move forwards as contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact point</td>
<td>Between steps to side and in front</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERHEAD</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Close to continental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and Stance</td>
<td>Move back crossover and then foot back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ground (ground reaction force)</td>
<td>Use of back leg to drive up to the ball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee flexion</td>
<td>In sync with hip and trunk counter rotation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip, trunk and shoulder Rotation</td>
<td>Hips, trunk and shoulders rotate away from the ball and against the feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position of arm on take back</td>
<td>Arm bent at end of (shortened) take back and prior to acceleration upward and forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder over shoulder</td>
<td>The forward shoulder moves down as back leg/rear shoulder move up and forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through</td>
<td>Across body to decelerate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skill Development

*The coaching role is to teach skills*

The primary function of coaching is to TEACH and develop skills. Tennis is an open skill sport – only the serve is repeated in the same way over and over: every other stroke is adapted in some way to the situation. This means coaches must consider two key issues:

1. **How to teach skills**

   Research is very clear! Skills should be taught from the whole stroke, before parts of the stroke (if necessary) are introduced and then the whole stroke should be developed. This means that the coach should:

   i. *show the players the whole stroke* – e.g. the forehand, several times and let the players try. Some will soon have a reasonable stroke pattern and simply need more practice and encouragement to develop it further. These players do NOT need the stroke broken down into parts. In reality too, adults who have a great deal of previous experience are often able to transfer previous skills to the new situation. They just need time to work out what to do.

   ii. *help those players who struggle with the movement pattern of the skill* by giving them a little time to try and figure out what to do. IF THIS DOES NOT WORK, THEN DO THE FOLLOWING:

      a) break the stroke down into the LEAST number of ‘parts’ possible: this could be showing the separation of the arms on the serve or the turn of the body on the forehand, before letting the player have several more attempts.

      b). then do something completely different; perhaps picking up the balls, before giving the players another try. Invariably the players will now be successful.

   iii. The stroke should then be put back into the whole as soon as possible. The WHOLE action MUST be tried before the coaching session moves on to another activity.

   The method of teaching skill outlined above is new to many coaches, who were themselves stood in a line perhaps to hit a (part of a) forehand one at a time and who were also taught through prescribed ‘skill progressions’.

   As a result, many coaches assume that breaking a skill into parts is advantageous. However there is clear evidence that it is not. In addition for many players it confuses them, wastes time (because they do not need all the parts) and actually makes learning more
difficult. One of the biggest problems in terms of teaching skill is the teaching of the serve: it is broken down into many parts (progressions), when often just a good demonstration of the whole, time and working out what to do, is all a player needs. For certain, very few players need to learn all the progressions: the skill of the coach is to use the right progression/part of the action when it is needed.

2. How to develop skill in the open environment of tennis
Coaching tennis skills by getting players to hit the same ball, fed by the coach at the same speed and to the same place every time is a very poor way of preparing player to actually play the game.
As soon as the player has the basic (not perfect!) shape of the stroke, the incoming ball should be varied to resemble the realities of the game.
For example, if the skill being developed is the forehand, the incoming ball should be increasingly resemble what happens in the game. It should first be
i. varied in terms of speed and bounce height
ii. sent short, deep or wide of the player
iii. hit first to the forehand, then the backhand and then mixed up so the player has to both decide and move before hitting the ball.

Session Content: Game Development

*The coaching role is to develop skills in the competitive situation through a series of increasingly open drills and games.*
Adult players want to play and they (usually!) want to improve as competitors. That is why they come to tennis and is the main reason why coaches always need to include competitive development in coaching session. Tennis is a decision making game and unlike children, adults can make decisions quickly and (usually) have the mental, emotional and social skills to compete.
Competitive success obviously hinges on the player’s ability to incorporate the technical skills into tactical play. This needs to happen in practice first, before it can happen on the match court: hence the importance of coaching sessions incorporating game related skills into the overall structure.
The basic concept of a good coaching session is that the open game situation at the beginning of a session should link to the open competitive/game development at the end. Using a game situation at the beginning of the session enables the coach to analyze the
technical skills in the open (game) situation, improve and practice them in the closed skill development and then progress them back into the open competitive situation. Then coaches need to know how to develop the tactical ability of adult players.

Basic Tactics

The basic tactics of tennis are obvious (if sometimes forgotten!):

- **Be consistent.** Get the ball over the net and into the court
- **Be accurate.** Hit the ball to where it is difficult for the opponent to return it
- **Maintain a good position on the court.** Try to move the opponent into a poor position with movement and anticipation
- **Play to your strengths.** Do what you do best more often
- **Play to the opponent’s weakness.** Identify what the opponent finds difficult and use that information

The charts below highlight the priorities and possibilities of the tactical skills that adult need to play singles and doubles successfully. They are different!

**Basic Singles Tactical Priorities and Possibilities for Adult Improvers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Tactics</th>
<th>Games Situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistency</strong></td>
<td>Serve both flat and slice. Have a consistent 2nd serve. Serve to the alley, body, centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>Use depth and placement to hit the ball to both angles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movement and positioning</strong></td>
<td>Recover quickly for the 3rd shot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Playing to strength**  
Vary placement, increasing pace and slice.  
Return early with pace. Use power / pace with flat return, use control / pace with spin.  
Change pace, spin, direction. Use patterns, and percentage play.  
Use slice and topspin for ball control.  
Passing shot, 2 shot passing shot or lob. Draw opponent out of position to use own strengths.

**Playing to weakness**  
Identify and hit to opponent’s weaker side. Exploit poor movement.  
Control tempo, isolate specific type of serve.  
Isolate weakness first (movement or stroke) Control tempo.  
Isolate opponent’s position. Place self in good position.  
Isolate opponent to expose weakness (movement or side of body).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Priorities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Possibilities</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication as a pair</td>
<td>Increase serve and volley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning and movement as a pair</td>
<td>Receiver to net after 2nd serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of angles and width of the court</td>
<td>Take time from net player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the net player</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork at the net or when both back</td>
<td>Switching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to poaching by opponents</td>
<td>Serve/volley on 1st serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolate the weaker player</td>
<td>Overheads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countering use of increasing power of opponents</td>
<td>Different formations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signals</td>
<td>Ball down the middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st serve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Basic Doubles Tactical Priorities and Possibilities for Adult Improvers**

**Competition for Adults**

Well organized and appropriate competition means that adults meet other players like themselves, they play more often and from the club perspective, they use more courts. The essential task for the coach is to reduce the gap between coaching courses and playing competitively.

So the type of competition is important and so is the quality of the competitive experience. Regular club competition is important to adults. League tennis is clearly very successful in
the US especially, but what its success indicates is that most improver adults enjoy being part of teams, more than they enjoy playing in an individual tournament.

Most adults are time aware so competitive systems that use available time in the best way are essential

Session Content: Closing the Session

The coaching role is to evaluate performance and prepare for the next match or training session.

The conclusion of the session is very important, but is often left to chance or players are allowed to ‘drift away’. The coach needs to make sure that players have a routine to cool down appropriately.

During the cool down the coach also needs to:

- Quickly evaluate what was achieved in the session.
- Encourage the players on their effort as well as their achievement
- Set out the plan for the next session
- Ask the players what they learned and improved

SECTION 4

SAFETY, INJURY AND PLAYER WELFARE

Safety

Safety is an important consideration for any tennis program.

Safety issues range from:

1. Facilities and surfaces. Clay court lines are an obvious concern, but the coach must also be aware of slippery surfaces and debris on court. Fences, umpire stands and net winders and posts should be inspected regularly.

2. Equipment. Balls, ball hoppers, rackets, racket bags and other equipment left on court are all potential safety hazards for players.
3. *Environmental conditions.* Rain, lightning, heat and humidity are all conditions that can affect practice and play. The coach and the program should have policies and procedures in place to determine when play should be cut short or not take place.

4. There should be contingency plans in place for the event of an accident on court.

**Injury**

The coach needs to be aware of the types of injury that can occur with adult tennis players. Accidental injuries such as a twisted ankle or a fall on court are to be expected. The coach must have sufficient first aid knowledge (or be able to call on another coach or person) to help the player quickly. The agreed procedures must be followed.

*At least one member of the coaching or program team should hold a first aid certificate and be able to administer CPR. First aid equipment should be readily available.*

*The facility MUST have an emergency procedures plan that is known to all coaches. This plan should include injury, fire and security.*

The club program itself should also have agreed and written procedures that take place in the event of accidents or injuries on court. A reporting and recording process is also necessary.

**Player Welfare**

Coaches should ensure that players follow appropriate hydration and nutrition routines. Hydration should be discussed in terms of volume, timing, frequency and type of fluid. Players returning from injury could be invited to remain in the coaching programs so they maintain social contact. Coaches should also be aware of psychological issues (e.g. loss of confidence) as players return to play after injury.

*The coach is responsible for the safety and welfare of players at all times.*

**Insurance**

The coach MUST have up to date and relevant insurance to coach. Membership of a professional organization such as the PTR is highly recommended.
A good coach constantly evaluates and monitors the performance, not just of their players, but also of themselves.

**Goal setting** is a major tool for coaches and players

- for the coach to monitor player progress against specific objectives.
- for reviewing progress with the players.

Goals should always be developed in time frames that are understandable by players: adults have a greater appreciation that success is not immediate, but nonetheless beginners and improvers especially need to ‘feel’ and see progress from session to session.

**Evaluating and monitoring of coaching performance**

Self-evaluation on a continuous basis by coaches is very important. Expert and even good coaches review each session they coach and seek the views of players in order to modify the next session and their own performance.

More objective and regular assessment of current performance, perhaps by peers, is also important and should help identify any gaps in the coach’s knowledge, experience or coaching base. In a program where several coaches work together, there is also an invaluable opportunity for coaches to help and evaluate each other on a regular basis. Regular and on-going training should be automatic for every coach.

The coach should also make sure that all insurances and professional memberships are kept up to date.