

3

Net/Wall Games



Net/wall game skills

Net/wall games are games in which players send an object (e.g., ball, shuttle) over a net or against a wall so that it lands in an area that an opponent is defending. The aim is to make it difficult for the opponent to return the object or force them into a mistake.

Net/wall game skills	What this is	What it looks like – Success criteria
Flight reception	<p>It is tracking an object in flight and moving into position to receive and return a ball or shuttle in flight.</p> <p>It varies depending on the game, but essentially means reading the flight path of the object and moving appropriately into position to receive it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Players track the ball or shuttlecock with the eyes while moving in under it, reaching to make contact in front of the eyes.Players place the object (ball or shuttlecock) in the best place on the court to try to beat the opposition.Players time the length of the shot to arrive with the fastest delivery, spin, or best position on the court.Players use different kinds of shots in different attacking and defending situations to change the amount of time their opponents have to react to different shotsOn the full, players strike or volley on the full, moving into line, side on, or under the object and, when possible, move forward to receive the ball or shuttle.In overhead striking, the players aim to be side on and to the back of the object so that they can make contact at the highest point. They rotate their hips and shoulders, strike, and follow through in line with the return flight path of the ball or shuttle.In bounce ball games (tennis, padde-tennis squash, etc.), players are back and to the side of the bounce, positioned side-on to move forward during the shot to make contact at the top or near top of its bounce.
Court positioning	<p>It is setting up in position to receive the ball to be in the best position to cover any return.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Players anticipate the return shot and are in the best position to play the next shot.Individual players move back to the T or centre between shots so that they can best cover the court. This involves side or backward side-stepping while watching the ball and the opposition.They will be moving back to the centre of the court or playing area.Team players read the play and move to the best position to execute their role as an attacker or defender.Players move constantly. They try to work out where the other team will place the ball.All players are on their toes, ready to speed up, while reading the play and anticipating the opposition's most likely return.

Net/wall game skills	What this is	What it looks like – Success criteria
Ball or shuttle placement	It is placing shots into open spaces on the court or playing area, away from the opponents so that they are unable to return it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The players make the opponent/s move from side to side or short to long. They place the ball or shuttlecock into the opponent's court (within the boundaries) so that they are unable to return it to score. They attack the net to place the ball or shuttle on angles that are hard to return. Players control the pace, spin, and direction of play, i.e., being on attack not defence.
Building an attack Defending an attack	<p>It is setting up moves for a winning shot.</p> <p>It is trying to find the opponent's weakness to exploit.</p> <p>It is transitioning from defence to attack.</p> <p>It is thinking strategically to win the rally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players build up shots to move an opponent into a court position that they are able to attack with a winning shot. They move an opponent short, long, or side to side on the court and/or keep them out to one side while building the opportunity to hit a winner to the open court. They use the entire court to place shots in the open spaces, away from the opponent. At the same time, players anticipate where the opponent/s will return the ball or shuttlecock. Players vary their choice of shots (volley, lob, clear, ground stroke), the speed, the distance, and the height of the ball or shuttlecock and use spin and faking to gain an attacking advantage. They use a recovery position to return to the T or the centre of the court.

Net/wall games	Page
3.1 Continuous Rally The aim in this short-tennis game is to see if children can keep a continuous rally going. The players use short-tennis rackets, padde-tennis bats, and slower bouncing balls to develop all of the Net/Wall skills required for these types of games.	88
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Strategy and tactics	

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<i>Collective effort and teamwork</i>		
3.6 Staircase Badminton	This is a badminton game with a difference. Winning points forces the opposition to go progressively down the staircase of positions. These are first standing, then on their knees, then on their seat, and then on their back to play a shot.	98
<i>Shuttle placement</i>		
3.7 Kick It	A fun game that involves kicking the ball over the net, like playing tennis with the feet. There are easy progressions so that children can choose a successful form of the game that challenges them.	100
<i>Risk</i>		
3.8 Attackers and Defenders	In this tennis-like game, children learn how to play both as an attacker at the net and a defender from the baseline. It is a fast-paced game that allows children plenty of turns at playing both at the net and from the baseline.	102
<i>Flight reception</i>		
3.9 Around the World	The aim of this game is to keep the rally going across the net while running between the ends of the court. Around the World helps children learn to move and play shots.	104
<i>Court positioning</i>		
3.10 Around the Planets	This game is played by throwing a ball (the rocket) from earth to bounce off the sun, which is drawn on a wall (or thrown over a net) for their partner to catch and take to a planet. The planets are arranged increasingly further from the sun.	106
<i>Decision making and thinking skills</i>		

3.1 Continuous Rally

The aim in this short-tennis game is to see if children can keep a continuous rally going. The players use short tennis racquets, padder-tennis bats, and slower bouncing balls to develop all of the net/wall skills required for these types of games.



EQUIPMENT



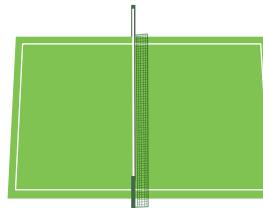
Racquets (4)



Small balls (2)



Bench or net per group



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus is on reading the flight of the ball and moving into the right position to play it. This is one of the most important skills in rally-type games.

Continuous Rally helps children learn to:

- track the ball with their eyes
- position themselves side on, and move forward during the shot to make contact with the ball at the top or near top of its bounce.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

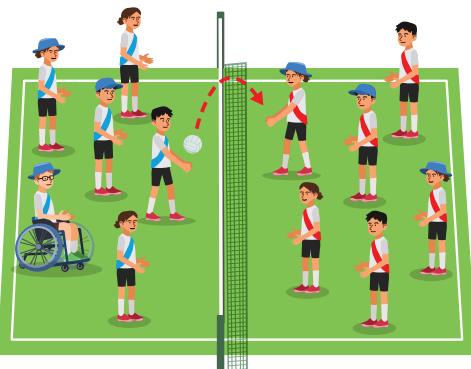
- Use a padder-tennis court area.
- Nets or stacked benches to divide the court.
- 4–6 players per court (four on the court at any one time).
- Use slower bouncing short-tennis or half-pressure tennis balls to provide more time for children to read the flight.

Play:

- Start the game by hitting the ball over the net.
- Players try to continue the rally for as long as possible to see how many hits they can achieve.

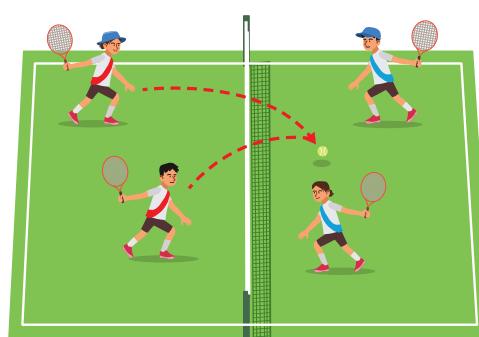
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



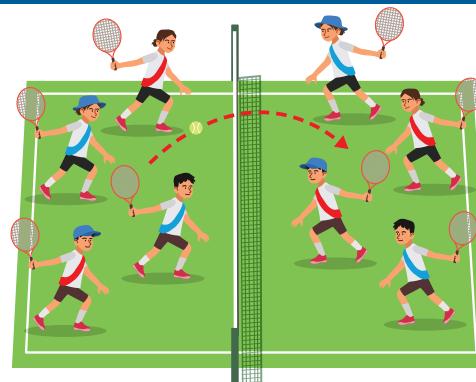
Step One:

If children have trouble getting into position – i.e., reading the flight, have them practice catching the ball one-handed with their hitting hand. Throw it back over the net until they get used to reading the flight. Re-introduce the rally.



Step Two:

Use short tennis racquets or padder-tennis bats with shorter levers and soft balls or slower bouncing tennis balls. Have lots of games going in pairs.



Step Three:

Groups of 5 build up to 2 v 2 continuous rally.
Have a feeder at the net with bucket of balls.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- Where is the best place to move to hit the ball?
- When is the best time to take your racquet back?
- How can you direct the ball to where you want it to go?
- What is the reason that you sometimes miss the ball?
- Are you running forwards or having to move backwards to hit the ball?
- Do you ever move sideways to the ball?
- How do you know when the ball is at the top of the bounce?
- How do you decide which shot to play?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- read the flight of the ball?
- demonstrate how to move on the court to successfully strike the ball?
- begin to successfully return the ball from different positions?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Flight reception

Flight reception is the ability to track the path of an incoming ball, move into a position to receive it, and hit it at the optimum moment to return it over the net. It is one of the most important aspects of net/wall games.

The advantage of games is that they randomise flight path and are more effective than drills to teach flight reception.

Children need opportunities to learn to move to the ball and read the bounce. In general:

1. Children should move forward to strike the ball rather than having to move backwards to play a shot.
2. Strike the ball in a side-on position and contact the ball in front of the eyes.
3. Know the difference between, and when to play, attacking and defending shots. Such decisions often depend on knowing where the opposition is standing.
4. Move efficiently around the court to be in the best position to take the shot. This may involve hitting the ball on the full at the net, at the top of the bounce from further back on the court.

3.2 Bounce Ball

This is a simplified game like volleyball, involving throwing and catching over a net. It encourages challenge by choice, allowing players to choose which level of the game to play to develop their net/wall game skills.



EQUIPMENT



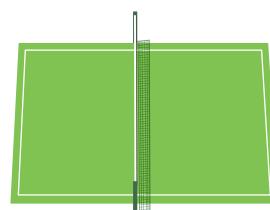
Large soft ball (1 per group)



Volleyball (1 per group)



Nets or benches per group



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus is on keeping the ball alive, while developing net-game skills (e.g., ball placement, court movement, flight reception, etc). Different game levels encourage **challenge by choice** (see Concept Clinic). Children select the most challenging and enjoyable form of the progressions to develop their net-game skills.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

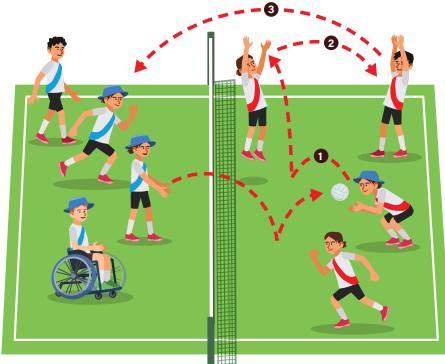
- Use large soft balls that bounce well.
- Teams of six a side.
- Use a court area with a net.

Play:

- One team throws the ball over the net.
- The other team attempts to catch the ball and has up to three passes on their side to pass it back over the net.
- The aim is to play the ball in a way that the opposition cannot return it.
- Initially, play by allowing one bounce between catches.
- After each point, rotate players around the court area so they play different positions.

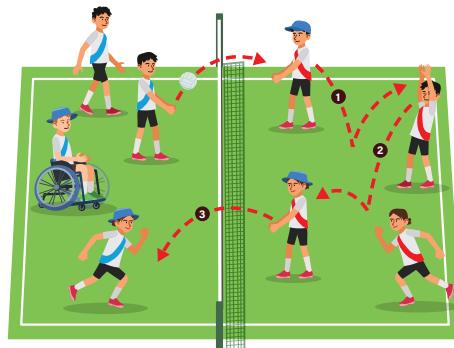
PROGRESSIONS

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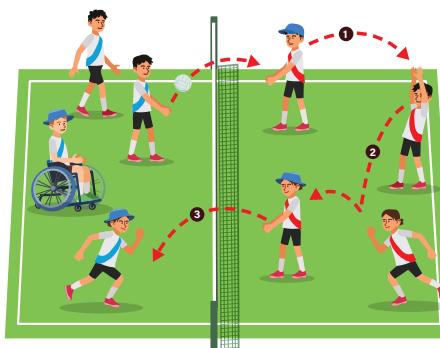
Step One:

Throw the ball over the net to start the game. Play the game with a low net height. The ball can be caught on the full or after the bounce and passed around the team up to three times before returning it.



Step Two:

Introduce hitting the ball rather than catching it. The ball can be returned over the net on the first shot, or the team can use up to three shots to return it over the net. The ball must still bounce before it is hit or returned over the net. Highlight to children how the height of the flight changes the time they have to move and play the ball.



Step Three:

Players choose if they want to let it bounce or play it on the full. This is an opportunity to explore different ways of hitting the ball, including those methods used in volleyball, such as off their forearms (dig shot) or fingertips (set shot).

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- How did you choose the version of the game that you found to be the most suitable for you?
- Did you try different versions of the game? Why or why not?
- Can you think of any changes we should make to these games?
- What strategies did you use in this game?
- What did you do to improve your ability to move from catching to hitting in the games?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- understand the three different versions of the game?
- choose the version of the game that they are finding the most challenging and enjoyable? (*Challenge by choice*)
- demonstrate the game skills of flight reception, court movement, and ball placement in a version of Bounce Ball?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Challenge by choice

Challenge by choice is a teaching strategy that allows players to choose their level of participation and practice difficulty. Initially developed by Project Adventure, it aims to empower children and foster increased engagement by creating a safe environment in which participants feel confident and comfortable about choosing to be involved.

The concept works by encouraging children to choose the most appropriate participation for themselves without peer pressure or teacher or coach direction. In its pure form, *challenge by choice* allows participants to choose whether or not to participate in an activity. Offering choice has the effect that children enjoy their participation more, and it also allows the teacher or coach to work with groups of children at different ability levels.

Strategies for teaching through *challenge by choice* include:

- Provide options based on difficulty and allow children to choose where they start and how they progress through the options.
- Discuss the effect of choice on their involvement and the effect of peer pressure on individuals.

3.3 Bench Ball

Players work as a team to get themselves from their area to a bench (or line) behind the opposing team's baseline by throwing balls from their zone to catchers on the bench.

Adapt the game to make it inclusive for all children.



EQUIPMENT



Large soft dodge balls (10)



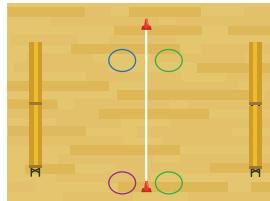
Hoops (4)



Cones or markers



Benches (4)



LEARNING FOCUS

This team game is often played as an invasion game, which allows a focus on strategic play and finding ways to win. However, in this version it also allows a focus on many of the net/wall skills. Specifically, it allows a focus on the game skills of ball placement, court positioning, and flight reception.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

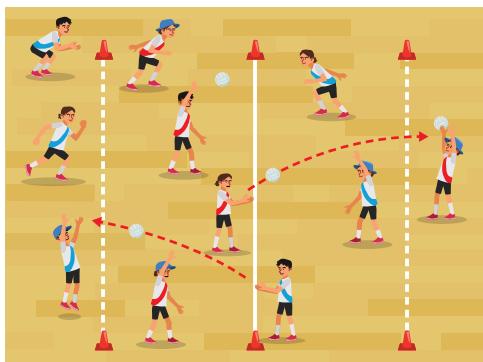
- Two teams of any size.
- Mark out a court area to suit learners. Divide the area into halves. Teams occupy a half each.
- Place benches along the baseline.
- Use 3–4 soft large balls per side.
- 1–3 players start on the bench.

Play:

- The aim is to throw a ball on the full to your player on the bench. If it is caught, the court player joins the bench and becomes an extra bench player.
- Players can move with the ball and must throw to their bench from inside their zone.
- The other team can try to intercept a ball heading towards the bench behind them.
- The team that gets all their team on the bench first wins.

PROGRESSIONS

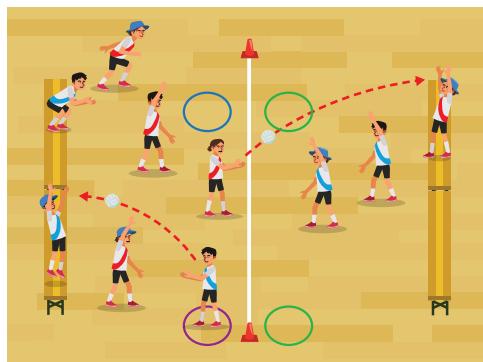
Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



Step One:

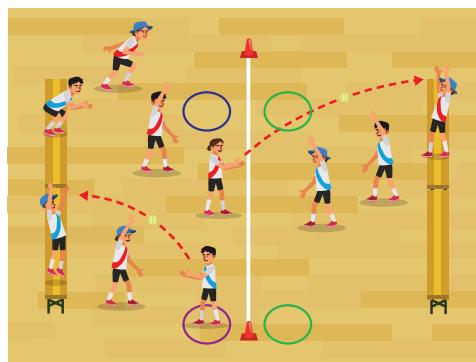
Initially pass to behind a line.

Shape: Progress to throwing to a bench, but with 2–4 hoops inside the oppositions throwing half for children who may lack throwing strength.



Step Two:

If you find that weaker throwers are left as the 'last man standing', allow them to nominate a team member to come back from the bench to throw for them or move the hoops in the opposition's half closer to the bench.



Step Three:

Increase the number of balls.

Focus: Play with tennis balls or frisbees.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- How is this game played, and what is the aim of it?
- What strategies did your team use that were effective?
- Are there any adaptations that could be made to the game to make it more inclusive?
- What ways can you decide as a team who throws (attacks) and who defends?
- How can the team work together to get the last court player on the bench?
- What different ways can you stop the ball being caught by opposition bench players?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- devise effective net/wall strategies and employ tactics to play the game?
- include all members of their team?
- identify adaptations to ensure that weaker players are not left in the throwing area?
- communicate the game-plays effectively?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Strategy and tactics

Bench Ball is a very versatile game that can be easily adapted and used in a variety of ways. While it helps to develop children's abilities to catch and throw, it is also a game with lots of strategic possibilities. To develop 'thinking' players, help children think about the different aspects of game play. For example:

The players need to be working on both attack and defence at the same time. On-attack court and bench players need to work together strategically to get all players onto the bench. The court players need to coordinate their play with bench players by making sure that their teammates are ready to receive the ball before throwing it over the defender. Tactically, court players could be moving or passing to other players in the hoops for a closer shot, and bench players could be moving along the bench to make undefended space for the incoming passes.

On-defence court players need to develop strategies and employ team tactics to defend the incoming balls by being in position to intercept balls thrown to their opposition on the bench. They need to hold on to as many of the balls as they can.

Communication and teamwork between the court players and the bench players is vital.

3.4 Live

In this game the players start by playing cooperatively. When the rally breaks down, the game goes “live” and changes to being competitive. The switch from cooperation to competition makes it enjoyable and challenging for children.



EQUIPMENT



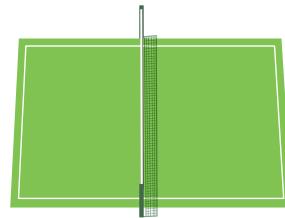
Short racquets (4)



Soft tennis balls
(2 per group)



Net or bench



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus is on learning to return a ball, sustain a rally and build an attack.

Focus the children’s attention on:

- getting into a rhythm of a rally and keeping it going for as long as possible
- anticipating the return shot from their partner
- moving to cover all of the court and to think about how to build an attack with their partner to play a winning shot.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

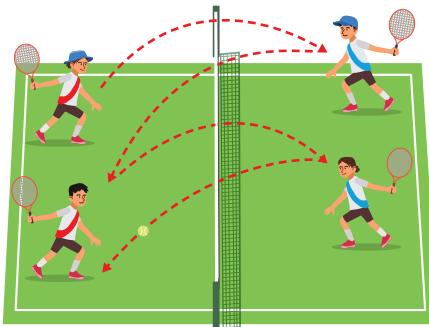
- Use paddler-tennis-sized courts, with a net.
- Have four players on the court at a time.
- Use half-pressure tennis balls.

Play:

- Begin by rallying diagonally to the opposite player using two balls.
- Cooperate to keep the diagonal rally going for as long as possible.
- When one rally breaks down, a player calls “live”.
- Now the pairs compete against the other pair to win the rally with the remaining ball.
- When a point is won, the game starts again with the cooperating pairs rallying on the diagonal with two balls again until a player again calls “live”.

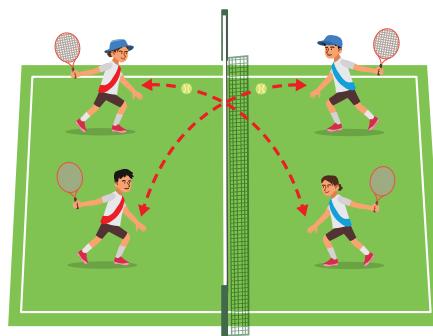
PROGRESSIONS

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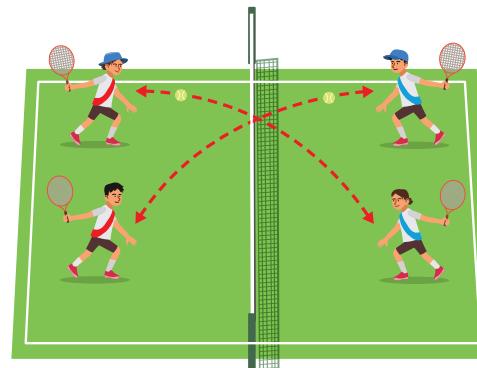
Step One:

Use one ball. Encourage four players to develop an M or W pattern to pass the ball around the court, using both cross-court and straight shots. See how long they can keep the pattern going.



Step Two:

Use two balls. Increase the complexity, by introducing the concept of cooperation, then playing "live" and transitioning to competition and setting up play to win the point.



Step Three:

Play Live on a larger space, such as a tennis court, and begin to play with tennis racquets and tennis balls.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- What is the best way to keep the ball going diagonally across the court?
- Can you place the ball to where you want it to go? How can you do this?
- What is the first thing you do when you hear the word "live"?
- Were you able to think ahead and build an attack?
- Why is it important to be able to do this?
- Where would you play the ball if both the players were up at the net?
- Where would you play the ball if both the players were at the back of the court?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- play cooperatively to keep a diagonal rally going?
- move around the court to be in the best position to play the ball?
- transition from cooperating to competition and build an attack?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Building an attack

Building an attack is the skill of being able to set up a series of moves to beat your opponent with a winning shot. This involves playing strategically to catch your opponent out of position or with a better passing shot. This may mean thinking about how to set up some return shots to win the rally.

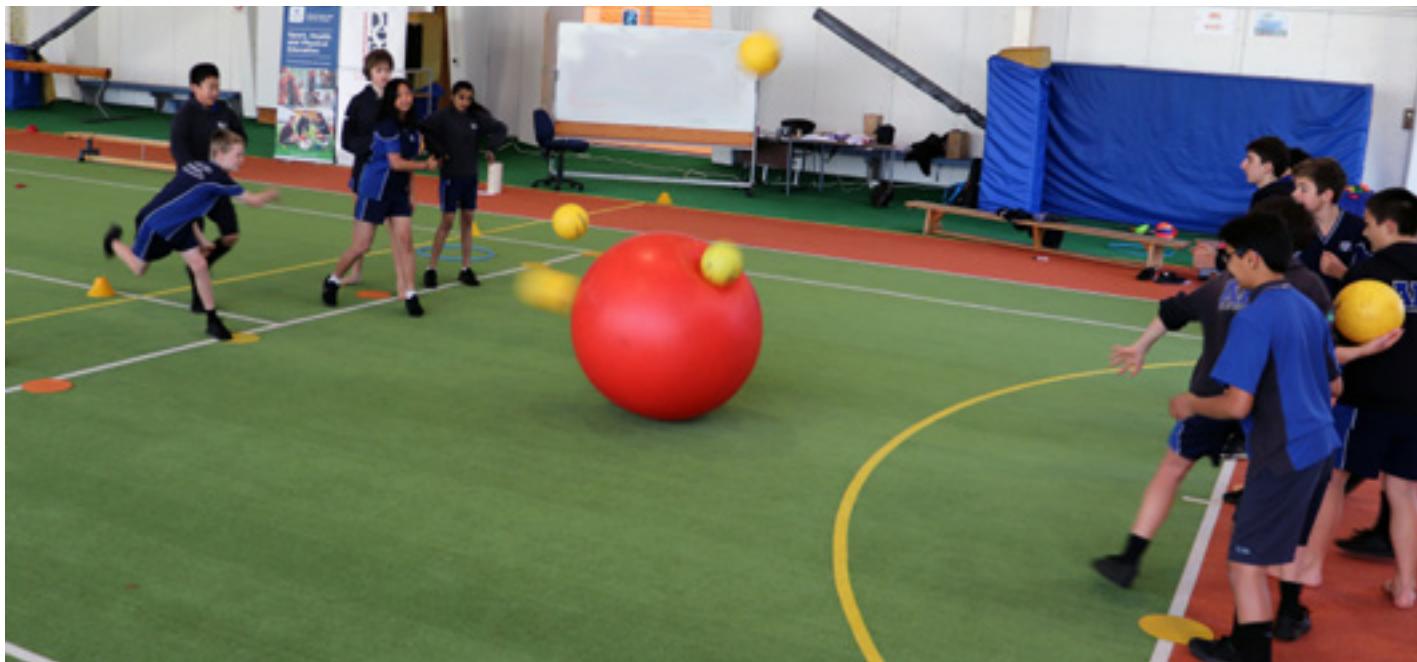
Building an attack is an important net/wall game skill and requires children to be able to read the play, plan ahead, and transition from defence to attack and vice versa. The game allows for moving both players up to the net, both players back, and/or one attacking the net while the other player drops back to cover the shot.

Strategies to teach how to build an attack include:

1. Using the entire court to place shots in the open spaces and causing the opponent to move and create opportunities.
2. Anticipating where the opponent/s will return the ball.
3. Varying the selection of shots (volley, lob, clear, ground-stroke), the speed, the distance and the height of the ball, and using spin.
4. Thinking about the best place to place the ball (side lines, corners, short and long) so that the opponents are unable to return it.

3.5 Bombardment

The aim of this game is for players to hit a Swiss ball out of the playing area to win a point. Players work together to apply a combined bombarding force on the Swiss ball to outdo the force of the other team.



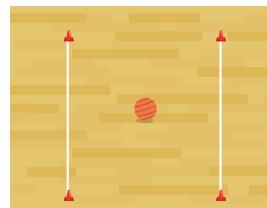
EQUIPMENT



Swiss ball (1)



Soft dodge balls
(1 per player)



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus of this game is on:

- Collective effort and teamwork: This involves understanding that the combined strength of all members of a team will have the most effect in this game.
- Movement and force: Exploring the effect of combined force and its impact on the ball's movement.
- Positive interaction: Being able to work together and provide support and collective strength to achieve positive outcomes and build team cohesion.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

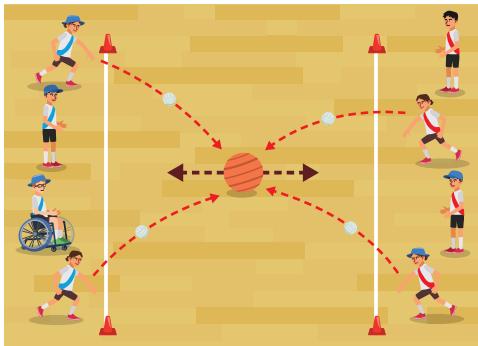
- This game can be played inside or outside.
- Create two teams who stand on either side of a court area.
- Each player has a ball if possible.
- Place a large Swiss ball in the centre of the playing area.

Play:

- Players throw the balls at the large Swiss ball in the centre.
- The aim is to apply sufficient force to the Swiss ball to roll it over the opposition's line.
- Players can retrieve the balls from the centre, but they must return to behind their throwing lines to launch the ball again.
- A point is scored when the ball is successfully rolled over the opposition's line.

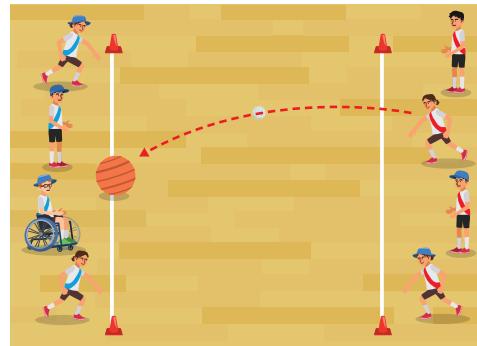
PROGRESSIONS

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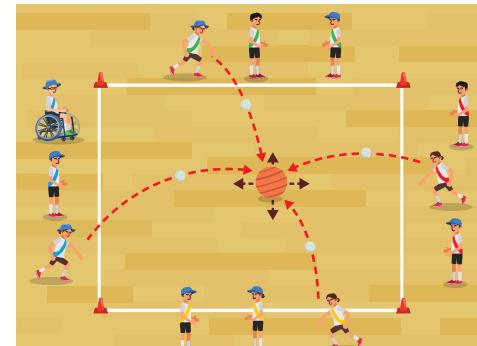
Step One:

Use soft balls and a small playing area to make it easier to apply sufficient force to get the Swiss ball rolling. The ball must cross the opposition's line to score a point.



Step Two:

Use volleyballs or similar and increase the playing area. Play the same game rules.



Step Three:

Play the game with four teams, one along each side of the playing area or court. The team needs to bombard the ball across the opposite line to score a point.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- What is the aim of this game? How is it played?
- How effective was it when everyone fired the balls in their own time?
- What tactics did you use to combine your team's force?
- What did you learn about applying collective force and effort from playing this game?
- Did you naturally take on the role of thrower or ball retriever?
- How did the team work collectively to stop the ball from rolling over your base line?
- Are there any changes you would make if you played this game again?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- explain how they used collective strength as a team?
- explain why they chose the tactics they used in this game? Were they effective in applying collective force? Why or why not?
- differentiate the player roles needed to be successful in this game?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Collective effort and teamwork

Collective effort and working as a team to generate maximum force or work outcomes often involves the need to combine the strengths of all members of a team. When players work together as a collective and provide support, their combined strength helps them to achieve their goal.

Games forms that require collective effort and teamwork help build team cohesion and cooperation by encouraging children to learn about how they can help one another and use one another's strengths.

Exploring the effect of combined effort also applies to physical forces. Applying force is an important concept for games play and is enhanced when players work together to apply more force when required. Players need to be able to apply force to objects, learn the effect this has on them, and as a result, learn how to accelerate, apply spin, and decrease the speed of objects in play.

3.6 Staircase Badminton

This is a badminton game with a difference. Winning points forces the opposition to go progressively down the staircase of positions. These are first standing, then on their knees, then on their seat, and then on their back to play a shot.



EQUIPMENT



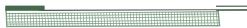
Badminton racquets



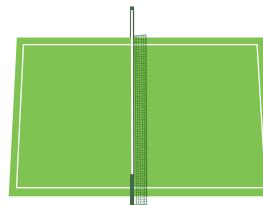
Short tennis racquets



Shuttlecocks (4)



Net (1)



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus in this game is on shuttle placement. It is an enjoyable game because everyone stays in.

Focus the children's attention on:

- placing shots into open spaces on the court
- staying on their feet to move to the shuttlecock
- supporting grounded team-mates
- including everyone.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

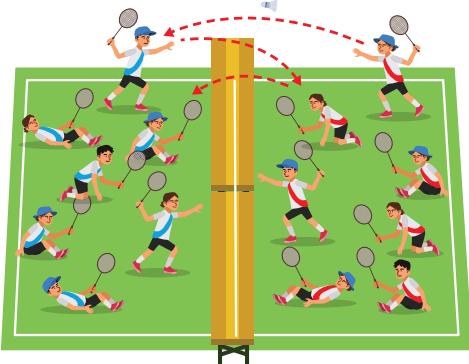
- Two teams of any size on either side of a badminton court with a net.
- Each player has a racquet.

Play:

- One team serves the shuttlecock and begins the rally.
- When a player misses a shot, they begin to move down the staircase with each subsequent miss. They go from standing, to kneeling, to sitting, and then lying on their back on the floor.
- If they can return a shot back over the net, they can move back up to the next position on the staircase.
- As more players are forced onto their backs, other players will need to move to cover the court to get team-mates back to their feet.

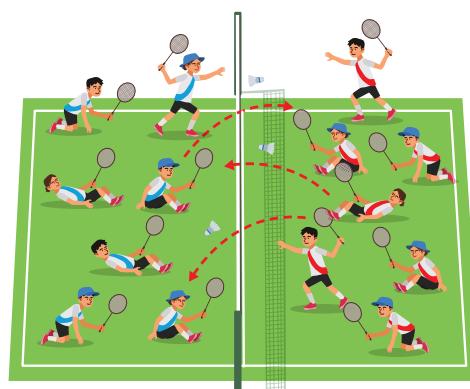
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



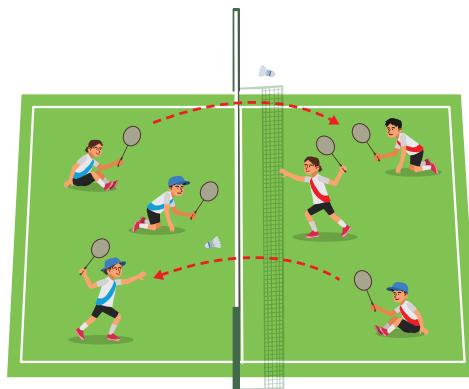
Step One:

Play with one shuttlecock and progress only to knees and seats. Give children two chances to play the shot before players move to their knees and seats.



Step Two:

Introduce more shuttlecocks: 2–4 depending on the size of the group. Introduce playing from one's back to one's seat from their knees to their feet.



Step Three:

Have multiple games going with smaller numbers per court so that players need to cover a greater court area.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- Why do you need to look at the shuttlecock and the opposition to play into space?
- Which was the hardest position to hit the shuttlecock from? Why?
- Did you try to hit the shuttlecock deep to the back court or drop it just over the net?
- What do the players on their feet need to do when most of the team are playing from their knees, seat, or back?
- What did you need to change about your play when the numbers in each team were reduced?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- have sufficient control to direct their shots and hit the shuttlecock over the net?
- strategically place shots on the court away from their opponents?
- see the importance of moving to cover the court?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Shuttle placement

Ball or shuttle placement is the strategic action of returning shots into spaces to move the opposition, open up options, and place pressure on the opposition to return the ball or shuttlecock. The key to this skill is being able to control the direction of the shot so that the return goes where the player wants it to go. This then enables the player to dominate the rally and play the ball or shuttlecock into open spaces, forcing the opposition to move. Being able to place the ball is important to both playing defensive shots and building an attack.

Placement strategies include:

1. Placing the shuttlecock or ball into open space: the sides, cross-court, back corners, or just over the net, depending on where the opposition is.
2. Attacking the net to place the shuttlecock on angles that are hard to return.
3. Controlling the pace of play by being on attack not defence.

In some net/wall games, children can be encouraged to think strategically about placement by modifying scoring so that certain zones score higher than others.

3.7 Kick It

A fun game that involves kicking the ball over the net, like playing tennis with the feet. There are easy progressions for children to choose a successful form of the game that challenges them.



EQUIPMENT



Cones/markers

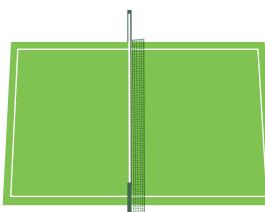


Nets or benches



Soccer or dodge balls

Court area
the size of a
badminton
court or smaller



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus of this game is on learning to control the kick and direct the ball with the foot. The advanced skill is to place the ball over the net into space to beat the opponent.

Focus the children's attention on:

- moving to get into a good position to kick the ball
- thinking about how to create time and support for keeping the rally going
- strategising as a team to decide if it is more effective to set up an attack using one, two, or three passes to return the ball and draw the opposition out of position.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

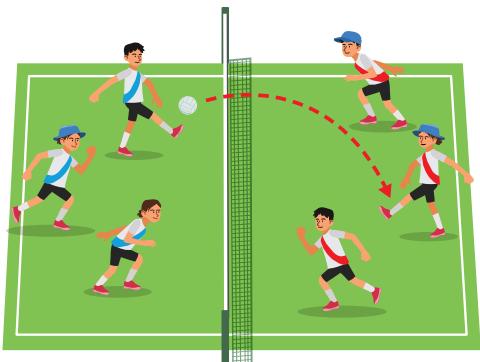
- Small teams of 3–4 per side.
- Teams stand on either side of the net.

Play:

- The game is started by one player dropping the ball onto the ground or their foot to kick it over the net.
- The ball can be kicked on the full or after one bounce.
- The players attempt to score a point by returning the ball into the opposition's court so that they cannot return it.
- Teams have up to three kicks on their side of the net.
- The players need to decide if they will kick the ball back on the first, second, or third foot touch.

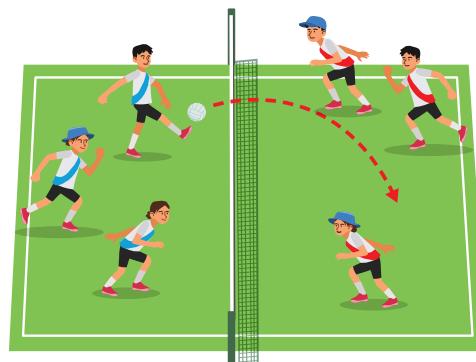
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



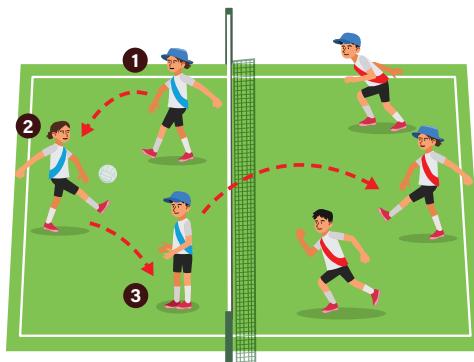
Step One:

The children use a cooperative rally to see how long they can keep it going. They have the option of kicking the ball on the full or after one bounce between passes.



Step Two:

The game becomes competitive, and the children now score points when the opposition does not return the ball. They should try to kick the ball into open court space.



Step Three:

Encourage players to set up their return using the three kicks allowed on their side of the net. Increase the options for passing by increasing teams to 4–6 per side and/or by increasing the size of the playing area.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- How well were you able to kick the ball back over the net or to pass it to one of your team-mates?
- How does getting into the right court position to receive the ball help you to be able to return the ball?
- Why should you be watching where the opposition moves to?
- How did your team put pressure on the other team in this game?
- What did you need to change about your strategy and decision making when you could use three passes on your side?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- keep a rally going?
- move to receive the ball to kick it, or do they play the ball too close to their body?
- use the three shots to place the ball and build pressure on the other team, or do they kick the ball straight back?
- work as a team to play this game strategically and win the rallies?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Ball control

Having good control of the ball is important in many games so that players can maintain possession and execute other actions effectively. In games like soccer, good ball control begins by being able to move into a position to receive the ball and then bringing the ball under control. As with many skills, this is as much about players reading the play and moving early as it is about technical competence.

To help children with ball control, focus on:

Moving to receive the ball: This involves anticipating where the ball is going to land and moving into place to receive it. This requires the body weight to be well distributed to allow movement forwards, backwards, or sideways. At the same time, the player needs to take a quick glance at what is happening around them before contact is made.

Placement: This involves being able to cushion the ball on contact and stop it from bouncing away from the body. Effectively trapping the ball allows the player to execute an action with it, like dribbling or passing.

3.8 Attackers & Defenders

In this tennis-like game children learn how to play both as an attacker at the net and a defender from the baseline. It is a fast-paced game that allows children plenty of turns at playing both up at the net and from the baseline.



EQUIPMENT



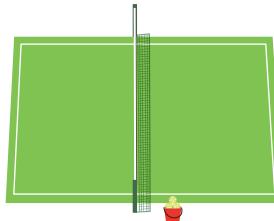
Short tennis racquets (3)



1 bucket of low-pressure tennis balls



Net or bench (1 per group)



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus of this game is to teach flight reception and court movement.

Focus on encouraging children:

- to watch and track the flight of the ball and move on the court to play it in front of them
- to read the speed and trajectory of the ball and decide on the best tactical shot to play to remain on attack or to get into an attacking position.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

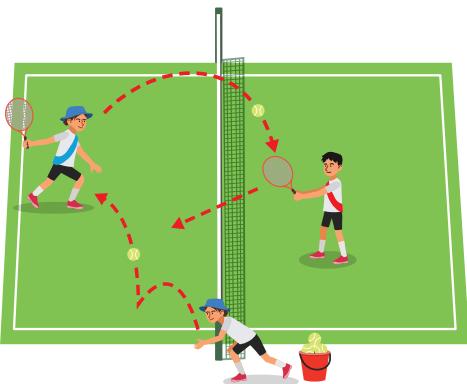
- Three players, each with a racquet position: one attacker at the net, a defender on the baseline, and a feeder at the side at midcourt.
- The feeder has a bucket of balls.
- Use low nets as court dividers.
- The aim is to get to be the attacker.

Play:

- The feeder throws the ball to the defender's forehand.
- The attacker tries to volley it back.
- Whoever wins the rally either remains as the attacker or becomes the attacker and the two players swap positions.
- Players stay on attack as long as they keep winning.
- When the bucket of balls is empty, collect them and rotate the feeder in as the attacker.
- Start another round of the game.

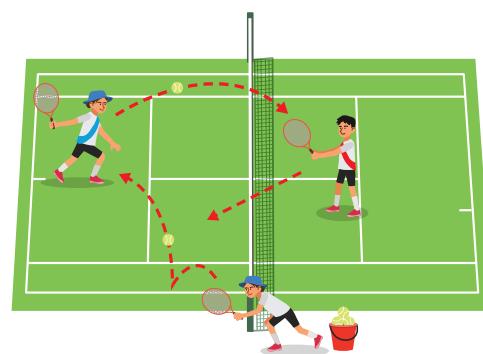
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



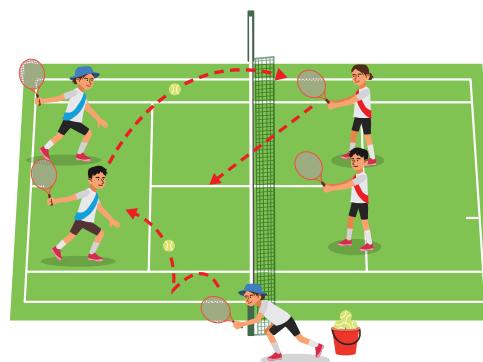
Step One:

Begin with one attacker and one defender on a small court area. Use short tennis racquets and low-pressure balls. Then introduce two attackers and two defenders into the short-tennis version on the smaller court area. Change around when the bucket of balls has been played.



Step Two:

A more advanced version of the game is to play it on a full tennis court with one attacker, one defender, and one feeder on each court.



Step Three:

Introduce the option of two attackers and two defenders and keep one feeder on a full tennis court. Change around when the bucket of balls has been played.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- How do you track the flight of the ball and at the same time move into position to return it?
- How do you read the spin, speed, line, and/or bounce of the ball?
- What is the tactical role of the attacker in this game?
- How do you decide what shot to play as the attacker?
- Why should you contact the ball in front of your body?
- Where is the best place for the defender to place shots in this game?
- Which version of this game do you find the most enjoyable and successful? Why is that?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- track the ball while moving into position?
- move forward at the net and play the ball in front of their body?
- explain the best position to place the ball on the court to try to beat the defender?
- explain the difference between being on attack and defence in this game?
- read the play and move into the best position to execute their role as an attacker or a defender?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Flight reception

Flight reception is the process of tracking the flight of a ball, interpreting its speed and path, and moving into position to receive it while deciding on an appropriate tactical response.

All three aspects need to be practised together in games that require visually tracking and responding to moving objects. Flight reception can be further supported when children are encouraged to:

1. Watch and read the flight of the ball. Factors like speed, angle, line of flight, and object weight will all influence the momentum, time of arrival, and rebound action of the ball. Provide lots of variation so children can practise this aspect of perception.
2. Move to be in line with the incoming ball. This involves both predicting when and where the ball will fall and moving to intercept the trajectory. Discourage reaching and emphasise moving the feet to get into position early.
3. Explore the best position to provide stability to the action being played. In tennis, position the body behind the ball so that contact is made while moving forward rather than back.

3.9 Around the World

The aim of this game is to keep the rally going across the net while running between the ends of the court. Around the World helps children learn to move and play shots.



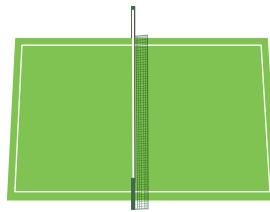
EQUIPMENT



Short tennis racquets
(1 for each player)



Low-pressure tennis balls



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus is on court positioning and moving to the ball.

Focus the learning on:

- being in the best position early to receive and return the ball, that is, taking up a preparatory position at the centre-back court
- reading the flight of the ball and moving forward or to the side to receive it
- moving to the ball and not waiting for it to come to them
- ensuring that it is safe to run around the outside of the court area.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

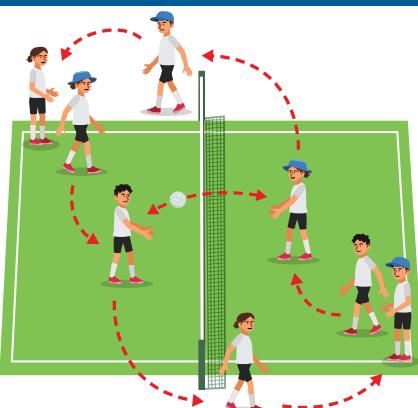
- Use a small court area, divided by a net or bench
- Groups of 8 players.
- 4 at each end with a racquet.
- Begin with short tennis racquets and slower balls.

Play:

- The focus in this game is on cooperation to keep the rally going.
- A player hits the ball over the net to a player at the other end and runs anticlockwise to that end to join the other team.
- Players should aim to hit the ball where it can be received and returned easily.

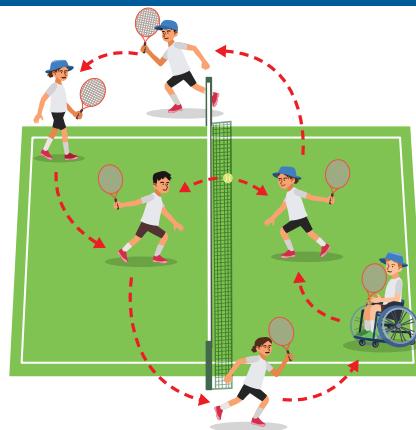
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



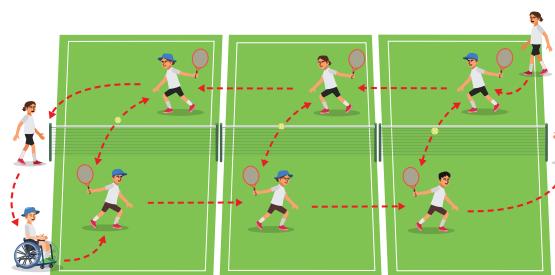
Step One:

Begin with a throwing version of the game. Children throw a ball over the net for the next player to catch and throw it back, trying to keep the rally going for as long as possible using throwing and catching.



Step Two:

Players use a small court and net area to play the game using short tennis racquets or paddle-tennis bats and low-pressure balls. Reduce the number of players to 6.



Step Three:

Using 3 courts in a row and all players. Now the players move to the next court to play their next shot instead of running to the other end. When they reach the third court, they run around to the other side and continue to move across the three courts on that side.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- Where is the best position to head for when you enter the court? Why is this?
- Where are four places you can move to easily from this position? (i.e., front court – left or right, or back court – left or right)
- What is the best way to move around the court?
- How many shots could your group achieve in your best rally?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- watch the rally and anticipate when to enter the game?
- move to the back-court centre position and move forward from that position to keep the rally going?
- anticipate the opposition's most likely return?
- use side- or back-stepping to move into position ready to move forward to the ball?
- read the flight of the ball and play the ball side-on and in front of them?
- work cooperatively as a group to keep a rally going?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Court positioning

Court positioning involves understanding where to stand to enable quick coverage of all the court. In tennis-based games, this is typically the middle of the back court. This position allows players to move forwards to attack the net or sideways to cover the lines. Moving forward to play the ball is the most important aspect of court positioning.

Court positioning requires players to learn to move in all directions, moving early, and being balanced to play a shot. Players also need to anticipate where the shot will land and how best to play it, which involves watching the flight of the ball and the movement of the opposition.

The aspects to emphasise when teaching children about court positioning include:

1. Moving to the centre of the back court
2. Watching the rally and reading the flight of the ball
3. Anticipating the opposition's most likely return
4. Being on their toes, balanced and ready to move early to play the ball
5. Moving at speed when necessary to be in a balanced stance to play the shot.

3.10 Around the Planets

This game is played by throwing a ball (the rocket) from Earth to bounce off the Sun, which is drawn on a wall (or thrown over a net) for their partner to catch and take to a planet. The planets are arranged increasingly further from the Sun.



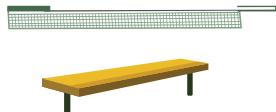
EQUIPMENT



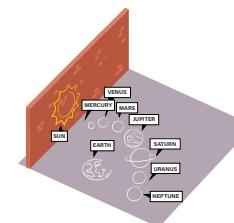
Chalk or hoops (8)



Dodge ball (1)



Net or bench (1 per group)



LEARNING FOCUS

The focus is on developing decision making in younger children so they become thinking players.

Focus on:

- strategising about where to throw to and where to move to
- throwing and catching
- flight reception (tracking and moving to the flight of the ball)
- enjoyment.

SET UP & PLAY

Set up:

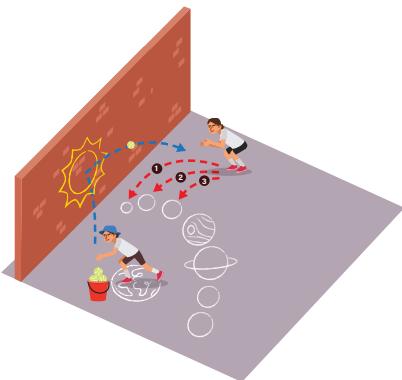
- Play in pairs using a large soft ball as the 'rocket'.
- Use chalk, tape, or hoops to mark the position of Earth on the ground, the Sun on a wall, and the planets in hoops or circles on the ground in order away from the wall (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune).

Play:

- One player stands on Earth (in the hoop) and throws a large ball (the rocket) at the Sun (the large circle) marked on the wall.
- Their partner tries to catch the rocket after one bounce and run it into the closest hoop (Mercury).
- Next turn, they catch the ball off the bounce and try to run it to Venus slightly further away. Repeat in subsequent turns trying to get the rocket to Neptune.
- Players swap over.

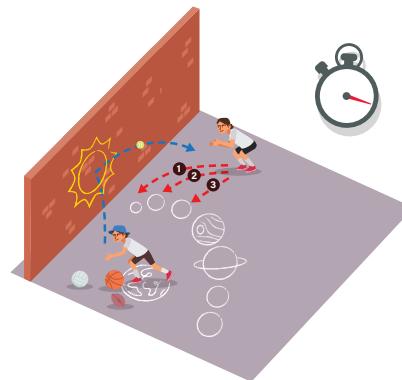
PROGRESSIONS

Using the following progressions, think about simplifying, shaping, focusing, and enhancing.



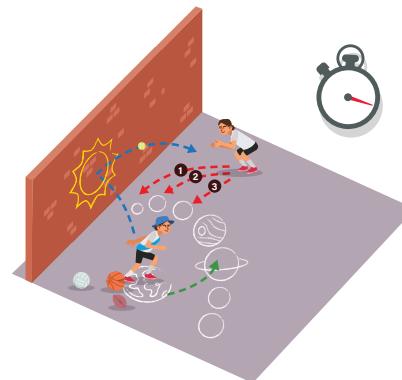
Step One:

Begin playing the game and encouraging children to explore tactics for throwing and catching the ball. Add variation by using different-sized balls (rockets) that cause different types of bounces.



Step Two:

Add a time constraint by having the thrower count to five after they throw the ball. The other player must then catch the ball and place it on a planet. Note that this will get progressively harder since the planets are spaced further away from the Sun.



Step Three:

Vary the game by allowing the thrower to move to help the catcher beat the time constraint. Usually this involves them moving to a planet and having the catcher throw them the ball after it is caught. However, there may also be other ways they can collaborate and succeed.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- What did you like/ not like about playing Around the Planets?
- How difficult was it to learn the game and land your rocket on different planets?
- What did you have to think about when deciding where you had to run to?
- Were you able to land the rocket onto all of the planets?
- How were you able to help your partner decide where to run to?

REFLECTION

After the activity, can the children:

- Understand the game and decide when and where to run to?
- Throw the ball to bounce into the different circles marked as the planets?
- Direct the ball onto the wall?
- Did they learn anything about the solar system and the planets?



CONCEPT CLINIC

Decision making and thinking skills

Games that give children choices or require movements to different court positions require them to decide what and where they need to move to. Early decision making can help them achieve success and improve their game-playing ability.

Thinking while playing and moving is common in most games. Reading the current situation and thinking ahead so that they know what to expect and what to do is important to success.

Young children need lots of different games that develop decision-making skills that require them to:

1. Read the situation and think ahead.
2. Help team-mates by communicating options or directing their attention.
3. Accept the challenge of deciding while they are playing.
4. Trial different options to find optimum results and learn from their mistakes.