

ITF Coaches Education Programme



Coaching Beginner and Intermediate Players Course

Psychology for beginner and intermediate players

Psychological characteristics of beginner and intermediate players

APP. AGE	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
4 - 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wants instant gratification.• Poor capacity to concentrate; easily distracted.• Egocentric.• Primarily wants to play and experience things as an individual.• Socially oriented towards adults.• Learns by imitating.• Gradually more accepting of external rules.• Loses interest quickly when confronted with incompatible or repetitive stimuli.• Needs constant praise.• Thinks intuitively and pre-operationally.

Psychological characteristics of beginner and intermediate players

APP. AGE	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
7 - 9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growing capacity to concentrate.• Can process specific information about the task. Concrete operations.• Perseverant and obstinate.• Greater interest in group interaction.• Starts comparing with others.• Responsive to new information; possesses a disposition for learning.• Needs constant achievement and success; desires to be useful and to do things well.• Wants praise from authoritative figures and will work hard to earn it.• Tendency to thrive on rivalry (competition).

Psychological characteristics of beginner and intermediate players

APP. AGE	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
10-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can establish medium and long-term goals.• Becoming more rational.• Shows greater enthusiasm toward participation in activities.• Increasingly tolerant and capable to demonstrating their sense of humour.• Socially oriented towards peer interaction and approval.• Less accepting of what you tell them.• Evidence of a desire to take on a more active role in training and practice.

Psychological development of the tennis player

- Goals of player development
- Long or short term
- Understanding of the game's psychological demands
- Ideal performance state
- Mental toughness

Psychological skills needed to play

Motivation	Emotional control	Control of thoughts	Concentration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Enjoying the game ▪Being motivated ▪Loving the game ▪Being competitive – achievement motivation ▪Giving 100% ▪Being committed ▪Sustain effort ▪Developing responsibility and discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Behaving cordially ▪Dealing with adversity, fear, anger, stress, frustration and learning to manage mistakes. ▪Find the appropriate Ideal Performance State ▪Creating on- and off-court routines that impact positively on enjoyment and performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Developing a positive attitude and approach to tennis and competition. ▪Fostering self-confidence. ▪Setting goals and creating a positive long-term vision. ▪Developing independence. ▪Developing the right type of intelligence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Learning to focus on concentration and being attentive. ▪Using imagery and visualisation to improve tennis skills.

Motivation



- Direction and intensity of a person's effort
- Two factors
 - Personal
 - Situational

Motivation enhanced directly or indirectly by:



- Making session's fun
- Sufficient feedback and attention to player
- Assigning responsibilities
- Changing the environment
- Providing multiple opportunities for success
- Adjusting to individuals within groups
- Using behaviour modification techniques
- Other motivational-related concepts

Competitiveness - achievement motivation



- Competitiveness
- Social evaluation
- Self-motivation
 - Motoric
 - Cognitive
 - Emotional
- Competitiveness and achievement motivation influence
- Developed in 3 stages

Stages of competitiveness and achievement motivation

Stage	Characteristics
Autonomous competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before approximately 4 years of age.• Child focuses on mastering the environment.• Self-evaluation/assessment.• No comparison with others.
Social comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commences from approximately at 5 years of age.• Child focuses on comparing to others.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No typical age.• Combination of previous two stages.• Not everybody reaches it.

Factors affecting competitiveness and achievement motivation

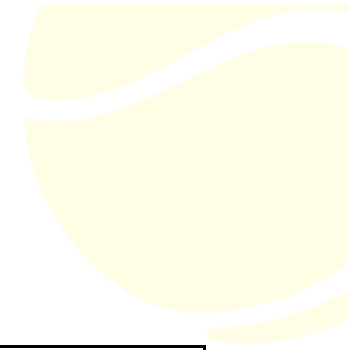
Factors	Characteristics
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To achieve success• To avoid failure
Situational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Probability of success: who's the opponent• Value of success: How important is the match
Emotional reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pride and shame
Attributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanent or unstable• Caused internally (by the player) or externally• Controlled by the player or out of their control

Persistence



- Never give up
- Goals
- Significant others
- Task/ego orientation
- The perceived motivational climate created by the coach

Motivational climates created by the coach



Task-Involving	Ego- Involving
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effort is rewarded and cooperation emphasised by the coach• All players in the group feel they have an important role• Mistakes are viewed as part of learning and instruction is provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The coach provides recognition/attention primarily to the most talented players• Intra-group rivalry is fuelled by the coach• Mistakes are punished

Persistence



- Ideal performance state-task oriented
- Create an optimal motivation climate
 - Success
 - Failure
 - Instruction
 - Positive role of intrinsic motivators
 - Build players' self-esteem
- Practical application
- Daily practice
- Culture of excellence

Other psychological skills

- Enjoying the game
- Love of the game
- Discipline and punctuality:
 - Making tennis lessons fun
 - Setting rules and regulations
 - Every ball policy
 - Avoiding the use of punishment with players
 - Not confusing discipline with authoritarian behaviour
 - Punctuality
 - Being late
 - Punctuality
 - Being flexible
 - Rules to parents
 - Fun games at start of lesson
 - Being creative

Setting goals



- Goal setting
- Age of 13-14
- Professional players
- 5 basic questions
 - Current situation
 - Goal
 - Purpose
 - Means
 - Obstacles
- Long-term goals
- Action-oriented
- Practical application

On and off-court motivational drills

GAME SITUATION	ON-COURT	OFF-COURT
Serve and return of serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A serving contest between two players that sees players aim to hit five consecutive flat serves in. Scoring: Players earn a 'game' only if all five serves are in, and each one is progressively 'harder/faster' (as indicated by location of 2nd bounce). If a serve is missed or not hit harder, players alternate. First to 6 games wins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches can ask players to make a treasure map or poster of exactly how they want to play, what they want to achieve, and how they want to look. They can go through old tennis magazines and find pictures of their favourite players that reflect just that. Reinforcing messages that their coach constantly tells them and good quotes to keep them focussed and goal-oriented may also be added. When complete, it should be displayed in a prominent place so that the players see exactly what they want to achieve each and every day.
Baseline game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players rally from the baseline for a set time. Consistency is the overriding goal, and the idiom 'do not waste a shot' is applied, so players rally with only one ball. Every time they commit an error, they should run to pick up the ball to resume rallying. Players need to give 100%, and any lapse in mental or physical effort should see coaches bring it to the attention of the players, and if necessary, schedule rest periods until players feel they are again ready to work at 100%. 	
Mid court and net game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coach feeds from the basket to players at the net. Players are asked 'How many balls do you need to play 5 very good forehand volleys...or to hit the target?' Players should indicate how many volleys they will need before starting the drill. 	

Emotional Control



- Symptoms or warning signs include
 - Rapid, shallow breathing
 - Sweating
 - Muscular weakness
 - Jerky play
 - Poor decision making
 - Persistent pessimism about the future
 - Lament
- Player responses

Emotional control cont.



- Processes
 - Nervous energy work
 - Interpreting situation
 - Appreciating that pressure situations
 - Ball never knows the score
- Action plan
 - Stay in the present
 - Take control
 - Understand their bodily signals
 - Re-focus before each point
 - Use self-talk
- Common pressure situations

Dealing with fear and learning to manage mistakes

- Fear
- Beginner players deal with fear by:
 - Resolving how to win the match
 - Undertaking tasks
 - Lose a tennis match
- Relaxation and activation
- Relaxation techniques
- Practical application
- Displaying good behaviour:
 - Respect
 - Ask for permission
 - Be well spoken and well mannered
 - One bounce habit
 - Ready position
 - Regular deep breathing
 - Taking time
 - No net rule

Control of thoughts



- Confidence
- Practical application
- Positive attitude
 - Towards winning, losing and skill development
 - Towards life
 - Positive and constructive manner
- Practical approaches
 - Referring to players' heroes and role models
 - Self-assess their performance
 - High mental effort
 - Watching the ball
 - Body language
 - Positive self-talk

Independence



- Long term process
- Tennis court-life

Age	Ways to foster independence
Under 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be on time for the lesson• Bring their own racquet bag, water, etc. to the court• Bring the necessary equipment for the lesson (balls, cones, etc.)• Collect balls when required• Behave on court• Learn basic tennis rules (the scoring system, the time between points and changeovers etc.)• After the lesson, collect all of the equipment used
Under 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare things themselves• Pack their bags before practice (racquet, balls, spare shirt, bottle of water etc.)• Always being punctual to training and practice• Warm-up correctly before practice and matches, without being asked or supervised by the coach• Develop a correct drinking regime (stick to it even when practising)
Under 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send in entries for tournaments themselves• Find their doubles partners on their own• Deliver their racquets for restringing; asking for the tension desired etc.

Intelligence



- Game intelligence
 - Analytic
 - Creative
 - Practical
- Coaches role
- Strategic thinking
- Improve decision makings skills
- Methods to use:
 - Refrain from telling what players are doing wrong
 - Provide pointers
 - Help player find alternative solutions
 - Create challenging drills and game situations
- Creativity-importance

Responsibility and Self talk

- Responsibility/positive attribution:
 - Players should accept responsibility for their own performance
 - Losses and poor performances cannot be blamed on others
 - Educate players to believe in themselves
 - Attitude improve tennis and in life
- Self talk
 - Self talk
 - Two functions
 - Use self talk to help them play better tennis

On and off court self confidence drills



GAME SITUATION	ON-COURT	OFF-COURT
Serve and return of serve	Players hit three sets of 20 serves and returns. The sole instruction from the coach is that prior to serving and returning the players must use some positive self-talk (e.g. 'Go for it!').	Transformation of vocabulary can have a powerful effect on self-confidence and an individual's emotional state. Players should trial the impact that these 'vocab shifts' can have on their entire outlook: instead of 'I failed', say 'I learned something'; rather than 'I am fine', use 'I am fantastic!'
Baseline game	The coach, having asked players what their best groundstrokes are, feeds high half court balls to the players so that they are able to further increase their confidence in that shot.	
Mid court and net game	The coach feeds balls to players at the net. They should volley, saying 'yes' after each good volley they play.	

Concentration



- Stay in the present tense
- Players should learn to improve perception skills
- Playing in the zone / ideal performance state
- Loss of concentration

On and off court concentration drills



GAME SITUATION	ON-COURT	OFF-COURT
Serve and return of serve	Three circles are drawn in each service box to encourage players to narrow their concentration to a particular point on court. The use of cue words and visualisation strategies may also assist players here.	The coach asks the players to do shadow strokes in the gym or in a room, preferably in front of a mirror or a window where they can check their form. For each stroke, players should select a cue word.
Baseline game	Players play points from the baseline and have to say 'bounce' when the ball bounces in the opponent's court and 'hit' when the opponent hits the ball. Likewise, when the ball lands in their half of the court they have to say 'bounce' and 'hit' when they hit the ball.	
Mid court and net game	Players A and B volley back and forth to one and other using balls of different weight, size, colour, and material.	

Visualisation



- Think using images
- Benefits of visualisation
- Visualisation internal or external
- Visualisation drills

Routines



- Series of actions
- Before training/match
- Between points
- After training/match
- Constant rehearsal

Developing sportsmanship

Areas of concern	Sportsmanlike behaviours	Unsportsmanlike behaviours
Behaviour toward officials	Questioning officials in an appropriate, courteous manner	Arguing with or swearing at officials
Behaviour toward opponent	Treating all opponents with respect and dignity at all times	Arguing with, making sarcastic remarks to or being aggressive toward opponents
Behaviour toward team-mates	Providing only constructive criticism and positive encouragement	Commenting negatively or sarcastically. Swearing or arguing with team-mates
Behaviour toward spectators	Interacting positively with spectators	Arguing with or swearing at spectators.
Rule acceptance and infractions	Obeying all rules	Taking advantage of “loopholes” or “grey areas” in the rules

Mental skills training for beginner and intermediate players

- Mental skills are like physical skills
- Automated
- Coaches and psychological skills
 - Lack of sport psychology knowledge
 - Misconceptions about mental skills
 - Lack of time
 - Traditional coaching habits

Mental skills training for beginner and intermediate players

- Implementing a mental skills programme
- Implemented on court by the coach
- Content knowledge of mental skills

Implementation of a mental skills training programme

- Less attention to mental skills
- Process
 - Recognise the need to improve
 - Identify the behaviour
 - Provide for practice of the behaviour
 - Analyse the behaviour
 - Integrate the new skills
- Importance of practice

Individual mental skills training

- Individualised
- Start with routines
 - Before the match
 - During the match
 - After the match

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal Setting.• Personal Motivation.• Practice Intensity.• Imagery Skills.• Mistake Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive Self-Talk.• Positive Body Language.• Confidence and Composure.• Concentration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routines.• Stress Management and Arousal Control.• Sportsmanship.• Pre-match preparation.• Competitive Skills.
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Coaching Young Female Players

- Behavioural characteristics of female players
- Interdependence of physical and psychological factors in tennis performance
- Off-court issues
- What can coaches do when such problems arise

Dealing with parents



- Significant role
- Reactions to winning and losing
- Extraordinary relationships
- Parental behaviours
- Higher parental encouragement
- Talent development

Favourable parental behaviours

- Showing an interest; emotional, financial and material investment; availability; organisation of family life; transport; nutrition.
- Being a motivator, a guide; being demanding.
- Sacrifices (hobbies, holidays, money, etc.).

Favourable parental behaviours

- Putting results in perspective:
 - playing down the importance of competition and defeat;
 - avoiding a focus on rankings;
 - transmitting values (such as fighting spirit, rigour),
 - attention to detail,
 - respect,
 - hard work,
 - discipline,
 - fair play,
 - good behaviour during matches,
 - being objective;
 - being honest about the child's level and the importance of sport, etc.

Favourable parental behaviours

- **Knowledge of the competitive sport** and tennis world; being a role model; introducing the child to tennis.
- **Introducing the child to a variety of sports** in the beginning; sharing other activities.
- **Support**; encouragement; comfort; trust.
- **Moderating role** of one parent between the child and the other, more involved parent.

Favourable parental behaviours

- **Establishing a dialogue**; decisions must be child-driven; maintaining positive communication; being attentive to the child's needs, and paying attention to his fatigue, burnout risks and his experience of competition.
- **Setting realistic goals**; emphasising the importance of play and enjoyment at first, the notion of improvement vs. results.

Favourable parental behaviours

- Developing the child's independence and autonomy.
- Being present during matches to show support; presence must be neutral, discreet and impassive.
- Showing respect for players and other parents, tournament organisers, etc.

Favourable parental behaviours

- Giving advice and analysing matches (provided parents are knowledgeable about tennis) when emotions have cooled down; being positive; drawing lessons from defeats; teaching the child to think so that they can find their own solutions.
- With the coach: showing an interest for their feedback; being open to their advice; showing trust and respect; establishing a dialogue; collaborating with them; knowing how to entrust your child and delegate tasks.

Unfavourable parental behaviour

- Being uninvolved; showing no interest; lack of availability, etc.
- Being ever-present, supreme, being intrusive, being overprotective.
- Ignorance of competition.
- Focusing family activities on the tennis activities of the child; excessive purchases with no contribution from the child; tennis is the only interest; early school dropout.
- Forcing the child to play many matches, to participate in competitions; putting pressure on them without taking their goals into account; misunderstanding the child's reactions.

Unfavourable parental behaviour

- No parental guidance; transmission of values that contradict the ethics of sport; acceptance of bad behaviour.
- Verbal and physical violence in general.
- Making accusations; making the child feel guilty; making criticisms; being sarcastic; being aggressive; being extremely demanding; giving too much praise; praising abilities and results; alternating excessive praise with ridicule; making comparisons with other children; refusing to accept defeat or always making excuses for the child.
- Projecting their own desires and motivations onto the child; idealisation.
- Lacking ambition; having too much ambition; overrating the child's level; emphasising the importance of results; losing perspective; connecting their behaviour and love for the child to their results; reward/punishment system.

Unfavourable parental behaviour

- Not letting the adolescent become more independent; interfering with their decisions.
- Parent-child conflicts; mother-father conflicts caused by tennis.
- Disruptive behaviour during matches; making interventions, being demonstrative.
- Making analyses right at the end of matches; only seeing errors and negative sides; giving advice that contradicts that of the coach.
- With the coach: interfering, being critical, lack of communication, conflicts.

Guidelines for coaches

Stages	Description of stage	Key parental roles
<p>Sampling (approx. age 3 – 8, average age to start tennis 6.5 years [Monsaas, 1985])</p>	<p>Initial involvement of child across a range of activities where the ability to play, explore and experiment is important.</p>	<p>Leadership Provide opportunities for the child to enjoy sport and develop fundamental motor skills at child's own pace.</p>
<p>Specialising (approx. age 8-13)</p>	<p>Child focuses on 1 or 2 sports and gradually decreases their involvement in extra curricular activities. Child is motivated to work harder and more seriously.</p>	<p>Facilitative Provide moral, financial and time support for the child to remain in sport, develop sport-specific skills and pursue high levels of performance. Daily family lives (including meals) start to revolve around the child's tennis lessons, practice, training and tournaments. Involves considerable financial and time sacrifices for parents. Family holidays spent at tournaments and camps. Relocation for some families to facilitate tennis needs of children.</p>

Guidelines for coaches

Stages	Description of stage	Key parental roles
Investment (approx. age 13-15 [Wolfenden and Holt, 2005])	Individual becomes committed to a single sport, is focused on achieving an elite standard and builds close relationship with coach. Child realises tennis is “no longer just a game” and is prepared to “develop their potential”.	Supportive & facilitative Provide continued moral and emotional support, including comfort and security in times of stress, a ‘balanced’ home environment and facilitation of schooling. Financial assistance to fund training/coaching (often at Academies and Training Centres) and tournaments.
Maintenance (approx. age 20 and over)	Player reaches pinnacle of sport and is challenged to repeat extraordinary performances and continue to improve	Supportive/follower Provide understanding (‘be there for them’) if required in times of setbacks which could include injury, fatigue, pressure and possible lack of motivation. Also share successes with child.
Contributory / ‘Repayment’ (typically over 30 years)	Player makes a unique contribution to sport often (but not necessarily) after retiring from competition (e.g. Evonne Goolagong Cawley in her work with young indigenous talent)	Supportive & Resource Provide emotional support, positive feedback and other required support (e.g. sourcing family records for biographies, documentaries).

Guidelines for parents



- Setting an example
- Open communications with child
- Dual roles - parent and coach
- Families
- Parents interfering
- Good working relationships with coach
- Significance of leadership by the parent
- Parents should be parents

Conclusion



- Tennis is a mental game
- Psychological training principles
- Mental skills - control player's mind
- Enjoyment of the game
- Parents are key
- Sportsmanlike behaviour
- Mental skills specifically and regularly rehearsed