

Highland Spring Mini Tennis Month



EARN YOUR STRIPES

Parent and child activity book

See inside for a selection of
tennis skills to practice at home

Share your Mini Tennis moments #Everyonefortennis



Tennis is a fun family activity...

Highland Spring Mini Tennis is a great way to spend time together and focus on your child's development whilst having fun. With smaller courts and rackets and lower bouncing balls, Highland Spring Mini Tennis gives children aged 3 -10 the perfect introduction to tennis.

Tots ideal for 3-5 year-olds

Our **tots** programme enables young children to learn the basics and how to enjoy the game through a series of fun activities based on balance, co-ordination, agility, movement and racket and ball skills.



Red Stage ideal for 5-8 year-olds

Mini red players learn to serve, rally and score with a slow ball, as well as learning the movement and co-ordination skills needed for tennis. Players are encouraged to play fun competitions in teams and as individuals, with short matches using tie-break scoring.

"I've learnt how to serve, rally and score"



Orange Stage ideal for 8-9 year-olds

Mini orange players develop a rounded game, learning a range of techniques and tactics. Courts are bigger and wider than the red stage but still smaller than full-size tennis courts. There are team and individual competitions with matches using tie-break scoring – usually the best of three tie-breaks.

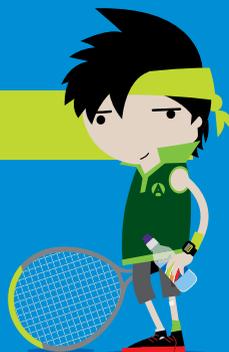
"Now I understand how to play the game"



Green Stage ideal for 9-10 year-olds

Mini green players can now put their technique and skills into practice on a full size court with a faster ball. There are individual and team competitions, with scoring extended to short sets.

"We play on full-size courts"



As part of Highland Spring Mini Tennis Month, we have put together some activities that you can do at home or at your local park to help develop your tennis skills! They each focus on specific skills and can include scoring so you can practise counting and track your progress as you improve.

1 Balance

Tennis develops the ability to balance when you are on the move (dynamic), and when your feet are still (static). Here are some fun balancing activities that you can do together:

Cross the River

Line up hoops or any kind of flat marker in your house, back garden or in the local park. 'Cross the River' using the stepping stones... Take it in turns with your child to hop, jump or skip from one marker to the next, balancing before you take off. Count out loud to see how many markers you land on. Make it harder by using fewer markers to get to the other side.

Jess' top tips!

- Keep your head up (it is the heaviest part of the body for children)
- Bend your knees and use your arms for take-off and landing
- Don't go too fast, make sure you are balanced before moving to the next stepping stone



Balance Beanbags

Walk in any direction balancing a bean bag, cushion, or book on your head, or a tennis ball on the palm of your hand or racket if you have one. Take it in turns with your child to be in charge shouting 'touch the floor', 'change direction', 'walk faster', 'hop' etc. Each time an instruction is followed successfully a point is scored. Call out the score if you want to make it competitive.



Jess says:

- Start with easy small movements to get the hang of it
- Use your arms for balance
- Keep your head up

2 Coordination

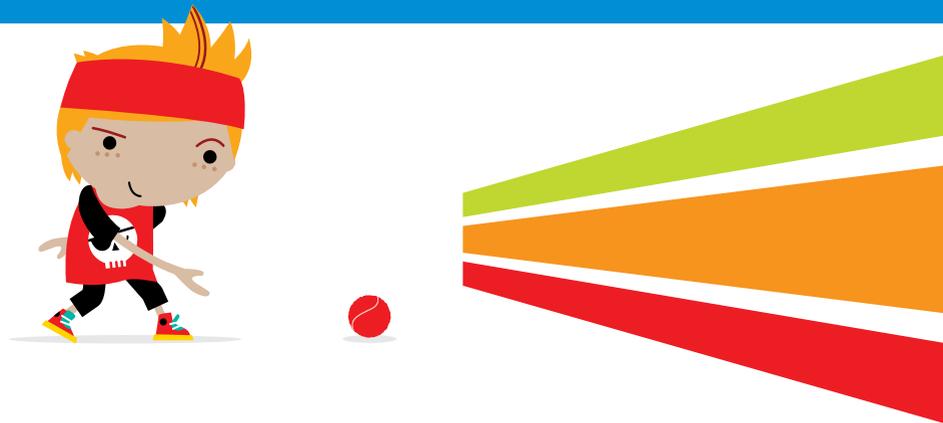
Coordination is the ability to control your body in the way you want. This could be writing, 'high fives', catching a ball or hitting a ball with a racket! Here are some activities you can do together to develop this skill:

Hot Potato

Roll a ball against the wall for your child to stop. As they get better repeat this from different distances, angles, and roll the ball at different speeds. You can progress to throwing and stopping the ball on the right or left hand side of your body with both hands together to replicate the turn needed for a forehand or backhand. When they get really good you can try throwing it against the wall (over or under arm). Swap over so you both get the chance to practice rolling/throwing and stopping/catching. Count how many balls you successfully pick up/catch, or count how many steps back from the wall you are to keep score.

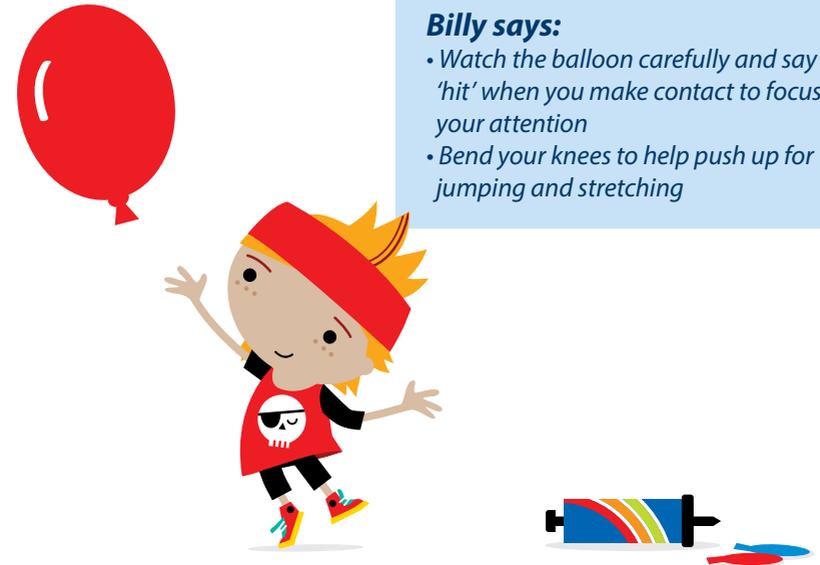
Billy's top tips!

- Try to 'freeze' for 3 seconds after you roll/throw and stop/catch the ball if you are having trouble controlling your limbs or balancing
- When rolling/throwing turn the body sideways and step forward with the opposite foot to your throwing hand



Balloon Tennis

Start by throwing the balloon up underarm for your child to catch, let it bounce first if it is easier. As you practise start to introduce new rules; can you both keep the balloon above your head by tapping it with your hand? Use alternate palm and back of hand to replicate forehands and backhands. Take it in turns to tap the balloon to develop a rally – count how many you can do before it touches the floor. Introduce 2 balloons once it gets too easy... or if you want to show off!



Billy says:

- Watch the balloon carefully and say 'hit' when you make contact to focus your attention
- Bend your knees to help push up for jumping and stretching

3 Agility

Agility is the ability to react by changing your speed and direction. In tennis this is usually the tennis ball coming from your partner. The following exercises are a fun way to improve your child's agility.

Chase and catch

Stand behind your child and roll the ball along the floor in front of them. As soon as your child sees the ball they have to run after it and pick it up as quickly as possible. As you get better you can change the direction of the ball for each roll so your child has to react quickly, or roll two balls in different directions/speeds at once. Once you are ready to show off you can throw the ball over their head for your child to catch after one bounce.



Suzi's top tips!

- Don't roll/throw the ball too hard
- Bend your knees to pick the ball up
- Try to return to a balanced position and freeze once you have picked up or caught the ball

Scarecrows

Hold your arms out to the side at shoulder height, like a scarecrow, with a ball in each hand. Stand in front of your child, when they are ready drop the ball(s) for them to catch. To start with they should try and catch one ball after one bounce; as they get better mix up which hand drops the ball to keep them reacting and deciding which way to move. As they get good you can drop both balls and see if you can catch them both after one bounce, or stand further away from your child and progress to catching with one hand. You can count how many they get out of 5 or 10 tries, and then swap over and you have a go.

Suzi says:

- The catcher should start with their feet shoulder width apart and on the balls of their feet
- Concentrate on a powerful push off for the important first step towards the ball



4 Receiving, hitting and sending

Highland Spring Mini Tennis and tennis involves reading the flight of an incoming ball (receiving skills), making contact with the ball (hitting) and then directing it back over the net in a chosen direction (sending). The following exercises will help you both develop receiving, hitting and sending skills:

Target bombing (sending)

Arrange some targets in the living room, garden or park – you could use jumpers, skipping ropes, hoops or skittles. Use a ball, hoop or bean bag to try and hit the targets. Vary the distance and angle of the target(s) to make it more challenging. Once you get really good you can try putting an object between you and the target to represent the tennis net in tennis – try to throw the ball over the object before hitting the target.



Catching (receiving and hitting)

Play throw and catch with your child, start with bigger balls or bean bags and letting the ball bounce once or twice. Increase distance between you and your child as their skill level improves and try to use one hand. Progress to throwing the ball over an object: like a park bench, a low wall, or a row of patio chairs and making each other move around to make catching more difficult. Count how many you can catch in a row, or play a game starting with 5 lives and see who wins.

Alfie says:

- Have your hands together in catching position before the ball is thrown
- Keep your eyes focused on the ball/ bean bag
- Say out loud 'bounce' and 'catch' to develop your timing

Alfie's top tips!

- Ask your child how they will have to change their throw to hit the various targets, i.e. harder and higher for targets further away, softer and lower for targets that are closer
- When throwing, point the palm of hand in the direction of the target



Highland Spring Mini Tennis Rally Awards

The Rally Awards are a skill based awards scheme for Highland Spring Mini Tennis players aged 3 – 10.

How do they work?

Mini players take part in four stages – **Tots**, **Red**, **Orange** and **Green**. Players progress through different levels within each stage by developing their skills and taking part in challenges.

Tots is made up of basic movement and balance skills.

Red, **Orange** and **Green** mini players develop 4 important tennis skills during each level of the Rally Awards:

- **How to rally**
- **How to serve**
- **Coming to the net and volleying**
- **How to score and compete**



There are numbered levels in each stage that represent how many times a mini player needs to demonstrate specific skills to achieve that award (e.g. Rally 5, Serve 10). See the table below:

Red	5	10	15	20
Orange		10	15	20
Green		10		20

There are more levels in **Red** than in **Orange** or **Green** as players stay longer in this stage. After completing the Green stage, mini players will be ready to go on to enjoy the full game of tennis.

Players can track their progress through each level of the Rally Awards with stickers, badges, certificates and the Rally Awards Collector.

Find out more about Highland Spring Mini Tennis today at:

www.minitennis.org