



THE PLAY STANDARD | SPORT ADAPTATIONS

Net Sports

Tennis, Pickleball, and Volleyball

All thirty-six lessons, adapted to the net-sport family

Document 6 of 12 | Version 1.0

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About This Document

The pillar documents teach the coach what a value is and how to run the frame. This document teaches the coach what that value looks like on a court with a net across the middle. It contains no new values and no new lessons. It contains the same thirty-six lessons with moments a net-sport coach can actually see.

Nothing here replaces the pillar documents. A coach reads the lesson in the pillar document and then reads the same lesson number here before the session. The framing sentence, the huddle-in question, the huddle-out prompt, and the carry-it-home challenge all come from the pillar document. Only the moments change.

Why These Three Sports Are One Family

Tennis, pickleball, and volleyball are structurally the same game. Territory is divided, the two sides never occupy the same space, play is punctuated rather than continuous, and there is a natural pause between every point. That structure determines what character looks like.

- Because play is punctuated, perseverance shows up as how quickly a player is ready for the next ball. There is a visible, timeable gap between failure and the next attempt, which exists in no invasion sport.
- Because players call their own lines, integrity is load-bearing in a way it is not anywhere else in this curriculum. A child in a net sport is asked to be honest against their own interest several times per session.
- Because the pause between points is real, emotional control has a natural training ground. The seven seconds after a lost point is where the lesson lives.
- Because partners are chosen before every session, inclusion is visible in the first thirty seconds of pairing.

A coach who moves from tennis to pickleball should recognize the frame, not relearn it. That is the point of organizing by family rather than by sport.

How to Use This Document

1. Read the day's lesson in the pillar document. That is where the script lives.
2. Read the same lesson code in this document. Carry the three moments in your head.
3. Check the sport variant line. It tells you what is different in your specific sport.
4. Check the across-the-bands line. It tells you what the moment looks like for the age in front of you.
5. Run the session. Name one moment out loud, by name, within seconds of it happening.

The Two Axes

Every child in a Play Academy Foundation session sits at the intersection of two independent scales, and confusing them is the most common error in youth sport programming.

Axis	What It Governs	Who Sets It
PLAY band	How the coach talks to the child. Vocabulary, abstraction, and whether the lesson is concrete, situational, or reflective.	The PLAY Standard. Sprouts 3 to 7, Climbers 8 to 12, Summit 13 to 17.
Sport stage	Ball, court, net height, racquet or paddle length, and which rules apply.	The sport's national governing body.

These do not align, and they were never meant to. A ten-year-old is a Climber for character instruction regardless of whether they are playing orange-ball tennis or green. An eleven-year-old and a twelve-year-old are both Climbers but play different volleyball net heights. The coach holds both facts at once.

For the application. PLAY band and sport stage are separate fields. Neither is derived from the other, and a lesson is keyed to the band while equipment is keyed to the stage. Forcing one to fit the other produces either equipment guidance that contradicts the governing body or lesson language pitched at the wrong age.

Crosswalk: Tennis

Age	PLAY Band	USTA / ITF Stage	Ball	Court
Under 8	Sprouts	Red	25 percent compression	36 feet
8 to 10	Climbers	Orange	50 percent compression	60 feet
11 to 12	Climbers	Green	75 percent compression	78 feet, full
13 to 17	Summit	Yellow	Standard	78 feet, full

Verification required. The tennis stage parameters above reflect the long-established red, orange, and green progression. Current USTA and ITF published pages could not be retrieved during research. Confirm ball compression, court length, and racquet length against USTA Youth Tennis and the ITF Rules of Tennis before this table is used to purchase equipment.

Crosswalk: Pickleball

There is no age-graded progression in pickleball. USA Pickleball applies one set of adult specifications to every player and defines juniors as a single bracket, eighteen and under. This is a genuine absence, not a research gap, and the Foundation should describe its own progression as its own rather than implying a national framework.

Specification	Value	Status
Court	20 by 44 feet, singles and doubles alike	USA Pickleball Rule 3.A.1
Non-volley zone	7 by 20 feet each side, lines are part of the zone	Rule 3.A.4.c
Net height	36 inches at sidelines, 34 inches at center	Rules 3.B.6 and 3.B.7

Specification	Value	Status
Paddle	Length plus width not over 24 inches, length not over 17 inches	Rule 3.D.2
Run-off	34 by 64 feet minimum recommended, 40 by 64 preferred	Rule 3.A.3
Youth modifications	None published	Absent from the rulebook

Pickleball's standard equipment already sits roughly where tennis orange-stage equipment sits: a slow, low-bouncing ball on a short court with a short paddle. That is the honest version of the claim that children rally faster in pickleball. It is a statement about specifications, which is verifiable, rather than about outcomes, for which no comparative study exists.

Court conversion. The USTA permits up to two pickleball courts of blended lines on one 78-foot tennis court, using the tennis net, with lines 1.5 inches wide in a lighter shade of the same color family. Four courts fit only with portable nets and only at run-off clearances below USA Pickleball's own recommendation. Foundation programs plan two to three per tennis court, never four, because children chase balls without looking.

Crosswalk: Volleyball

USA Volleyball publishes precise playing specifications and no age-graded skill curriculum. It will tell you what net height a twelve-year-old must play on. It will not tell you what a twelve-year-old should be taught this month.

Age Group	PLAY Band	Indoor Net, Female	Indoor Net, Male	Court
10 and under	Climbers	6 ft 6 in	7 ft 0 in	16 by 9 m permitted
11 to 12	Climbers	7 ft 0 in	7 ft 0 in	18 by 9 m standard
13 to 14	Summit	7 ft 4 1/8 in	7 ft 4 1/8 in	18 by 9 m standard
15 to 18	Summit	7 ft 4 1/8 in	7 ft 11 5/8 in	18 by 9 m standard

- Boys and girls play identical net heights from 10U through 14U. They diverge only at 15U.
- Court length reductions stop at 10U. For a program serving ages 10 to 17 there is no official court reduction available at all.
- Beach uses an entirely different system: two-year bands by graduation year rather than one-year bands by birthdate. A program running both will have the same child in a 13U indoor group and a 14U beach group at once.
- Beach 10U nets are 6 ft 6 in for both genders, fifteen centimetres lower than the indoor standard for boys. AAU sets 10U and 12U higher still. Confirm which sanctioning body applies before setting a net.

Minivolley. USA Volleyball's nearest thing to a youth curriculum is the Minivolley manual, which is advisory rather than rule. Its organizing principle is worth adopting: not one net and twenty children per side, but four to ten nets and two to four per side. It defers blocking deliberately and recommends a one-syllable stop call, BALL, rather than shouting do not jump, because children hear the word jump.

The Thirty-Six Lessons in Net Sports

Each entry gives three moments to watch for during play, a line on how the moment changes across the age bands, a note that applies to every sport in the family, and, where one sport genuinely differs, a sport variant naming it. The value, the framing, the questions, and the carry-it-home challenge are in the pillar document and are not repeated here.

One moment is enough. A coach is not looking for all three. A coach is looking for one, and naming it out loud within seconds of it happening. Three are given so that a coach who does not see the first has two more available.

Pillar P — Perseverance in Net Sports

P1 — Effort

Moments to Watch For

- A player who chases a ball that has clearly passed them and plays it anyway.
- A player who recovers to ready position after every repetition without being told.
- A player who asks for extra feeds after the group has moved on.

Across the bands. Sprouts run back to the line instead of walking. Climbers recover their feet. Summit hold effort standards through conditioning nobody is watching.

In this family. Effort in a net sport is measured in recovery, not in winners. Watch the feet between points.

Sport variant. Volleyball: pursuing a ball into the free zone or off the court. Pickleball doubles: covering ground for a partner who is out of position.

P2 — Trying Again

Moments to Watch For

- A player who misses the same shot four times and sets up for the fifth the same way.
- A player who resets their feet within two seconds of losing a point.
- A player who serves again immediately after a fault instead of walking it off.

Across the bands. Sprouts pick the ball up and go again. Climbers shorten the gap deliberately. Summit can describe their reset and use it under pressure.

In this family. The pause between points is short and identical every time, which makes recovery speed comparable across children and across sessions.

Sport variant. Volleyball: the passer who calls for the next ball straight after shanking one.

P3 — Mistakes

Moments to Watch For

- A player who names their own error before the coach does — late, flat-footed, too early.
- A player who changes one thing after a miss: grip, position, or contact point, rather than swinging harder.
- A player who asks what to fix instead of asking to move on.

Across the bands. Sprouts say the miss is fine and keep playing. Climbers name the error. Summit sort errors into technique, decision, or effort.

In this family. In doubles, watch for the player who owns an error to their partner rather than to the coach.

P4 — Finishing

Moments to Watch For

- A player who plays out a point that is already lost.
- A player whose last five balls of a basket look like the first five.
- A player who stays through the collection and the cool-down rather than drifting off.

Across the bands. Sprouts finish the lap or the line. Climbers finish the drill. Summit finish the session at standard.

In this family. A point, a game, and a set all have unambiguous ends. Finishing is easier to see here than anywhere else in the curriculum.

Sport variant. Volleyball: playing the rally through a bad set rather than letting it drop.

P5 — Hard Things

Moments to Watch For

- A player who asks to work their weaker side.
- A player who takes the harder feed, the deeper target, or the stronger partner when offered a choice.
- A player who holds technique when tired rather than reverting to whatever is easiest.

Across the bands. Sprouts stay with a task that is not working. Climbers choose the harder option out loud. Summit build their own session around a weakness.

In this family. The weaker side is obvious in every net sport and easy to avoid for an entire session. Watch which side a child protects.

Sport variant. Pickleball: a player who keeps dinking when banging would win the point today.

P6 — Patience

Moments to Watch For

- A player who builds a point instead of going for a winner on the first ball.
- A player who holds a new grip or contact point through a stretch where they are losing.
- A player who waits at the feed line without crowding or cutting.

Across the bands. Sprouts wait their turn calmly. Climbers stay with a change that is not paying off yet. Summit can name the dip and choose to stay in it.

In this family. Rally length is patience made visible. A child who can extend a rally has learned to wait.

Sport variant. Volleyball: running the full three-touch sequence rather than sending the first ball back over.

P7 — Courage

Moments to Watch For

- A player who volunteers to demonstrate in front of the group.
- A player who steps in to volley rather than backing up.
- A player who plays up against someone clearly stronger without lowering effort.

Across the bands. Sprouts try the new thing. Climbers try it in front of peers. Summit attempt the decisive ball with the group watching.

In this family. Stepping forward rather than backing up is the physical form of courage in every net sport.

Sport variant. Volleyball: calling mine on a ball in the seam.

P8 — Focus

Moments to Watch For

- A player who watches the ball all the way to contact.
- A player who runs the same short routine before every serve.
- A player who returns attention to the drill after a distraction on the next court.

Across the bands. Sprouts keep their eyes on the ball. Climbers recover attention quickly. Summit use a routine that genuinely resets them.

In this family. Doubles: the player still tracking play while their partner takes the ball.

P9 — Consistency

Moments to Watch For

- A player who arrives early and is warm before the session starts.
- A player whose effort in the final drill matches the first.
- A player who works one skill alone before or after the group session.

Across the bands. Sprouts come ready every time. Climbers keep a daily habit. Summit hold a standard without supervision.

In this family. Repetition is the whole training method here. Consistency shows up as the fiftieth ball looking like the first.

Sport variant. Volleyball: the same passing platform on ball fifty as on ball one.

Pillar I — Leadership in Net Sports

L1 — Responsibility

Moments to Watch For

- A player who manages their own racquet, paddle, shoes, and water without a parent handling it.
- A player who collects balls without being asked.
- A player who leaves the court and the equipment better than they found it.

Across the bands. Sprouts look after their own bottle. Climbers arrive prepared. Summit take over what an adult used to do for them.

In this family. Every child in a net sport carries something. Equipment responsibility is assignable on day one.

Sport variant. Volleyball: checking and setting net height, or taking the net down at the end.

L2 — Initiative

Moments to Watch For

- A player who starts the warm-up before the coach reaches the court.
- A player who organizes the group into pairs unprompted.
- A player who sets up the next drill from memory.

Across the bands. Sprouts find something that needs doing. Climbers move before instruction finishes. Summit lead a segment without being assigned.

In this family. Court setup and takedown happen every session and are always available to whoever moves first.

Sport variant. Pickleball: moving the portable net or laying temporary lines without being asked.

L3 — Teamwork

Moments to Watch For

- A player who feeds their partner catchable balls rather than difficult ones.
- A player who adjusts pace so a weaker partner can stay in the rally.
- A player who plays the simple ball that keeps the rally alive.

Across the bands. Sprouts include and wait. Climbers make the partner better on purpose. Summit choose the weaker partner deliberately.

In this family. The practice partner is the teammate. Say that out loud, especially in singles, where it is not obvious.

Sport variant. Volleyball: setting a hittable ball rather than the one that makes the setter look good.

L4 — Accountability

Moments to Watch For

- A player who names their own error to their partner before the point restarts.
- A player who does not blame a partner, the wind, the sun, or the equipment.
- A player who apologizes specifically and then plays the next ball properly.

Across the bands. Sprouts say it was theirs. Climbers own it without an explanation attached. Summit own decision errors, not just execution errors.

In this family. A partner hears an owned error immediately, because they are standing right there. The distance between error and accountability is about two seconds.

Sport variant. Volleyball: owning a bad set rather than blaming the pass that produced it.

L5 — Encouragement

Moments to Watch For

- A player who tells a partner specifically what they did well, not just good job.
- A player who is the first voice after somebody else misses.
- A player who encourages the person struggling most rather than the person already winning.

Across the bands. Sprouts cheer. Climbers give specific credit. Summit credit a rival or a competitor for their spot.

In this family. In doubles the between-point exchange is the whole opportunity. Watch what a partner says in those seven seconds.

L6 — Communication

Moments to Watch For

- A player who calls the ball early rather than after it lands.
- A player who tells a partner where they are going before the point starts.
- A player who asks a clarifying question during instructions rather than guessing.

Across the bands. Sprouts use a loud clear voice. Climbers call early. Summit organize the group verbally without being the designated leader.

In this family. Communication is thin in singles and constant in doubles. Match the teaching to the format in front of you.

Sport variant. Volleyball: mine, out, and short called before contact. Pickleball: yours, switch, and bounce it. Tennis singles: the calls are to yourself and out loud.

L7 — Service

Moments to Watch For

- A player who picks up balls that are not near them.
- A player who feeds for somebody else so that player gets more repetitions than they do.
- A player who helps a younger or newer participant without being assigned to it.

Across the bands. Sprouts help without being asked. Climbers take the unglamorous job. Summit mentor with no audience and no credit.

In this family. Feeding, shagging, and setting up are the invisible jobs in every net sport, and none of them appear in a score.

Sport variant. Volleyball: shagging balls and running the cart while others hit.

L8 — Integrity

Moments to Watch For

- A player who calls their own ball in when the call would have gone their way.
- A player who admits a double bounce, a net touch, or a foot fault nobody else saw.
- A player who corrects the score in the opponent's favor.

Across the bands. Sprouts tell the true thing. Climbers make the honest call under pressure. Summit hold the standard when the cost is real.

In this family. Net sports are the strongest integrity teachers in the curriculum, because players call their own lines. Say that out loud to the group.

L9 — Influence

Moments to Watch For

- A player whose warm-up standard the rest of the court quietly matches.
- A player who lifts the group at the point where energy normally drops.
- A player who refuses to join in when the group starts complaining or cutting corners.

Across the bands. Sprouts are copied by younger children. Climbers notice their own effect on the group. Summit set the tone on purpose.

In this family. On a shared court, the tone set on court one travels to court four inside ten minutes. Watch which court it started on.

Pillar A — Attitude in Net Sports

A1 — Respect

Moments to Watch For

- A player who handles a racquet or paddle carefully rather than dropping or throwing it.
- A player who acknowledges an opponent or partner directly at the end of a game.
- A player who takes a correction without an eye roll or a comeback.

Across the bands. Sprouts show gentle hands. Climbers describe the behavior rather than the feeling. Summit give a weaker opponent the same seriousness as a stronger one.

In this family. Equipment respect is highly visible in net sports because everyone carries something throwable. A thrown racquet or paddle is a named moment every time.

A2 — Sportsmanship

Moments to Watch For

- A player who congratulates the winner immediately and specifically.
- A player who does not celebrate in a way aimed at the other person.
- A player who plays a lost game at full effort to the last point.

Across the bands. Sprouts shake hands. Climbers handle a loss within ninety seconds. Summit conduct themselves so opponents want to play them again.

In this family. The net is a natural meeting point at the end of a match. Use it as the ritual, whatever the sport.

Sport variant. Volleyball: the handshake line is built in. Tennis and pickleball require the coach to build the ritual deliberately.

A3 — Manners

Moments to Watch For

- A player who greets the coach by name on arrival and on leaving.
- A player who thanks whoever fed them or partnered them.
- A player who makes eye contact during a conversation with an adult.

Across the bands. Sprouts say please and thank you. Climbers greet adults by name. Summit introduce themselves properly to an unfamiliar adult.

In this family. The handshake and the net greeting are the two ritual points in every net sport. Use them.

A4 — Gratitude

Moments to Watch For

- A player who thanks the person who fed the basket.
- A player who notices the court was swept, lined, or set up before they arrived.
- A player who helps put away equipment somebody else brought out.

Across the bands. Sprouts thank the person who brought them. Climbers name something that was prepared for them. Summit thank someone for work nobody mentions anymore.

In this family. Portable nets and temporary lines make the setup labor visible. Point at it.

A5 — Emotional Control

Moments to Watch For

- A player who is visibly frustrated and does not throw, kick, or hit anything.
- A player who takes a breath at the baseline before serving again.
- A player who recovers composure without an adult stepping in.

Across the bands. Sprouts take one big breath. Climbers name their own tell. Summit hold composure in a high-stakes or unfair moment.

In this family. Net sports give a natural pause between every point. That pause is the training ground for this lesson and exists in no invasion sport.

A6 — Response

Moments to Watch For

- A player who adjusts without complaint to sun, wind, a bad bounce, or a poor surface.
- A player who accepts an unwanted partner or court assignment and makes it work.
- A player who keeps playing at standard after a call goes against them.

Across the bands. Sprouts choose their next thing on purpose. Climbers respond well to something outside their control. Summit refuse to let another person's conduct dictate their own.

In this family. Outdoor courts supply this lesson for free. Wind, sun, and a bad surface are the curriculum.

A7 — Inclusion

Moments to Watch For

- A player who partners with whoever is left rather than steering toward a friend.
- A player who brings a quiet participant into the rotation.
- A player who adapts a rally so a beginner can stay in it.

Across the bands. Sprouts invite. Climbers choose the person usually chosen last. Summit make a new participant's first session easier.

In this family. Partner selection happens in every net session and is the most visible inclusion moment in the entire curriculum. Watch the first thirty seconds of pairing.

A8 — Listening

Moments to Watch For

- A player who executes an instruction correctly the first time.
- A player who lets a partner finish speaking before responding.
- A player who refers to something another child said in the huddle.

Across the bands. Sprouts show listening ears. Climbers repeat back what somebody said. Summit take a correction fully before responding to it.

In this family. Court noise makes listening genuinely hard. Bring the group in rather than shouting across the net.

A9 — Energy

Moments to Watch For

- A player who jogs between drills rather than walking.
- A player who claps or calls for a partner after a good rally.

- A player who arrives visibly ready and lifts the court.

Across the bands. Sprouts bring a ready face. Climbers notice whether they added energy or took it. Summit hold energy through a repetitive block.

In this family. Volleyball culture already rewards vocal energy. Tennis and pickleball usually do not, which makes it a coachable differentiator.

Pillar Y — YOU in Net Sports

Y1 — Identity

Moments to Watch For

- A player who loses a set and is the same person afterward.
- A player who describes a poor session without calling themselves bad.
- A player who corrects a teammate who is talking down about themselves.

Across the bands. Sprouts name something good about themselves that is not winning. Climbers separate played badly from am bad. Summit compete freely rather than protecting a ranking.

In this family. Ladders and challenge matches make ranking visible. Watch how a player talks about themselves the day they move down.

Y2 — Confidence

Moments to Watch For

- A player who attempts a shot they refused a month ago.
- A player who names something they can now do that they could not before.
- A player who performs under pressure without asking for reassurance first.

Across the bands. Sprouts show what they can do. Climbers keep a list of proof. Summit rely on a record rather than on encouragement.

In this family. Net sports produce countable evidence — rallies in a row, serves in, dinks held. Use the count as the evidence file.

Y3 — Fuel

Moments to Watch For

- A player who arrives having eaten something substantial.
- A player who chooses water over a sugary drink at the break.
- A player who talks about what food does rather than whether it is good or bad.

Across the bands. Sprouts name a fuel food. Climbers connect what they ate to how they felt an hour in. Summit manage their own pre-session nutrition.

In this family. Long outdoor sessions in heat make this immediately observable. Never comment on any child's body while teaching it.

Y4 — Rest

Moments to Watch For

- A player who connects a flat session to a short night without being prompted.
- A player who talks about a consistent bedtime rather than a random one.
- A player who prioritizes sleep over a screen and says so.

Across the bands. Sprouts name their bedtime routine. Climbers notice the difference sleep makes. Summit manage sleep around training and competition.

In this family. Early weekend court times make sleep debt visible. Ask, do not diagnose.

Y5 — Body

Moments to Watch For

- A player who drinks before being told to.
- A player who uses breath deliberately to settle before serving.
- A player who describes movement they do outside of sessions.

Across the bands. Sprouts drink water and take a breath. Climbers describe their own activity outside sessions. Summit run a hydration or breathing protocol on purpose.

In this family. Hard courts in summer heat are a real hazard, not a lesson prop. Follow the heat protocol first and teach second.

Y6 — Goals

Moments to Watch For

- A player who names a process goal rather than a result they cannot control.
- A player who works their stated goal without being directed to.
- A player who reports back on progress from a previous session.

Across the bands. Sprouts say one thing they want to get better at. Climbers pick a goal they control. Summit structure a session around a stated objective.

In this family. Counting is the natural goal mechanism here. Twenty dinks in a row, ten first serves in, five passes to target.

Y7 — Self-Awareness

Moments to Watch For

- A player who identifies their own trigger before it escalates.
- A player who asks for what they need rather than acting out.
- A player who names a strength of theirs accurately, without inflating or dismissing it.

Across the bands. Sprouts notice how their body feels. Climbers name their trigger. Summit name their pattern under pressure, including the unflattering part.

In this family. The between-point pause is where a player either regulates or unravels, and it is visible from across the court.

Y8 — Honesty

Moments to Watch For

- A player who gives an accurate self-rating rather than a flattering one.
- A player who admits they do not understand rather than nodding along.
- A player who acknowledges a weakness without being prompted.

Across the bands. Sprouts tell one honest thing about their day. Climbers rate their effort honestly. Summit reject an available and true excuse.

In this family. Self-officiating means honesty is already load-bearing in these sports. Connect this lesson back to L8 explicitly.

Y9 — Balance

Moments to Watch For

- A player fully absorbed in play without needing prompting.

- A player who keeps playing when given the option to stop.
- A player present through the whole session without reaching for a phone.

Across the bands. Sprouts play hard with real people. Climbers trade screen time for movement. Summit manage their own device use around training and sleep.

In this family. Net sports are lifetime sports. Say so to Summit: this is a thing they can still be doing at sixty.

Coach Notes for Net Sports

What This Family Teaches Best

Every family of sports teaches some values more readily than others. Net sports are unusually strong on four, and a coach should lean into them rather than distributing attention evenly.

Value	Why This Family Teaches It Well
L8 Integrity	Players call their own lines. A child is asked to be honest against their own interest several times per session, unsupervised, with a witness only if they choose to be one.
A5 Emotional Control	The pause between points is real and repeated. A coach can watch a child regulate or unravel dozens of times in one hour.
P2 Trying Again	The gap between a failure and the next attempt is visible and short enough to time. Recovery speed is directly coachable here.
A7 Inclusion	Partner selection happens out loud before every session. Who a child pairs with is the most legible inclusion signal in the curriculum.

What This Family Teaches Poorly

Net sports are weak on the values that require shared territory and continuous play. Do not force them.

- L6 Communication is thin in singles tennis, where there is no one to talk to. Teach it in doubles or accept that the invasion sports carry it better.
- L3 Teamwork in a singles context has to be taught through practice partnering rather than through play. Be explicit that the partner is the teammate.
- A9 Energy has no cultural support in tennis or pickleball the way it does in volleyball. That makes it worth teaching deliberately rather than assuming it.

Delivery Errors Specific to This Family

- Naming only the players on the near court. On a four-court block a coach names moments where they happen to be standing. Rotate deliberately and track who has been named.
- Letting the ladder define the child. Challenge matches and ranked ladders make status visible every week. Y1 Identity exists for exactly this and should be scheduled during a competitive block, not away from it.
- Coaching over the net. Court noise makes listening genuinely hard. Bring the group in rather than shouting across.
- Treating a thrown racquet or paddle as a discipline event only. It is an A5 moment and should be named as one, then addressed.
- Skipping the handshake in tennis and pickleball. Volleyball has a built-in handshake line. The other two require the coach to build the ritual, and A2 does not land without it.

Safety Notes

Eye protection. No governing body requires eye protection in pickleball. Foundation programs require it anyway. National emergency-department data from 2014 to 2024 shows facial injuries are the single largest category of pediatric pickleball injury at 27.1 percent, that 58.4 percent of the decade’s injuries occurred in 2024 alone, and that 57.4 percent fell in the 13 to 17 band. A 2025 JAMA Ophthalmology paper on pickleball

ocular injuries explicitly calls for standardized protective equipment guidelines. The Foundation is exceeding the governing body standard here rather than implementing it, and coaches should say so plainly to parents who ask.

Run-off space. USA Pickleball identifies five-foot sidelines as unsafe and recommends seven feet minimum with ten feet behind the baseline. Children chase balls without looking up. Where a converted court cannot provide that, reduce the number of courts rather than the run-off.

Heat. Hard courts in summer are a hazard rather than a lesson prop. The heat protocol governs first and the lesson second. No pickleball governing body publishes heat guidance at all, so the Foundation follows the standard adopted in Document 8.

Jumping. In volleyball, use a one-syllable stop call. USA Volleyball recommends BALL rather than do not jump, because it is faster and because children hear the word jump.

Talking to Parents About Net Sports

Parents of net-sport children ask two questions more than any other: whether their child is improving, and whether they should specialize. On the first, answer with a countable thing — rallies in a row, first serves in, dinks held — because it is the same evidence the child is using to build confidence in Y2. On the second, the Foundation does not recommend early specialization, and a coach should say so and refer the conversation to programming staff rather than giving an opinion on a child's athletic future.

Play Academy Foundation, Inc. is a national nonprofit that brings professional sports, wellness, and recreation programming directly into the neighborhoods where children live.

Roughly half of American high school students attend no physical education in a given week, and fewer than three in ten attend daily, against a national recommendation of daily physical education. That deficit has held for thirty years. The Foundation exists because it is not going to close on its own.