



Tennis + Reading Program for ages 5-8, Frequently Asked Questions

We are excited to offer longer tennis classes for our youngest players (80 minutes as opposed to 40 minutes) by incorporating off-court instruction focused on literacy (both physical and reading) in addition to on-court tennis instruction. Some of the common questions we receive about this change are answered below.

How will this work?

Kids age 5/6 will be grouped together and kids age 7/8 will be grouped together for both on-court and off-court activities. After a short icebreaker and welcome, 5/6 year olds will begin with ABC activities off-court while age 7/8 year olds will begin on-court. After about 35 min, they will switch places. Off-court activities will include a story, life skill discussion, and physical movement focused on developing agility, balance, coordination and speed (abc's of physical literacy). On-court activities will include our traditional dynamic warm-up, tennis skill development, and tennis games.

Why reading? I want my child to play tennis, s/he gets enough reading at home.

40% of SPPS 3rd graders do not meet proficiency standards in reading, which is a reliable predictor of future success. As a nonprofit that uses tennis as a vehicle for improving our community and creating healthy young athletes, we feel reading is a critical life skill that all young people need and that our St. Paul community must tackle together. According to the MN Literacy Council, about 66% of the ninth grade achievement gap can be explained by the learning experiences that occur in summer during elementary school. Over the summer, middle- and upper-income children continue to improve reading skills, while children living in poverty do not. The goals of our SPUT ABC program are two-fold: 1 - we want to combat the summer slide, ensuring that all SPUT kids are exposed to reading as a fun pastime during the summer months and 2 - we use stories to introduce our SPUT SPIRIT life skill themes to our youngsters in an understandable way.

Why physical literacy? My kids should be hitting tennis balls.

Children need to develop agility, balance, coordination and speed (ABC's) to be successful in any sport. As their young bodies physically develop, racquet skills aren't as important to master for kids age 8 and under as are these basic athletic fundamentals. Children who don't develop basic physical skills while they're young may dislike sports and physical activity when they're older, probably because they don't develop basic competencies and therefore struggle at learning more complex skills later in life. Developing physical literacy at a young age is critical to becoming a successful athlete, whether on the tennis court or in any other sports arena.



My child struggles with reading. I don't want him/her to be embarrassed if s/he can't read.

Our summer reading program is not a tutoring program. Our goal is to keep your child at the level s/he is currently at by simply exposing them to books throughout the summer and reading to/with them. Children are not forced to read, but are encouraged if they are interested. It can be difficult for other kids to listen to a story read by a developing reader, so we have our trained volunteers lead story time. Our focus is on making reading fun for kids, hoping that the experience leads to positive attitudes toward books and choosing a trip to the library over more screen time.

I am interested in becoming a reading volunteer. How do I learn more? What qualifications are needed?

Please contact us at 651-222-2879 or email laura@urbantennis.org. We also have a Volunteer Application form with more info at our website under the Get Involved menu. All volunteers over age 18 must pass a background screening. Youth volunteers must be age 14 or older. All new volunteers must attend training on Tuesday, June 14.

Please contact us at 651-222-2879 with any additional questions. We are looking forward to a great summer and welcome your input and ideas on our programming at your neighborhood courts!