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What is it?

> The Smash Down Barriers program is a sport-for-development program supported by the Australian Government, Table Tennis Australia and the International Table Tennis Federation.

> Its objective is to use table tennis as a tool to improve the lives of people with disabilities by:

1. Increasing levels of physical activity;
2. Providing leadership opportunities; &
3. Promoting social inclusion.

This Smash Down Barriers Manual consists of 6 introductory lessons designed to assist coaches with any level of Para Table Tennis understanding, to deliver fun, safe and inclusive activities. Any person wishing to learn more should contact their state or national table tennis association.
Coaching Players with Disabilities

> Do not treat players with disabilities as if they are simple, and avoid using condescending language. Having a disability does not mean that a person is intellectually inferior.
> Speak directly to the person with the disability; not to someone accompanying them.
> Do not lean on or touch a person’s wheelchair without their consent. The wheelchair is part of the user’s personal space.

> Consider sitting down or kneeling to get on the same level as the wheelchair user when engaged in long conversations.
> Do not demean or patronize the athlete by patting them on the head.
> Feel comfortable using expressions such as running along. It is likely the wheelchair user expresses things in the same way.
Safety

- Check the playing area is free of hazards and is a safe distance away from walls and fixed objects.
- Ensure the surface is safe and appropriate for the activities.
- Check there is a safe distance between the group of participants and tables.
- Make sure all equipment is appropriate, safe and working correctly.
- Check equipment that has been set up by others before you use it.
- Provide clear instructions for the game and use of equipment.
- Instruct participants on safety: e.g. no leaning on the table.
- Remind players to be aware of table corners when moving around the tables.
Basic Terms & Rules

> **A rally**
is the period during which the ball is in play.

> **A serve**
is played from behind the table with the server hitting the ball so that it bounces on their half of the table before going over the net and bouncing on their opponent’s half of the table. Each player has 2 serves in a row before it is the opponent’s turn.

> **A let**
is called when the ball hits the net during a serve and bounces on the opponent’s half of the table. When a ‘let’ is called, the server may have another serve. When the receiver is in a wheelchair, a let may be called during the serve if:
- The ball bounces on the receiver’s court and returns in the direction of the net;
- The ball comes to rest on the receiver’s court; or
- In singles, crosses either sideline of the table.

> **A game**
is played with 2 (singles) or 4 (doubles) players and is won when a person or team reaches 11 points. Games can also be played with a time limit (for example a player or team leading after 5 minutes is the winner). If scores are level, then the game is determined with serves alternating after each point. The first player or team with a 2-point advantage wins the game.

> **A match**
consists of an odd number of games (for example best of 1, 3, 5 or 7 games).

> **In doubles matches**
all players successively take it in turns to hit the ball, except when the match is played by wheelchair players.
Scoring

Scoring - the server’s score is always called first. A point is scored each time a rally is won. If both players reach 10 points, then the players alternate with one serve each. The first player to have a 2-point advantage wins the game (for example 12-10).

5 common ways of winning a point:

1. The opponent fails to make a correct service
2. The opponent fails to make a correct return
3. The opponent serves or hits the ball outside the table or beyond the end line without touching the table
4. The opponent’s free hand touches the playing surface
5. In doubles, the opponents strike the ball out of the sequence established by the server and the first receiver.
Warm-up & Warm-down

The Ideal Warm-up will:

- Raise the body temperature.
- Result in the pulse rising between 10-30 beats per minute above resting heart rate.
- Include low intensity exercises which allow full range of motion movements.
- Be low impact.
- Be rhythmic and continuous.
- Move from general to specific muscle groups.
- Include stretching of major muscle groups to be used in the lesson

Examples include:
- A 5-min walk or light jog
- Mobilising the joints: arm circles, ankle and wrists rotations, etc.
- Stretching
Warm-up & Warm-down

The ideal Warm-Down will:

- Decrease the body temperature and heart rate.
- Include low intensity exercises which allow full range of motion movements.
- Be low impact.
- Be rhythmic and continuous.
- Include stretching of major muscles groups used in the lesson.
- Include a relaxation activity.

Examples include:
- Slowly walking around
- Slow stretches to prevent stiffness.

Tips for Coaches:
- The following lesson-plans assume that each lesson starts with a warm-up and ends with a warm-down.
# OVERVIEW OF LESSONS

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- **Warm Up**
- **Activities**
- **Finish**

**OVERVIEW OF LESSONS**

- **LESSON 01**: Grip, Warm Up Shakehand Grip, Balance & Transfer, Bouncer Challenge, Warm Down
- **LESSON 02**: Ready Position, Forehand & Backhand Drive, Balloon Table Tennis, Target Serving, Hitting Challenge, Warm Down
- **LESSON 03**: Serves, Warm Up Basic Serving, Frogger Splat, Beat The Champ, Warm Down
- **LESSON 04**: Forehand & Backhand Push, Warm Up Forehand Push, Hit The Square, Limbo Table Tennis, Hitting Challenge, Warm Down
- **LESSON 05**: Forehand Topspin, Warm Up Forehand Topspin, Throw & Hit Topspin vs Backspin, Top Table, Warm Down
- **LESSON 06**: Singles & Doubles Matches, Warm Up Serves in Doubles, Doubles Matches, Team Matches, Warm Down
Equipment:
• 1 racket per player
• at least 1 ball per player
• balloons (optional)

ACTIVITIES:

Warm-up
Shakehand Grip
Balance & Transfer
Roller Ball
Bounce & Catch
Bounce & Transfer
Bouncer Challenge
Warm-down

5 minutes
5 minutes
10 minutes
10 minutes
10 minutes
5 minutes
5 minutes
5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

• Hold the racket in the palm of the hand.

• Place the thumb and forefinger roughly parallel to the straight edge of the rubber.

• Wrap the remaining three fingers loosely around the handle to provide stability.

• Check that every person has the correct grip and pay attention to the forefinger.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Different para players often require different ways to grip the racket. For example, players with quadriplegia do not have the strength in their hands to grip the racket and often use elastic bandages to join the bat and the hand. Regardless of the necessary modifications, it is important that the racket is secured to the hand in a manner enabling the widest possible range of effects and techniques.
WHAT TO DO

**Ball-Balance**
- Using the correct grip, place and balance the ball on the forehand side for 2 minutes.
- Mix it up and ask players to “change hands”, “walk forward/backward”, “lift the right leg”, etc.
- Repeat using the backhand side.

**Ball-Transfer**
- Get into small groups with one ball per group.
- The first player will balance the ball on the forehand before transferring it to the second player and around the group.
- Repeat the exercise with the backhand.
- Mix it up by alternating forehand and backhand sides and changing direction.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Check that players are using the correct grip.
- Make it easier by using balloons or harder by using 2 or more balls per group.
WHAT TO DO

• Divide the group into pairs facing each other across a table or the floor.
• Using the backhand side of the racket, ask the players to roll the ball to each other, trying to keep the ball rolling all the time.

ROLLING BALL

• 1 racket per player and 1 ball per pair.
• This exercise can be done on any flat surface (e.g. the floor, a desk, or a table).

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Ask the players to play a match up to 11 points. A point is scored if the ball passes over the end without the opponent returning it.
WHAT TO DO

• Hold the racket in front of your body with the forehand side facing up.
• Bounce the ball once and catch it.
• Bounce the ball twice and catch it.
• Bounce the ball thrice and catch it.
• Mix it up by asking the players to bounce the ball "X" number of times and catch it.
• Repeat the exercise first using the backhand and then alternating sides of the racket.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Check that players are using the correct grip.
• Encourage players to use a low bounce.
• Encourage players to throw the ball onto the racket using a flat hand to simulate the serve.
WHAT TO DO

• Standing in a circle, the first player will bounce the ball on the forehand and ‘pass’ the ball to the second player and around the group.
• Repeat the exercise first with the backhand and then alternating sides of the racket.
• Mix it up by changing direction and calling out a minimum number of bounces before transferring the ball.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Check that players are using the correct grip.
• Encourage players to use a low bounce.
**BOUNCER CHALLENGE**

• 1 racket and ball per player.

**WHAT TO DO**

Ask players to count the maximum number they can do in 30 seconds of each of the following:
- Bounce the ball on the forehand
- Bounce the ball on the backhand
- Bounce the ball alternating the forehand and backhand
- In pairs, bounce and transfer the ball using the forehand
- In pairs, bounce and transfer the ball using the backhand
- In pairs, bounce and transfer the ball alternating the forehand and the backhand

After each 30 seconds, ask the players to indicate how many they did.

**TIPS FOR COACHES**

• Check that players are using the correct grip.
• Encourage players to use a low bounce.
equipment:  
- 1 racket per player  
- at least 1 ball per player  
- balloons  
- paper, plastic cups or similar targets

activities:  

warm-up  
ready position  
forehand & backhand  
balloon table tennis  
ten pin table tennis  
table tennis cricket  
hitting challenge  
warm-down  

5 minutes  
5 minutes  
5 minutes  
10 minutes  
10 minutes  
10 minutes  
5 minutes  
5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

• Bend your knees and lean slightly forward.
• Place your feet shoulder-width apart.
• Hold the racket in front of your chest and in a vertical position (for easy transfer to forehand or backhand).

TIPS FOR COACHES

• For standing players - the ready position should be the same used by able-bodied players. Some disabilities will restrict movement and require minor modifications, for example some ambulant players may not be able to bend the knees. Each case should be considered individually.

• For wheelchair players - the wheelchair should be positioned so that the player can reach the forehand and backhand corners. If possible, the player should lean slightly forward without losing balance; some players use their free hand to grip the chair for extra support.
**WHAT TO DO**

• Forehand Drive (for right-handed players):
  • Place your left foot forward with the body angled 45° to the table.
  • Start in the Ready Position with the racket in front of your chest.
  • Rotate your hip to the right until the racket is beside you at hip height.
  • Contact the ball slightly in front of the body with a brushing up action.
  • Follow through forward and up, finishing near your forehead as if saluting.

• Check that players are using the correct grip and adopting the ready position.
• Combine this activity with Balloon Table Tennis (next activity) by teaching the Forehand Drive first, getting them to practice with balloons and then repeat the activity with the Backhand Drive.
WHAT TO DO

• Demonstrate the Forehand Drive first, ask the players to copy your actions and provide feedback. Then repeat this exercise using the Backhand Drive.
• 1 racket per player.

• Backhand Drive:
  • Place your feet shoulder-width apart and square to the table.
  • Start in the Ready Position with the racket in front of your chest.
  • Bring the racket toward your stomach and then forward to contact the ball upward with a brushing action.
  • Follow through forward and up as if throwing a frisbee.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Check that players are using the correct grip and adopting the ready position.
• Combine this activity with Balloon Table Tennis (next page) by teaching the Forehand Drive first, getting them to practice with balloons and then repeat the activity with the Backhand Drive.
WHAT TO DO

• Divide into pairs, one balloon between two players.
• Hit the balloon to each other using the forehand drive.
• Count how many forehands can be done without letting the balloon hit the floor.
• Repeat the exercise with the backhand drive.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Check that players use correct grip and adopt the ready position.
• Remind players to follow through to their heads as if saluting (forehand stroke) or forward and up as if throwing a frisbee (backhand stroke).
TEN PIN TABLE TENNIS

Divide the players into small groups of 4 with 1 racket and 1 ball per group. Set up 6 plastic cups or similar targets on one-half of the table as shown below.

WHAT TO DO

- The 1st player, the hitter, bounces the ball on their forehand-side of the table and hits it at the targets.
- Each target is 1 point and each player has 5 balls to score as many points as possible.
- Replace or re-set the targets as needed and change around.
- The player with the most points wins the game.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Check that players are using the correct forehand technique.
- Encourage the receivers to use the Ready Position when catching the ball.
- Repeat this exercise with the backhand drive.
WHAT TO DO

• One player is the “batter” and the others are the “fielders.”
  A “fielder” bounces the ball on both sides of the table toward the “batter.”

• Scoring - If the “batter”:
  • hits the targets then he/she scores 4 points;
  • misses the targets but hits the table then 1 point;
  • misses the table on the full then 0 points;
  • misses the table on the full and the ball is caught by a fielder then they swap positions.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Check that players are using the correct Ready Position and Forehand Drive technique.
• Change it by placing the sheets of paper in different areas of the table.
In this challenge, players pair up and hit forehands continuously. Pairs attempt to set a personal record for continuous hitting. Repeat this challenge using the backhand drive.

WHAT TO DO

- 1st player bounces the ball on their side of the table and hits a forehand across to the receiver’s forehand side.
- The receiver hits the ball back using the forehand stroke and the rally continuous with forehand drives.
- Ask the players to record their highest rally.
- Repeat with the backhand drive.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Emphasize hitting slowly; the aim is to control the ball and keep the rally going.
- If space is limited, put 4 players to a table with 2 using the forehand drive and 2 using the backhand drive. Change positions half-way through the exercise.
SERVES

Equipment:
• 1 racket per player
• at least 1 ball per player
• 6 sheets of paper per table

6 shallow baskets per table (optional)

ACTIVITIES:

Warm-up 5 minutes
Basic Serving 10 minutes
Frogger Splat 10 minutes
Target Serving 10 minutes
Beat the Champ 15 minutes
Warm-down 5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

• Serve from behind the end line of the table and in the ready position.
• Lay the ball on the flat palm of the free hand and throw the ball up at least 16cm vertically without imparting spin.
• Hit the ball down so that it bounces first on your side, then on the other side of the table.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Emphasise hitting down so that the ball bounces on both sides of the table.
• Some disabilities will restrict a player’s capacity to follow the service rules, in these cases the rules are relaxed. For example, amputees or players with hemiplegia can put the ball on a side of the racket or toss the ball with the racket hand.
WHAT TO DO

- The aim of Frogger Splat is to serve so that the ball bounces on both sheets of paper.
- Players score a point each time they hit the sheets of paper.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Check that the players are following the techniques of Basic Serving.
- Mix it up by changing the positions of the sheets of paper.
TARGET SERVING GAME

WHAT TO DO

- Place 6 sheets of paper or 6 shallow baskets on one half of the table as shown below.
- Put the players into small groups so that any players not practising their serves are picking up balls from the ground.
- 1 racket and 6 balls per group.

Each player has 6 balls to hit all 6 sheets of paper or baskets.
Players get 1 point for every ball that hits the target.
The player with the highest score wins the game.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Check that the players are following the Basic Serving techniques.
WHAT TO DO

• 1 player starts as the “champion” and the rest are “challengers”.
• Each player challenges the “champion” to a first-to-3-points game.
• Each player gets one serve, with the “challenger” serving first.
• The winner stays on the table and plays against the next “challenger”.
• The “champion” retires after winning 3 consecutive games.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Match players in groups according to ability level and/or disability to make the game fun and challenging.
ACTIVITIES:

Warm-up 5 minutes
Forehand Push 10 minutes
Backhand Push 10 minutes
Hit the Square 10 minutes
Limbo Table Tennis 10 minutes
Hitting Challenge 5 minutes
Warm-down 5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

- Start in the ready position with the racket in front of you and in a vertical position.
- Turn your hip and place your feet side on at 45° angle to the table.
- Swing the racket back and besides the body at hip height.
- Come forward and down with the racket and brush underneath the ball.
- Finish with the racket close to the table with the palm facing upward.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Initially hit across the table with the aim to keep the rally going.
- Make it harder by asking the players to push to both the forehand and backhand corners.
**WHAT TO DO**

- Start in the ready position with the racket in front of you and in a vertical position.
- Turn your hip and place your feet side on at 45° angle to the table.
- Swing the racket back and besides the body at hip height.
- Come forward and down with the racket and brush underneath the ball.
- Finish with the racket close to the table.

**TIPS FOR COACHES**

- Make it harder by asking players to push to both the forehand and the backhand corners.
WHAT TO DO

• The aim of Hit the Square is to push so that the ball bounces on the opponent’s sheet of paper.
• Players score a point each time they hit the sheet of paper.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Encourage players to use both the forehand and backhand push.
• Mix it up by changing the positions of the sheets of paper.
LIMBO TABLE TENNIS

Set up a string over the net using the clamps and rods/sticks as shown below. The objective of limbo table tennis is to keep the ball low and push the ball through the gap between the net and the string.

WHAT TO DO

• Start by setting the string 20 cms above the height of the net and lower it throughout the exercise to increase difficulty.
• Players receive 1 point for every ball that is pushed through the gap between the net and the string.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Encourage players to use both the forehand and the backhand push and push to all sides of the table.
• This exercise can also be used to keep the serve low.
WHAT TO DO

• 1st player serves to the receiver's forehand corner.
• The receiver pushes the ball back using the forehand push and the rally continues with forehand push.
• Ask the players to record their highest rally.
• Repeat with the backhand push.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Emphasize slowly and continuously. The aim is to control the ball and keep the rally going.
• If space is limited, put 4 players to a table with 2 using the forehand push and 2 using the backhand push. Change positions half-way through the exercise.
ACTIVITIES:

- Warm-up: 5 minutes
- Forehand Topspin: 5 minutes
- Throw & Hit: 15 minutes
- Topspin vs Backspin: 10 minutes
- Top Table: 15 minutes
- Warm-down: 5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

• Standing players should start in the Ready Position and turn the hip so that their feet are side on at 45° to the table. Wheelchair players should start in the ready position and turn the hips, waist and shoulders slightly to the right.

• Swing the racket back and low (approximately at knee height) until the racket is almost vertical.

• Swing the racket forward and up, contacting the top of the ball with a brushing action and finishing above the head.

• The ball should dip quickly on the other side of the table due to the topspin.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Some disabilities restrict a player’s capacity to perform this stroke. For example, players with paraplegia may not have the necessary strength and movement for this stroke. In such cases, ask the players to perform the same exercises using the forehand drive.
WHAT TO DO

• Arrange the participants into small groups of 4-6 players and 1 coach or feeder per group
• The coach throws the ball so that it bounces on both sides of the table toward the forehand side of the receiver.
• The players take turns and attempt to hit a forehand topspin.

• As the players progress through the exercise, the coach/feeder hits the ball back to develop a continuous forehand topspin rally.

TIPS FOR COACHES

• Mix it up by throwing the ball so that it bounces once on the receiver’s forehand corner.
• Ask the players to hit a forehand topspin to the receiver’s forehand and backhand corners.
TOPSPIN VS BACKSPIN

Arrange the players into small groups with only 2 players per table at the time and 1 ball per table.

WHAT TO DO

- Player 1 begins the rally by pushing the ball to the forehand corner of Player 2.
- Player 2 plays a forehand topspin to “open up” and counter the backspin generated by Player 1.
- Change players after a few attempts.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- The forehand topspin is often used to counter the backspin generated when pushing the ball.
- To play against a ball with more backspin, a more open racket (palm facing up) is required.
- Make it harder by playing a game where the players must push twice before “opening up” with the forehand topspin.
TOP TABLE

Players will play games until the coach calls “stop”. The player leading the game moves one table closer to the “Top Table” while the player losing the game moves one table away.

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</tr>
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<td>4</td>
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WHAT TO DO

- Assign 2 players per table. Any remaining players can assist with umpiring and ball picking and they can take turns to play as instructed by the coach.
- The coach should identify the “Top Table” at the beginning of the activity.
- The coach times games and calls “stop” every 3-5 minutes.
- Winning players move toward the “Top Table” while losing players move away.
- Repeat.

• If standing players are matched against wheelchair players, then the players should follow the modified rules for wheelchair table tennis (see lesson 6).
ACTIVITIES:

Warm-up: 5 minutes
Serves in Doubles: 10 minutes
Doubles Matches: 10 minutes
Team Matches: 25 minutes
Warm-down: 5 minutes
WHAT TO DO

- Always serve from the right corner to the right corner.
- Players hit alternately, except wheelchair players.
- Serve twice to the same side and same person.
- After you finish serving 2 points, swap sides with your partner.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- When wheelchair players are serving, the standard rules apply. However, a “let” may be called if the ball returns to the net after bouncing on the receiver’s court or comes to a rest on the receiver’s court.
**WHAT TO DO**

- Form groups of 3 pairs per table. The first 2 pairs will play a doubles match while the remaining pair can assist with scoring, umpiring and ball-picking.
- Player 1 serves from the forehand corner of the table to the opponents’ forehand corner.
- Players hit alternately.
- Player 1 serves twice to the same side and the same person.
- Play a match to 11. The winners then play against the 3rd pair.

**TIPS FOR COACHES**

- When a doubles match is played by wheelchair players, they do not have to hit alternately.
TEAM MATCHES

Divide the group into pairs. 1 racket per player and 1 ball per table. Team matches are played in 3 parts; starting with doubles and followed by 2 singles matches. A team receives 1 point for each match won. Therefore, if team A wins the doubles but loses both singles they lose the match 1-2.

WHAT TO DO

- Team A and Team B play a doubles match to 11 points. The winning team receives 1 point.
- Player 1 from Team A plays a singles match to 11 points against Player 1 from Team B. The winning team receives 1 point.
- Player 2 from Team A plays a singles match to 11 points against Player 2 from Team B. The winning team receives 1 point.

TIPS FOR COACHES

- Remember that matches can be played to best of 1, 3, 5 or 7 games.
- As the first round of matches end, play winning teams against winning teams and losing teams against losing teams.
Useful Links / Contacts

For information about the Smash Down Barriers Program visit: www.smashdownbarriers.com

For information about table tennis visit: www.ittf.com

and for information about para table tennis visit: www.ipttc.org

To find a club or for more coach education and resources, contact your state or national table tennis association.