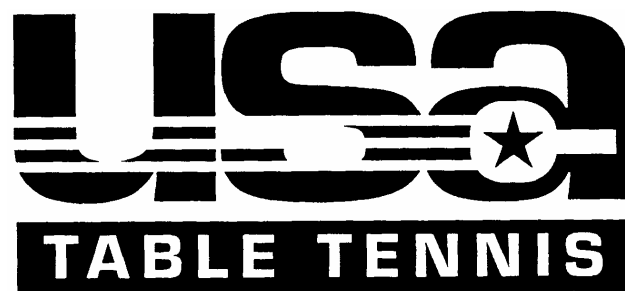
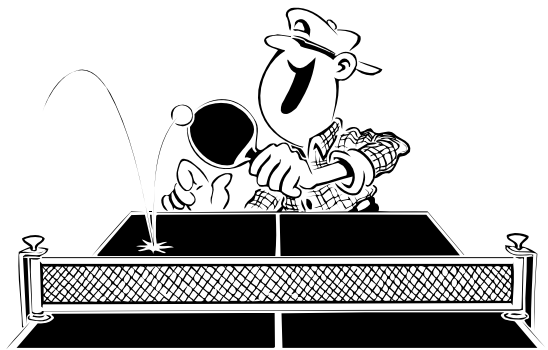


PROFESSIONAL TABLE TENNIS COACHES PRIMER



©2003 By Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach
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Foreword

If you are reading this you are probably either a professional table tennis coach or are thinking of becoming one. This manual should help you in either case.

This manual is not about how to coach, but how to set up a coaching business – the finances, getting a facility and equipment, setting up and running coaching programs, and (most important) getting and keeping students, which is the bloodline of your coaching business. This is all about how to make a living as a *Professional Table Tennis Coach*.

For info on coaching techniques, see USATT's *Instructor's Guide to Table Tennis* (a basics manual), or any of a number of books that explain playing techniques. If you have knowledge of the game as a player, you'll learn the rest with experience. It would be helpful to attend a coaching clinic for coaches (USATT runs several each year), or to attend a coaching camp as a volunteer assistant to observe professional coaches at work.

It is assumed that the reader is fairly experienced as a player. To be a coach, you do not need to be a top player, although it helps. You do not need to have coaching experience – no one does when they begin. You simply have a desire to be a coach in the Olympic Sport of Table Tennis.

For information on becoming a **USATT Certified Coach**, contact USATT at usatt@usatt.org, or **719-866-4583**.

This is strongly recommended!



Table of Contents

Section	Topic	
1.	The Profession of Coaching	3
2.	How Much Income Can You Make As a Table Tennis Coach?	4
3.	What Credentials Do You Need to be a Professional Table Tennis Coach?	6
4.	Getting a Facility, Tables and Other Equipment	7
5.	Start With a Plan	9
6.	Getting Students	10
7.	Setting Up and Teaching a Class	11
8.	Running a Junior Training Program	14
9.	Private Coaching	18
10.	Keeping Players Interested	20
11.	Ethics of Coaching	20
12.	Sample Flyers	21

1. The Profession of Coaching

There are two types of professional coaches: part-time coaches, and full-time coaches whose primary income is from coaching (or related income). If you are thinking of being a full-time coach, with table tennis your primary income, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you like coaching? (If not, go no farther.)
- Will the income be adequate for your needs? (See below)
- Is your table tennis level and knowledge high enough so that you can work with players at the beginning/intermediate level?
- Are you physically able to coach the amount of hours needed? (Group coaching is less demanding, but it's sometimes difficult to get enough students from that alone.)

If your answer to all of the above questions is no, then you probably don't want to be a full-time coach. But if you say yes to all of them, then you are about to enter the corps of Professional Table Tennis Coaches. Welcome!

2. How Much Income Can You Make As a Table Tennis Coach?

Can you make a living at table tennis? Let's look at potential income from private coaching alone.

Annual Salary, 50 Weeks/Year, from only Private Coaching

<u>Hours/week</u>	<u>\$15/hour</u>	<u>\$20/hour</u>	<u>\$25/hour</u>	<u>\$30/hour</u>	<u>\$35/hour</u>
5	\$ 3,750	\$ 5,000	\$ 6,250	\$ 7,500	\$ 8,750
10	\$ 7,500	\$10,000	\$12,500	\$15,000	\$17,500
15	\$11,250	\$15,000	\$18,750	\$22,500	\$26,250
20	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$30,000	\$35,000
25	\$18,750	\$25,000	\$31,250	\$37,500	\$43,750
30	\$22,500	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$45,000	\$52,500
35	\$26,250	\$35,000	\$43,750	\$52,500	\$61,250
40	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$70,000
45	\$33,750	\$45,000	\$56,250	\$67,500	\$78,750
50	\$37,500	\$50,000	\$62,500	\$75,000	\$87,500

Are these figures reasonable? There are coaches in the U.S. who coach over 50 hours a week at \$25-\$30/hour, plus group sessions, and make around \$90,000/year coaching. Any coach who lives near a reasonably large population base can get about as many hours of coaching as he/she wishes, within 2-3 months. It can get physically exhausting, especially when you do private coaching for 25-30 hours per week or more, so you might want to set an upper limit for private coaching, and then add as many group sessions as possible.

But this doesn't realistically show how much money one can make at table tennis – you can (and should!) make more. Here are a few examples.

Income from a Junior Training Program

Suppose you have 20 junior players paying \$10 per 2-hour session, twice per week. (More later on how to get students.) That's \$400/week for four hours work, or \$100/hour! Do that for 50 weeks, and you're making \$20,000/year from this alone. You might want an assistant coach or practice partners, and you may have to pay a percentage to the club or facility, but you should still get the bulk of this income, at least \$15,000 or more. Plus it'll be a main source for private students. (Some professional coaches rely mostly on group sessions, and do little private coaching.)

Income from a Beginning Class

Suppose you set up a 10-week, 90-minute/session beginning class. Suppose you get 20 players at \$100 each, and hire two assistant coaches (usually local players) at \$10/hour each, or \$15/session. That's \$2000 in income. Even if you pay \$300 for a pair of assistant coaches, you come out with a \$1700 profit for 15 hours of work. That's \$113/hour!

Suppose you do four classes like this per year: add about \$7000 to your annual income! (Not to mention the extra money from private students you get from the class, sales of equipment and refreshments, club fees if they join your club, tournament and/or league fees if you run them, etc.) Or you could even do just the class, and pocket the \$7000/year. The players get what they

paid for (if you are a good coach); the local club, tournaments and leagues get new players, and you get a nice salary for your work. *Everybody wins!*

Income from Tournaments

Suppose, in addition to coaching, you run tournaments and leagues. Besides giving students more incentive to improve (and thus seek out the local professional coach – you), you will get income from these tournaments and leagues. The actual running of these events is outside the scope of this manual (contact USATT for more info on this), but they are related to coaching. If you don't run these types of programs, make sure someone else is for the benefit of your students – and yourself, since your students will be more active and more likely to continue if they have programs like these.

Suppose you decide to run a tournament every two months. Suppose you get 60 players each time, at \$35/each, \$2100 income. Suppose you give out \$700 in prize money and trophies, and an additional \$300 in expenses – mailings, flyers, hired staff, sanction fee, etc. That's a profit of \$1100 for one or two day's work (\$6600/year) – plus profits from sales of refreshments and equipment. In addition, you can often set up mini-clinics on the Friday before a tournament for extra income.

Income from Leagues

Suppose you run a weekly league. Suppose you get 20 players at \$5/night each. That's \$100 for each league night, or \$5000/year.

Income from Equipment and Refreshment Sales

Contact various table tennis companies about being an equipment distributor. Your students will need equipment, and they'll either buy it from you – or from someone else. Why not you? Similarly, if you have refreshments on hand (especially drinks), you'll make profits from that.

Total Income

It's hard to maximize income in all of the above, you should be able to make \$50,000/year in less than 30 hours coaching per week, as long as you focus on group sessions (junior training and classes), with private coaching, tournaments, leagues, and equipment & refreshment sales filling out your income.

3. What Credentials Do You Need to be a Professional Table Tennis Coach?

Not as much as you'd think! Let's start with playing level.

What Level Player Do You Have To Be To Be a Professional Table Tennis Coach?

Let's be real. To be a professional table tennis coach, you need to be (or have been) at a certain level as a player. Being able to play an orthodox game with orthodox strokes is also important – if you can't demonstrate it, how can you teach it effectively? Using the USATT rating system, anybody over an 1800 level would have no trouble making it as a coach. If your goal is to coach mostly beginners, then you don't need a high level of play. As your aspirations go higher, your level of play may become more important.

Remember – to a typical beginning player, a 1500 player looks like the world champion! You may be hesitant about your knowledge and abilities as a coach, but as an experienced player, you know so much more than beginners that you'll be coaching them for months before you run out of things to teach – and by then, you'll be on your way toward being an experienced coach.

You'll find that getting credentials is not as hard as you'd think. There are two types of credentials that are helpful for coaches: playing credentials and coaching credentials. Almost any current or past title can help you as a player – county champion, local collegiate champion, etc. If you have anything like this, it'll help in getting students. As to coaching credentials, at the very least, get certified as a coach by USATT.

USATT Coaching Certification

For info on being certified as a USATT Coach, contact USA Table Tennis at usatt@usatt.org or **719-866-4583**. If you are experienced as a player, you will not have too much difficulty in getting certified at least at the club level. (The coaching levels are Club, State, Regional and National.) As you gain experience, you can move up the ladder to National Coach. By being certified, you will be listed as a coach on the USATT coaches list. As a USA Table Tennis Certified Coach, you will receive information on coaching seminars and other materials so you can expand your table tennis knowledge. (Contact USA Table Tennis for information on this.) Plus, getting certified gives you a nice USATT Certified Coach Certificate for the wall at your club!



You may also find it valuable to get certified as an umpire at the same time. It's a simple test (at the lowest levels), and is something all coaches should do. (And another certificate!)

Credentials or not, what do you need to know to be a professional table tennis coach? Obviously, you need to know the techniques of the game that you will be teaching. If you are an experienced player, you'll know the basics – but will need to know some of the specifics of the techniques (i.e. you may be doing something correctly, but not really know what you are doing), and you'll need to know how to teach it. However, for now, if you are an experienced player, you know all you need to start out as a coach.

4. Getting a Facility, Tables and Other Equipment

If there isn't already a facility with tables for you to coach at, then you're going to have to do some legwork in getting them. If you want to be a full-time coach, then you'll need either a full-time facility, or several locations to coach at. If you want to be a part-time coach, you won't need as much.

For many coaches, there may already be a local club, but it's only part-time – and the tables are used by club members. This doesn't leave you with tables to coach on. For part-time coaching, you might ask the club leaders if you can use one table to coach on, in return for either a percentage of coaching, or for promoting the club or other work. Typically, a club should let you coach for free at the start. After you've built up your business, you should pay the club either a percentage of your coaching income or a set monthly fee. A typical percentage might be 10-15%. A typical monthly fee (for a full-time coach) might be \$200-300/month. Not only does the coach get income this way, but you attract new players for them – so make sure to point this out to them when bargaining on the finances!

If you are looking for a new facility to coach at, there are many options. Get out the phone book and start out by contacting local recreation centers. (They may be listed under “community centers.”) Local schools and churches are also possibilities – for these, you might ask local players about possibilities.

Schools can be a great resource. A survey done by this author a number of years ago showed that about 1/3 of junior and high schools already have ping pong tables – and most those schools had ping pong clubs. Find all the schools in your area with tables and clubs, and get in contact with them about coaching or using their facilities.

Tables, Nets, Barriers, Balls and Robots

If you're not rich, contact table tennis distributors about getting discounts on these items. One way to get a very good deal is to agree to sell only equipment from the manufacturer/distributor that gives or discounts the equipment for you. Most are willing to make deals if you become a distributor for them.

After the U.S. Open, U.S. Nationals and North American Teams (and often other large tournaments), the used tables, nets and barriers are normally on sale at a discount, and the distributors will allow you to pay for them monthly (installment plan), with interest based on your credit rating. Contact the tournament directors or table dealer for further info. (If you combine this with becoming a distributor for the table manufacturer's equipment, you might get a very good deal.)

Another option is to contact local clubs to see if they have used tables for sale. Many clubs are willing to sell older tables, and use the money to help pay for new ones.

Balls are an ongoing expense. As a coach, you will go through a lot of them due to multi-ball training and group training. Most full-time coaches work out some sort of deal with a distributor for free or inexpensive training balls. (You can also get deals for 3-star balls for tournaments.)

College Classes

Most colleges have numerous sports classes, and welcome the idea of someone teaching a table tennis class. Contact the local colleges' physical education departments, and ask about setting up a class. You'll find that most colleges already have tables – so that problem is taken care of. Even if you coach at a club, this is a great way of getting new players into your club.

Table Tennis Robots

Robots are valuable tools for coaches, and I recommend you get one. They are very good for beginners to work on basic strokes. They are also useful for group training when you have an odd number of players. They are also a great attraction for junior players, who love to use them. Like other equipment items, you can become a robot dealer, and in return get a deal on it for your coaching.

Using Videotape

One way to both increase interest AND improve your coaching is to make use of videotape. If you have a video camera, charge a nominal fee for a tape of your sessions. Then, when giving lessons, refer to what the player can now see in the tapes.

5. Start With a Plan

No two regions have exactly the same circumstances, so you need to tailor your coaching program to your circumstances and personal preferences. How many tables can you use? How often? Are there already established players looking for coaching, or are you starting from scratch? Do you prefer coaching adults, juniors, beginners or advanced players? (Can you afford to be choosy?)

You need to decide what your goals as a coach are. If it's simply to make lots of money, and that alone, you are probably in the wrong profession. If it's because you enjoy coaching, and want to make a living at it – then you're in business. But you need to be more specific.

Many coaches are picky about their students, and only want to coach players who can become elite players. If you can afford to pick and choose your students, you can do that. If you are trying to make a living, or at least make good money at it, you can't afford to be too choosy – at least at the start. As you pick up business, you might be able to pick and choose.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you prefer to do group training or private coaching?
- How serious should the training be? Every coach has to find a balance between seriousness and fun.
- How many hours a week can you coach? How many hours a week do you need to coach to make the amount of money you need to make?

Here are some coaching options to choose from:

- Beginning Classes
- Intermediate/Advanced Classes
- Group Junior Training
- Private coaching

6. Getting Students

This is the single most important task for any coach!

The first step is to create a flyer about your coaching program. It should include your name, any titles as a player or coach, contact info, rates and hours, and what type of coaching you do (private, group, what type of classes, etc.).

Here are ways of publicizing your coaching.

- Fax or email copies of your flyer, or a press release, to the calendar section of every newspaper in town. (More on this below.)
- Give copies of the flyer to all local club members to give out to interested parties. Family members of current club members are a treasure trove of potential students.
- Do a mailing to all current and past USATT members. You can get address labels very cheaply from USATT. You can get them by age, by zip code, or just about anything else.
- Put up copies on every bulletin board you can find, including recreation centers, YMCA's, Boys' Clubs and colleges. It might be a good idea to create a flyer with tear-off phone numbers at the bottom.
- Distribute the flyer at Asian Restaurants and Churches. Look them up in the phone book, and mail, fax or email the flyer.
- For a junior class, contact local Chinese schools. You can find these either in the yellow pages, or simply ask local Chinese players. Most Chinese schools meet in regular schools, but on weekends. This is a treasure trove for students.
- Contact local schools and offer to do exhibitions or to teach a PE class. Bring lots of flyers to give out. (Some schools forbid giving out flyers – ask in advance.)
- Create a web page with info on the class.
- Put flyers in bottles and toss them out to sea.

This first item is probably the most important of all – and it's free! – so let's elaborate. This is what you are going to do.

1. Pick up Yellow Pages.
2. Look up every local newspaper, and make a list of their phone numbers
3. Call every local newspaper, and ask for the email address and/or fax number for the calendar section of their newspaper.
4. Send copies of your flyer to every newspaper in town. Or look at sample calendar sections, and send them something that fits their format.
5. Make sure to send notice of your classes at least six weeks before the start of every new beginning class.
6. Enjoy the free advertising! And it's perfect for a table tennis class as the people who look at newspaper calendar sections are usually those looking for a new activity.

7. Setting Up and Teaching a Class

These are absolute musts for successful coaches, so let's go over it step by step. You might have to make adjustments for your particular program – for example, if you are teaching a college class, you might have to adjust to the college's schedule, or their academic requirements.

Step One: Should You Hire an Assistant Coach?

You may need 1-2 assistant coaches or practice partners, depending on the number of players in the class. (You need to decide how many players you can have as a maximum, and stick to that. If you get too many, set up a second class.) The assistant coaches need not be regular coaches – just reasonably good players. The assistant coaches each get paid for their work, which comes out of the class fees - perhaps \$8-10/hour. It's easy to get volunteers to do the class for a time, but unless they get paid, their interest goes down, and eventually you lose your assistant coaches/practice partners. While it's usually best to keep a ratio of one coach for every six players, you can increase that ratio. But don't get greedy. If you get a lot of students, there's a lot of cash coming in, and they will enjoy it far more if you have help or practice partners. In the long run, via repeat customers and word of mouth, you'll come out ahead. Most importantly, you and the students will enjoy it more.

Step Two: Create a Schedule

For a beginning class, I recommend roughly 7-8:30pm once a week for ten weeks. Many clubs get busy around 8pm; if so, perhaps make it 6:30-8:00pm.

For a junior class, I've found 4:30-6:30 to be the ideal time, both on weekdays and weekends. On weekends, you can move it around some to fit your schedule. I'd recommend two sessions a week for beginning and intermediate juniors.

Step Three: Produce a Flyer

You will need to produce an info flyer, and make lots of copies of it. (See sample flyers at the end of this *Primer*.) The flyer should specify that the class is for beginners or those who have not been in organized table tennis, or whatever the criteria for the class is. The flyer should include the following information:

- The names of the coaches and their qualifications.
- The address & directions to site.
- Contact information for further information.
- Amount of fee and who/what to make it out to (\$100 for a ten-week, 15-hour class seems reasonable).
- Dates and times of the class.
- If it's not strictly a Beginning Class, then an approximate rating level the class is for, for the benefit of USTTA-rated players (under 1300, for example).
- If it's a Junior Class, the age range for the class.
- A short listing of the things to be covered in the class.

Step Four: Develop a Class Plan

What follows is a sample schedule for a ten-week, 90 minutes/week **Beginning Class**, used for years in Maryland.

- Week 1:** Intro to TT; Grip; Stance; Forehand drive
- Week 2:** Table tennis equipment; Backhand drive
- Week 3:** Footwork; Beginning serves
- Week 4:** Pushing; Advanced serves
- Week 5:** FH loop vs. backspin; Blocking
- Week 6:** BH attack
- Week 7:** Smashing
- Week 8:** Return of Serve
- Week 9:** Loop/smash combinations; Tactics
- Week 10:** Smashing lobs; player's choice

A **Junior Training Program** is a bit different as it is more of an ongoing program. For this, you need to assign drills to players based on their level. You also need to find a balance between practice and matches – usually about 50% each. More on this in the section on Coaching Juniors.

You should try to schedule a USATT tournament at the end or near the end of the class, with a novice singles event for class participants.

Step Five:

Collect fees, and teach the class! Make sure to get contact information for everyone so you can send them info on future programs.

Step Six:

See Step One. Every time it gets easier!

Teaching a Beginning Class

Start off each session with some easy stretching. Next, ask if there are any questions from the previous week. Next, explain & demonstrate the first item planned for that week's class. Finally, send the players into groups (one per coach, if you have multiple coaches) to work on the technique. If two items are scheduled for that day, make sure to plan how long to spend on each segment. When the first segment is done, call everyone together again, and explain & demonstrate the next technique.

Don't get too caught up with the idea of trying to make everyone a world-class player. Most are there not only to learn, but to have fun as well. Keep that in mind as you teach.

Some of the players will develop nice strokes, while others will have rather strange ones. If a player is resistant to change, work with him, and make the best of what he does.

There are three methods of practice you should use in teaching the class. The most important is multi-ball, which most coaches are familiar with. (It is a technique whereby the coach hits balls rapidly from a box at the player.) You will need a bucket of balls (several, actually, since the helpers will also be feeding multi-ball). Divide the players into three groups (if you have three coaches/helpers), and take turns feeding multi-ball. Have the players rotate – one gets multi-ball, one or two pick up balls, and the rest either rest or practice on a separate table. Multi-ball is especially good when teaching a new stroke.

A second method is to have the coaches/helpers hit with each of the players. This is especially good when teaching them various stroking and footwork drills.

A third method is to have the players practice together. This is the easiest way, but is the least effective as the players, at this level, simply can't rally effectively or consistently. They will learn much faster if they sometimes hit with an accomplished player who can adjust for their errors and keep the ball going at the same pace, same spot. Pushing is a good stroke to have the players hit among themselves, although the coaches/helpers should step in and hit with those who are having difficulty. Serve and receive practice can also be done among the players, with one player serving and catching the other's receive, or both players serving and catching the other's serve. Or, if you have enough balls and tables, let the players serve onto the floor and pick them up afterwards.

Reminder - make sure to get contact information for everyone so you can send them info on future programs.

8. Running a Junior Training Program

How It's Different

Coaching junior players is somewhat different than coaching adults. In terms of teaching, juniors tend to pick up new techniques faster and better, but don't have the ball control that will develop as they get older and develop better motor skills.

They also don't have the attention span of adults. With an adult, you may spend a lot of time on one thing, trying to get it right. Except for advanced juniors (with a larger investment in the sport), this won't work as well with junior players. It's better to work for shorter periods of time, and cover more material. This doesn't mean breezing through something and not teaching it well. It means that while an adult may spend a long time working on something new, a junior player probably would spend less time in one session on the same technique. Otherwise, the junior will simply lose interest and look to other activities. Generally, I wouldn't have most beginning/intermediate juniors spend more than 15 consecutive minutes on one technique – it's not worth the risk of "burn-out."

Discipline

One of the toughest tasks a new coach faces when working with junior players for the first time in a group session is discipline. Many coaches know a lot about table tennis, but not how to motivate and keep discipline. It doesn't take long to completely lose control of a class, and once lost, discipline is hard to regain.

Start off by deciding exactly what you think you should fairly expect from the players. If it's a two-hour session, do you expect them to focus continuously on training the entire time? Unless you've got a room full of advanced junior players (i.e., more used to the discipline needs to improve), you're kidding yourself if you do. You've got to find a balance between work and play. If the juniors know that the first half will be training, the second half more games, they are more willing to concentrate for the first half, knowing the second half will be more "fun." Yet, even the "fun" part is training, since they will be playing competitive matches.

So a good balance would be to let the players know that the first half will be all training; the second half might start with a drill or two, but then go into match play of some sort.

What do you do if the players goof off during the training part? Let it be known that the harder they work the first half, the sooner they will get to the game part in the second half. Then stick to it. (Never threaten a disciplinary action you are not prepared to fulfill.) You'll be surprised at how this will get them to focus!

If a player really is causing a problem, have him sit out for a while. Few players want to sit on the sidelines while the rest are playing or practicing.

Setting Up a Class Schedule for a Junior Training Program

What To Do With Beginning Players?

The problem is that beginners can't really rally properly together, and so putting them together too much doesn't help. You can put them with an assistant coach for a portion of a session, but there is a limit to how much attention one player can get. I recommend requiring players in a junior class to take a few hours of private coaching before being allowed in the class. Another

option is to have a robot available for them. Another option is to have an intermediate player hit half of a session with the beginner, and half the session with a more advanced player.

Who Hits With Whom?

In a perfect world, every player would get to hit with a stronger player all the time. But that's impossible. So you generally have players hit with players of roughly the same level. Sometimes you can have a player spend part of a session with a weaker player, and part with a stronger – they balance out. If you can get a practice partner, then if he hits with one of the stronger players, that player can then hit with a weaker player. Some coaches make up hitting partners on the spot. Others keep track (on paper or on a computer) and rotate hitting partners. It's your choice.

A Typical Junior Training Schedule (for two hours)

Many junior coaches have found it successful to have sort of a “contract” with the players. The contract is that if the players work hard the first half, the second half will be mostly games. Serve and attack drills are considered “fun” drills, and can be done at the start of the session, before going to games.

The drills themselves are usually 15 minutes long, with each player doing 7.5 minutes. (Some drills, such as serve & attack, can be done for ten minutes each.) Stress to the players that both players are drilling at all times. That means that if one player is doing a footwork drill, the other is doing a control drill – practicing ball control and consistency. A typical training session could be divided into the following segments. You should vary the sessions, and when possible tailor the drills to the players.

1. Stretching & jogging – 5 minutes
2. Forehand & backhand warm-up (drives & loops) – 20 minutes
3. Footwork drill – 15 minutes
4. Player specific drill – 15 minutes
5. Break – 10 minutes
6. Serve & Attack drill – 20 minutes
7. Games – 35 minutes

Stretching & Jogging (5 minutes)

Start the class off with a stretching routine, followed by a few minutes of jogging to loosen the muscles. (Some say it is better to jog first, to loosen the muscles before stretching.) Since you often don't know who will show up for the specific class in advance, this is a good time to work out who hits with whom. For this reason, it's a good idea to have one of the juniors lead in stretching while you make plans.

Forehand & Backhand warm-up (drives & loops) – 20 minutes

Have the players hit forehand-to-forehand and backhand-to-backhand, as a warm-up, for five to ten minutes each. Advanced players will do this for only five minutes or so, and then warm up their forehand and backhand loops. Players may also combine these warm-up drills with footwork drills.

Footwork drill (15 minutes)

There are a wide variety of possible drills. See the Instructor's Guide for examples, under “Scheduling Practices.” The most common footwork drills are given below. Players should

normally do two footwork drills, either doing an extra one during the warm-up phase, or in the player specific drill.

Here are some footwork drills. Note that the driller normally hits each ball to the same spot (either forehand or backhand) so the practice partner can make steady returns.

- **One-one footwork:** Partner alternates hitting the ball to two spots, such as wide forehand and middle of the table. Driller moves side to side, hitting all forehands.
- **Forehand-backhand footwork:** Partner alternates hitting the ball to the wide corners. Driller alternates hitting forehand and backhands.
- **Two-one footwork:** Partner hits two balls to the backhand, one to the forehand, and then repeats. Driller hits a backhand, a forehand from the backhand corner, then a forehand from the wide forehand, and then repeats.
- **Random footwork, half table:** Partner hits ball randomly all over forehand (or backhand) side. Driller hits all forehands (or backhands).
- **Random footwork, whole table:** Partner hits ball randomly all over table. Driller hits forehands or backhands (depending on where the ball went).

Player specific drill (15 minutes)

This is where you either tailor a drill to the player, or throw in different drills for variety. For example, a player developing a backhand loop may use this segment to work on it. See the Instructor's Guide for examples of other drills. You can sometimes use this segment for serve practice.

Break (10 minutes)

While the players are resting, you can set up the second half game plan.

Serve & Attack drill (20 minutes)

This is the most popular drill among junior players. There are two main ways of doing this drill. One way is for the server to serve backspin, the receiver pushes it back to a pre-arranged spot or area, and the server attacks, usually with a loop. The other way is for the server to serve anything, the receiver returns as if it were a game (or perhaps playing slightly more control so server can attack), and server attacks. Note that this is where players can practice their serves, although players should be encouraged to practice serves on their own. (Another option is to devote part of the practice session to serve practice alone, or do so right after the session.)

Games (30 minutes)

It's important to stress that this is practice, and that this is the time to try out what they have been practicing, even if it means losing sometimes. There are many options on what to do here. Here are some possibilities:

- **Up-Down Tables.** You start it off by matching the players off against others in no particular order. They play one game, usually to 11 (you can vary this). The winners move up a table, and the losers move down a table, and a new series of games begins.
- **Brazilian Teams.** You start it off by dividing the players into teams of 3-6 each. One player from each team goes to a table and plays a point. The winner stays on the table; the loser goes to the end of the line on his team, and the next player on his team plays the next point. New player always serves. Games can be up to 21, 31, 41 or 51.

- **Doubles.** You can do this up-down table style (see above) or a round robin.
- **Round Robin Tournament.** Put the players in groups so the players in each group are roughly the same level, and play it out. To save time, you might play only one game, or play the third game from 8-all.
- You might end the session with **relay races** or a similar game-type activity that is actually part of their physical training. Relay races can include regular running, bouncing ball on racket, bouncing ball like a basketball, through an obstacle course, etc.

9. Private Coaching

Let's be clear; private coaching is tiring work. If you don't like coaching, it will wear you down until you hate the job. But if you like coaching, and like working with others, it can be an enjoyable activity.

Decide how many hours you want to do private coaching, and what hours you want to do it. During the week, you can get lots of junior students in the afternoon, with more adults at night. On weekends, you can get both. You can also get a number of retired people for daytime coaching.

Do you prefer to coach a lot of hours a few days a week? Or coach nearly every day, but less hours? Some coaches find that after coaching for a few years, they can coach nearly every day, almost never taking a day off.

Get a notebook planner of some sort, and write down all scheduled lessons – staying organized is important. Make sure to have the phone number of all students.

Every coach will run into students who arrange a lesson, but don't show. How should you handle this? This is your job, your business, and you can't afford to waste your time. You might let a student get away with it once, but make it clear that if they arrange a time and don't show, they still pay.

Different coaches differ on how much to charge. In a big city, where prices are high, you can charge more. In the country, where prices are lower, you should charge less. I'd recommend charging a minimum of \$20/hour, and you may go up to \$35/hour or more. Most coaches give discounts to club members and juniors.

How do you go about deciding what to teach in private lessons? Remember the cardinal rule: the customer is always right!

What this means is that you coach what the student wants. If a student wants to be an advanced player with advanced technique, that's what you teach him. If a student is aiming for a specific level (especially an older player) or simply wants to work on one part of his game, work with him toward his goals, even if it means not trying to turn him into a world-class player. You'll even find students that just want to hit around or play games. If that's what they want, and they'll pay for it, I suggest you do what they want.

However, most students are going to put it in your hands as to what to do. So what do you do?

If the student isn't a beginner, hit with him for a while, see what he can do, analyze what he needs to do, and then teach him. If he seems unhappy about making changes that you know he needs to do, explain to him that these are long-term techniques that will pay off in the long run. Most students will accept that.

There is a difference between coaching adults and juniors. Adults often have difficulty copying proper technique, and there will be times where you'll want to pull your hair out when a player seems to stubbornly do a stroke the wrong way no matter how hard you try to fix the problem. Juniors tend to pick up new and proper techniques much more easily – they are more natural

mimics. On the other hand, adults have more natural ball control, and so can rally longer. They also have more patience, and so can work longer on a specific technique.

Break down each one-hour lesson into several segments. Start with a warm-up. Then work on basic shots. Then get to more advanced shots. Perhaps finish with serve and receive. If you are doing multi-ball, and there are balls all over, go to ball pick-up a few minutes before the lesson ends so you'll be on time for the next student. (Make sure the student helps pick up balls!)

10. Keeping Players Interested

Many coaches lose students as fast as they get them. Why? Because they don't really understand what the student wants. And students run the whole range from those who just want to have fun to those who are very serious about improving. You need to learn to tell just what the student wants, and give it to him. Remember – the student is always right! (At least in this respect.)

However, some aspects are constant. You need to keep it fun. A coach who is obviously unhappy with his work or so serious he never smiles isn't going to inspire students. You need to find a balance. You may put your student through lots of drills, but every now and then break things up – lob a few balls (or let the student lob), crack a few jokes, have fun.

At the same time, you must treat the sport as just that – a sport. The only thing worse than a coach who is too serious is one who treats the sport like a game. Some coaches are always preaching how fun is all that matters, and they let the players play games or other fun activities, but don't really train them. The players aren't required to put in an investment in the sport, and so don't take it seriously as a sport – they might as well be playing Parcheesi.

So you must find a balance between seriousness and fun. Treat it like the Olympic sport it is, but have fun as you do so.

For a junior class, you should stress the team aspect as much as possible. The quickest way to turn a semi-serious junior player into a more serious one who comes back over and over is to get team uniforms. Kids like to be part of a team, and if they have team uniforms, they get that much more enjoyment out of it, and that much more incentive to come back.

11. Ethics of Coaching

The U.S. Olympic Committee has put together an excellent guide to the ethics of coaching. It is online at www.usolympicteam.com/education/ethics.pdf.

12. Sample Flyers

On the next two pages are sample flyers, one for a **Beginning Class**, one for a **Junior Training Program**.



About the Author

Larry Hodges is certified by USA Table Tennis as a National Coach. He is the Author of *Table Tennis: Steps to Success*, *Instructor's Guide to Table Tennis*, and over 200 coaching articles. He is the USATT Club Programs Director and Editor of *USA Table Tennis Magazine*. He chaired the USATT Coaching Committee from 1991-95. He was named USATT's 2002 Developmental Coach of the Year. Formerly a full-time coach, he still coaches part-time at the Maryland Table Tennis Center.

Beginning Table Tennis Class

at the

Maryland Table Tennis Center

18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879 • 301-519-8580 • www.mdttc.com

Dates: 10 Mondays, April 2 – June 4, 2001

Times: 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Fees: \$100/student. Make checks out to Larry Hodges.
Join USATT for an additional \$30/year (\$20 if under age 18), and get 6 copies of their glossy bi-monthly magazine as well as information on tournaments, clubs and other info. It also allows you to join the USATT Rating System.

Coach: Larry Hodges, USATT Certified Coach. See www.larrytt.com.
Assistant coaches may be hired, depending on turnout.

Items Covered: The goal of the class is to teach the basics of table tennis.
Techniques to be taught include the basic strokes, serve and return of serve, tactics, footwork and equipment.

Directions: From the Beltway (495), take 270 North. Go to exit 11, Montgomery Village Ave. Drive 1/4 mile to first traffic light, Frederick Rd. (355), and turn left. Drive 1.1 miles and turn right at Econo Lodge sign (steep uphill). Go 100 yards until road dead ends, and turn left. Go 100 yards and take first left-hand turn into MDTTC parking lot.

More Info: Contact Larry Hodges, 240-686-0127, larry@larrytt.com

Participant's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Email _____

I accept full responsibility for my participation. I relieve the coaches, directors, sponsors and any others involved in the class of any liability for injury, loss or damages.

Signature _____ Date _____



Maryland
TABLE TENNIS
Center

Junior Table Tennis Training

at the

Maryland Table Tennis Center

18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879 • 301-519-8580 • www.mdttc.com

Times: Thursdays, Saturdays & Sundays, 4:30-6:30 PM

Ages/Levels: Ages 8-15, all levels

Fees: \$200/20 sessions. Make checks out to Maryland Table Tennis Center

Coaches: USATT Certified Coaches Cheng Yinghua, Jack Huang, Larry Hodges
(usually two coaches/session)

Directions: From the Beltway (495), take 270 North. Go to exit 11, Montgomery Village Ave. Drive 1/4 mile to first traffic light, Frederick Rd. (355), and turn left. Drive 1.1 miles and turn right at Econo Lodge sign (steep uphill). Go 100 yards until road dead ends, and turn left. Go 100 yards and take first left-hand turn into MDTTTC parking lot.

More Info: Contact Larry Hodges, 240-686-0127, larry@larrytt.com

Participant's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Email _____

I accept full responsibility for my and my children's participation. I relieve the coaches, directors, sponsors and any others involved in the class of any liability for injury, loss or damages.

Signature _____ Date _____

(Parents sign for those under 18)



Maryland
TABLE TENNIS
Center