



Advanced Tennis for the Absolute Beginner

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Cardio tennis gives you all the heart-pumping workout and thwacky satisfaction of a real tennis game — except that it's OK if you're truly terrible and have more chance of hitting the lottery jackpot than hitting the ball.

There comes a time in every gym-goer's life when she feels the need to shake up her routine. Shuffle the deck. Take a break from the hamster wheel-like doldrums of the treadmill and elliptical machines. The answer to the workout blahs just may lie in a round of cardio tennis — a brilliant blend of cardio class, tennis camp, and the most enjoyable PE class you ever had.

Your next cardio tennis class is just a click away.

- **Where to play:** Check out CardioTennis.com to find a class near you
- **Average cost:** \$12-\$15 per class
- **When to play:** Year-round (available on indoor and outdoor courts)
- **Equipment needed:** Comfortable tennis shoes and a racquet. Racquets, and heart-rate monitors are provided at some sites.

Game on!

Cardio Tennis launched in 2005 at the US Open. The goal: to get people to rethink how they viewed tennis. "We knew many people did not look at tennis as a fitness activity," says Michele Krause, national cardio tennis program manager at the Tennis Industry Association. "People perceived it as recreation or non-fitness. We wanted to change that perception."

During a cardio tennis class, participants gather on a tennis court for 60 to 90 minutes to sweat, burn some serious calories (depending on your exertion, as much as, say, a spinning class or other high-intensity cardio) and have a lot of fun. The workouts are taught by certified tennis professionals who lead students through a series of short warm-up drills, a cardio workout, and a cool-down phase. The specific activities vary from class to class, but the cardio session can include a number of fun drills and games with titles like Red Rover, Field Day, and Drop Shot Me. Each drill involves either catching or swinging at a ball that's lobbed by the instructor or a student. The activities are designed to keep the feet moving and will most likely also keep a smile on your face.

No experience necessary

If you're apprehensive about attending a class due to lack of tennis knowledge or ability, fear not. Tennis talent is not a requirement in cardio tennis. Seriously. Classes are available for people at a variety of skill levels — from advanced to never-held-a-racquet-before. And unlike a regular tennis match, which depends on each player's ability to return a volley or serve, cardio tennis players are mostly swinging at balls that are being fed by the instructor. If you lob every ball out of the court or swing at nothing but air you still get a great workout because you're constantly moving your feet.

"Cardio tennis is for anyone interested in having a good time while working out," continues Krause. "We're not concerned where or how you hit the ball."

What cardio tennis instructors are concerned about is getting participants' heart rates up to their target cardio zone. The best way to do that is to make the class fun. "Because cardio tennis is so fun and entertaining, players are more apt to work harder without even noticing," says Chris Ojakian, a cardio tennis instructor. "If you're not having fun, your motivation is lower, and you won't achieve the results."

The social interaction involved in cardio tennis helps increase the fun factor. Some of the drills and games involve playing doubles or three-on-three matches with other participants — a far cry from the solidarity of a workout machine. "In a spinning class you're not giving high fives to the person next to you," continues Ojakian. To ensure that all of that fun is truly yielding results, some facilities offer heart-rate monitors that participants wear throughout the class to make sure that they're within their target heart-rate zone.

Total training

So why is cardio tennis such an effective workout? It's the very nature of the game of tennis itself. Playing tennis involves running after balls and swinging racquets high and low. That kind of activity engages the entire body. "The body works more efficiently when it's trained as a whole," says **Stacy Berman**, certified fitness trainer and founder of **Stacy's Boot Camp** in New York City. "Programs that focus on multidirectional moves force the body to engage more muscles in the workout, allowing the body to build in a complete way. Traditional machine workouts (treadmills, cycling machines, etc.) recruit the same muscles over and over again while leaving out other muscle groups."

Still not sure if cardio tennis is for you? The only way to know for sure is to try. "Expect to have fun," says Ojakian. "You'll get a great workout, improve your tennis, be entertained, and expect to view tennis in a whole different way."