

Levels of Competitive Tennis

Event	Event sub-levels (beginning with sectional events, levels are listed weakest to strongest)	Explanation	Personal goals	Approx. time commitment
Little Tennis, QuickStart Tennis Playing Format governed by the USPTA, USTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USPTA Little Tennis lessons with USPTA certified professionals and coaches QuickStart Tennis Playing Format and tournaments 	<p>USPTA Little Tennis: ages 3-10, developing motor, racquet and playing skills on a smaller court with graduated equipment</p> <p>QuickStart Tennis Playing Format: events played with graduated equipment and courts</p>	These are beginner children who are acquiring early motor and playing skills in a simple format through the sport of tennis.	2+ hours/week
Unsanctioned junior tournaments governed by the USPTA, USTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USPTA Junior Circuit Junior Team Tennis National Junior Tennis League Middle school and High school tennis 	Tournaments on a local level where players are introduced to competitive play without earning national or sectional points or rankings	These are young players just starting out in competitive play and have not fully determined their future tennis goals.	1+ hours/day for at least 3 days a week
Sectional junior tournaments governed by the USTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sectional tournaments that offer only sectional points (multiple graduated levels in most sections) Sectional tournaments that offer national points in conjunction with sectional points. Each section has up to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 8 events that earn Level 5 national points (lowest) – 3 events that earn Level 4 national points (higher) – 1 event that earns Level 3 national points (higher) <p>(Every USTA section is organized by its own set of rules, rankings and tournament structure. Check directly with your section or on its Web site for more comprehensive information on the junior tournament rules of your section.)</p>	This is where the most formative competitive play takes place. Tournaments are point-based, and each of the 17 USTA sections has complete autonomy over how to administer these events in its own section. Sections have from as few as 1 to as many as 7 graduated competitive levels. Each section has up to 12 tournaments at its highest level of competition that offer national points in conjunction with sectional points.	This level includes a graduated scale of competitive players from the earliest to advanced levels. Players range from the most ambitious who seek high school and college recognition, while others enjoy athletics as healthy competition and a way to a healthy lifestyle.	1.5 to 3+ hours/day, depending on the player's level One or more tournaments a month
National junior tournaments governed by the USTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 5 tournaments (lowest level) Level 4 tournaments Level 3 tournaments Level 2 tournaments Level 1A tournaments Level 1 tournaments (highest level) <p>Refer to Page 16 of the USTA National Junior Tournament Schedule¹ for a complete list of tournaments at each level.</p>	These tournaments are the home of the elite American junior players. This is the highest level at which U.S. junior players are separated by age groups. National events require a greater amount of travel and time commitment. Many of these tournaments coincide with ITF events and earn both national and ITF points. For a list of these, as well as a detailed explanation of each level and its requirements, refer to the USTA National Junior Tournament Web site. ¹	These players compete against the country's best juniors and have a high ambition of climbing the tennis ladder. Many will earn college scholarships and have the talent and potential to pursue tennis as a career.	3+ hours/day including fitness, weight-training, etc. One or more tournaments a month
ITF junior tournaments governed by the ITF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 5 tournaments (lowest level) Grade 4 tournaments Grade 3 tournaments Grade 2 tournaments Grade 1 tournaments Grade C International Team Events (Jr. Davis/Fed Cup) Grade B Regional tournaments Grade A tournaments & Grand Slams (highest level) 	Players must be age 18 and under to enter ITF Junior events. Grade A to Grade 3 tournaments hold the elite junior players in the world, and you must have a world ranking to enter. Grades 4-5 are more accessible to U.S. juniors with a modest national ranking. Most players who excel at this level will go on to play in college or on the Futures and Challengers and the ITF Women's circuits. ITF tournaments require players to play only one match a day and entail a greater time commitment.	Players have begun to compete at the international level and have a high ambition of climbing the tennis ladder. Many have also earned college scholarships and still have the option to make tennis their career.	3+ hours/day including fitness, weight-training, etc. One or more tournaments a month

Levels of Competitive Tennis

Event	Event sub-levels (beginning with sectional events, levels are listed weakest to strongest)	Explanation	Personal goals	Approx. time commitment	
College tennis governed by the ITA, NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, and individual athletic conferences within each division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITA National Small College Championships • NAIA Team Championships • Conference Championships • ITA National Summer Championships • ITA Regional Championships • ITA National Indoor Championships • ITA National Team Indoor Championships • ITA All-American Championships • NCAA Team and Individual Championships 	There are a number of different divisions at the college level, including NCAA Division I, II and III, NAIA and Junior College. Many college players earn some scholarship money to play on a school's team. In addition to academic eligibility requirements, college players who play in pro-level tournaments must be aware of amateurism issues regarding competition, prize money, team affiliation and endorsements to be eligible for collegiate play. Consult the NCAA eligibility rules and regulations ² for more information.	At this level, players have the ambition to play the highest amateur level of competition while earning a college degree.	In the 6,000 hours (2.5 – 3 hours/day for 6 years) plus fitness and training	
Futures events governed by the ITF	Men <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000 tournaments • \$15,000 tournaments 	Women ITF Women's Circuit governed by the ITF	Futures are the entry level of the men's pro circuit, and Challengers are the "minor leagues" of professional tennis. To make the main draw of a Challenger, one would need to be around No. 260 in the world or higher. Futures are easier to enter, as most have open qualifying, but still need a world ranking. Women compete on the ITF Women's Circuit, which is the equivalent to the men's Futures and Challengers.	These players have high hopes of becoming top ATP/WTA players but still have the option to pursue other careers should they not continue on the path of a pro tennis career.	
Challenger events governed by the ATP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$37,500 tournaments • \$50,000 tournaments • \$75,000 tournaments • \$100,000 tournaments • \$125,000 tournaments • \$150,000 tournaments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000 tournaments • \$25,000 tournaments • \$50,000 tournaments • \$75,000 tournaments • \$100,000 tournaments 			
ATP/WTA Tour events governed by the ATP and WTA	Men <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATP International Series • ATP International Series – Gold • ATP Masters Series • Grand Slams (highest) 	Women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTA Tier IV • WTA Tier III • WTA Tier II • WTA Tier I • Grand Slams (highest) 	Entrants in these tournaments are world-class tennis players. They travel to tournaments year-round and derive most or all of their income from tournament winnings. You must have a world ranking to enter ATP and WTA events. Approximately the top 100 men and women are automatically entered in the Grand Slams. The other event sub-levels have varying ranges of allowed entrants. See Pages 7-8 for details.	This is the highest level of tennis, at which the world's best players compete as professionals.	10,000 hours (3+ hours per day for 10 years) plus fitness and training

¹ http://dps.usta.com/usta_master/usta/doc/content/doc_13_15595.pdf?1/5/2007%204:56:11%20PM

² www.ncaaclearinghouse.com