Tennis

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in; watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

Games similar to tennis have been played since the 11th century. Modern tennis was first developed in 19th century in England. It was on the Olympic programme at the 1896 games in Athens, but after that was not included between 1928 and 1988. At London 2012 there will be five events: men’s and women’s singles and doubles, as well as mixed doubles. Have you ever played tennis or been to a tournament?
1. Vocabulary

a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Serve</th>
<th>Tennis ball</th>
<th>Tennis racket</th>
<th>Tennis court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Serve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Backhand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Umpire</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Forehand</td>
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</table>
2. The rules of Tennis

- Tennis is played on a court, 23 metres long and 11 metres wide.
- There is a net in the middle of the court. Players stand at both ends of the court.
- Players use a racket to hit a ball. The ball must go over the net and land inside the court.
- To start, one player hits or ‘serves’ the ball. The other player tries to hit the ball back (or ‘returns the serve’).
- When players hit the ball to each other, this is a ‘rally’. The rally continues until a player misses the ball, hits it into the net, or out of the court.
- The aim of the game is to hit the ball so that the other player misses it.
- A match consists of ‘games’ and ‘sets’.
- The same player serves throughout one game, then the other player serves in the next game.
- A set is a group of games. Usually the first person to win six games wins the set.
- The winner of the match is the first to win either two or three sets.
- Tennis has individual (or ‘singles’) and team (or ‘doubles’) events for men and women, and mixed doubles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. a set</th>
<th>b. a rally</th>
<th>c. singles</th>
<th>d. a racket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e. to serve</td>
<td>f. mixed doubles</td>
<td>g. to return the serve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A player does this to start a rally.
2. This part of a tennis match has six or more games.
3. In this kind of tennis match, men and women play together.
4. This is what a player must do after his (her) opponent serves the ball.
5. This piece of equipment has strings and a handle, and is used to hit the ball.
6. This part of a tennis game starts with a serve, and ends when a player fails to hit the ball back.
7. In this kind of tennis match, a man plays against a man, or a woman plays against a woman.
3. Questions & Answers

**Tennis? That’s not an Olympic sport, surely?**
Yes it is. Why shouldn’t it be?

**Well, I’m not sure... it just doesn’t seem like an Olympic sport. It’s a ball game.**
Yes, it is, but the Olympics isn’t just running and jumping around, you know. In fact, about one quarter of the summer Olympic sports are ball games.

**Oh. And has tennis always been played at the Olympics?**
It was played until 1924, and was then removed from the programme until 1988. But it’s been played in every Games since then.

**So, there was no tennis at the Olympics between those years?**
Well, not quite. It was played as a demonstration sport in the Mexico City Olympic Games of 1968, and in Los Angeles in 1984.

**Why does tennis have such a strange system for scoring: 15, 30 and 40 points? Why not just 1, 2 and 3 points?**
Nobody knows for sure. One theory is that a clock face was used to show the score. The hand was moved to the 15-minute position for the first point, and the 30-minute position for the second point.

**Well then, why do players go from 30 to 40 points? Shouldn’t it be 45?**
Perhaps ‘45’ took too long to say, so it was abbreviated to ‘40’.

**I’m not convinced. Anyway, why do they say ‘15 - love’, rather than ‘15 - zero’, or ‘15 - nil’?**
Well, here’s one theory. It comes from the French ‘l’oeuf’, or ‘the egg’, because the shape of the 0 looked like an egg.

**Oh come on. You’re not serious are you?**
Absolutely! And get this - scientific research has shown that top players are actually less likely to win matches once they are married!

**Really? Do we know why?**
Perhaps because in tennis, ‘love’ means nothing!
a. What does the text tell us? Choose Yes or No.

1. The proportion of Olympic sports that use a ball.
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. The names of the other Olympic sports.
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Reasons why tennis was removed from the Olympics after 1924.
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. The year when tennis reappeared as an Olympic sport.
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Possible reasons for the odd scoring system in tennis.
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. A possible explanation of the word ‘love’ in tennis scoring.
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. The names of the scientists who investigated tennis and marriage.
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. A joke about tennis.
   a. Yes
   b. No

b. Complete the text with a preposition: for, for, like, from, from, than.

Tennis doesn’t seem to some people 1__________ an Olympic sport. After featuring in the first seven Olympics, tennis was removed 2__________ the list of official sports. Nobody can say 3__________ sure why tennis has such an odd system 4__________ scoring (15, 30 and 40 points). It is also unclear why players start with ‘love’, rather 5__________ ‘nil’, like in other sports. It may be that this comes 6__________ ‘l’oeuf’, which means ‘the egg’ in French.
4. Solution

**Exercise 1a**
1. b; 2. a; 3. g; 4. c; 5. e; 6. d; 7. f

**Exercise 2a**
1. e; 2. a; 3. f; 4. g; 5. d; 6. b; 7. c

**Exercise 3a**

**Exercise 3b**
1. like
2. from
3. for
4. for
5. than
6. from