



Introduction

Students in SEA programs are not only learning squash; they are also becoming more physically fit. Getting all students to participate with full effort in fitness activities, however, can sometimes be a struggle. Students who have not had prior athletic experiences, who are overweight, or who are very self-conscious about their bodies may especially struggle with fitness. As coaches, it is our job to make sure that all students are improving their fitness levels. This guide shares tips and ideas to help coaches get more creative and make fitness more fun, productive, and enjoyable.

Overview

Below are the topics covered in this guide.

- General Tips for Coaches
 - Support and encourage students
 - Participate in fitness
 - Modify exercises
 - Use team competitions
 - Play music
 - Use fitness equipment
- Opening Games
- Integrating Fitness into Feeding Drills
- Serious and Fun Fitness

General Tips for Coaches

To lead fitness sessions with strong student engagement, consider the following tips.

- Support and encourage students**

Many students don't have confidence in themselves. Coaches need to send the message that we believe they can accomplish anything. Acknowledge that fitness may be difficult, and it may take time to reach their goals, but if they push themselves, they can get there. Celebrate and congratulate students when they succeed. As students see and feel good about what they accomplish, they will be more willing to take on new challenges, both on the courts and in life.
- Participate in fitness**

Students are much more motivated when coaches and volunteers join in on the fitness. Our presence on court is much more important than telling them what to do. When we participate, it adds fun and gets the students involved.
- Modify exercises**

Understand that not all students know how to or are able to do certain exercises. Modify exercises as needed to enable students to feel comfortable and participate. One modification that comes up often is push-ups. Two ways you can have students do modified push-ups are: (1) on their knees pushing themselves up or (2) off the wall, still in push-up position but pushing off the wall instead of the floor.

❑ **Use team competition**

Having groups go against one another can bring out the best in the children. Students push/motivate one another, and do their best on behalf of their teammates.

❑ **Play music**

Having good music brings out positive energy and makes the fitness much more pleasant. Apple music allows coaches to make clean playlist. You can go into restrictions, turn off explicit and play music that the students can relate to. Urban Latin music and hip hop are often a huge success during practice. Another good music program is Pandora, where you can search certain stations; Pandora also allows you to go into the settings and turn off explicit language.

❑ **Use fitness equipment**

From ladders, to hurdles, to jump ropes, fitness equipment helps get students excited. Even just doing wall sits as a team where the students pass a medicine ball or balance a squash ball on a racquet down the line makes fitness more engaging.

Opening Games

At the start of practice, either in your opening circle or after your initial warm-up, coaches may want to do something more to warm-up students' muscles and raise their heart rates. This is a perfect opportunity for team-based games that get students active and set a positive tone to the start of practice. Below are a few sample games to consider.

Relay Races

Find space off court to form teams of 4 and have students compete. Coaches can get creative with this. For example:

- ❑ Set 3 cones far apart from one another for each team. Every time a student approaches a cone have them do a different exercise or something silly.
 - ❑ 1st cone- 3 burpees
 - ❑ 2nd cone- spin around the cone 6 times
 - ❑ 3rd cone- student must touch the cone with their nose and then bear-crawl back for the next person to go.

Relays are the most fun when teams cheer one another on. If students are quiet and you need to get the energy levels up, give points not only to the team that wins each race, but also to the team that cheers the most for their teammates.

Offense-Defense (not the squash game)

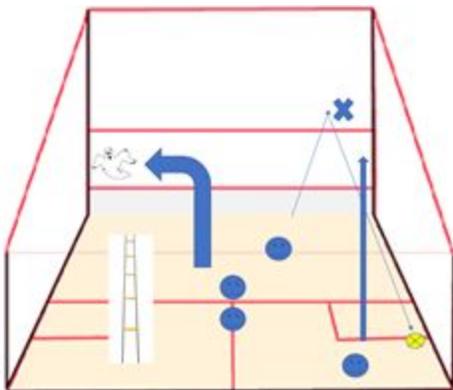
- ❑ Break the students into two teams on court.
- ❑ Team A will be on offense and have a ball. Their objective is to simply keep it away from Team B. They must throw it to everyone on their team without dropping the ball. If they drop the ball, Team B will be on offense and A will switch to defense. You can play off the wall and have the students go for a couple of minutes.
- ❑ Once students get the hang of it, you can count each team's catches. This will get them sweating and having competitive fun.

Tic Tac Toe Relay

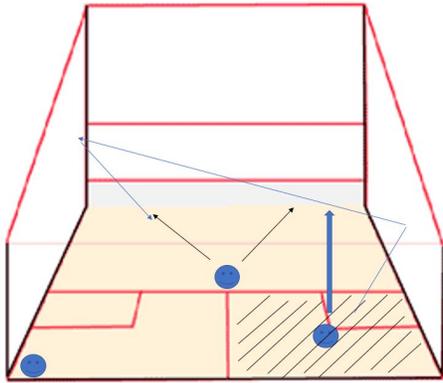
- ❑ Use tape to form a tic tac toe layout at the front of the court (or off court).
- ❑ Split students into two teams and line them up at the back of the court.
- ❑ Give each team a set of small cones. One team will have yellow cones, and another will have orange cones.
- ❑ The team's goal is to be the first to get three in a row. One at a time, students run to the tic tac toe court and have two options.
 - ❑ Option A- They can run down with their cone and place it in the box.
 - ❑ Option B- They can run down empty-handed steal a cone from the other team.
- ❑ One major rule to the game is that the first two runners must run down with a cone to get the game started.

Integrating Fitness into Feeding Drills

Adding a fitness component to feeding drills helps keep the pace up on court and increases students' fitness and footwork skills. Decreasing time spent waiting in line also reduces behavioral problems that sometimes occur behind the coach's back while he/she is feeding. Below are a couple ideas for adding fitness to feeding drills.



Forehand Drives off of coaches feed, then student goes for a backhand ghost, then the student runs down the ladder to the back of the line. You can get creative with the footwork drills on the ladder.



Coach's corner. Have one student in a corner doing some sort of exercise (burpees, weights, jump rope, etc.). Remember that using equipment such as jump ropes can help get the students pumped. While one student is doing the exercise, the other student is at the T and has to hit the ball back to the coaches corner (opposite side from where the student is doing fitness.) Coach can feed boast, straight or drop shots to get the student moving.

Serious and Fun Fitness

In addition to warm-up games and feeding drills, practices often involve high-intensity fitness workouts focused on increasing particular aspects of students' squash game (endurance, strength, flexibility, etc.). Below are a few ideas for intense and enjoyable fitness activities.

❑ Cycling intervals with professional squash

If you have access to spin bikes, use them for interval training. Students love the opportunity to get on equipment. To make it more enjoyable and directly relatable to squash, use a television or projector screen to play a professional squash match; instruct the students go fast while the players are playing a point and allow them to take a break when the players are getting ready to serve, talking to the ref, and so on. If you do not have speed cycles, think of other high-intensity activities students can do while watching squash (ladders, jump ropes, etc.).

❑ Sprints with a bucket of balls

Split the team into groups of roughly three to four players, with two teams per court competing against one another. Each team will have two buckets: one bucket full of balls at the front wall (with 20+ balls in it) and one empty bucket at the back wall. The team's goal is to run down, one player at a time, and grab one ball and then run back to place it in the empty bucket. The first team to empty the front wall bucket and fill up the back wall one wins. If you have teams on multiple courts, the winners can play each other in the next round and the losers can play for 3rd and 4th place.

❑ **100 sprints as a team**

Each court must get 100 court sprints done as a team, but only one person can go at a time. Allow the students to figure out a breakdown that works best for them.

Additional Resources

❑ Squash New Zealand (Kiwi Squash)

❑ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHYvf9HSTuI>

❑ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh74s5Kd05A>

This guide was written by Rodney Galvao at SquashBusters Providence, with support from the 2017-2018 Squash Leadership Committee.