

Balancing balloons



Aim of activity

Hands, thumbs, knees and toes. Can you use your body to keep the balloon off the ground? Master the moves and become a tennis champion!

What you'll get out of it

- Discover the sport of tennis.
- Try out some tennis skills.



Grand slam



60 mins



Challenge yourself

What you'll need

- A large, clear space
- Balloons, 1 per girl
- Cones (or similar), 1 per 4 girls
- Chalk or masking tape – enough for the length of your meeting space

Note to leader

If possible, use biodegradable balloons or use balloons from another activity.



Stay safe



If anyone has a latex allergy or fear of balloons popping, use non-helium foil balloons as an alternative.

Before you start

Blow up your balloons. We'd recommend inflating a few as spare in case any pop.

Then split your meeting space in half using chalk or masking tape.

Before the Balloon relay challenge, place a cone for each team of four, about ten Rainbow steps away from the marked out line.

What to do

1 Have you ever seen a game of tennis before? Perhaps it was on TV or maybe you've played a game yourself? If you have, put your hand up and share with everyone something you remember. Don't worry if not, you'll find out all about it in these fun challenges.

2 Does anyone know how a tennis player stands? When a tennis player's ready to start playing, they stand in the **ready position**. Let's try it out.

Ready position

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, bending your knees slightly. Hold out your hands in front of you as if you're holding a tennis racket, like the picture on the front of the card.

3 Now, move around your space. Imagine you're warming your body up for the big game. You might want to stop and stretch every five steps, move on the spot quickly to make your heartbeat faster or say something positive to get you in the best mood. When your leader says 'Ready!', get into the ready position.

4 Listen to your leader as they call out these different actions. Remember to get into the ready position to start each action. Keep going until you've mastered all the moves.

Jump and land – jump up and land on both feet at the same time.

Hop – hop on one foot for five seconds.

Jump and hop – jump from one foot to the other.

Tennis players use **hand-eye coordination** when they hit a ball with their racket. This means they use their eyes to watch the ball carefully, and their brain tells their hands where to go to hit it. This can be really tricky, so some tennis players use bigger rackets and balls to practise. You use these skills all the time without thinking.

5 It's time to put your hand-eye coordination to the test with the three fun challenges on the next page. Grab a balloon and find a space. Listen to your leader as they tell you how to play each one.



Floating balloons

Push your balloon up in the air using one hand. When it comes back down, hit it up again using your other hand. Keep your eye on the balloon. Don't worry if it hits the floor, pick it up and try again. Once you've all mastered this, try and keep your balloon in the air only using your thumbs, then with each finger on your hand and finally using all different body parts to keep it off the floor!

Balloon rally

Get into pairs and find a space together. Using one balloon, hit it back and forth in your pair. In tennis, passing the ball between you is called a **rally**. How long can you keep your balloon in the air? Can you keep it going for one minute? Try hitting the balloon with each hand. Is one easier than the other?

Balloon relay

Get into teams of four with one balloon per team. Stand in a line on the marked out line opposite a cone. When your leader says, 'Go!', take turns to go around the cone holding your balloon with only one hand. Pass the balloon to the next girl in the line to keep moving. Remember to cheer on your team!

Now you've warmed up, this time you need to move whilst pushing your balloon up in the air using your hand. Can you keep it in the air as you go around the cone? If it falls to the floor, pick it up and keep going.

Let's add in a rally! The first Rainbow in the line needs to move to the cone holding the balloon. When she reaches the cone, stop and try to hit the balloon over to the next Rainbow in the line who needs to catch it. The first Rainbow now needs to move to the back of the line, and the second Rainbow who caught the balloon can go! If you can't hit it all the way to the next Rainbow, take a step closer and try again. Keep going, making sure everyone in the line has had a turn. Which team will be the first all back at the start line?

6 Come back together. What was your favourite challenge? You've been using hand-eye coordination to keep the balloon off the floor and get it over to your partner. This is a really good skill in sport, especially tennis! What other skills do you think you used?

Take it further

Enjoyed this activity, LTA Youth is helping girls like you get into tennis – your leader can check out a [free training course](#) to help build your tennis skills.