

TRACKING RACKETS

A history of the Game of Tennis

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To understand the development of the game of tennis through the ages.
- To begin to understand how and why tennis equipment has changed through time.

1 Start the lesson with a class discussion about tennis and the equipment that is used for today's game. It would be good to have some 'props' e.g. rackets, different balls etc.

2 Read through the information page together linking other events in history which are relevant that the children may already know about. Some children may have knowledge of Tudors and Stuarts or Queen Victoria and what life was like during those times.

3 **ACTIVITY 1:** Explain to the children that they are going to construct a 'Tennis Equipment Timeline' using pictures of tennis equipment and a timeline. Some children will be able to annotate their timeline with additional, relevant information that they have learned during the lesson.

4 **ACTIVITY 2:** Look at some pictures of tennis rackets and any real rackets available. Ask the children to draw what they think a racket and ball may look like in the year 2500.

5 During the lesson it may be possible to set up a game of 'Jeu de Paume' – perhaps at the front of the class or in a corridor or playground, using a sponge ball. There could be an ongoing competition to see which pair manages the longest rally!

6 Finish with a quiz to see who has remembered the most information.

EQUIPMENT

Information pages, (one between two), copies of worksheets, scissors, glue, tennis rackets, balls and sponge balls.

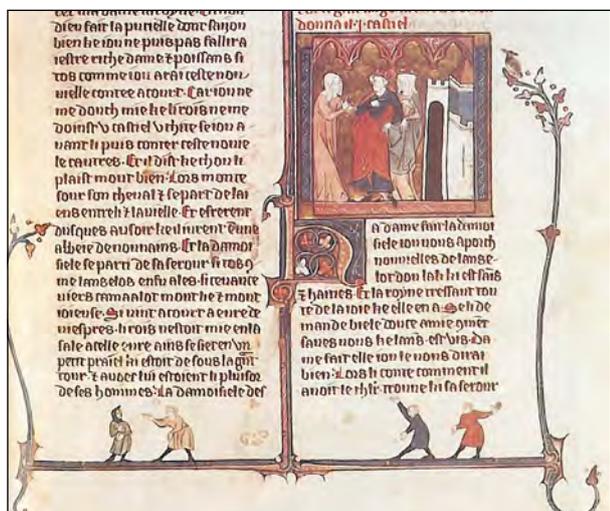
Information Page

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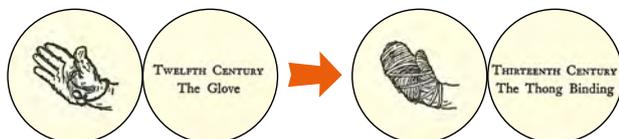
Tennis as we know it has only been played for just over 125 years. However a form of tennis called Real, Royal or Court Tennis, from which lawn tennis developed, was played centuries before.

12TH CENTURY



The first game of tennis was played by monks in France. This game was called 'Jeu de Paume' because the small, hard ball was hit over a net with the palm of the hand.

13TH CENTURY



Players of Jeu de Paume started to wear a glove to protect their playing hand. Later a simple wooden racket was developed in Italy.

16TH CENTURY

'Real Tennis' began to be played throughout Europe by Kings and their courtiers in castles and palaces. They used long handled rackets with a lopsided head. In fact Henry VIII was a very keen Real Tennis player and built a famous court at Hampton Court Palace.

19TH CENTURY

A game called Rackets in which players used a long handled racket and a small, hard, white ball became popular. This game however was played indoors and in the 1860s, two very keen Rackets players called Harry Gem and Augurio Perera, set about inventing a new outdoor version of the game which they called Lawn Tennis. The popularity of the game spread and the first Tennis Club in the world was opened in Leamington Spa in 1872.

Also around that time, a gentleman called Major Walter Clopton Wingfield, was developing a game, simpler than Rackets to be played outside.

He manufactured a portable box set which included everything required to play the game which he called Sphairistike. These rackets had long, slender handles with small, pear-shaped heads. It is a combination of these two games that we know today as tennis.

Tennis rackets have changed dramatically over the years from the first Jeu de Paume game. Strings were originally made from dried, twisted animal gut but are now generally made with synthetic fibres. From the 1900s rackets were made of wood until the 1970s when oversized metal rackets became popular. Nowadays most rackets are made of light weight carbon fibre and have large heads to enable easy contact of the ball.

Some other interesting dates:

- 1877** The first Lawn Tennis Championships were held at Wimbledon. The winner was Spencer Gore.
- 1884** Ladies were allowed to compete at Wimbledon.
- 1896** Tennis was first played at the Olympics.
- 1922** The new Wimbledon grounds were opened.

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Cut these sections out and glue them onto the Tennis Timeline Worksheet in the correct position



TRACKING RACKETS

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Timeline



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Timeline



Jeu de Paume

12th Century

1200

1300

1400



Glove

13th Century



Real Tennis

16th Century

1500

1600

1700



Sphairistike

19th Century

1800



Rubber Balls
Wooden Rackets

1900



Large-headed
Carbon Fibre

1990



Oversize Graphite

1970-80



Mini Tennis
Launched in 2001

2001

2000

1700