

Determining Tennis Lesson Commissions

Whether you are hiring a new Tennis Professional or evaluating your current structure it is important to have fair tennis lesson commissions. I bring a complete perspective to this subject, because for decades I have worked as a Tennis Professional and hired and paid numerous Pros at many different facilities. When hiring I always ask myself, "If I was the Pro and in this situation, what commission structure would I feel good about?" This approach will put you on the right track.

The following information is applicable for true Tennis Professionals. Someone is qualified as a Tennis Teaching Professional if they have a current certification in the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) or the United States Professional Tennis Registry (USPTR). I suggest looking for someone with at least a Pro 2 rating in the USPTA. The characteristics of an excellent Tennis Professional are beyond the scope of this column, yet there is a published article on "Qualities of Top Tennis Professionals" on our web site.

The diverse range of lesson commissions is from 50% to 100%. Many Tennis Pros earn 65% to 85% of gross lesson revenues, and here are factors that determine the percentage.

Is the Pro expected to perform non-lesson responsibilities? If yes, pay high in the range.

Is the club paying no or minimal salary or is there a significant salary? With no or minimal salary pay high in the range.

Are you providing benefits such as housing, meals and insurance? No or minimal benefits result in higher commissions.

A stellar Professional, Pro 1 rating in the USPTA, great people skills, much experience, excellent player/coach etc. should be paid very high in the range.

A Tennis Director, who is responsible for hiring and supervising other Teaching Pros, should be paid very high in the range. Also, it is reasonable for a Tennis Director to receive a small percentage of the tennis lessons from his Assistant Pros.

A good Professional, Pro 2 rating or higher in the USPTA, solid people skills, five years or less experience should be paid toward the middle of the range.

An Assistant Pro, Instructor rating in the USPTR, who has many good qualities yet is starting her career, could be paid in the low or middle of the range.

If your club is an outdoor facility you should pay higher in the range than an indoor club with significant operating costs.

If a facility decides to maintain just a small percentage, I think this should be at least 10% due to accounting costs. Also, except at indoor clubs, I believe Assistant Pros should earn at least 65% of lesson gross.

Your area market can affect the lesson structure. Exclusive areas like the Hamptons or Palm Beach generate significantly higher revenues, and in these type markets it is reasonable to pay some staff lower commissions.

I like incentive programs, and our firm pays on a sliding scale so within a given month a Tennis Pro can earn a five or ten percent bonus depending on the number of lessons taught.

If your club does retain a percentage of lessons and members are allowed to pay the Pro directly with cash or checks, you need accounting verification and random lesson audits to insure all revenues are being reported.

Although there are no set guidelines that an Assistant Pro should make “x” or a Head Professional should earn “y”, when you consider all the factors like the type of club, responsibilities of job, salary and benefits then abilities of the Tennis Professional, you will be able to determine fair lesson commissions. Also, if you have excellent staff it is better to overpay and consider a sliding scale bonus. If you have questions or would like to confidentially discuss your club’s lesson commissions, I invite you to contact me.

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