Tournament Packing Checklist

Print it. Tape it inside the gear bag. Never forget the overgrips again.

Tournament mornings are stressful enough without a missing shoe or a dead phone. This is the same checklist competitive junior families use — split into **local one-day events** and **overnight trips**, with notes for every age division from 10U to 18U.

> **The night-before rule:** Bag packed, outfits laid out, food prepped. Tournament mornings are for warming up, not hunting for socks.

The essentials bag (every tournament, every age)

- [ ] **2+ racquets**, strung within the last few weeks — a popped string mid-match should never end the day
- [ ] **Non-marking court shoes** (plus a backup pair if you own one)
- [ ] **Extra socks** — 2 pairs. Blisters ruin weekends
- [ ] **Match outfits + warm-up layers** for the day's weather
- [ ] **Hat or visor**
- [ ] **Wristbands**
- [ ] **Big refillable water bottle** — most sites have fountains, not cups
- [ ] **Towel** — tournaments don't provide them
- [ ] **Sunscreen + lip balm**
- [ ] **Overgrips + replacement grips**
- [ ] **Vibration dampeners**
- [ ] **Basic first aid** (parent-held): bandages, athletic tape, blister pads
- [ ] **Phone + charger / power bank** — draws and court assignments move around
- [ ] **Snacks** (see the food section below)

By age division — what changes

10U & 12U (orange / green ball): pack for comfort. Matches are short; waiting is long. Favorite snack, a book or cards for downtime, shade (pop-up tent or umbrella), and extra water. Keep the day light and fun.

14U: add a jump rope for warm-ups and an extra set of strings — players start breaking them at this stage.

16U & 18U: full-day fuel plan, backup shoes mandatory, and know the stringer's contact at the venue before you arrive. Days run long; be ready for three matches and a late final.

Food & hydration (the real performance edge)

Kids don't lose matches because of talent on tournament day — they lose them in the third set when the tank is empty. Pack more than you think you need.

- [ ] Water **plus** an electrolyte drink — not just water on hot days
- [ ] Bananas, peanut-butter sandwiches, granola bars
- [ ] Pretzels or crackers (salt matters when sweating)
- [ ] A real lunch if there's a long gap between matches — don't rely on the venue
- [ ] Cooler with ice for summer events

> **Between matches:** Eat within 30 minutes of walking off court. Skip the venue candy run — sugar spikes crash exactly when the next match starts.

Paperwork & check-in

- [ ] **USTA membership number** — screenshot it; don't rely on venue wifi
- [ ] Tournament confirmation email (saved offline)
- [ ] Photo ID for older juniors — some sites ask at check-in
- [ ] Emergency contacts + allergy / medical info on a card in the bag
- [ ] Payment method for on-site stringing or the pro shop

Overnight & travel tournaments — add these

- [ ] Everything above, packed for **each** day
- [ ] Laundry bag + detergent pods (hotel sink laundry is a parent superpower)
- [ ] 2 extra sets of strings
- [ ] Hotel confirmation + venue drive time mapped the night before
- [ ] Schoolwork and chargers for every device
- [ ] Entertainment for downtime — cards, a book, downloaded shows
- [ ] Pillow from home for younger kids — sleep wins matches

- [ ] A small toolkit: scissors, extra laces, mini screwdriver for racquet butt caps

> **The 10-minute venue recon:** When you arrive the night before or early morning, find bathrooms, water, shade, the tournament desk, and the practice courts. Match day is not the time to explore.