

VOLLEYBALL COACHING GUIDE

Teaching Volleyball Skills



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Warm-Up

A warm-up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm-up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. The warm-up is also a good time for the coach and athletes to talk about the objectives of the upcoming practice. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm-up prior to exercise cannot be overemphasized. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warming Up:

- Raises body temperature
- Increases metabolic rate
- Increases heart and respiratory rate
- Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm-up is tailored for the activity to follow. Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm-up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm-up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic walk/ fast walk/ run	Warms muscles	3 minutes
Stretching	Increases range of movement	5 minutes
Event Specific Drills	Coordination preparation for training/competition	10 minutes

Aerobic Warm-Up

Activities such as walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks.

Walking/ Running

The first activity in an athlete's training routine should be to warm the muscles. Based on your athletes' ability levels, this may be: walking briskly, jogging slowly or running for 3-5 minutes. As a coach, you should be aware of individual athletes' needs regarding the warm-up walk or run. This activity circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching.

For those athletes capable of running, they should start out slowly and gradually increase speed; however, the athletes should never reach even 50 percent of their maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm-up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

Stretching

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up and an athlete's performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury.



Event Specific Drills

Drills are activities designed to teach sport skills. Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally, reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to his/her highest possible level. Drills can be combined with the warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he/she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.

Specific Warm-up Activities

- Swing arms back and forth simulating the pendulum swing.
- Move quickly through the techniques without the ball.
- Use a 10- to 15-minute warm-up period on court, with drills that involve movement and the ball.



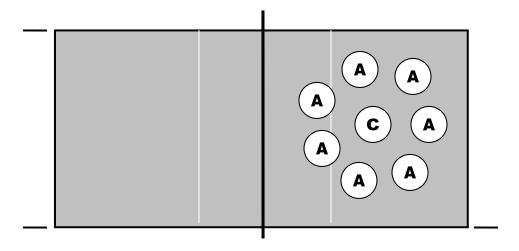
Warm-Up Drills

The best warm-up drills are based on skills scheduled to be covered in that practice and that the athletes have some level of confidence doing already. Warm-up is a low impact exercise, and the intent is to get the blood flowing at the same time the athletes are re-engaging their volleyball brains since the last practice or competition.

Circle Passing Drill

Description

The athletes (A) will form a rough circle on one side of the net. The coach (C) will stand in the middle of the circle and initiate the drill by tossing the ball to one of the athletes, who will pass the ball backto the coach. The coach in turn will pass (or toss) the ball to a different athlete, who will pass it back to the coach, and so on.



This low level non-impact drill is an opportunity for the coach to discuss the goals of the rest of the practice session, reinforce general goals the team should be focused on or discuss upcoming competitions or just allow the team to bond in a cooperative drill.

The drill can be made more complex by having the athletes set or overhead pass the ball in a controlled fashion. At the highest levels, the coach can hit the ball (25% effort) at athletes to warm up their passing/digging skills.











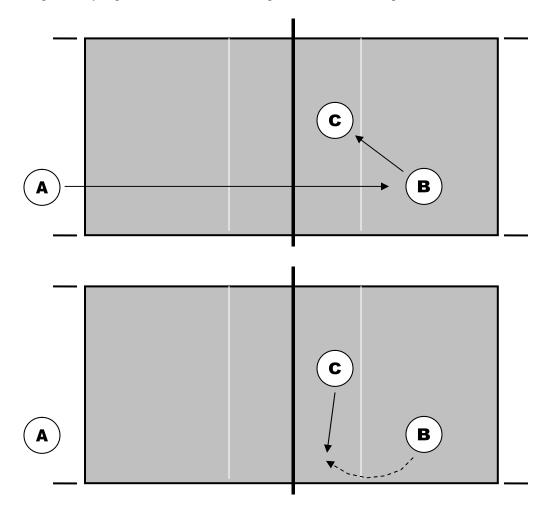
BASE Drill (Build All Skills Efficiently)

The basic passing drill below is designed to be easily adaptable to all levels of ability. It also allows athletes of differing ability levels to participate in the same drill while each is improving his/her specific skill needs.

Description

One player will be stationed at each position A, B and C. The remaining players will form a line off the court behind position A.

- 1. The ball is tossed over the net from Player A to Player B. (Since every ball comes from over the net, the sooner you begin teaching this drill, the sooner your athletes will develop the correct habits.)
- 2. Player B passes the ball to Player C with either an overhead or a forearm pass, and then approaches the net.
- 3. Player C bump sets the ball to Player B, who is standing 2 meters (6 feet) from the net. Player B catches the ball and rolls it under the net to the next Player A in line.
- 4. When the drill has been executed and the next player in line moves to position A, the player previously in position A moves to position B, the player previously in position B moves to position C, and the player previously in position C moves to the last position in line behind position A.





Variations

Using the variations below, you can build ever increasing challenges into the core drill, keeping it as game-like as possible. This drill should be run from the right side as frequently as it is run from the left side.

Before beginning the drill, you must determine how long each player is in this position. It can be for:

- Just one rotation, then each player "follows the ball," jogging to the new spot.
- A certain number of attempts, then the group rotates.
- A certain number of successes, then the group rotates.
- A certain amount of time, then the group rotates.

This drill can be enhanced by varying the difficulty of the task each player performs (listed in order of increasing complexity):

Player A:

- Tosses the ball over the net underhand.
- Tosses the ball over the net overhand.
- Tosses the ball over the net flat and hard overhead.
- Hits the ball over the net underhand.
- Hits the ball over the net overhand.

Player B:

- Catches the ball any way possible.
- Catches the ball in a "basket catch," cradling the ball between the forearms and upper arms.
- Passes the ball to the setter with a forearm pass.
- Passes the ball to the setter with an overhead pass.

Player C:

- Catches the ball any way possible.
- Catches the ball in a "basket catch," cradling the ball with the elbows bent.
- Catches the ball in a hand setting position.
- Bump sets the ball to Player B.
- Hand sets the ball to Player B.

This drill can be further varied by adjusting other factors, including:

Distance

- Player A can vary his/her distance from the net when initiating the drill. At the most basic level, Player A may only be 2 meters (6 feet) from the net, while advanced players will begin behind the endline, as if serving.
- Player A can send the ball directly to Player B or to an area nearby, forcing Player B to move his/her feet to execute the pass. At the most basic level, Player B may not need to move at all, while advanced players may be expected to run a short distance or even dive/roll to get balls more than 3 meters (10 feet) away.
- Player A can vary the height of the ball that is sent to Player B. At the most basic level, Player A may send the ball over very gently, while advanced players should expect to see balls coming from 10 meters (30 feet) high or very flat and sharply hit.



Court Position

- Player A can initiate the drill from anywhere on his/her side of the court, including from behind the service line.
- Player B can be positioned in a variety of positions on his/her side of the court to simulate a specific spot in the rotation.

Introduce Scoring

- Player B must accurately catch or pass the ball X number of times in a row.
- Player B must accurately pass the ball to the setter X out of Y times.

Accuracy

- The pass from Player B must land within 1 meter (3 feet) of Player C to be considered "accurate."
- The pass from Player B must be high enough that the setter can easily hand set the ball.
- The set from Player C must land within 1 meter (3 feet) in front of Player B at the end of the approach to be considered "accurate."

Conclusion

This drill is flexible enough that all three players could be working at the same ability level in the drill or each athlete could be working at a different level. An example would be: Player A is performing a very basic underhand toss while Player B is performing a more complex overhand pass away from the body at the same time Player C is practicing getting his/her feet to the right position to hand set the ball.

As a coach, you should work to have the players themselves run this drill as soon as possible. You can be more effective as a coach when you can move independently of the drill, offering corrective suggestions and encouragement.

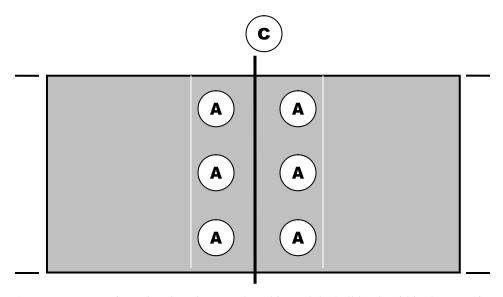


3 on 3 in 3 Drill

Description

Six athletes will play a shortened game of three-hit volleyball to 5 rally points. Three athletes will line up on each side of the net inside the 3-meter (10-foot) line, facing the net.

The drill begins each time with the coach (C) tossing the ball from off the court to an athlete (A) on one of the teams. That athlete will need to pass the ball in a controlled fashion to the athlete next to him/her, who will set the ball back to the first athlete, who will then attack the ball over the net to the opposing team. The ball must be played entirely within the first 3 meters (10 feet) of the net on each side to be legal.



A team scores a point only when they use three hits and the ball lands within the opposing team's legal area (inside the 3-meter/10-foot line), or the opposing team is unable to legally return the ball using three hits. Once a team has scored 5 rally points, a new team of three athletes can be rotated in to play the winners or the existing teams can be mixed to form new teams.

This drill reinforces the idea that volleyball is a three-hit game, and is intended to solve two main problems: reducing the tendency to "one over" every ball, and encouraging athletes to understand their responsibilities to play defense by shrinking the court to more manageable proportions.







Stretching

Flexibility is critical to an athlete's optimal performance in both training and competition. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. Stretching follows an easy aerobic jog at the start of or the end of a training session or competition.

Begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension, and hold this position for 15-30 seconds until the pull lessens. When the tension eases, slowly move further into the stretch until tension is again felt. Hold this new position for an additional 15 seconds. Each stretch should be repeated 4-5 times on each side of the body.

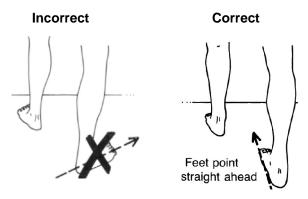
It is important to continue to breathe while stretching. As you lean into the stretch, exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, keep inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch. Stretching should be a part of everyone's daily life. Regular, daily stretching has been demonstrated to have the following effects:

- 1. Increase the length of the muscle-tendon unit
- 2. Increase joint range of motion
- 3. Reduce muscle tension
- 4. Develop body awareness
- 5. Promote increased circulation
- 6. Make you feel good

Some athletes, such as those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful to not allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes, and should never be part of a safe stretching program. Unsafe stretches include the following:

- Neck Backward Bending
- Trunk Backward Bending

Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. Take the calf stretch, for example. Many athletes do not keep the feet forward, in the direction that they are running.





Another common fault in stretching is bending the back in an attempt to get a better stretch from the hips. An example is a simple sitting forward leg stretch.

Incorrect Correct





In this guide, we will focus on some basic stretches for major muscle groups. Along the way we will also point out some common faults, illustrate corrections and identify stretches that are more event specific. We will start at the top of the body and work our way to the legs and feet.



Upper Body

Chest Opener



Clasp hands behind back Palms facing in Push hands toward sky

Side Stretch



Raise arms over head Clasp forearms Bend to one side

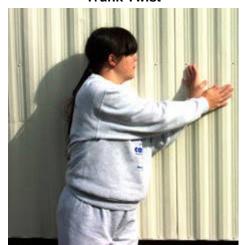
Side Arm Stretch



Raise arms over head Clasp hands, palms up Push hands toward sky

If the athlete is unable to clasp the hands, he/she can still get a good stretch by pushing the hands to the sky, like the athlete above

Trunk Twist



Stand with back to wall Turn, reach palms to wall



Triceps Stretch



Raise both arms over head Bend right arm, bring hand to back Grasp elbow of bent arm and pull gently toward the middle of the back Repeat with other arm

Shoulder Stretch



Take elbow into hand Pull to opposite shoulder Arm may be straight or bent



Chest Stretch



Clasp hands behind neck Push elbows back Keep the back straight and tall



This is a simple stretch that the athletes may not feel a lot when stretching. However, it opens up the chest and inner shoulder areas, preparing the chest and arms for the workout.



Low Back & Glutes

Crossed Ankle Stretch



Sit, legs outstretched and crossed at ankles Reach extended arms in front of body





Sit, bottoms of feet touching Hold feet/ankles Bend forward from hips Ensure that the athlete is pulling up in his lower back

Groin Stretch



Here, the back and shoulders are rounded. The athlete is not bending from his hips and is not getting the maximum benefit of the stretch.



Here, the athlete is correctly bringing his chest to his feet and not pulling his toes toward his body

Hip Rolls



Lie on back, arms outstretched Bring knees to chest Slowly drop knees to left (exhale) Bring knees back to chest (inhale) Slowly drop knees to right (exhale)



Work on keeping the knees together to get the full stretch through the buttocks



Supine Hamstring Stretch



Lie on back, legs outstretched Alternating legs, bring legs to chest Bring both legs to chest at the same time



Downward Facing Dog

-Toes

Kneel, hands directly under shoulders, knees under hips Lift heels until standing on toes Slowly lower heels to ground Continue alternating up and down slowly

Downward Facing Dog –



Drop heels to ground Excellent stretch for the lower back

Downward Facing Dog -



Alternate raising to toes with one leg up, while keeping the other foot flat on ground Excellent stretch to prevent and help shin splints



Lower Body

Calf Stretch



Stand facing wall/fence Bend forward leg slightly Bend ankle of back leg

Calf Stretch w/Bent Knee



Bend both knees to ease strain

Hamstring Stretch







Legs straight out and together
Legs are not locked
Bend at hips, reach toward ankles
As flexibility increases, reach for feet
Push out through the heels, forcing toes to the sky



Seated Straddle Stretch



Legs straddled, bend at hips Reach out toward the middle Keep the back straight

Hurdle Stretch - Correct





Correct alignment of the lead leg is important in a hurdle stretch. The foot must be aligned in the forward direction of running.

Sit with legs outstretched, bend one knee, touch bottom of foot to opposite thigh Toes of the straight leg are flexed toward sky
Push out through the heel, forcing toes to the sky
Bend at hips in nice easy stretch, reaching toward the feet or ankles
Bring chest to knee







Take a hurdle stretch position Turn and lean back in the opposite direction of the bent leg Hold for 15 seconds and assume the start position Repeat 3-5 times



If the athlete feels pain in the knee during this stretch and foot is pointing out to the side, point foot back to relieve stress.



If the athlete feels pain in the knee during this stretch, bring the knee in toward the body to relieve stress.

Forward Bend



Stand, arms outstretched overhead Slowly bend at waist Bring hands to ankle or shin level without strain Point fingers toward feet





Stretching - Quick Reference Guidelines

Start Relaxed

Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm

Be Systematic

Start at the top of body and work your way down

Progress from General to Specific

Start general, then move into event specific exercises

Easy Stretching before Developmental

Make slow, progressive stretches

Do not bounce or jerk to stretch farther

Use Variety

Make it fun, use different exercises to work the same muscles

Breathe Naturally

Do not hold your breath, stay calm and relaxed

Allow for Individual Differences

Athletes start and progress at different levels

Stretch Regularly

Always include time for warm-up and cool-down

Stretch at home



Serving

Teaching the athletes a repeatable routine to use each time they approach the service line is the most critical factor for a successful serve. The athletes either are coming off the bench to serve or have just been involved in a strenuous play on the court; in either case, having a steadying routine for them to fall back on will give them the confidence to serve their team to a point.

Underhand Serve

Description – Underhand Serve

The athlete should position the feet behind the service line, shoulder width apart and facing perpendicular to the endline (as if planning to hit a golf ball or softball over the net). The athlete will do the following: Hold the ball in the off hand in front of the body, palm up. With the off hand, toss the ball approximately .3 meters (1 foot) straight up in the ar. As the ball is coming down, swing the dominant hand with a closed fist across the body in a natural motion into the bottom third of the ball, toward the net. The amount of force the athlete needs to apply is determined by how far into the opposing court the serve is intended to land.











Skill Progression - Underhand Serve

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Accurately toss the ball			
Make contact with the ball			
Strike the ball with a rigid, consistent contact point			
Get a legal underhand serve over the net			
Get a legal underhand serve over the net and inbounds			
Accurately place the ball to a designated place on the court			

Totals

Teaching Points

- Many athletes will not be strong enough initially to get the ball over the net from the regulation endline. If
 Modified competition is offered in your program, an accommodation can be made to allow theseathletes to
 move closer to the net when they serve. These athletes should be encouraged at practices to slowly move back
 toward the legal service line as their strength and confidence increases, eventually serving from the regulation
 endline.
- Some athletes may have a physical limitation with their off hand such that they cannot toss the ball accurately with that hand. It is legal to both toss and hit the ball using only the dominant hand. Athletes can even toss the ball with both hands if that will help produce a more consistently accurate toss.
- Practicing with a whistle to initiate the serve is helpful so that athletes are practicing under the same conditions they will experience at competitions.











Faults & Fixes - Underhand Serve

_		
Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete executes an inaccurate toss	 Practice tossing the ball with the off hand. Have the athlete use the 	Ball Toss drill
	dominant hand to toss the ball.	
	Have the athlete use a two-handed toss.	
Athlete misses hitting the correct spot on the ball (despite a good toss)	Have the athlete practice hitting the ball with the dominant hand directly out of the off hand – no toss. Once the athlete has improved the arm swing motion, slowly reintroduce the toss.	Serve to Target
Athlete consistently serves short	Make sure the athlete understands to use the entire upper body for power, and not just the elbow.	Serve to Target
	Teach the athlete to strike the ball with a rigid striking surface such as a closed fist.	
	Have the athlete focus on swinging through the ball, rather than stopping at the point of contact.	
Athlete consistently serves into the net hard	The athlete is strong enough; he or she needs to hit slightly under the ball to give it more arc.	Serve to Target
Athlete consistently serves left or right	The athlete may be twisting the body in one direction or the other with the arm swing.	Serve to Target
	The athlete may be curling the dominant arm inward with the elbow rather than swinging the entire arm as one unit.	
	In either case, the correction is to minimize body movement during the arm swing.	
Athlete serves the ball long	Teach the athlete to swing the arm slower.	Serve to Target
	Have athlete move back farther if space allows.	



Overhand Serve

The athlete's position is behind the service line, facing the net, with the feet slightly staggered shoulder width apart. The foot opposite the dominant hand should be slightly forward (left forward for a right handed athlete), toes pointing at the spot the server is aiming at, with his/her body weight resting primarily on the back foot. The athlete should hold the ball in the off hand at arm's length in front of the body, palm up. The dominant arm should be held above the shoulder, with the elbow at the same height as the ear and pointing backward, and the hand pointing forward ("thumb in the ear" or "drawing the bowstring").

The athlete will do the following: Softly toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) in the air so that it passes in front of the dominant shoulder. Shift the weight from the back foot to the front foot by leaning forward, and rotate the dominant arm high and into the path of the ball. Sharply strike the ball with an open hand, aiming at a point slightly above the height of the net. Follow through on the arm swing, rotating the upper body for more power.

A "roundhouse" service style also works for many athletes. The athlete is positioned in the same fashion as the traditional underhand service style described in the previous section. Instead of holding the ball waist high and swinging the arm at that height across the body, the athlete will hold the ball at shoulder height, toss the ball above the head and swing the arm to contact the ball above the head in one "roundhouse" motion.











Skill Progression - Overhand Serve

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Accurately toss the ball			
Make contact with the ball			
Strike the ball with a rigid, consistent contact point			
Get a legal overhand serve over the net			
Get a legal overhand serve over the net and inbounds			
Accurately place the ball to a designated place on the court			
Totals			

Teaching Points

The most common problem in an overhand serve is a bad toss. Many Special Olympics athletes lack the coordination with one hand to make a consistent toss. A solution that can work for some of these athletes is to have them use two hands on their toss. Everything mechanically remains the same except that the athlete uses both hands for the toss instead of one, and the ball needs to be tossed higher than normal to give the athlete time toraise the arm and swing.

The second most common problem is poor mechanics in the arm swing. Often, Special Olympics athletes have never been taught the correct way to throw a ball, which exactly translates into the overhead hitting motion used in volleyball. The correction for this problem in hitting a volleyball is to replace the volleyball with a tennis ball or other small round ball, and simply practice an overhead throwing motion correctly. The athletes should continue to use the underhand serve until they can effectively throw any ball overhead, at which time they can begin practicing an overhead serve.



Faults & Fixes – Overhand Serve

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete executes an inaccurate toss	Practice an accurate toss.	Ball Toss Drill
Athlete misses the ball	Practice an accurate toss	Ball Toss Drill
Athlete consistently serves into the net hard	Have the athlete toss the ball slightly higher and focus on hitting the ball "up" rather than straight ahead, aiming for an imaginary spot higher than the net.	Serve To Target Drill
Athlete consistently serves into the net short	Teach the athlete to swing the arm faster.	Serve To Target Drill
	Teach the athlete to strike the ball with a rigid striking surface instead of a loose hand.	
	Make sure the athlete's arm is fully extended above the head when making contact with the ball.	
Athlete consistently serves left or right	Check the accuracy of the toss; if the ball is tossed anywhere except in front of the dominant shoulder, the serve will tend to go out of bounds.	Ball Toss Drill/ Serve To Target Drill
	Adjust how the athlete is positioned at the service line; toes should point toward the target, avoiding excessive upper body movement.	
Athlete serves the ball long	Teach the athlete to swing the arm slower.	Serve To Target Drill



Serve Drills (Underhand and Overhand)

The drills listed here can be used for both Underhand and Overhand Serving.

Ball Toss Drill

Drill Description

Have the athlete assume the correct serving position (perpendicular to the endline, feet shoulder width apart, off hand holding the ball in front, palm up). The athlete will repeatedly toss the ball straight up and back down into the same hand. The height of the toss will initially be very low, perhaps only a few centimeters Q inches). Once the athlete has gained confidence with a very low toss, slowly increase the height of the toss until the athlete can consistently toss the ball straight up and down 0.3 meters (1 foot).





Serve to Target Drill

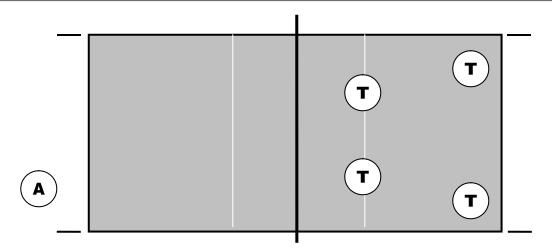
Drill Description

Have the athlete assume the correct serving position. The coach will place targets on the opposite side of the net—two targets 3 meters (10 feet) from the net and 2 meters (6 feet) from each sideline; two targets 2 meters (6 feet) from the back line and 1 meter (3 feet) from each sideline. The targets can be folding chairs laid flat, open newspapers, chalk outlines, or even teammates sitting or lying on the floor. The targets should all be horizontal to better train the servers to serve into the court but away from the opposing players who will be standing (vertical).









Each athlete will serve 10 balls to these targets as verbally and visually identified by the coach (deep right, short left, etc.). Immediately following each serve, the athlete will run to a prescribed defensive position on the court, mimicking game conditions, and then run back to the service line for the next serve. For each target the athlete can hit, one point is awarded. As an example, each athlete can have personal performance goals to raise their score of 3 points at the first practice to 6 points by the end of the season.

A variation for athletes who lack the strength to get the ball over the net from the regulation endline is to position them at the 3-meter (10-foot) line for the drill. This will allow them to practice their basic mechanics while gaining the strength they will need to eventually serve from behind the endline. Slowly moving these athletes away from the net will increase their confidence as they get stronger.



Passing

The athlete should assume an athletic position – face the direction the ball will come from, feet slightly staggered and shoulder width apart, knees bent, upper body slightly leaning forward, hands held loosely in frontof the body. Once the athlete decides to forearm pass the ball (as opposed to overhead passing), the athlete will clasp the hands together in whatever fashion feels comfortable as long as the thumbs are exactly even. The elbows should be locked straight and the thumbs should be pointed toward the floor 1 meter (3 feet) in front of the athlete.

The athlete should watch the flight of the ball and move the feet so that the ball will contact a point on the forearms above the wrist, between the outstretched arms, while still crouched in the athletic position without having to reach offbalance in any direction.















Skill Progression – Forearm Passing

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Create a consistent platform			
Demonstrate a stable, staggered stance			
Demonstrate proper athletic stance			
Forearm pass a ball tossed directly to them			
Forearm pass a ball tossed 1 meter (3 feet) from the athlete			
Forearm pass the tossed ball to the setter			
Forearm pass a ball served directly to them			
Forearm pass a ball served in their area of responsibility			
Forearm pass the served ball to the setter			
Totals			

Teaching Points

At lower levels, the most common problem athletes have is movement to the ball. Formany it is the fear of misjudging the ball and being hit or injured. For others it is an inability to stay focused on the ball as it passes high in the air toward them. Volleyball requires strong depth perception as well as considerable eye-hand coordination. Patiently executing drills in a progressive fashion can improve lower level athletes' confidence in their ability to pass a ball in a game-like situation. An example would be practicing for several weeks to pass a ball tossed from 1 meter (3 feet) away and 2 meters (6 feet) high, then slowly increasing the height and distance of the toss until the athlete eventually feels comfortable receiving a serve in a match.

At intermediate levels the most common problem is the desire to immediately hit the ball back over the net ("one over") rather than to the team setter so that an attack can be performed. While this can be effective in the short term, it removes the element of team play that is so important to the true enjoyment of the sport. "Three hit" drills run under game-like conditions can address this problem.

The common complaint of bruised/sore forearms can be eliminated with a combination of proper technique and the use of softer volleyballs and long sleeves. Athletes often pass the ball in the wrong place on their arms—using the wrists rather than the fleshy part of the forearm.





Faults & Fixes – Forearm Passing

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
The athlete doesn't move to the ball	Have the athlete practice shuffling the feet to a ball tossed slight away (left/right/in front/behind). Verbally coax the athlete to move during the drill.	Compass Drill
Sending the ball back over the net immediately ("one over")	Reinforce changing the direction of the ball to a target on the athlete's side of the net.	BASE Drill
Hitting the ball on the wrists/thumbs	Have the athlete practice catching the ball in a cradle between the forearms and upper arms.	Basket Catch Drill
Passing the ball off one arm	Have the athlete practice catching the ball in a cradle between the forearms and upper arms.	Basket Catch Drill
Wild arm swings when contacting the ball	Have the athlete focus on passing the ball at the correct angle over a very short distance to a designated target without swinging the arms.	BASE Drill
Passing the ball too high on the arms (elbows or biceps)	Have the athlete practice catching the ball in a cradle between the forearms and upper arms.	Basket Catch Drill



Skill Progression - Overhead Passing

The athlete should assume an athletic position – face the direction the ball will come from, feet slightly staggered and shoulder width apart, knees bent, upper body slightly leaning forward, hands held loosely in front of the body.

The athlete should watch the flight of the ball and move the feet so he/she will contact the ball just above and in front of the head with both hands, as if setting the ball. The hands of the athlete will need to be much stronger since the ball will be coming faster and higher. The ball should be directed in a controlled fashion to the setter rather than simply "slapped" back over the net.



Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Create a consistent overhead hand position			
Demonstrate a stable, staggered stance			
Demonstrate proper athletic stance			
Overhead pass a ball tossed directly to them			
Overhead pass a ball tossed 1 meter (3 feet) from the athlete			
Overhead pass the tossed ball to the setter			
Overhead pass a ball served directly to them			
Overhead pass a ball served in their area of responsibility			
Overhead pass the served ball to the setter			
Totals			



Teaching Points

A common problem with overhead passing is the tendency to send the ball immediately back over the net-a "one over." This can be minimized with drills that emphasize changing the angle of the ball toward the setter rather than straight back toward the attacker and over the net. In those drills that keepscore, the team can score a point only when they use three hits before sending the ball back over the net.

Some athletes will not have the hand/wrist strength to pass balls using the correct overhead passing mechanics. An option for them is to lock their wrists together and reverse forearm pass the ball over the head using the bottom of their fists (sometimes called the Tomahawk). This is very inaccurate and should be used only when the athlete simply cannot pass the ball using the proper technique described above.





Faults & Fixes – Overhead Passing

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Misjudging when to overhead pass versus when to forearm pass	Have the coach run drills and call out "hands" or "arms" while the ball is in the air to prompt the athlete to take the ball overhead or with his/her forearms, respectively.	BASE Drill
Sending the ball back over the net immediately ("one over")	Allow the team to score points in a drill only when they use three hits to return the ball.	3 on 3 in 3 Drill
Having the ball slip through the passer's hands in overhead passing	 Practice catching the ball overhead firmly and accurately. Use a reverse forearm pass (called the Tomahawk) for those athletes that lack hand strength. 	3 on 3 in 3 Drill



Passing Drills (Forearm and Overhead)

The drills listed here can be used for both Forearm and Overhead Passing.

BASE Drill (Build All Skills Efficiently)

The BASE Drill is described in the Warm-up section of this book.

3 on 3 in 3 Drill

The 3 on 3 in 3 Drill is described in the Warm-up section of this book.

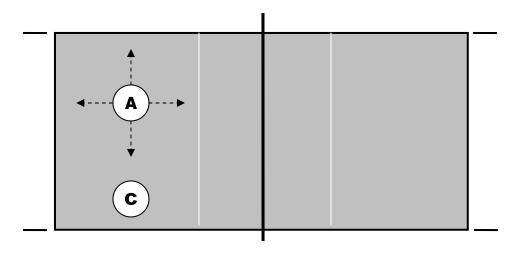
Compass Drill

Description

The athlete (A) will assume the correct passing position facing the coach (C) approximately 3 meters (10 feet) away. The coach will initiate the drill by tossing the ball directly in front of the athlete, who will pass the ball back to the coach. The coach will then toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) to the left of the athlete, who will pass it back to the coach, who will toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) behind the athlete, who will pass it back to the coach, who will toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) to the right of the athlete, who will pass it back to the coach, who will toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) in front of the athlete. The drill then repeats 4 more times.

Each time the athlete moves the feet to the ball, he/she must return to the original ready position to await the next toss—the athlete should not anticipate the next toss and run to that position ahead of time.







This drill is intended to force the athlete to move his/her feet to the ball. The coach should give continuous verbal reinforcement during the drill – where the ball is going, move the feet quickly, use proper form, etc.

Variations

For more advanced athletes, the coach can vary the location each time without warning, rather than following a predictable pattern. The coach can also introduce spin to the toss so the athlete can practice passing a ball in more game-like situations.

Basket Catch Drill

Description

The purpose of this drill is to allow athletes to become comfortable judging where the ball should be contacted on their forearms. It is designed for very beginning athletes, or athletes who are struggling to make contact with the ball at the correct point on their arms or judging when to move their feet to get in proper position.

The athlete will face the coach 1 meter (3 feet) away in the proper passing position. The coach will gently toss the ball to the athlete at a height of 2 meters (6 feet) off the ground. The athlete will "catch" the ball by curling his/her arms into a basket while keeping the hands locked.



Variations

The drill can be increased in complexity by having the coach toss the ball from farther away, toss the ball higher, toss the ball over the net, or toss the ball slightly away from the athlete so he/she must move the feet to make the catch.

Once the athlete has demonstrated the ability to consistently catch the ball at the correct point on the arms, he/she will repeat the drill described above while bumping the ball back to the coachinstead of catching it.

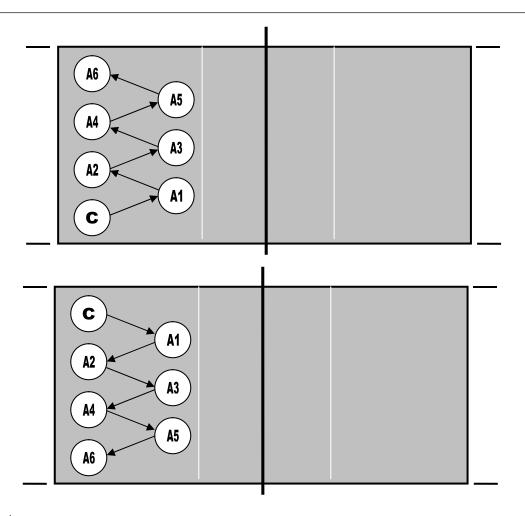
Zig Zag Drill

Description

The purpose of this drill is to teach accurate ball control to beginning athletes while changing the direction of the ball, encouraging three hits during competition.

The athletes (A) line up in two rows approximately 3-4 meters apart (10–13 feet) while facing each other on the same side of the net. The drill begins with the coach tossing the ball to the athlete in position A1, who passes to the athlete in position A2, who passes to the athlete in position A3, and so on until the ball reaches the last athlete in line, who reverses the order. The drill will continue as long as the athletes are able to keep the ball in the air using proper technique. It can be done with an unlimited number of athletes, as space allows.





Variations

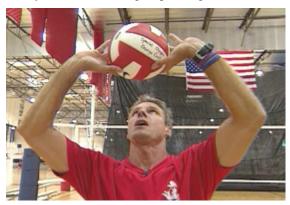
The drill can be made more difficult by varying the distance between the athletes; the farther away from each other, the more difficult the drill.



Hand Setting

The athlete should face the target of the set (not the source of the pass), standing with the feet shoulder width apart, left foot slightly in front of the right foot (regardless of the dominant hand), hands slightly above and in front of the forehead as if cradling the ball, with thumbs pointing at the forehead and fingers pointing skyward.

The setter needs to wait for the ball to make the initial contact with both hands at the same time. The setter then changes the direction of the ball toward the target by pushing with both arms outward toward the target, ending with arms fully extended and fingers pointing at the ball as it arcs toward the target.





Skill Progression - Hand Setting

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Create a consistent overhead hand position			
Demonstrate a stable, staggered stance			
Demonstrate proper athletic stance			
Demonstrate follow-through with full arm extension			
Front set a ball tossed directly to them			
Front set a ball tossed 1 meter (3 feet) from the athlete			
Front set the passed ball to the hitter			
Back set a ball tossed directly to them			
Back set a ball tossed 1 meter (3 feet) from the athlete			
Back set the passed ball to the hitter			

Teaching Points

Hand setting is the most difficult skill for any volleyball player to learn to do well. It requires considerable eye-hand coordination as well as quick feet to get under the ball during competition. The quality of the setting directly determines how effective the hitters on a team will be.



Many teams will identify potential setters and have them train almost exclusively on developing those skills necessary to directing the offense. A dedicated setter should be your most mobile and athletic athlete. Setters will need to practice their specialized skills separate from the rest of the team as well as with the team.

Faults & Fixes - Hand Setting

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Hitting the ball with both hands rather than controlling the contact	Have the athlete practice catching and then releasing the ball to develop timing when contacting the ball.	Flick Drill
Double contacting the ball – hitting the ball	Get the hands up as early as possible in the correct position while facing the target.	Flick Drill
Inconsistent location of the set (too far off the net, too close, etc.)	Face the target rather than the source of the pass.	Run Down Drill



Hand Setting Drills

Flick Drill

Description

In this drill the athlete will stand in the correct setting position facing the coach 1 meter (3 feet) away. The coach will gently toss the ball into the hands of the athlete, who will "flick" or snap the ball as quickly as possible directly back to the coach in a straight line. The coach's hands should be held in front of his/her face as the target for the athlete to aim for. As the athlete gains confidence the coach should slowly move his/her hands higher above the head and make the toss from farther away so that the athlete can begin putting arc on the set rather than a straight line.

The purpose of this drill is to allow the athlete to practice: (1) getting the hands up in the proper position early, (2) waiting for the ball to contact the hands before setting it, and (3) flicking the ball rather than hitting it with the hands.



Variations

As the athlete gains confidence, the coach can increase the height of the toss, make the toss from an angle rather than directly in front or even add spin to the toss.

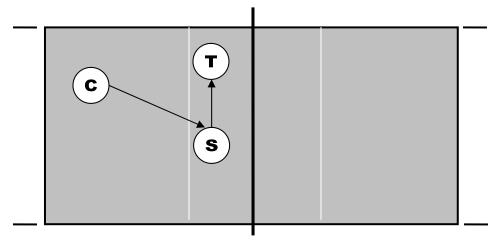


Run Down Drill

Description

In this drill the setter (S) will begin in the front right position. The coach (C) will initiate the drill by tossing the ball to the setter, who will hand set the ball to a stationary target (T).

The focus of the drill is for the setter to move the feet to the ball as quickly as possible to allow time to stop, face the target, set the hands and body in the proper position, and deliver the ball accurately. The tosses from the coach should correspond to the ability level of the setter involved in the drill—low, gentle tosses for a beginning setter trying to gain confidence, and high spinning tosses off the net for more experienced setters.







Variations

The value of this drill is that the coach can mimic specific game conditions by varying the location of the toss (away from the setter – hence the name of the drill), the height of the toss, and the amount of spin on the toss. The starting location of the setter as well as the coach can be varied to provide an easier or harder challenge for the setter. The drill can also require the setter to periodically backset, increasing the difficulty.

While having a net is the best (most game-like) situation, this drill can also be run beside a wall. This variation has the added benefit of allowing the setter(s) and an assistant coach to practice their skillsat the side of the gym while the rest of the team is using the court to work on any other skill development.









Attacking/ Hitting

Standing Attack

The athlete should stand facing the direction the ball is intended to travel (most often at an angle from the set), with the feet slightly staggered shoulder width apart. The foot opposite the dominant hand should be slightly forward (left foot forward for a right-handed athlete) with the body weight primarily on the back foot. The athlete's dominant arm should be held above the shoulder with the elbow pointing backward and held at the same height as the ear, and the hand pointing forward ("thumb in the ear"). The off arm should point in the direction the ball is intended to travel.



Once the athlete is ready to swing, the off arm will begin to drop as the dominant arm reaches high toward the ball. The athlete's weight will shift from the back foot to the front foot, and the arm will swing into and through the ball, snapping the wrist to give the ball topspin.









Jumping Attack

The mechanics are the same as a standing attack with the addition of a jump. The athlete will need to be a short distance behind where the set will land. He/she will take a 3- or 4step approach to the ball, with the last two steps as the jump. The second to last step is the longest. The last step just closes the feet together (step-close). A strong upward arm swing helps generate extra vertical height. The athlete should take the last step on the foot opposite the dominant arm (left foot for right handed athletes).







Skill Progression – Attacking/ Hitting

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Demonstrate proper arm position			
Demonstrate fully extended arm swing with follow-through			
Standing, spike the ball over the net from a toss or set			
Standing, spike the ball over the net using a short approach from a toss or set			
Accurately hit the ball to a designated place on the court from a toss or set			
Accurately hit a variety of tosses or sets from a variety of heights from a standing position			
Time their jump to spike the ball over the net using a short approach from a toss or set			
Time their jump to accurately hit the ball to a designated place on the court from a toss or set			
Time their jump to accurately hit a toss or set from a variety of heights			
Totals			



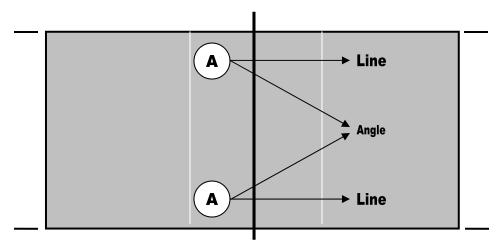
Teaching Points

The mechanics for an overhead attack are very similar to throwing any ball overhead—softball, tennis ball, etc. Using physical analogies to teach the volleyball hitting mechanics may help some athletes to understand better.

At the lowest level of ability, athletes often do not have the arm strength or coordination to attack the ball with one arm while jumping in the air. These athletes can be successful by locking their hands together and striking the ballon the bottom of their fists with both arms locked overhead while standing on the ground.

Most Special Olympics athletes (at all levels of ability) cannot jump to reach above the height of the net to spike the ball downward. Drills that focus on having these athletes hit upward, rather than downward, are more appropriate for them. Reaching high, snapping the wrist, and practicing the accurate placement of their shots into the opposing court will allow them to be successful attackers regardless of their height or jumping ability.

The two primary hitting directions are "line" and "angle." In the diagram below, the attackers (A) can choose to send the ball over the net in one of two primary directions. The easiest direction for beginning hitters to learn is angle, since it provides the most amount of court for the athlete to hit into. As the athletes gain confidence with their hitting mechanics, they can be encouraged to attack the ball into different areas of the opposing court with verbal prompts from the coach or setter.







Faults & Fixes - Attacking/ Hitting

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Consistently mistiming the approach (running past the ball or not coming in quickly enough)	 Practice waiting until the coach/setter gives a verbal command to start the approach (after the ball has been set or tossed). Adjust the distance from the net at which the athlete waits before the approach (farther for an athlete who overruns, closer if the athlete is too slow). 	Target Practice Drill
Consistently hitting the ball into the net	The athlete may be hitting the ball harder than the level at which he/she is are capable of being accurate. • If hitting from the ground,	Target Practice Drill
	aim at a spot slightly above the net.	
	• If hitting while jumping, stop trying to hit straight down and instead focus on hitting the ball at 50% strength while snapping the wrist to send the ball up and over the net with topspin.	
Consistently hitting the ball out of bounds (too deep)	The athlete is hitting the ball too hard and needs to swing at 50% strength while snapping the wrist to send the ball up and over the net with topspin.	Target Practice Drill
The athlete's hand/wrist isn't strong enough to snap the ball over the net	The athlete can swing at the ball with both hands locked together (reverse underhand passing – [called a tomahawk] hit that ball on the bottoms of the hands).	Target Practice Drill

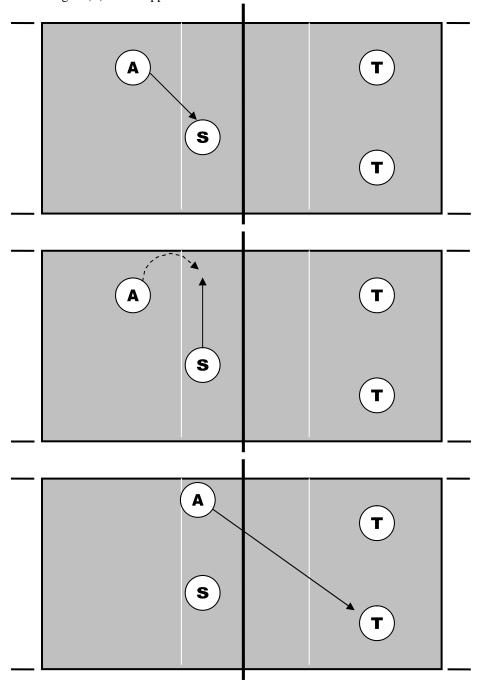


Attacking/ Hitting Drills

Target Practice Drill

Description

A coach or setter (S) will stand on the same side of the net as the attacker (A). The attacker initiates the drill by tossing the ball to the setter, who will set the ball to the outside for the attacker to approach and hit. The attacker will aim for one of the targets (T) on the opposite side of the net.





Variations

This drill can be run with the athlete attacking the ball from the ground or in the air, close to the net or 34 meters (10-13 feet) off the net, or with a high or low set. At a lower level of ability the attacker can be verbally told what set to expect before the drill begins ("this will be off the net"); at higher levels the attacker will have to adjust the approach without any verbal prompts.

The drill should also be run from the right side by reversing the angles.















Blocking

Blocking is an advanced skill that requires physical height, jumping ability and good judgment to time the jump against the attacker. While most Special Olympics athletes will not (and should not) try to block, those who are able can change the energy of a game with a well-executed stuff block.

The athlete should stand squarely facing the net, approximately 15-20 centimeters away (6-8 inches), feet even and slightly less than shoulder width apart, hands close to the body in front of the chest with the palms facing the net. The athlete will bend deeply with the knees and then explode straight upward, reaching with both hands as high as possible. The athlete should attempt to reach over the net, with both arms straight, as far as he/she can without touching the net.

The outside blocker is positioned to be lined up on the inside shoulder of the attacker at the point where he/she will swing at the ball. A blocker on the right side of the court will put his/her right arm on the ball. A blocker on the left side of the court will put his/her left arm on the ball. This will give the best chance of blocking an "angle" or cross-court attack.



Skill Progression - Blocking

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Demonstrate proper blocking stance			
Demonstrate proper jumping technique while reaching as high as possible			
Demonstrate proper arm position above the net			
Position themselves in front of the hitters' approach			
Time the jump correctly with the hitters' attack			
Demonstrate proper landing technique			
Totals			



Teaching Points

A common problem is athletes who confuse blocking a tight set with a chanceto reach over and attack the ball before the opponent can attack it. This usually results in a net violation on the blocker.

The athlete can reach to his/her left or right if necessary to block a ball, but this reaching should be done with both arms and not a sideways jump. Sideways jumping creates awkward landings and increases the chance of injury or collision with teammates. The blocker should jump straight up and down, always landing evenly on both feet, exactly where they took off from.



The athlete should focus on reaching to a specific point above the net rather than wildly flailing the arms hoping to make contact. The primary purpose of the block is to take away a specific portion of the court and force the attacker to hit either into the block or into the arms of the defenders covering the rest of the court. Blockers will decide to cover the "line" or the "angle" before jumping, and the rest of the team will arrange themselves to cover the rest of the court as defenders.



Faults & Fixes – Blocking

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Misjudging the timing of the jump	Wait for the hitter to leave the feet and then jump.	Right Place, Right Time Drill
Jumping sideways to block rather than straight up and down	Have the athlete practice moving the feet early – and landing exactly where they take off from No drifting in the air.	Right Place, Right Time Drill
Not getting enough height on the jump	The athlete may be bending at the waist instead of at the knees.	Over and Back Drill
Consistently touching the net on the way up	Minimize arm movement until after the athlete has left his/her feet.	Over and Back Drill
Consistently touching the net on the way down	Focus on reaching over the net and then pulling the hands back overhead, rather than dropping them down in front (should land with hands high).	Over and Back Drill

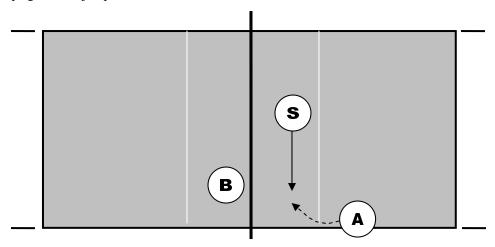


Blocking Drills

Right Place, Right Time Drill

Description

A coach or setter (S) will stand on the opposite side of the net from the blocker (B) and initiate the drill by accurately tossing the ball out to a fixed spot where an attacker (A) will hit at an angle. The blocker practices timing the block jump against the jump of the attacker.



Variations

Once the blocker is able to correctly time the block, the coach/setter can vary the location of the toss: farther outside, closer to the middle, lowers, higher, etc. This forces the blocker to move his/her feet to a new position and still time the jump against the hitter.

The blocker will move the feet as either a quick left-right (or right-left) shuffle step (2-step move) if he/she needs to move 1 meter (3 feet) or less. If the blocker needs to move more than 1 meter (3 feet), he/she will turn and quickly step over to the correct location and then jump straight up and down, this is called a 3-step cross over.

Over and Back Drill

Description

A coach will stand on one side of the net holding a ball 5 centimeters (2 inches) above the net, with one half of the ball on each side of the net. The athlete will assume the correct blocking position on the opposite side of the net from the coach. At the signal from the coach (a slap of the ball), the athlete will jump up, place his/her hands around the ball without touching the net and land correctly holding the ball.

Variations

This drill will be modified to challenge each athlete based on their physical ability. Moving the ball higher above the net, further over the net on the opposing court, and/or to the left or right of the athlete are all excellent ways to challenge more athletic players.



Cool-Down

The cool-down is as important as the warm-up; however, it is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool-down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool-down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. Note that cool-down is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic jog	Lowers body temperature	2 minutes
	Gradually lowers heart rate	
Stretching	Removes waste from muscles	5 minutes



Sample Workouts

Beginner Team

Warm-up (10-15 minutes)

- Jogging: 3 minutes around court
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Pepper, setting and hitting, passing and serving to warm up the body

Skill Work (45 minutes)

Introduction to Passing

- After the coach demonstrates the proper form, the athletes will practice assuming the correct passing platform without the ball.
- Athletes form two lines facing each other 2 meters (6 feet) apart and practice passing the ball back and forth between them.

Introduction to Serving

- Demonstrate underhand serve.
- Athletes form two lines facing each other 2 meters (6 feet) apart on the same side of the net and practice serving the ball to each other, focusing on correct mechanics rather than distance or height.
- Once the athletes become more confident, they should move farther apart and onto opposite sides of the net.

Introduction to Hitting

- Demonstrate correct hitting mechanics
- Athletes form one line facing the net 2 meters (6 feet) away and practice hitting a ball over the net. The ball comes from a coach who stands 1 meter (3 feet) away and very gently tosses the ball to the athletes.

Team Concept (15 minutes)

- Practice ready positions with six players on the court.
- Explain the standard rotation (clockwise) and how substitutions will be made.
- Discuss the offensive and defensive responsibilities of each position (who passes, who sets, who hits, etc.).

Cool-down (10 minutes)

- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a "winners circle."



Intermediate Team

Warm-up (10- 15 minutes)

- Jogging: 5 minutes around court
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Pepper, setting and hitting, passing and serving to warm up the body

Skill Work (15 minutes)

BASE Drill

- Focus on accurately passing the ball to the setter.

Team Concept (15 minutes)

Service Reception

- Set up the team to receive serve and practice passing the serve to the setter.
- The coach or assistant coach should lead the drill by serving to every part of the court, allowing the team to practice their passing and communication skills.
- For each settable pass, the team receives one point; the drill can end when a total number of settable passes have occurred or when a specific number have occurred in a row.

Scrimmage (30 minutes)

Divide the team into two equal groups of six, and play using competition rules.

- Ideally this will be a six on six game. Coaches, volunteers or family members can be recruited to fill out one team.
- Whenever possible, have an official who uses whistles and hand signals to train the team on what to expect in competition.

Cool-down (10 minutes)

- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a "winners circle"

Advanced Team

Warm-up (10- 15 minutes)

- Jogging: 5 minutes. around court with slow giant arm swings
- Stretching: Chest, shoulders and arms, hamstrings, quads, groin and calves
- Team warm-up: Pepper, setting and hitting, passing and serving to warm up the body

Skill Work (15 minutes)

BASE Drill

- Focus on accurately passing the ball to the setter.

Team Concept (15 minutes)

Transition Scoring

- Set up the team to receive serve.
- The coach or assistant coach should lead the drill by serving; the team will pass, set and attack the ball over the net.
- As soon as the ball clears the net (and before the team is ready), the coach will toss a second ball into the court, forcing the team to scramble to play defense immediately.
- If the team is able to pass, set and attack the second ball back over the net during transition, they will get one point.
- If the team uses fewer than three hits or fails to return either ball back over the net, no point is scored and the drill begins again.
- Once the team has scored 5 points, the drill ends.

Scrimmage (30 minutes)

Divide the team into two equal groups of six, and play using competition rules.

- Ideally this will be a six on six game; however, for advanced players the scrimmage can be four on four, three on three, or even two on two.
- Whenever possible, have an official who uses whistles and hand signals to train the team on what to expect in competition.

Cool-down (10 minutes)

- Bring the team together for cool-down stretching.
- The coach will make one positive comment about each athlete within a "winners circle."



Modifications

In competition, it is important that the rules not be changed to suit athletes' special needs or even preferences. There are, however, a limited number of approved modifications to the volleyball rules that do accommodate the needs of Special Olympics athletes. Coaches can modify the training exercises, their coaching style and even the sports equipment to assist athletes in achieving success as long as the modification meets the guidelines set forth in the *Special Olympics Volleyball Rules*.

For lower ability athletes, there are two approved alternatives in sanctioned competitions: modified competition and Individual Skills Competition. Details are provided in the *Special Olympics Volleyball Rules*.

Accommodating an Athlete's Special Needs

Some Special Olympics athletes have limited use of one arm. This creates difficulties in serving, passing and setting. Through practice the athlete may be able to learn how to toss and serve one-handed. This athlete may have trouble playing in the back row where passing is the primary function. In those programsthat offer the libero rule, the athlete can be substituted out an unlimited number of times for the back row specialist, allowing the athlete with limited use of an arm to play front row only.







Some athletes have hearing impairments that can be addressed by reminding everyone that all referee signals include a whistle as well as a hand gesture. By using the same gestures in practice, all of the athletes will learn to pay attention visually.

Modifying Your Communication Method

Different athletes require different communications systems. For example, some athletes learn and respond better to demonstrated exercises, whereas others require greater verbal communication. Some athletes may need a combination—to see, hear and even read a description of the exercise or skill before being able to master the skill.



Cross Training in Volleyball

Cross training is a modern-day term which refers to the substitution of skills other than the skills directly involved in the performance of an event. Cross training came about as a result of injury rehabilitation and is now also used in injury prevention.

There is a limited value and crossover to the specific exercise. A reason to "cross train" is to avoid injury and maintain muscular balance during a period of intense sport specific training. One of the keys to success in sport is staying healthy and training over the long haul. Cross training allows athletes to do event specific training workouts with greater enthusiasm and intensity, or less risk of injury.

Basketball, tennis and swimming are Special Olympics sports that can provide excellent cross-training opportunities, where available. Basketball reinforces jumping skills, tennis teaches good footwork and depth perception, and swimming strengthens the shoulder joint and improves overall cardiovascular conditioning.

While sanctioned Special Olympics volleyball competitions are commonly defined as "indoor" six on six competitions, there is considerable value in encouraging athletes to play on a variety of surfacesand with fewer team members. Playing the sport on grass or sand allows athletes to play more aggressive defense while lowering the risk of injury in diving or rolling. Engaging in games of four on four, three on three or even two on two forces athletes to cover more of the court and apply all of their skills on every point, accelerating their skill development.

NOTE: As always, coaches should take into account the physical abilities and limitations of their athletes when playing variations of the sport.