

Try to be the spark that will ignite the passion and fire of volleyball into your players. Be patient, be passionate, be creative, be energetic and be prepared.

- Our aim is to help our kids fall in love with volleyball and to want to continue to play it for as long as possible. We don't want to be their last volleyball coach / instructor but we WANT TO BE the one that inspires them to continue to play.
- We want to make the game as appealing and simple as possible for the kids to play but also appealing and interesting for the parents, family members and spectators. Every child watching is a potential athlete. If he or she sees someone having fun he or she will be curious and may want to join.
- We want to reduce the possibility of them getting hurt or having bruises.
- We want to use the ball that is best suited to the kids abilities and not necessarily the ball that is considered to be appropriate for their age group.
- We want them to improve, have fun and touch as many balls as possible during every practice and every game.
- Individual work, pair work, teamwork.

Equipment: Knee pads (if we ask them to wear them then we must teach them how to use them)

Balls: You should have one ball for every child that is practicing.

Hoops and cones are very useful.

Methodology: When explaining a new exercise trying to do the following

A) Explain verbally what you want the kids to do.

B) Demonstrate it to the kids.

C) Ask the kids to demonstrate it to everyone.

D) Get the kids to do it.

\*Instructions need to be clear and checked. This will give the kids a reason to listen. Furthermore, when you introduce new exercises it will take the kids time to comprehend, assimilate the information and apply it. Therefore, be patient and do not get frustrated. A simple trick is to break the exercise down into smaller exercises.

## Warm Up

I like my players to have a ball while they are warming up. Whether they are running or working on their volleyball skills. Especially at the beginning of the practice, I find that this helps them to focus on volleyball.

## Grades 4/5

Aim of the practice: Learning to toss and catch the ball to yourself and a partner.

Sub-aim: working with a partner, footwork, having your shoulders behind the ball before you catch it and learning the dimensions of a volleyball court.

## Warm Up

1) Walk with the ball touching it with your left hand first and then with your right hand. The child is bending down and the ball is between the child's feet. A good way to do this is to have all the players standing on the baseline of the volleyball court facing the net. They will walk towards the net and then do the same exercise backwards towards the baseline. (B) Then use the sideline of the volleyball court so that they can do the same exercise laterally.

Aim: The aim of the exercise is for the players to keep low, widen their feet. Furthermore, they are introduced to the lines that will make up a volleyball court.

2) Do the same thing but now instead of asking the players to use their hands they will use their feet.

Aim: to work on footwork and coordination, keep their feet apart and avoid bouncing up and down.

Sub-aim: also, when standing it is important that the ball is between your feet / your shoulders are behind the ball. This can also be useful when teaching the right position for blocking.

3) Toss the ball forward let it bounce and then catch it. The toss needs to be 6 to 7 feet high. The players begin from the baseline and walk towards the net. You need to tell them that they must make one toss, let the ball bounce only once and then they should catch it. Once they have caught the ball they must go to the net. They cannot touch the net, they turn around and do it again facing the baseline. Once they have completed this they sit on the baseline and wait for everyone to finish. Remind them that it is not a race.

Aim: learning to toss the ball underhand, learning to catch the ball

Sub-aim: being introduced to the idea of not touching the net. We are also introducing the idea of a high pass / toss.

Warning: It is important that they understand that the toss must be high, roughly six to seven feet high, in front of them and accurate.

4) Now they do the same thing but this time they must do it two times going towards the net and two times returning to the baseline.

Aim: we want a high toss but now we are giving more importance to accuracy and evaluating the trajectory of the ball too.

A variation of this in the future can be that they toss the ball underhand but after it bounces they must stop it in a setting position over their forehead.

Warning: make sure the toss is high and accurate. Some kids will have difficulty tossing the ball while others will have difficulty with the height of the toss and/or the accuracy of the toss.

#### Pair work

5) The kids are placed in pairs facing each other about ten to fifteen feet apart. They have only one ball. Player one tosses the ball into the space that separates him from his partner. The ball must bounce once before player two can catch it. Once player two has caught the ball he must go back to his starting position before he can toss the ball to his partner. The toss must be six to seven feet high. After one minute you ask the kids to change partners. The easiest way to do this is to have them rotate. You can use cones or markers to indicate the distance that separates the kids from their partners and the other kids.

Aim: Working in pairs, accuracy of the toss as well as height.

Sub-aim: footwork needs to go and catch the ball as well as understanding the trajectory of the ball. Meeting new people and playing with them.

Warning: it is important to tell the kids that they must try to catch the ball with their shoulders facing the ball. The ball should be between their shoulders when they catch the ball. Watch out for the height of the toss, the accuracy of the toss and that the person catching the ball is moving to the ball and not overrunning the ball. Finally, the catcher catches the ball with his shoulders facing the ball, knees slightly bent and feet pointing in the same direction. You always want your players to be square to the ball.

Duration: Because the exercise may be new for some let it last a little longer. Roughly one minute for every partner that a child works with. If there are 10 kids the exercise will last 9 minutes. While they do this, the coach / instructor is monitoring and helping if someone is having trouble. Do not over correct or interrupt the activity but try to take some notes / mental notes about some problems you notice. The focus / aim is on them working in pairs and trying to execute the skill being asked. Perfection can wait.

Possible problem: What if you have an odd number, for example 11 kids. Then two kids will be grouped together. For example: player one and two are grouped together. Player two stands behind player one while player one catches and tosses the ball to player three who is facing them. Once player one has completed his toss he goes behind player two who then steps forward and catches the toss and tosses the ball to player three. Players One and two do not rotate, only player three rotates.

6) The same thing but this time the ball cannot bounce. Player one must toss the ball six to seven feet high while player two must catch it. Again, do this for 45 – 60 seconds and then ask them to change partners.

7) Now they do the same thing but this time they will be facing their partner with the net between them. They will be on the same team. So, they will be playing together. To get a point, they will have to toss the ball over the net and their partner will have to catch the ball to get a point. They will be required to be ten feet from the net when they toss it to their partner. The first to ten wins. They need to keep track of their points. Stop the exercise when one person reaches ten.

A better variation can be to give a 4-minute time limit. They play for 4 minutes and keep score. Whoever is winning after 4 minutes, after you blow your whistle, wins. Then they rotate.

Aim: working on tossing the ball, accuracy, height, over an obstacle (represented by the net) and catching the ball. Furthermore, they are keeping track of the score and working together to win. You introduce competition.

Advice: If someone is very good then that person's team will have to get 15 points instead of 10. If someone is very weak then they will only have to get 5 points. If they complain then offer them the possibility to get 20 points instead of 15. Someone might take you up on the challenge.

#### Team game

You put half the players on one side of a regular volleyball court and the other half on the other side of the net. You explain to them where to court ends. The kids are spread out, they are not necessarily in the six zones of the court and there could be more than six kids on one side of the court. Hopefully you will have more than twelve kids in all. If you don't then you make sure that one half of the court is made up of at least six kids while the other half is made up of the best kids who must cover more court space. First you introduce one ball and throw it to a team. They must catch the ball and toss it over the net. Only one touch per toss. If the ball falls you reward a point to the team that got the point. Play like this for about five minutes. Then you will introduce a second ball. Every time the ball falls or the ball goes out a team is rewarded a point. The more you play this game in the future the more balls you can introduce.

Aim: introducing team sport, volleyball court and the kids must focus on one ball and then on two balls at the same time.

Important to keep in mind that the same exercises can be used for tossing the ball from a setting position. It is important to have a fixed pattern / routine at first because kids perform better when they know what to expect. Just before they become too confident you will need to introduce new things differently.

## Introducing the underhand serve

Aim: learning to serve underhand.

Sub-aim: hitting the ball, hand tossing the ball, which foot needs to be forward, knees bent, elbow straight, feet facing forwards.

1) The player will bounce the ball and after it has hit the floor he will try to hit the ball with his forearm and then he will catch it. They will bounce the ball with the same hand that they will hit the ball. After three minutes they will do the same thing using their left hand and left forearm. After every time they hit the ball with their forearm they will catch it and then do it again.

Aim: learning to hit a volleyball with their forearm. Working on a singular platform first.

Warning: Make sure they do not bend their elbow while they do this exercise. Try to get them to bend their knees, 45-degree angle, shoulders slight bent forwards and feet straight.

2) Now they will do the same thing but they will have to try to hit the ball twice with their forearm before catching it. They will practice this for three minutes and then they will change hands.

3) Now they will face the wall. They will hold the ball with their left hand and they will be asked to hit the ball with their right hand. They will first mime this gesture without a ball. They will have to keep their left foot in front of them, shoulders pointing forward and they will pretend to hit the imaginary ball with their right hand. It is important that they do not raise their left hand before hitting the imaginary ball. Make sure their non-hitting hand does not move. Do it for 2-3 minutes.

Aim: players use their imagination and try to visualize what they will do. This will give you the chance to check their feet and shoulders as well.

4) The same thing, always with the imaginary ball. However now they will be asked to serve their imaginary ball facing the wall. Once they have done that they will run onto the court, to the ten-foot line and serve their imaginary ball over the net. They do this for two minutes. You do not want them to run too fast.

Aim: practicing the skill, visualizing it and focusing on the things that need to be done.

Sub-aim: introducing miming and repetition without the ball.

5) Now they will serve against the wall with a ball. They will stand roughly ten feet from the wall. The kids will be very excited because they have a real ball in their hands now. They must serve the ball against the wall and catch it. They do this for 3-5 minutes.

Aim: learning to serve underhand.

Warning: make sure the shoulders are pointing forward, the ball is in the left hand for the righties and the right hand for the lefties, that the opposite foot is forward, knees bent, feet straight and that they serve the ball without tossing it.

6) Standing 15 feet apart with a partner and one ball between them. Player one will serve underhand to player two. Player two will catch the ball and then serve it to player one. They work together for one minute and then they change partners.

Notice: by changing partners you can extend an exercise without it becoming repetitive and boring.

7) Now players stand ten feet from the net, the net is between them and they must serve the ball over the net to their partners. They will practice for 3 minutes and then they will play short games against the other players.

8) Serving game: first pair to serve and catch five balls wins. Once someone wins they change partners and do it again. If there is a strong player his team will have to get seven points to win.

### Team game

You put half the players on one side of a regular volleyball court and the other half on the other side of the net. You explain to them where the court ends. The kids are spread out, they are not necessarily in the six zones of the court and there could be more than six kids on one side of the court. Hopefully you will have more than twelve kids in all. If you don't then you make sure that one half of the court is made up of at least six kids while the other end is made up of the best kids who must cover more court space. You give one ball to each team. They must catch the ball and serve it over the net. Only one touch per serve. If the ball falls you reward a point to the team that got the point. Play like this for about three minutes. Then you will introduce two more balls. Every time the ball falls or the ball goes out a team is rewarded a point.

Aim: kids play as a team, work on their catching and serving. They are introduced to the size of a volleyball court and to the idea of out. They also must focus on what is happening on the other side of the court and not what is happening on their side while the server is serving. This team game is very simple, extremely useful and lots of fun.

Grades 6-8 (whole picture then break it up and build it up) (mime with no ball + ball + catch + skill)

Warm up: students warm up with a ball in their hands.

Catch ball warm up: running from the baseline to the net with a ball in every athlete's hand.

Two balls for each pair going forwards, backwards and sideways.

Miming: Players place the ball slightly in front of them and then bend down to push the ball forwards, backwards and sideways. This helps players to keep their feet wide, not to hop while they shuffle and move forwards and backwards plus it introduces the concept of keeping low and bending your knees.

Individual bumping drills (head bent forward, torso bent forward, thumbs down, platform out and indicate the sweet spot, bottom out in a sitting position, knees bent, and feet spread apart, I prefer left foot slightly ahead of the right foot)

Set the angle, freeze the angle

1) Every player has a ball. They toss the ball high, about 10 feet high and let it bounce, after it bounces once they form a platform with one hand and pass the ball to themselves. They do this about ten times with their right hand while walking towards the net and backwards from the net. Then they do it with their left arm.

Aim: hitting the ball with the platform and understanding where they need to strike the ball.

Warning: make sure the toss is nice and high and that the ball lands in front of the child. Furthermore, make sure the elbow is not bent when the child hits the ball.

2) Now the child throws the ball about two feet high and hits the ball with one arm, always while walking towards the net. The toss is underhand. The ball is not tossed with one hand. The same hand that they will use to hit the ball. Then they do it with the other hand.

Sub-aim here is that they train tossing the ball as well.

3) Now they are up against the wall and they try to hit the ball against the wall by using the platform of only their right forearm. They will try to do 3 sets of five with each forearm against the wall. Make sure they keep low and do not bend their elbows.

## Pair work

1) athletes work in pairs. One is seated with legs spread out. Hands together, thumbs pointing down, elbows close together forming a large platform. Athlete number 2 has the ball in his hand and places the ball on his partners platform and pushes down on it. The person sitting is pushing hard against the ball with his platform and his head is down and his elbows are not bent. They do five sequences and then they change.

2) Same position but now the person standing tosses the ball underhand to his partner and the person sitting his legs spread out passes the ball back to his partner with his platform and his head tilted down and his eyes looking at his platform while he is passing the ball. The partner who is standing should catch the ball above his forehead. They do three sets of five. After each set of five the partners swap.

3) One person is on his knees with shoulders facing forward while his partner is standing in front of him with the ball in his hand. The person standing tosses the ball and the person on his knees passes the ball to this partner who catches the ball above his forehead. Three sets of five and then they swap partners.

You are working on the platform and making sure the elbows are not bent and that the knees are bent at 45 degrees and the shoulders are facing forward. Also make sure the thumbs are facing down.

## Individual

1) Everyone has a ball in their hands and they are facing the wall at about 5 feet from the wall. They are on their knees and they toss the ball against the wall and try to pass five balls in a row with their platform. They do five sets of five. The better players can do five sets of ten. Try to challenge all your athletes based on their abilities.

## Pair work

1) Standing: one player tosses the ball underhand to his partner who sets it back 7 feet high so that his partner can block the ball above his head. After every five passes the swap.

Warning: make sure the head is down, the eyes are on the platform, that the shoulders are forward, that the knees are bent, the backside is out, and the feet are straight. I prefer left foot forward, others prefer right foot forward or feet parallel.

2) The toss now comes from the forehead and the passer must pass the ball back to his partner's forehead. After ten tries they swap. After ninety seconds they change partners.

3) Now they both stand on either side of the net. Player one tosses the ball from his forehead to his partner who must bump the ball to himself and catch it above his forehead and then push it to his partner who must do the same thing. Sixty seconds and then the swap partners.

Mime + ball + do

Setting: (hands spread out above your forehead, hands following the ball into your fingers, then fingers and hands following the ball while it leaves your hands. Torso straight, knees slightly bent, feet straight and right foot forward)

You can use the same exercises to teach setting. Furthermore, when they toss the ball at the beginning of the practice make sure they use two hands and that they exaggerate the ball coming into the hands and the ball going out of his hands.

1) Everyone has a ball in their hands. They toss the ball from their forehand into the air, about ten feet high, they let the ball bounce in front of them and then they catch the ball above their foreheads again. Make sure they put their right foot forward while they are catching the ball and releasing the ball above their foreheads.

Work on catching the ball first and then work on the ball entering your players hands and being released from his hands.

Hitting (three foot take off, same foot forward as hitting hand upon take off, take off when the set is at its apex, jump two to three feet from the net, open your shoulder, follow through and make sure you when you land you do not touch the net or cross the center line)

Against the wall (Part 1)

1) Miming: All the players are against the wall and they are miming hitting the ball by rotating their shoulders. They have their left foot forward if they are right handed and vice versa.

2) Everyone has a ball in their hands and they are facing the wall. They toss the ball against the wall. Watch that they are opening with their shoulders. Instead of volleyballs they could use tennis balls. Make sure the opposite foot is forward.

3) Now they toss the ball at the base of the wall and follow through with the hitting arm all the way to their belly button. They try to do three of these in a row. They are not hitting the ball but pushing the ball. Make sure they are closing their wrist when they push the ball.

At the Net (part 2)

1) Miming: players shuffle with their left foot in front of them if they are right handed and their right foot in front of them if they are left handed. They shuffle forwards, backwards, and sideways.

2) Miming: The players do the same thing but this time they imagine hitting the ball and blocking their and closing their wrist as high as possible.

3) Coach tosses the ball and the player do the same thing but now they try to hit the ball over the net. You will have another player on the other side of the net who shags the ball. After hitting the ball.

4) Each person has a ball and stands at the 10-foot line facing the net at 45 degrees. They have their opposite foot in front of them and they have the ball in their hitting hand. They toss the ball 8 feet high and shuffle towards it and catch it. They do not hit it. However, they open their shoulder as if they are miming to hit the ball. They catch the ball with their hitting hand behind the ball and their off hand in front of the ball.

5) Now they toss the ball and hit the ball over the net but they block their arm at the point of contact and close their wrist. They do not follow-through.

6) Finally, they toss, shuffle, hit the ball and follow-through.

Hitting plus jumping (mime jumping and catching the ball)

- 1) mime toss + shuffle + jump + swing + catch + block
- 2) toss + shuffle + jump + swing+ catch (with a ball) + block
- 3) toss + shuffle + jump+ swing + catch + block + landing
- 4) toss + shuffle + jump + swing + follow through + landing

One step Hitting

- 1) Mime: right foot forward for righties or vice versa + toss + (shuffle)+ one step + jump + catch + landing
- 2) toss + one step + jump + swing + catch + block+ landing (with a ball)
- 3) toss + one step + jump + swing + follow through + landing

Two step hitting

- 1) mime without a ball: toss + two steps + jump + swing + follow through + landing (no ball)
- 2) toss + two steps + jumps + swing + catch + block + landing (with a ball)
- 3) toss + two steps + jump + swing + follow through + landing

Three step hitting

- 1) mime without a ball: toss + three steps + jump + swing + follow through + landing (no ball)
- 2) toss + three steps + jump + swing + catch + block + landing (with a ball)

3) toss + three steps + jump + swing + follow through + landing

Game for Grades 4-6 (Mini volley) All games from 5-10

Bump game one against one

- 1) one against one: catch plus underhand toss over the net.
- 2) one against one: toss the ball underhand over the net + bounce + bump + catch + toss underhand over the net
- 3) one against one: toss the ball over the net + bounce + bump over the net
- 4) one against one: serve underhand over the net + bump the ball over the net (one touch)
- 5) one against one: serve underhand over the net + bump to yourself + bump the ball over the net (two touches)

Bump game two against two

- 1) Toss underhand over the net + catch + pass to your partner + catch + toss underhand over the net
- 2) Toss underhand over the net + bump + catch + toss over the net (two touches)
- 3) Serve underhand over the net + bump pass or catch (+ toss to your partner + toss to your partner + bump over the net (three touches)
- 4) Serve underhand over the net + bump pass + bump pass + bump over the net (three touches)

Bump game four against four

- 1) Toss underhand + bump pass to your teammate + catch + toss over the net
- 2) Underhand serve over the net + bump pass to your teammate + catch + toss over the net (the team that gets the point rotates, so no one serves twice in a row) You want as many people to practice serving and touching the as much as possible. Games up to 5-10.

Bump + set game: one against one

- 1) Toss underhand over the net + bump pass to yourself + catch + toss to yourself + set over the net
- 2) Underhand serve over the net + bump pass to yourself + catch + toss to yourself + set over the net
- 3) Underhand serve over the net + bump pass to yourself + catch or set to yourself + set over the net
- 4) Underhand serve over the net + bump pass to yourself + set to yourself + set over the net

5) Underhand serve over the net + bump pass to yourself + set over the net

Bump + set game: two against two

1) Toss underhand over the net + bump to your partner + catch + toss to your partner + set over the net

2) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + catch or set to yourself + set to your partner + set over the net.

3) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + catch + set to your partner + overhand spike over the net.

4) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + set to yourself + set to your partner + set over the net.

5) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + set to your partner + set over the net.

6) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + set to your partner + spike over the net (no jumping).

7) Underhand serve over the net + bump to your partner + set to your partner + jump + spike over the net

Bump + set: Four Against four (or three against three) The team that gets the point rotates, no one serves twice in a row.

1) Toss underhand over the net + bump pass to your teammate + catch + toss to your teammate + set over the net.

2) Serve underhand over the net + bump pass to your teammate + catch + toss to your teammate + set or spike without jumping over the net.

3) Serve underhand over the net + bump pass to your teammate + set to your teammate + set or spike over the net (with or without jumping).

4) Serve underhand over the net + bump pass to your teammate who is in zone two (right front) + set + set or spike over the net (with or without jumping)

5) Serve overhand over the net + bump pass (or catch + toss) to your teammate in zone two (right front) + set or spike over the net (with or without jumping)

6) Same as five but minimum two touches.

7) Same as five but minimum three touches.

8) Same as five but teams play on a bigger court: 30 feet long and 15 feet wide.

9) Same as 8 but teams play diagonally on the same court: 30 feet long and 15 feet wide.

## Six against six

Play with your setter in the center front so it is easier to pass to your setter.

1) coach tosses the ball underhand over the net + team calls the ball + bump passes the ball to the setter in zone three + setter catches the ball + tosses the ball to her teammates in zone 2 or four 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

2) Coach tosses the ball underhand over the net + team calls the ball + bump pass to teammate in zone 3+ catch or set to yourself + set to teammate in zone 2 or 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

3) Coach tosses the ball underhand over the net + team calls the ball + bump pass to teammate in zone 3 + set to teammate in zone 2 or 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

4) Coach serves the ball underhand from 15 feet out over the net + team calls the ball + bump pass to teammate in zone 3 + set to teammate in zone 2 or 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

5) Coach or players serve the ball underhand from 15 feet out over the net + team calls the ball + bump pass to teammate in zone 3 + set to teammate in zone 2 or 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

6) Coach or players serve the ball underhand from behind the baseline over the net + team calls the ball + bump pass to teammate in zone 3 + set to teammate in zone 2 or 4 + set, spike or bump the ball over the net. Every three successful passes they rotate.

7) Teams play six against six, minimum three passes. After every point the team that won the point rotates. No one serves twice in a row.

8) Same as 7 but overhand serve from 15 feet out.

9) Same as 8 but overhand serve from 20 feet out.

10) Overhand serve from 25 feet out.

11) Overhand serve from 30 feet out.

12) Overhand serve from 35 feet out.

Recommended books	Podcasts
1) "Mindset" by Carol Dweck	1) Coach Your Brains Out
2) "The Talent Code" by Daniel Coyle	2) Gold Medal Squared, The Volleyball Life Podcast
	3) Volley Talk (from Denmark)