INTRODUCTION

Congratulations, you are one of 1,200 BYU students who will take a volleyball class this year. So why did you decide to take this class? Regardless of your reason for enrollment, here's what's in it for you:

In this class you will:
1) Learn how to play beginning level volleyball.
2) Make new friends.
3) Attain a basic understanding of the rules and strategies.
4) Be able to perform basic volleyball skills.
5) Have fun.

This packet will help you learn the basic rules and skills of the game. It contains photos of various skills that will help you learn what is taught by your instructor. It also contains helpful solutions to some of the basic problems you may have as you learn to play the game. Finally, each of you will be required to pass a written exam which contains information on skills, terms, rules, and playing strategies. To help you prepare for this exam, a study guide is included.

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The rules for volleyball can vary according to the level of play. For the volleyball classes taught at BYU, the most recent volleyball rules book will be used. These are the same rules used by most college intramural programs. Each year the rules for college, professional and high school volleyball get closer to being the same; but until the rules are standardized we'll use the following college/university rules.

Scoring
Regulation play requires six players to be on the court. Play which involves just two or three players per team will have slightly different rules.

Points are earned when the team wins the rally (Rally Scoring). Each time a team wins a rally, they keep serving. The first team to win 25 points and be ahead by at least two points, wins the game. The first team to win three out of five games wins the match. The fifth game is played to 15 points.

Centerline
A player may touch the floor on the opposite side of the centerline with their foot, but to keep players and classmates from being seriously injured, all players should avoid crossing the centerline.

Net Stuff
Incidental contact with the net is allowed, but players in the act of playing the ball may not touch the net. This includes shoes, clothing or wigs. It is not considered a net violation if the ball pushes the net into you.

A player must allow the opposing team three contacts on the ball if the ball is completely on the opponent's side of the net. But if, by chance, a passed ball does break the plane of the net, attack it. You can reach over the net to block a ball that is being hit into your court. And, most importantly, you cannot reach under the net and grab someone's shorts especially when they are jumping.

A back row player cannot spike or attack the ball over the net while he/she is on or in front of the ten foot line and when the ball is completely above the net; they can't block either.

The ball must cross the net completely between the antenna or the imaginary extension of the antenna.
Any ball that contacts an antenna is out of bounds.
Sometimes a player on your team will pass the ball into the net. As long as your team has not used its three hits, a ball that hits the net can be played.

Ball Handling
A player may not carry or "scoop" the ball. A carry is usually called if the ball visibly comes to rest or has prolonged contact with a part of the body. (In game play, it's a carry if the referee says so.)

A player may contact the ball with any part of the body. Even kicking the ball is legal.
In general, you can't hit the ball twice in a row, with a few exceptions. If you are the first person to play a hard-driven ball or serve from the other team, it is legal if the ball hits your arms and then ricochets off your nose. Even though the ball hit you twice, it only counts as one hit. In another example, if you receive a serve by setting it, and the ball is spinning like crazy as it leaves your hands, the spinning is caused by the ball hitting two parts of the hands, but this still counts as one hit.

The block does not count as one of the team's three allowed contacts with the ball; however, if a blocker touches the ball and as a result it goes out of bounds, the blocking team is at fault.

It's tempting to block a serve, but that would be illegal.
A ball that hits the ceiling is still in play as long as it hits the ceiling on your side of the net. However, a ball that hits an adjacent wall is out of bounds.

Serving
The server must serve the ball with one hand after the ball is tossed in the air. You can serve from anywhere between the two sidelines. The server cannot touch the court or line at the point of contact with the ball. You have eight seconds to serve the ball after the referee blows the whistle.

You only get one chance to serve, no re-tosses.

You can serve underhand or overhand.
A serve that hits the net and still goes over is legal.

Reasons to Play a Point Over
Replay the following points if:

1) players on both teams commit fouls
2) you can't resolve a playing dispute
3) the ball gets stuck in the rafters
4) an adjacent ball comes into your court

Overlap
A player must be in his/her respective "service order position" relative to the players adjacent to him/her when the ball is served. For example, a left front player has to be positioned so that he/she feet are more left than the center front player and more forward than the left back player. After the ball is served, players can go anywhere.
TERMS TO KNOW

Ace: A served ball which leads directly to a point

Attack (spike): Returning the ball into the opponent's court by jumping and hitting the ball from a height above the level of the net.

Back-row set: A set placed so that a player from the back row can make a legal attack.

Backset: A set in which the setter pushes the ball backward over his/her head.

Basic serve: Any serve that you can consistently hit into the opponent's court (often this is an underhand serve).

Block: An attempt to intercept the ball as it approaches or passes over the net.

Defense: Strategy and tactics used by a team when the opponent controls the action of the ball.

Dig: The techniques used to pass the ball after an opponent's attack.

Dink (or Tip): A soft, easy attack used to place the ball in an open area of the opponent's court.

Forearm pass: A method of passing the ball in which the ball is played off the forearms.

Free ball: A ball that is hit over the net with an upward flight allowing opponent an easy play.

Fronting the hitter: A blocking ready position in which the blocker moves in front of the hitter.

Match: The winning of three out of five games. (Or two out of three in certain situations; i.e., tournaments.)

Offense: Strategy and tactics used by the team controlling the ball which include serving, serve reception, setting, and attacking the ball.

Opposite attacker: See weak side attack.

Outside hitter/attacker: See strong side attack.

Overhead pass (set): A method of passing in which the hands are used to contact the ball in front of the face.

Rally: Play of the ball between service and a point or side-out.

Rally point scoring: A scoring system in which every serve results in a point.
Right side attacker: See weak side attack.

Side-out: The exchange of service to the receiving team when serving team fails to score a point.

Strong side attack: A right handed hitter attacking from the left side or a left handed hitter attacking from the right side. More commonly called outside hitter/attacker.

Ten foot line: The attack line located ten feet back from the centerline.

Tip: A fingertip attack on the ball which directs the ball into the opponent's court.

Weak side attack: A left handed hitter attacking from the right side or a right handed hitter attacking from the left side. More commonly called opposite or right side attacker.
BEGINNING VOLLEYBALL SKILLS

As you read about each of the basic volleyball skills, you will notice that each skill is broken down into segments and each segment is given a verbal cue. These cues describe the important parts of the skill and will help you become a good volleyball player in a short period of time. By memorizing the cues, you will quickly learn each skill. The cues are also important because they describe sound volleyball technique and will keep you from developing bad habits if you learn the skills correctly the first time.

Serving

In beginning volleyball, the serve is the most potent offensive weapon. More points are won with the serve than any other game skill. Intermediate and advanced players have developed the ability to pass a serve to the setter who can then run the offense. They have practiced passing and can handle most serves. Good passing skills take time to develop, unfortunately, while you may be learning to pass, servers will be sending you the toughest serves they can muster and will probably win lots of points. Some beginning classes require all serves to be underhand serves, which enables the offense to make a good pass and run the offense. Underhand serves are the easiest to learn and the easiest to receive.

To serve underhand, all you have to do is hold the ball in one hand, and then hit the ball out of the hand with the opposite fist (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Underhand serve (cues: ready, step, swing, contact with fist)

Another serve that is particularly effective is the floater serve. The best thing about the floater serve is the way it goes through the air. If hit correctly, the ball has no spin on it. As it flies over the net to the other team, the weight of the ball and the air hitting it make the ball move erratically. A good floater serve moves up and down and left and right at random just as your opponent is about to pass it to the setter. The erratic movement of the ball is due to some goofy physics principle about air pressures and stuff like that, but it really works. With practice, a floater serve can move as much as five feet in any direction.
To hit a floater serve, stand a few feet behind the service line and while stepping with your left foot, toss the ball about four feet up in front of your right shoulder (Figure 3). As you step forward, swing your arm in a way similar to a baseball pitcher—except you want to contact the ball high with an open hand. Contact the ball with the palm of your hand and follow-through to the target. If you make contact anywhere on the ball except dead center, the ball will spin as it flies and will not “float.” Even if it does have spin, it will more than likely land in the opponent’s court and play will begin. Most beginning players cannot hit a floater serve, so don’t be disappointed if your serves don’t float.

![Floater serve](image)

Figure 3. Floater serve (cues: face target, arm swing, contact high (open hand), follow-through to the target)

If you can’t serve the ball over the net, you can’t score points. After you have practiced for a while, pick a serve that you can do consistently. This should be your basic serve, one which you can always get to go over the net. No matter what the score is or how much stress you may have, this serve will land in the other court. For some people this means using an underhand serve in the heat of the battle. To have fun in volleyball, you need to be able to consistently serve the ball into the court. Once you have become comfortable with your basic serve, start experimenting with other serves like the floater.

Before you start the serve, get ready, take a deep breath, and think about what you are doing. This is a mental part of the game which must precede every serve. Poor serves are often just a matter of not concentrating immediately before the serve.

*Each skill presented in these notes will be followed by a brief problem and solution section. These coaching tips are designed to help you improve.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Here's My Problem</th>
<th>Try This:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My serves don’t make it over the net.</td>
<td>Make sure you step, then hit. Try hitting harder by swinging harder. You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>might be hitting too high on the ball. Make contact on the bottom half of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the ball and reach up to make contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My floater serves don’t float.</td>
<td>The ball must have no spin, so concentrate on hitting the center of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ball and keep practicing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My serves go everywhere.</td>
<td>The toss determines a lot. Toss the ball no higher than four feet. Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the ball as high and as far in front of you as possible.</td>
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Forearm Pass

The forearm pass is the most used skill in the game of volleyball and unless there is some mastery of this skill, good volleyball cannot be played. The forearm pass should be used: (1) on serve reception, (2) to dig spikes, and (3) in many situations when you cannot get in a good position to use some other shot (like an overhand pass or a spike).

The ball should be played off the forearms just above the wrists. Figure 4 shows one way to position your hands when you are passing. The hands do not have to be touching, but the best passers in the game hold their hands as shown in the picture. After you have played a few minutes, look at your forearms, they should be slightly red above the wrists. This is good because it means you are using your arms correctly.

The sequence for passing correctly begins with the ready position (see Figure 4). You should assume this position every time the ball is about to come over the net: just before a serve, just before an attack, and just before a free ball comes over the net. By staying low and leaning slightly forward, you will be able to react quickly to any ball that comes your way. Figure 5 shows the full sequence for completing a forearm pass. Notice how the player in the figure starts with the ready position with the hands and wrists together. Focus on the ball and quickly move to where it is expected to land. Good passing requires quick foot movement as you move to beat the ball to the spot where it will hit the ground. If you are late getting there, your passes will likely go everywhere except to the person setting. As always, practice makes perfect. Sometimes a ball just barely clears the net and you have to use a forearm pass to pass it high enough for your setter to get under it, on other occasions, you will use a forearm pass to dig a hard driven attack in which your arms will act like a
sponge and absorb the ball's speed and deflect it to the setter. Knowing when to lift or absorb the ball takes practice.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 5.** Forearm pass sequence (cues: ready position, hands and wrists together, contact with forearms, elbows straight, face the ball, move your feet)

Beginners often feel some "stinging pain" when they first start passing with their forearms. This is common. When a hard driven ball makes contact with your forearms, it can cause a stinging sensation. Most complaints of stinging occur in beginning classes during the first few days of class. It is extremely rare for the pain to be so severe as to prevent a player from participating. If your forearms really hurt when you pass, talk to your instructor, a long sleeve T shirt worn is often sufficient to prevent the problem. Within the first week or two of class, most students stop complaining about the pain. Either it stops hurting or students get tougher!

One final note about the forearm pass. Sometimes during a game an easy ball will come over the net and hits the ground while everyone stands around and watches. The slang term for this goofy phenomena is a "campfire." The spot the ball hits is kind of like the campfire and everyone is standing around in a circle, starry eyed, watching the fire burn. This happens for several reasons. In game play, the person setting is responsible for every second hit a team makes. That means that the first time a ball comes over the net everyone but the setter is responsible for the ball. If the setter is close to the ball, some players might forget who the setter is and expect him or her to get it. With all this forgetting and expecting, the ball hits the ground. Another common reason for a campfire is the failure of players to communicate about who is going to get the ball. The best rule of thumb is to take every ball that is coming to you or near you. Once the ball is played then you can fight with each other about who is being a ball hog. Pass first, fight later.
Here's My Problem | Try This:
---|---
I can't control where my passes go. | Don't let the ball hit your thumbs. Move quickly to beat the ball to the place it is headed for. Make sure you start from the ready position. Watch the ball all the way to your arms.
How do I pass a ball that comes at my head or shoulders? | If you are a front row player let it go to a person behind you. If you are a back row player and you are in the right position, and you think the ball will land in the court, set it.

Setting
This method of passing the ball is the most accurate and should be used whenever possible. It is also referred to as the overhead pass. In beginning volleyball, most of the balls which come over the net are free balls. Free balls are passes which are easy to receive. These are gifts from the other team. They failed to finish their three hits with an attack and are content to send the ball over the net any way they can. This gift is a free chance to set up an attack, hence the name free ball. You can usually tell if a ball is going to be a free ball because after the second hit, the ball is no where close to the net and isn't likely to be attacked. This happens a lot when first learning to play volleyball.

The set is the ideal method of receiving a free ball or any easy ball that comes over the net. In your class, the player who is playing in the front middle position is the setter. As your team rotates, every player will eventually rotate through the setter position and will be responsible for every second contact and will be expected to set the players who are attacking. Setting is a fundamental skill every team player must possess.

Setting, like forearm passing, requires the player to beat the ball to where it is likely to land. To set a ball you have to be underneath the ball as it comes down. This means move your feet. The ball is received with both hands extended above the head and forming the shape of the ball. With a quick flip of the wrists and extension of the elbows, the ball is sent to the target. To send the ball to the right place you should position yourself so that your shoulders are square with your target. In other words, face your target (see Figure 6).

There are many different flight paths a set ball can take. Advanced volleyball offenses require specific sets for specific plays, fortunately, you only need to learn one. When you set the ball use the 10–5–5 rule, that is: set the ball ten feet high, five feet away from the net, and five feet inside of the sideline. Once your setting becomes somewhat consistent, the attackers on your team will have better opportunities to attack the ball because they will be able to anticipate where the set is going.
As an attacker, you may not have a chance to attack the ball; in these cases, a well placed overhead pass can be an effective weapon. A set that drops just behind the blocker or near a side line can deflate the toughest opponents. A particularly good place to send the ball is deep to the back corners of the opponent's court. Try this attack, it's pretty cheesy, but hey, a point is a point.

Finally, there is one more slang term you need to learn. Sometimes a setter will be ready for a ball and just when he or she sets it, the ball passes right through their cup shaped hands and falls to the ground. This happens because the setter's hands were spread too far apart when the ball arrived.
Here's My Problem | Try This:
--- | ---
My sets spin. | Move your feet to arrive before the ball. Use ball shaped hands and face your target.
I'm not very accurate with my sets. | Arrive before the ball. Be stopped. Use ball shaped hands and receive the ball with bent elbows. Keep your body under the ball and keep your shoulders square with the target. After you release the ball, follow through with your hands. Point your fingers where you want the ball to go.
I don't have much power for long sets. | Keep you body beneath the ball. Bend your knees and elbows before you receive the ball, then extend both. Finish the set off by flipping your wrists and following through.

Spiking (Attacking)

The best part about the game of golf (besides driving the cart) is driving the ball off the tee. You tee-up your defenseless little ball, take out the biggest club in your bag and whack it as far and as hard as you possibly can. Sometimes the ball curves like a jet fighter into a nearby pasture. At other times the ball sails straight as an arrow and seems to go forever; an impressive display of power and accuracy. When you hit a good one, it gives you a feeling of power and accomplishment. In volleyball, the spike is synonymous with driving a golf ball. It can careen into your opponent's court, send players heading for cover, and leave spectators in awe—or it can plow into the back wall like a drunken missile. Attacking is the most exciting and enjoyable part of the game. It’s the skill that keeps you coming back for more, but it is not easy to do.

When you think about how complex the skill of attacking is, it’s a wonder anyone can do it. You sprint, jump into the air, swing your arm at about 35 miles per hour, and hopefully make contact with a ball that is flying at ten miles per hour. If everything goes well the ball bounces into the other court. Figure 7 shows the attacking sequence. The model in the figure is right handed so any left handers will have to reverse the sequence. Like passing, attacking begins with the ready position. As the ball leaves the setter’s hands, focus on the trajectory of the ball. You should start your approach when the ball is in the setter’s hands. Your first step is with your right foot. The entire approach is a four step acceleration. Written, it might look like: Riiight, Leeft.....right/left, ending with a big arm swing and jump.

During the approach your arms first swing forward, then back and forward as you jump off the ground. Once in the air, your hitting hand reaches back behind your head like an archer grabbing an arrow out of his quiver while your non-hitting arm is held out in front to counterbalance the motion. The arm swing motion appears like a person using a bow and arrow. The hitting arm reaches back for an arrow while the non-hitting arm is extended forward as if it were holding the bow. The ball makes contact with the palm. Figure 7 shows the entire sequence.

If you stand in one spot and jump, you probably won’t jump as high as when you get a running start and then jump. Attacking would be a lot easier if the net were lower or we were all a
little taller. Since neither of these is likely to happen, we have to use a running start and jump higher. The four step approach shown in Figure 7 should begin behind the ten foot line. That means after you block, you have to retreat to the ten foot line in preparation for an attack. This movement from the net to the attack position and back is called transition. It happens each time the ball goes over the net. Some games are so exciting, you forget where you are supposed to be and you end up attacking a ball without an approach (you forgot about moving back to position). This is common when learning to play. Make sure you begin every attack by starting behind the ten foot line.

Figure 7. Spiking sequence (cues: four step approach riiight, leeft....right/left (as ball leaves setter's hands), swing arms - forward, back, forward, "bow and arrow" hitting action)
Here's My Problem | Try This:
--- | ---
I keep hitting the ball long. | If you are able to hit from above the net, hit down on the top of the ball. Snap your wrist at contact. If you can't hit from above the net, hit the ball on the bottom, back half and don't hit too hard.
I keep hitting the ball into the net. | You can't hit down on the ball if the ball is not above the net. Make contact on the bottom half of the ball. Concentrate on getting the ball to land in, even if you have to sacrifice power. Learn to consistently hit the ball in the court, then add speed and power.
I can't hit the ball at all. | When beginning, forget the approach and try hitting the ball while standing (not unlike a serve). Move your feet to position your body beneath the ball. Swing easy at first. Forget about power and speed. Watch the ball until your hand makes contact.

**Blocking**

Blocking is one of the most important skills in "power" volleyball, but it is not so important for beginners, as there are usually very few spikes to block. Most beginning and intermediate volleyball classes are coed and use a net set at men's height. Many believe this places females at a definite height disadvantage when it comes to blocking. As you will see, this is not necessarily true. There are two reasons for blocking. The first is to deflect an attack back into the opponent's court; this is called a stuff. In a game situation, a stuff can alter the tempo of the game and either silence the crowd or send it into a frenzy.

Good blocking begins with a good ready position. The first frame of Figure 8 shows a player in ready position. Notice that the hands are near the shoulders. Ofttimes, players who start with their hands to their sides hit the net as they swing their arms up into the blocking position. When in the ready position, you should be approximately arms length away from the net. The blocker should be watching the ball as it moves from the passer to the setter and to the attacker. By focusing on the ball at all times, a blocker can mirror the exact movement of an attacker who is watching and reacting to the same ball movement. Quickly step to the position of contact by side stepping or running to the point of contact.

If the attacker you are trying to block is right handed, try to position yourself so that your body is centered on their right shoulder. This centering technique is called fronting the attacker. Fronting an attacker is the best way to block when blocking with only one person. Use a good foot plant to make sure that you jump up and not out. Blockers are the ones who regularly contact the net or cross over the center line. Jumping up and not out will prevent much of this. As you jump, try to anticipate where the attacker will hit the ball. Open your hands as far as possible and try to reach over the net. As soon as you land, be ready to attack a set from your setter.
As your level of skill increases, blocking will become more and more effective. However, in the beginning stages of skill development, blocking is of little value because there is rarely an attack that requires blocking. In fact, knowing when *not* to block is probably just as important as knowing how to block.

Figure 8. Blocking sequence (cues: keep hands near shoulders, ball, setter, ball, hitter, step to the attacker, lead over the net with hands)

How do you know when not to block? If no one on the other team can consistently attack a ball you do not need to block. Likewise, if the setter is forced to chase a bad pass and fails to make a good set, the attacker is not likely to have an effective attack. This is a free ball situation and you should not block. It is more efficient to drop back to the ten foot line and dig or pass any ball that comes over the net.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Here's My Problem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I keep hitting the net when I block.</td>
<td>Jump straight up, not at an angle. Don't get too close to the net. A wild, flailing block is worse than no block at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rarely make contact when I block.</td>
<td>Anticipate an attacker's moves and preferences and adjust accordingly. Good footwork precedes good blocking. Be sure to front the blocker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Offense

The basic player positions are shown in Figure 9. The row closest to the net is referred to as the front row. The player positions are called left front (LF), center front (CF) and right front (RF), while back row players are called left back (LB), center back (CB) and right back (RB). Each time the team sides out, each player rotates one position in a clockwise direction. As the team rotates through the positions each team member will eventually be the setter as they occupy the center front position. There will be six different setters and everyone will be an attacker when they get to the left front or right front position. This offense is called a 6–6 offense because there are six setters and six attackers. This is the easiest offense to run. The only difficult part is remembering to set when you rotate to the center front position.

Other offenses, such as the 5-1, have one person who sets the whole time and five attackers; the 6-2 has two players who take turns setting and all six players can be used as attackers. Each offense has advantages and disadvantages and is highly dependent upon the team's ability to perform the basic volleyball skills.

Serve Reception

To win points you have to be able to successfully receive serve. Since the serve can go anywhere in the court, you will need to be able to cover the whole court. To help you do this there are several serve/receive formations your team can assume. The most common serve-receive formation is a three-person setup, where all three players are aligned approximately 20 feet deep into the court, or roughly halfway between the 3-meter line and the baseline. One player stands in the center of the two sidelines, and the other two space themselves evenly between the corresponding sideline and the center player.

The left and right front and center back players must remember not to take serves which are coming to them and are above the navel. The left and right back players are in better position to receive these serves. From this serve formation, your team is ready to quickly move into the 6-6 offense described earlier. Once your team sends the ball over the net, you must move into a defensive position.
Defense

Because hard driven spikes are rare in beginning volleyball, few blockers are needed. Most balls loop over the net like free balls or serves. The easiest way to defend against these is with the Shallow defense. This defense is a slight variation of the W serve reception formation as seen here in Figure 10. The basic player positions can easily move to the shallow defense. It doesn’t matter if the attack comes from the center, right, or left sides, the basic shallow formation changes only slightly. Figure 11 on the next page shows the shallow W formation and how it can adjust to cover attacks from different sides of the court.

Even if your opponent does have an attacker who is able to spike consistently, the center front player and either the left or right front players are available to block.

Figure 11. The Shallow defensive formation. The dotted line shows the shape of each formation.