StAc 187
Intermediate Volleyball

Class Notes

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Brigham Young University
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 intermediate-level volleyball.
2) Make new friends.
3) Attain an understanding of intermediate volleyball strategies and skills and, most of all, have fun.

In this packet you will read about the rules and skills of the game. It contains photos of various skills to help you learn what is taught by your instructor. It also contains helpful solutions to some of the problems you may have as you learn to play better volleyball. 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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Court and the Rules of the Game

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.

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

Contact with the net is not a fault unless it is made while playing the ball or it interferes with play.

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 the crud out of 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 it’s 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.

Attack angle: The angle of approach a hitter takes when accelerating to hit a ball.

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

Backside: 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.

Cover: The positioning of players near a spike in order to retrieve balls which glance off the block.

Cutshot: An attack in which the ball is hit with slicing action at a sharp angle toward the sideline.

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.

Dump: Tipping the ball over the net on the team’s second contact.

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 hitter: See weak side attack.
Outside hitter: See strong side attack.

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

Pipe: An attack out of the middle of the back row.

Quick: A short set that is attacked when the ball is just above the net.

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 hitter: See weak side attack.

Seams: Gaps between defensive players or blockers.

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. This is also called the outside hitter.

Switch: A planned interchange of positions for offensive or defensive purposes. Switching must occur after the ball is contacted by the server.

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.

Transition: The movement of players that is required to change from defense to offense and from offense back to defense.

Weak side attack: A left handed hitter attacking from the left side or a right handed hitter attacking from the right side of the court. This is also called opposite or right side hitter.
INTERMEDIATE VOLLEYBALL SKILLS

As you read about each skill, you will notice that each skill is broken down into segments and many segments are given verbal cues. These cues describe the important parts of the skill and will help you quickly improve your playing ability.

Serving

As your level of volleyball skill increases, you will have to serve better to score points. There are several types of serves with varying degrees of difficulty. The simplest serve is the underhand serve. It is regularly used by beginners, but is also very easy to receive. Another serve that is more suited to intermediate and advanced play 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 hard-to-understand 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 2). 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 intermediate players have difficulty making a floater serve “float” consistently. So don’t be disappointed if your serves don’t float every time.

All intermediate level players should be able to hit a consistent floater serve. 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 go in. To have fun in volleyball, you need to be able to constantly serve the ball into the opponent’s court. Once you have become
comfortable with your floater serve, start experimenting with other more difficult serves.

A more exciting serve is the top spin serve. It’s kind of like spiking the ball from the service line. Just like attacking the ball, the top spin serve is supposed to be hit with power. The object of this serve is to give the opponent as little time as possible to react to the ball. Top spin is generated when the hand snaps over the top of the ball. The whole serve can be described as a toss and a standing spike (See Figure 3)!

![Figure 3. Top Spin Serve (cues: face target, reach for the ball, snap wrist)](image)

If you really want to get fancy, the same serve can be hit from a running position. This is the jump serve. The toss is higher and slightly inside the court. A 2 or 3 step running approach lets the server jump and contact the ball as high and as close to the net as possible. The jump and arm swing are exactly the same as the technique used to attack the ball. This serve takes practice, but if successful it can impress even the toughest opponent. 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.

Good serves result in points. Here are a few strategies to make your serves more effective:

1) serve to an open space on the court
2) serve to the worst player on the other team
3) serve to the setter
4) serve to a player who just came in the game

Each skill presented in these notes will be followed by a brief problems and solutions section. These coaching tips are designed to help you improve. Serving tips are found on the next page.
Here’s My Problem | Try This:
---|---
| My floater serve go out of the court. Make contact on the center of the ball and reach up to make contact. A good floater serve will fly close to the net. The closer to the net you can hit the ball, the harder you can hit it and still keep it in the opponent’s court. |
| My floater serves don’t float. The ball must have no spin so concentrate on hitting the center of the ball and don’t toss too high. |

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 set or spike the ball.

The ball should be played off of 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’re using your arms correctly. The sequence for passing correctly begins with the ready position (see Figure 5). 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 6 shows the full sequence for completing a forearm pass. Notice how the player in the figure starts in the ready position with the hands and wrists together. Focus on the ball.

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Figure 4. Forearm pass hand position

Figure 5. Forearm pass ready position
(Cues: low to the ground, lean forward, watch the ball)
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. Sometimes a ball just barely clears the net and you have to use a forearm pass to lift 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 comes with experience. When playing with two or three players per team, it is common for the setter to scramble just to get to the pass. In these situations, it is impossible to get under the ball to set it. The best way to set the ball for an attack is to use a forearm pass. By bumping the ball five feet off the net and about five feet high, an attacker can usually get off a good spike. It is even possible to do a forearm back set where the setter uses a forearm pass to set the ball behind them.

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. 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 heading for. Make sure you start from the ready position and watch the flight of the ball carefully.

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 with your hands.

**Setting**

This method of passing the ball is the most accurate and should be used whenever possible (except on serve reception and digging). It is also referred to as the overhead pass. Regardless of the offense your team may be running, 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 which means you have to move your body quickly. The ball is received with both hands forming the shape of the ball, the arms extended above the head, and the elbows bent. With a quick flip of the wrists and extension of the elbows, the ball is received and 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 when you set (see Figure 7).

There are many different flight paths a set ball can take. Advanced volleyball offenses require specific sets for specific plays; in intermediate volleyball you will only need to know a couple of sets. For most setting, 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. On those occasions when you get a really good pass (one that comes close to the net in the center of your court) you may want to try setting a quick set. A quick set is one which rises only a foot or two above the net. The attacker and setter must communicate and let each other know they want a quick set. The attacker jumps up to spike at the same time the setter first touches the ball. If all goes well, the setter places the ball into the attackers reach just as he or she is at the peak of their jump. When the timing is on, the quick set and the sudden attack are exciting to watch and rarely get blocked.
The next skill for intermediate players is the back set (Figure 8). The back set is used to direct the ball behind the setter. The basic movement of the setter is the same as for a normal (forward) set; the difference between the two occurs when the setter makes contact with the ball. At the moment of contact for a back set, the back is arched and the head tilts back in the direction of the set; the hands follow through in the same direction. The 5–5–5 rule applies to back sets as well. Figure 8 shows an example of a back set. This set is often successful because most intermediate players will anticipate that the setter will set forward and will move to a blocking position in front of the setter. When the back set occurs, they find themselves out of position and are unable to block.

Figure 8. Back set

Another setting skill which is required by experienced players is the jump set shown in Figure 9. In the jump set, the setter makes contact at the peak of the jump. A team that has a setter who can jump set will be able to attack more quickly. Jump setting also gives the setter the option of dumping the ball. A dump occurs when the setter tips the ball over the net on a team’s second contact.

Figure 9. Jump set
When learning to jump set, most players will lose some setting accuracy. Since jump setting is a difficult skill, few intermediate players are able to demonstrate a high level of control when they jump set. If you can control the ball when jump setting, you should use it whenever possible. If not, just set with your feet on the ground and keep practicing. 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 won’t get good sets all the time, in these cases, a well placed overhead pass can be an effective weapon. A particularly good place to set the ball is deep to the back corners of the opponent’s court or immediately behind the blockers. Try this attack, it’s pretty cheesy, but hey, a point is a point.

When a team fails to send the ball over the net with an attack they usually have to resort to a free ball. 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 glad to send the ball over the net any way they can. This gift from the other team 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.

The overhead pass is the ideal method of receiving a free ball or any easy ball that comes over the net. When a free ball comes over, everyone on the team except the setter is responsible for passing it. The setter should back away from the ball and wait for a pass from a teammate.

Finally, there is one more setting 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 occurs because the setter’s hands were spread too far apart at the instant the ball arrived.

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<th>Here’s My Problem</th>
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<td>My sets spin.</td>
<td>Be sure to face your target and use ball shaped hands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I set with a forearm pass, my sets are not very</td>
<td>Using a forearm pass to set the ball should be a last ditch effort to set the ball. If at all possible, use an overhead pass. If you do set with your forearms, try to softly lift the ball. You can practice this by forearm passing the ball to yourself. Also try to point your fingers where you want the ball to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accurate.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t have much power for long sets.</td>
<td>Keep your body beneath the ball. Bend your knees and elbows before you receive the ball, then extend both when you set it. Finish the set off by flipping your wrists and following through.</td>
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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 misguided 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’s 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 10 miles per hour. If everything goes well, the ball bounces into the other court. Figure 10 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. 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 is contacted with the palm. Snapping the wrist at the moment of contact helps propel the ball downward and puts top spin on the ball which makes it curve downward into the court. Figure 10 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 described (shown in Figure 10) 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).

When attacking, a player usually has the option of hitting the ball down the side line or cross court. The top court in Figure 11 shows the trajectory for spiked balls. The right front (RF) can hit down the opponent’s right side line or angle the ball across court for a crossing shot. If we assume the RF and LF players in the figure are right handed, the bottom court shows the approach the attackers should take depending upon which side of the court they are on (right or left). A right handed attacker on the left side of the court should take a looping, half circle approach to the net. A right handed player attacking from the right side of the court should use a straight approach to the net when spiking. For some reason, most players attack better when they hit from the left side of the court. For right handed players, the left side of the court is known as their strong side. Likewise, the right side is called the weak side.

Strong side attackers have more power and are able to hit down the line and cross court with greater accuracy. The looping approach keeps their body in a position to hit either way. Next time you play, try to attack the ball from your weak side while using a looping approach. You will quickly learn that it is almost impossible to hit a ball cross court. When weak side hitters use a straight-on approach they can hit down the line or cross court.

“Oh, but all this attacking and hitting and spiking stuff is impossible for me because I’m not tall enough to hit the ball while it’s above the net.”

Attacking is not limited to tall players or genetic freaks who can jump five feet straight up. All players, no matter how short, can attack the ball on a net set at men’s height. The only adjustment you need to make is in where to contact the ball. Tall players hit the ball while it is out in front of their body. Shorter players need to contact the ball while it is above the head. Another key for short players is to snap the wrist at the moment of contact which puts top spin on the ball. In reality, shorter players hit up on the ball so it clears the net, but put sufficient top spin on it so it curves into the court. Every player in an intermediate volleyball class should be able to deliver a hard attack.

Here’s a final word on attacking. Even though hitting the ball hard is a thrilling part of the game, there are other strategies which can be used to win points. One of these is the dink. A dink is a gentle attack made by softly tipping the ball into an open area of the opponent’s court. After a few powerful attacks, a well placed dink is a sure point winner. Try it.
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<tr>
<th>Here’s My Problem</th>
<th>Try This:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I keep hitting the ball long.</td>
<td>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 it’s bottom, back half and try to give it top spin by snapping your wrist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep hitting the ball into the net.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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**Blocking**

Blocking is one of the most important skills in “power” volleyball. Most intermediate volleyball classes are coed and use a net set at men’s height. Many believe this places females and shorter players at a height disadvantage when it comes to blocking. As you will see, this is not necessarily true. There are two main 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 sent it into a frenzy.

Good blocking begins with a good ready position. The first frame of Figure 12 shows a player in ready position. Notice that the hands are near the shoulders. Ofttimes, players who start with their hands at 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 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 usually 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, retreat so you will be ready to attack a set from your setter.
The most effective method to block is with two people. The mechanics of blocking with two is the same as for one blocker. When blocking with two, the outside most blocker is responsible for setting up the blocking positions. The blocker closest to an outside hitter on the opposing team should position himself/herself so as to take away any attacks which will be aimed down a sideline. The second blocker lines up next to the first blocker and both jump to block at the same time. This only works if both of the blockers are able to control their movements. It’s always interesting to watch an out of control second blocker run and jump into the first blocker. The resultant collision usually sends the first blocker into the net or onto the floor.

As your level of skill increases, blocking will become more and more effective. In fact, knowing when not to block is probably just as important as knowing how to block. 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.

Lastly, here’s one easy blocking strategy you can use in every game. Most likely your team has a person who can jump high and block well. Match your best blocker up with the opponent’s best hitter. By dedicating your best blocker to this role you will have a much better defense.

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<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. Many professional teams try to reach a goal of 5 stuff blocks and 6 control blocks per game. They rarely do this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Offense

The basic player positions are shown in Figure 13. 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.

In the most basic offense, the person who occupies the center front position is usually the setter. 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. The is the easiest offense to run. The only difficult part is remembering to set when you rotate to the center front position. This offense works well when you are playing with inexperienced teammates. It’s easy to run and everyone understands how it works. A weakness of this offense is the constant changing of the setter. Each rotation brings a new setter who sets differently from the other five players on the team. Because everyone sets differently, the attackers are never able to anticipate the position of a set and will struggle to get good hits. In addition, there are only two players who can attack at any given time. With the setter in the center front position, only the left front and right front players are free to attack.

Other offenses such as the 5–1 has one person who sets the whole time and has five attackers; the 6–2 has two players who take turns setting and all six players can be used as attackers. Each of these offenses has advantages and disadvantages dependent upon the team’s ability to perform the basic volleyball skills. All intermediate volleyball classes should use a 5–1 or 6–2 offense. These offenses are geared toward skilled volleyball players. Before we show you how to run these offenses, a brief explanation of how to receive serve is necessary.

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 formation looks like the three-person formation (see Figure 14). The setter (CF) assumes the setter
ready position close to the net and slightly to the right. Both the left front and right front
players move behind the ten foot line and move slightly to the lines. The center back moves
forward. From this formation, a serve that lands anywhere in the court can be successfully
passed to the setter.

The left and right front and center back players must remember to not take serves
which are coming to them and are above the navel. The left and right back players are in
better positions to receive these serves. Now we are ready to look closer at the 5–1 offense.

Most likely, the first time you played a 5–1 offense, you were playing volleyball with
some friends or classmates and they started telling you where to go. As the ball was served,
people started running around the court and you were left to wonder what was going on.
For most people, these first few rotations in a 5–1 offense can be confusing and intimidating
if you do not understand what is going on. The drawings in Figure 15 show the six rotations
a team will use when they run a 5–1 offense.

Note the basic starting position for each rotation. In the box labeled “setter serving,”
the setter is in the RB position. Notice how the RB player is just behind and just to the right
of the RF player. If the RB player lined up further to the left than the adjacent CB player or
in front of the RF player it would violate the overlap rule. See the list of terms for the
definition of overlap. In the next box labeled “First Rotation,” the setter is in the CB
position. As the team rotates each player will move to the next position.

When the ball is served the setter quickly moves to the setting position near the net.
There are several advantages to using this popular 5–1 offense. Because it is heavily
dependent upon one setter, the other players on the team get accustomed to having one
person run the offense and they don’t have to worry about who is setting. However, if you
are the setter in a 5–1 offense, you will carry a large responsibility. The entire offense
depends upon your ability to set the ball consistently and accurately. In the 5–1, there are
only two attackers on the front row when the setter starts from the front row. Once the setter
rotates off of the front row, there will be three attackers. Some consider it a disadvantage to
have only two attackers for some of the rotations. The 6–2 offense corrects this problem by
having two setters opposite each other. The setter who is currently setting comes out of the
back row which means there are three front row players who are able to attack.
Figure 15. 5–1 Offense

Figure 16 shows the different rotations for a 6–2 offense. With a setter on the front and back rows, there are only three true rotations; as the front row setter rotates to the back row, the rotations repeat. With a 6–2 offense, there are always three attackers on the front row; however, one of them is going to be the non-setting setter. Hopefully, both setters are good attackers. With two setters on the court, it is sometimes hard for them to remember what row they started on and who is supposed to be setting at any given moment.

Defensive Strategies
Because hard driven spikes should be blocked, the best defense is a good strong blocking effort. Most advanced teams will use some variation of the 4–2 defense which always has two blockers and four players to dig. In Figure 17 you can see how the basic player positions can moved to form the 4–2 defensive positions. In the player back version of this defense, the CB player plays deep in the back row; this is shown in the figure. It doesn’t matter if the attack comes from the center, left or right sides, the basic two-person blocking formation at the net is critical for the rest of the team.
The blockers try to block out an area of the court that will not need to be covered by the players who are digging. If the block is in place, the only places left to attack are down the line or cross court, right where the players are aligned. A common variation of the player-back defense shown in the figure is created by moving one of the back row players up behind the block to dig any ball that is dinked over the block. This is called the player-up defense which works well when an opponent uses a lot of off-speed or dink shots.