

VOLLEYBALL

Coaching Handbook



Missouri Valley Family YMCA



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for volunteering as a Volleyball coach at the Y!

Volunteer coaches are the heart of the Missouri Valley Family YMCA, playing a vital role in shaping young athletes. As a coach, you do more than teach the fundamentals of volleyball—you instill teamwork, discipline, and a love for the game.

Coaching is about more than just showing up for practices and games; it's about being a role model and a mentor. It's a rewarding experience, but we know it can also be challenging—especially for parents volunteering to coach their child's team. That's why we're committed to making the process as smooth and enjoyable as possible for you.

This manual is designed to support first-time coaches by providing essential information on rules, basic techniques, and effective drills. It focuses on the fundamentals, helping you build confidence in your coaching skills.

We sincerely appreciate your time, dedication, and commitment to our young athletes. Thank you for making a difference in their lives and in our YMCA community!

Sincerely,

Cole Lafferty

YMCA Sports Director

Stretching and Warm Up

Stretching prevents injuries, improves athletic performance and encourages a healthy lifestyle. Remember to teach kids proper techniques before they attempt any new form of exercise. Children who participate in sports or other physically demanding activities should stretch to prevent injuries. Stretching helps young athletes prevent muscle tears and pulls. Stretching also helps a child's joints move through a full range of motion.

Generally warm ups should start with low intensity exercise such as fast walking to light jogging for 5 minutes to increase heart rate, raise the body's temperature and increase blood flow to the muscles. A proper warm up may reduce chance of injury to your body. If children learn correct exercise habits when they are young, they can continue to practice them when they get older. The fun factor is integral when teaching kids about stretching. If a child thinks stretching is boring, she will likely lose interest in doing it. Below are some examples of fun stretching and warm up exercises to implement before beginning your practice.

Warm Up Games

- Red Light, Green Light
- Line Tag
- Color Tag
- Sharks and Minnows
- Freeze Tag

Warm-up games should be played for at least 5 minutes at the beginning of each practice to stimulate blood flow to the muscles.

Stretching Exercises

1. Follow the Leader

- For the first practice have the coach act as leader but for the following practices designate 1 or 2 leaders for stretching activities. The group leaders will each pick a couple stretches for the group to follow along with. Have them hold the stretch for 10 seconds every time, having the whole group counting to 10 with the leaders. Remember to keep

this age appropriate. Young children may not yet understand the concept of stretching.

a. Arms/Neck

- Roll arms around in a 'windmill type' action. First rotate right arm forward 10 times, then switch to left arm. Then try both arms at the same time. Then, change to rotating arms backwards using the same sequence.

b. Quadriceps

- Stand straight, bend one leg, and hold your ankle or top of your foot. Pull your bent leg until your heel is close to you bottom. Use a teammate to balance. Hold for 10 seconds, and then switch legs.

c. Hamstrings

- Have children reach up as high as they can while on their tip toes (reach the sky) for 10 seconds. Afterwards have them reach down to touch the grass, tell them to keep their feet together and legs straight. Have them count to 10 while holding this stretch as well.
- While sitting on the ground with legs stretched out in a V position have the leader designate everyone to reach for their left shoe. Hold for 10 seconds and then reach for the right shoe. Last, have them place their feet together and reach for both shoes at the same time.

d. Triceps

- Elbow Pull- Position the right elbow behind the head and begin grabbing the elbow with the left hand. Slowly pull the elbow until you begin to feel it stretch. Hold for 10 seconds and then switch arms.

PASSING

The forearm pass is for receiving serves and spikes, for digging balls that are no more than waist high, and for playing any ball that has gone into the net. There is no swing of the arm to the ball but rather the player allows the ball to come to their arms.

1. Ready Position.

- Have your players stand with their feet shoulder width apart, toes turned in slightly, and the right foot just slightly ahead of the left.
- As they bend at the waist and flex the knees, their weight should shift slightly forward onto the balls of their feet. They should keep their heads up and follow the ball while keeping their knees bent and their weight over the balls of their feet.

2. Hand Placement

There are several generally accepted hand placements involved with the forearm pass. With either hand placement the thumbs and fingers should never be crossed or interlocked.

Option 1- Make a Fist

Make a fist with one hand with the thumb on top, and wrap your fist with your other hand. Your thumbs should line up side by side. Bring your arms together straight and away from the body.

Your forearms should create a “platform,” where the ball should contact. Do not use your fists or wrists to hit the ball—the contact should be about two to six inches above the wrists.

Option 2 – The Cup Method

Make a cup with both hands and lay one hand over the other. Thumbs should be placed side by side and your forearms will create a platform, where the ball should contact.

Rules of Thumb

- The palms and thumbs of the hands should be facing close together and pointed towards the floor. The arms are extended away from the body in about a 45 degree angle.
- Locking out your elbows and extending your arms with wrists turned down gives you a solid, flat platform; the foundation for accurate passing
- Shrug your shoulders as you go through the motion, keeping them up by your ears as you pass the ball. This helps you extend your platform as far in front of your body as possible and aids in keeping your elbows solid and locked.

2. Use Your Legs

- Using your knees, and a little power from your arms, push through the ball.
- The key to passing is bending your knees and using them to power your legs and get momentum to guide the ball

3. Move Your Feet

- Quick feet are key in passing a volleyball
- Feet should never cross over each other, but instead moving in a shuffling manner

- Feet should ALWAYS beat your arms to the ball

Beginner Passing Drills

Toss and Pass

- This drill requires each person to have a partner
- Partner 1 tosses an easy ball to the other partner to pass back
- Do this 5-10 times then have the other person toss the ball

Recommendations

- Once both players have become comfortable with passing have them continuously pass the ball back and forth to each other
- To make this a little more competitive, challenge the teams to which pair can continuously make 10 passes back and forth

This drill teaches:

- Practicing passing with proper technique
- Moving the feet to pass
- Aiming at a target

Line Passing

- Have players get into two lines facing each other
- Players at the front of each line pass the ball to each other
- After passing, the player goes to the back of the line

Recommendations

- Add variation by counting each completed pass and challenge them to reach a certain number
- Practice calling the ball and have each player yell out "mine" or "got it"

This drill teaches:

- Proper passing technique
- Calling the ball
- Aiming at a target
- Moving to the ball

Call the Ball

- Have two lines of players behind the serving line
- The first player in each row comes forward to the middle of the court
- Tell them you will be tossing the ball in the middle of the two players and that one person needs to call the ball and make the pass

- The player who makes the pass goes to the end of the line and the other one stays till they complete a pass
- A new player from the lines fills in the vacant spot

Recommendations

- Toss the ball in a variety of ways; higher, lower, etc.
- If a pass is made without someone calling the ball make them redo it

This drill teaches:

- Proper passing technique
- Calling the ball
- Taking initiative

Bridge

- Have players line up in two lines at the end of the court
- Line leaders come to the middle of the court
- Toss the ball directly towards the player.
- Player should make a bridge over the ball so that it bounces between the legs
- Player should retrieve their own ball and just continues to toss between the lines

Recommendations

- Toss the ball to different areas of the court to have players grasp the concept of moving to the ball
- If this becomes too easy for players, they can instead make the pass instead of having it bounce

This drill teaches:

- Shuffling the feet to get to the ball quickly

SETTING

Overhead Passing

The overhead pass is any pass contacted above the player's head. The best known overhead pass is the set, which is usually the second contact made in setting up an attack. Setting a volleyball correctly is the most difficult skill to learn in volleyball. The ability to accurately place the ball where it needs to be time and time again is a skill learned through continual practice.

Setting Posture

Setting posture refers to the ideal body position of a player immediately before setting the ball. Good balance will allow you to move in any direction more efficiently, and will also make it easier to simultaneously contact the ball with both hands.

- Feet should be shoulder-width apart.
- One foot should be slightly in front of the other.
- Knees slightly bent.
- Hands positioned directly over forehead with elbows pointing to sides.

Hand Position

- Bring hands together to make a triangle with your fingers (thumbs, index, and middle fingers should be touching their counterparts on other hand)
- Move your hands above your head and rotate the wrists so palms are facing up (make sure fingers are still touching).
- Separate hands slightly, so that the distance between fingers is about the width of a volleyball.

Contact

The ball must only contact your fingers and **never** the palm of your hand. The amount of time your hands are actually in contact with the ball is tiny.

- As the ball is approaching, square your shoulders towards the target.
- Once the ball hits your fingertips, immediately extend your arms and wrists to push the ball upward
- Use power from your legs to help you push the ball outward

Setting Drills

A number of the passing drills mentioned on pages 10-11 can be easily used for practicing setting as well.

Setting 101

- Each player will need their own ball and start by lying on their back
- Have them hold the ball above their forehead and use the proper setting hand position
- Using their fingertips, have each player push the ball up about a foot in the air and catch it keeping the original hand position.
- Repeat as long as necessary

Recommendations

- Have the players start the drill off slowly to get the used to the hand position and contact with the fingertips
- For players with more advanced skills have them do this without catching the ball in between, for a continuous setting motion.

This drill teaches:

- Setting technique
- Controlled sets

Side-to-Side

- Two players face each other and stand about 10 feet apart
- Player one stands still and tosses the ball to the left and right of player two, forcing her to move to get to the ball
- Player two will set the ball directly back to player one
- Switch after 2-3 minutes

This drill teaches:

- Moving to get to the ball
- Controlled setting
- Aim and consistency

Wall Setting

- Each player will pick a spot/brick on the wall as their target
- Have them try and set to that spot repeatedly

This drill teaches:

- Aim and consistency
- Setting motion & technique

HITTING

Once your players have the skills to set up a teammate for an attack (spike), they will enjoy the excitement that great team play generates. Spiking is the primary skill used to attack the ball, and it is usually the third contact in the three-contact offense.

Position Yourself

Once your team has received the ball over the net position yourself on the 10 foot line, the attack line, on either the right or left hand side of your court. The person playing the setter will set the ball high in your direction, arcing it so that it falls close to the net. You'll start your approach after the ball is set

Approach & Jump

Face the ball and bend your knees so you're ready to move.

If you are right handed:

1. The right foot should be in front and you're first large step will be with your left foot.
2. Next, step with your right foot to build speed. At the same time, swing your arms back behind you to prepare for the strike. The distance of this second step will vary according to the position of the ball.
3. Step again with your left foot. Your knees should be bent (ready to jump) and arms behind you.

4. Jump explosively upward and swing your arms forward at the same time to jump high into the air. The higher you jump, the more powerful your strike will be.

If you are left handed:

1. The left foot will be forward and the first large step will be with the right foot.
2. Next, step with your left foot to build speed. At the same time, swing your arms back behind you to prepare for the strike. The distance of this second step will vary according to the position of the ball.
3. Step again with your right foot. Your knees should be bent (ready to jump) and arms behind you.
4. Refer to step 4 above

Hit the Ball/ Snap the Wrist

- Raise your elbow above your ear and keep your palm close to your head.
- When your hitting hand pulls back, keep the elbow high and extend the hitting arm up.
- You want to make contact with the ball at the peak of your jump.
- Hit the top of the ball with the heel of your hand.
- Snap your wrist downward to spike the ball into your opponent's court.

Land/Follow Through

Finish your spike by bringing your arm down across your body. Land with your feet should width apart and knees slightly bent.

UNDERHAND SERVING

Posture

- Feet should be slightly staggered with the foot opposite your hitting arm out in front.
- The majority of the server's body weight should be shifted to the back foot.
- Hips should be positioned so they are facing square towards the net.

The Ball

- Place the ball in the palm of your **non striking** hand
- Hold it out in front of you a little lower than the hip and across your body directly in the line of your striking hand.
- Make a fist with your serving hand; be sure the thumb is always off to the side
- The ball can be hit with your fist and forearm facing upward or to the side

Contact Point

The server should aim to hit the ball on the bottom half of the ball, slightly below the center of the ball. The point of contact determines the direction and trajectory of the served ball.

Complete Motion

1. Similar to a pendulum, the striking hand is brought back and then quickly forward to serve the ball
2. With the arm still behind you, step forward with the opposite foot of the striking hand, bend your knees, and lower the held ball.
3. Lean your head over the ball and bring the striking hand forward to meet the ball
4. Once contact is made, extend the legs up for power
5. Follow through by continuing your arm swing upward and pointing the striking hand in the direction of the intended target

OVERHAND SERVING

Posture

- Feet should be about shoulder width apart and slightly staggered (the foot opposite your hitting arm positioned in front).
- The majority of the server's body weight should be shifted to the server's back foot.
- Hips should be positioned so they are facing square towards the net.

The Toss

The toss is one of the most crucial elements of a successful overhand serve.

- The server should toss the ball with the hand opposite their serving hand.
- The toss should only be two to four feet above the server's head and tossed in front of the server's strong hand.
- A consistent toss is the key to being a consistent server, so a server should take the extra time to practice until it is consistent.

Contact Point

A server should aim to contact the center of the ball so as to keep the trajectory of the ball as flat as possible.

- You want to contact the ball on the upper part of the palm of your hand.

Complete Motion

1. Start in the serving posture discussed above.
2. Hold the ball in the hand opposite your serving arm.
3. Bring the ball in front of your serving arm's shoulder
4. Gently toss the ball two to four feet high, in front of your serving shoulder
5. Step towards the tossed ball with the foot opposite your serving side
6. Contact the center of the ball with your serving hand.

7. As you make contact, make sure to follow through until the serving arm is completely extended out in front of the body.

Serving Drills

Progressive Serving

This drill is for beginner servers and requires each player to have a partner. Each player stands on one side of the net opposite of each other. Serving can be done underhand or overhand.

- First, start serving inside the attack line so you are close enough to get the ball over the net. Try to serve to your partner.
- Partner 2 will serve the ball back in the same manner.
- After each completed serve, both partners take a step back and repeat steps 1 & 2

Recommendations

- For more advanced players, once they have reached the serve line servers should work on serving to their partners standing in different areas of the court.

This drill teaches:

- Proper serving technique
- Serving accuracy
- Serve placement

Serving Contest

Divide the players into 2 teams and have each team stand on their serving line.

- For beginner players, allow them to serve a couple feet ahead of the service line.
- One at a time, a player on each side will serve the ball either over or underhand.
- If the ball goes over the net and lands in bound the respective team will get 1 point
- The first team to a set number of points wins

This drill teaches:

- Serve consistency
- Serving under pressure
- Serving technique

Dead Fish

Once players have learned how to over or underhand serve this game will be one of their favorites!

- Split the group up into two teams and put a cart of balls on each side

- Everyone starts serving
- If a person misses the serve they must to the other side of the net and lay on the ground like a dead fish
- The rest of the her team must save her from becoming a “dead fish”
- If she gets hit by one of their serves she is saved and can go back to serving

The first team to lose all their players to the other side become “dead fish” and loses the game.

Hit the Target

This drill may be for more developed players and servers, but can be used in younger players to jumpstart serving accuracy.

- A hula hoop, cones, or ball cart will be required for this drill
- Place the object or circle the cones in one area of the court
- Players will take turns trying to serve the ball into the cart, hoop, or cones

For a larger team, place a hoop or cart on the other side, divide the team into two groups and have both sides attempting simultaneously.

Serve-Receive

This drill is great way to combine practice for both serving and receiving. The whole team can participate with little waiting time.

- On the receiving court put anywhere from 2-4 players receive the serve.
- The rest of the team is behind the service line on the opposing side
- One at a time, players will serve to the receivers.
- Receiving side should try to get 3 hits to get the ball over
- Once the number of receivers have received the same amount of serves they switch to go serve
 - Example: 3 players are receiving therefore they receive 3 serves and then come off the court.
- Those who have served to the receivers will now switch and receive themselves.

This drill teaches:

- Moving to receive the ball
- Serving in a game-like situation

BLOCKING

Blocking is a team’s first line of defense. Good blocking involves ability in timing and in reading the offensive hitter's intentions. The objective in blocking is to block a hard-driven spike back into the opponent's court or to deflect it high into the air on the blocker's side of the court.

Ready Position

For blockers, time is of the essence. A single second could be the difference between stuffing the opponent’s attack and air balling.

1. **Knees Flexed-** Many beginning blockers get lazy and stand straight up between blocks. Keeping the knees flexed will allow you to elevate much quicker when the opportunity presents itself.
2. **Arms high-** Blockers must always be ready to spring into action. Keep the arms high and elbows at chest-level to minimize the amount of time it takes to go from the ready position to blocking.
3. **Elbows In-** Turn the elbows in towards each other so that the bottom of your elbow is pointed at the ground.

Touching the net while attempting to block is a violation. The best way to avoid this mishap is to make sure there is sufficient space between your body and the net; half an arm's length should suffice.

Blocking Sequence

1. When blocking, a hitter must first watch the ball as it comes off the passer (ball).
2. As the ball begins to descend towards the opposing setter, the blocker will transfer her focus from the ball to the setter (ball-setter).
3. Once the ball leaves the setter's hands, the blocker should quickly shift focus back to the flight path of the ball (ball-setter-ball) to determine where the set will land. As soon as that information is obtained, the blocker will then locate and focus on the hitter (ball-setter-ball-hitter).

The Block

- **Blocker moves along the net quickly with feet never crossing**
- **Hands should be open with fingers spread**
- **As the blocker jumps, the hands should surround the ball**
- **Fingers should angle down to deflect the ball to the opposing floor**

Example Practice Plans

Practice 1

5 Minutes	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coaches and players ○ Goals for season
10 Minutes	Warm Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 laps around court ○ Circle around and have coach lead stretches
20 Minutes	Passing Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "How to pass" ○ Lateral shuffling ○ Bridge Drill ○ Toss and Pass drill

20 Minutes

Serving

- Proper footwork and motion
- Serving practice
- Progressive Serving drill

5 Minutes

Recap

- What is the ready position?
- What is the passing motion?
- How many hits can one side have?

Practice Two

10 Minutes

Warm Up

- Color Tag or other game
- One player leads group stretch

15 Minutes

Passing Review

- Passing Motion
- Shuffling
- Toss and Pass drill
- Line Passing drill

20 Minutes

Setting

- How to set
- Setting 101
- Wall Setting
- Coach tosses to players

15 Minutes

Serving Review

- Review serving motion
- Progressive Serving drill
- Serving practice or Dead Fish game