

Volleyball Tips & Drills

What defines a great volleyball team? While no two are alike, and everyone has its own unique set of talents and weaknesses, successful volleyball teams share a few common traits:

- Consistently high jumping
- Powerful attacks
- Effective blocks and digs
- Well-executed serves, passes, and sets
- Team strategy; well-organized and prepared
- Excellent team communication
- Ability to anticipate the opponent's moves
- Confidence
- Will to win

Does your volleyball team possess these? If not, here are a few volleyball drills and tips to set you up.

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Why volleyball drills?

As with any popular sport or athletic event, indoor volleyball is very competitive. Let's face it, every serious team is in it to win! A great match is also fast-paced and entertaining, and can be a lot of fun to watch. Volleyball has become one of the most-watched events in the Summer Olympics!

Regularly practicing volleyball drills not only improves confidence and showmanship, but targets the skills, teamwork, strength, and stamina needed to have the cutting edge on the opponent.

There are three general kinds of volleyball drills: those that focus on developing your individual technical skills, such as serving, setting, digging, spiking, and blocking; drills that focus on team strategy, and drills that condition your muscles for endurance.

Building technical volleyball skills

Volleyball drills for skills

Volleyball drills that improve individual skills are particularly important for beginners. Drills reinforce a beginner's volleyball moves. Effective youth volleyball drills should be done using the proper technique, and with purpose.

Volleyball drills for beginners should:

- Be repeated until the skill becomes habit
- Be progressive
- Be player and age-appropriate
- Suit the level and ability of the player
- Focus on individual playing skills

Jumping and spiking volleyball drills

Tips:

- Jump off both legs
- Establish an effective footwork strategy
- Land on your toes with knees bent to avoid back and knee injury
- Don't ball forward off the hand, don't slap
- Keep your eyes on the ball
- Widen your vision to the opponent's court
- Know where your opponent's key players are

Drills:

- Hit the ball against the wall, catching it each time
- Hit the ball from different angles high above your head

Blocking volleyball drills

Your first line of defense against a powerful spike is a block. The key is knowing how to execute one.

Tips:

- Know your hitter's strengths and weaknesses
- Observe the hitter's body language and style
- Anticipate where and how the hitter is going to contact the ball
- Stay "on the ball"; position yourself where the ball is, not where the hitter is
- Keep your hands above your head and jump with your legs

Drills:

- Pepper block drill ? players on the same side of the net alternate blocking spikes
- One-on-one block drill ? players on either side take turns blocking each others spikes
- Live team block drill ? players on the same side work together to block an attack

Serving volleyball drills

Tips:

- Stand far enough behind the serving line to avoid stepping on it
- Face your target; follow through with a smooth overhead arm motion
- Open the palm and use the heel of the hand
- Keep eyes on the ball while tossing up
- Serve to specific areas, target the weakest players
- Serve with calculation and control; it doesn't have to be hard-hitting
- Advanced players should practice deception when serving. Face one area but serve to another
- Serve in a "ready, place, swing" pattern, running to your defense position after each turn
- Practice tossing the ball up before hitting it, keeping eyes on the ball

Passing volleyball drills

Tips:

- Face the incoming path of the ball, not its target
- Wait for the ball, don't rush to it
- Ease into the pass rather than swing at it
- Rise up to meet the ball, using your legs

Drills:

- Toss the ball in the air several times in a row without stepping out
- Practice the arm and body motions without the ball
- Individual players practice digging off the wall
- Teams practice catching the ball near the stomach with hands close to sides

Setting volleyball drills

A team can win any match just by mastering the art of setting. Setting is lightly hitting the ball with the hands above the head, thumbs and fingertips together to form a triangle. To 'place' the ball, open the hands up slightly before contacting the ball. Great setting involves timing and control.

Tips:

- Wait for the ball, stay in control
- Know your opponent's blockers and where they are
- Develop a consistent style
- Master the art of deception. Don't let the opponent anticipate your next move
- Become a great jump setter
- Use consistent footwork and technique

Drills:

- Volley the ball against the wall
- Toss the ball into the air
- With a partner, run forward, backward, and sideways on the set
- With a partner, simply tip back and forth

Team strategy volleyball drills

Communication

The success of your volleyball team depends not only on players executing their skills, but how well they communicate with one another. Therefore after players have worked on their individual skills, combination drills should be done to enhance teamwork. Team drills should simulate real game situations. They should be fun, fresh, and creative. The idea is to get players performing together. Effective team strategy drills should encourage communication and interaction, which is key to great teamwork.

Anticipation

Another skill of every great volleyball team is reading. The ability to anticipate the opponent's next move in order to prepare for contact will greatly improve your team's chances of scoring points. Being able to read the opponent, focus on what's ahead, and get a feel for the overall flow of the game are some of the most important skills team players can have.

Tips:

- Practice drills with a partner
- Turn drills into a game
- Keep drills fun, fresh, and creative
- Practice drills with specific goals in mind
- Anticipate the opponent's next move - focus on what's ahead
- Be organized and well-prepared
- Watch and get to know your hitters and setters, and their styles
- Observe the direction of the hitters' shoulders
- Know your hitters' arm swing and approach, watching for signs of attack

Conditioning volleyball drills

In order to perform volleyball well, a player has to be in shape. All the skill and strategy in the world is pointless unless a player has the stamina to jump, dig, and perform through the duration of the game. Your team can have plenty of talent but in the end, the team with the most stamina will come out ahead.

The purpose of volleyball conditioning drills is to get players in shape. Volleyball conditioning drills make players strong and able to jump and move quickly. Conditioning drills can be done in the off-season, preseason, or year-round. Volleyball conditioning drills are often done separately, so the practice training sessions can focus more on teamwork and skills.

Volleyball conditioning drills should be simple, easy-to-follow, and make sense. Volleyball conditioning drills should focus mainly on two things: **strength** for higher jumps and stronger cores, and **speed** for faster moves and sharper responses.

Weight training volleyball drills

Beginners should start a weight training routine as soon as possible in order to reach their goals by game time. Weight training can include a combination of weight lifting, medicine balls, isometrics, and plyometrics.

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What are isometrics and plyometrics?

Isometric exercises isolate and work your muscles through repetition. Examples of isometrics are plank hold, leg raises, wall sits, squats, and calf-raisers. Plyometrics are intense drills designed to develop the neuromuscular system to enhance vertical power, speed, and reaction time. Explosive moves, such as power jumping, power push-ups where your hands leave the floor, and skipping, are great plyometric exercises you can do at the gym or home. Squats, drops, and jumps using a medicine ball or other weight are also great.

Hopefully now, you not only have a passion for the game, you have a good idea what volleyball drills, skills, and tips go into the making of a truly great volleyball team.