

Youth Volleyball Coach's Guides – Skills & Drills

Typical Practice Plan

5 minutes: Warm-up with a volleyball (i.e. progressive passing with a partner over the net)

5 minutes: Hitting drills (i.e. I throw you go)

15 minutes: Skill Work - Partner passing/setting drills (i.e. triangle passing/setting, 1 sided butterfly)

10 minutes: Serving Drills (i.e. ball and a wall, 10' line partner serving)

15 minutes: Drill (i.e. circulation)

5 minutes: Skill Work (i.e. target setting)

5 Minutes: Grill or "game-like drills" (i.e. queen of the court)

Keys to Passing

1. Wrist and Hands Together (early)

a. Why? Surface area equals control. It's important that the athletes have a big, flat platform, which includes their hands. This key is hands down the most uncomfortable one to fix. Spend some time here, and ensure the athletes are willing to make changes.

2. Straight and Simple (elbows straight, hands down)

a. Why? This is a common mistake that needs to be fixed early on. Kids will make a double move (some call it bobbing or praying) where they bring their arms up, and then back down before passing. They also bend their elbows before passing. We need to focus on helping them eliminate the extra movements. We have them start with their hands on their knees or hanging straight down. Make sure they pass with straight arms without any up and down movement. Simple is better than complex. Repeatable actions are best.

3. Face the Ball, Angle the Platform

a. Why? When we pass the laws of physics apply. The ball knows angles, so we want to let the angle do the work. Most kids will want to direct the ball by swinging their arms in a desired direction. We want to change this. Make sure the kids are facing the ball, and angling their platform to the target. When they are finished with their move the shoulders and body should not be facing the target, but rather square to the ball.

4. Shuffle

a. Why? Kids will want to cross their feet when they move. This action forces them to be off balance. Make sure kids shuffle when they move to pass. This helps with balance and enables to stay square to the ball. If we aren't balanced it's difficult to pass. Make sure they do not bob up and down as they shuffle. Getting to ball and getting feet stopped on contact is best.

5. See Server, See Spin (this applies to receiving the serve)

a. FITTS

- b. Find the server EARLY-fixate on the server from the time they get the ball. Begin to identify possible serving direction from where they are standing and looking. Look for other “tells”: (way back could be a jump serve, really close could be a short serve, etc.).
- c. Identify the angle of attack. See the direction of the server’s steps and the angle of attack.
- d. Toss, Tempo, then Torque. The toss is just like the set. Where is it going to take the server/hitter (based upon the angle of the attack and in relation to their body). How fast (tempo) are they moving, stepping, running? Torque-what are their shoulders doing and at what angle?
- e. Spin or no Spin? Recognizing what type of serve it is (may happen early in the sequence). If it is spinning, how? Spin equals direction. If it’s not spinning, determine velocity (how fast is it coming? Deep or short? Etc.).

6. Passing Principles

- a. The ball “knows” angles (let the angle do the work)
- b. Simple movements over complex (easy to repeat)
- c. The arms and hands respond best to unexpected events.
- d. Passing high and off the net is statistically proven to be the most effective.

Hitting/Attacking Keys

1. 4 steps (right, left, right, left)--for ALL hitters out of serve receive.

- a. Right foot forward
- b. Small, bigger, biggest
- c. Slow, faster, fastest
- d. 2nd step on or behind the 10’ line

2. Double arm lift

- a. Relax on 1st step (a little forward movement of the arms is ok)
- b. Forward and down on the 2nd step
- c. Back on 3rd step (BIG reach, straight back, arms straight)
- d. Forward and up on 4th step

3. Bow and Arrow swing-Left arm high and right arm back like pulling a bow

- a. TORQUE--open and shut a door-face setter on takeoff and face net on landing.

Why? We use 4 steps in order to generate more momentum. We use the 1st step as a timing step. Make sure they are going small to big and slow to fast as they approach the net. If all steps are the same it’s very difficult to create good timing. Slow to fast helps with timing and momentum.

- b. Most common mistake in an approach involves their arms. Kids are going to want to bring their arms up, then down, then back and up again. Keep their arms relaxed and down.

c. Another common mistake involves the bow and arrow. Make sure the non-hitting arm is reaching high, which helps facilitate the bow and arrow motion. Make sure the hitting arm elbow gets back, which generates potential energy. This motion also helps them hit higher and with range.

4. Hitting/Attacking Principles

a. We are trying to jump high and hit hard with timing, so we need momentum, arm lift, and an approach that will develop momentum and assist with timing.

b. We will need torque to hit hard.

c. Simple movements are better than complex movements-repeatable.

Serving Keys

1. Standing Float Serve - the single hardest serve to receive (that is why we teach it)

a. Bow and Arrow

- Stand at 45 degree angle
- Ball in one hand
- Hitting elbow and shoulder back

b. Place, Step, Hit OR Step, Place, Step, Hit (Place is what we say, not toss-or they throw it too high--want to place the ball in the air where we should hit it).

- Place ball in front of hitting shoulder
- Contact on heel of hand (big hand--squeeze their index and pinky together)
- Step and swing to target--High 5 where you want it to go

2. Serving Principles

a. Correct serving movements require torque to generate force.

b. Tasks that require speed and accuracy (like serving) are learned best if there is an equal emphasis on both speed and accuracy from the beginning.

c. Simple movements are better than complex movements. The simpler the movement the more easily repeatable it will be.

Overhead Passing/Setting Keys

1. Passing

a. Hands up early in the shape of the ball, elbows are out.

b. Extend (like a basketball chest pass)-superman pose-freeze hands like a double high 5.

c. Face the ball, square to the target-usually make the target the OH position.

d. Footwork should be right left right.

2. Overhead Passing/Setting Principles

a. Simple movements over complex.

b. Passing high and off the net is statistically proven to be most effective.

Individual Defense Keys

1. Be STOPPED, be READY: feet apart, knees bent, arms down hands up around chest height-can protect face with an overhead pass or get a good platform if needed.
2. Ball-Setter-Ball-Hitter
 - a. Ball--is the pass coming over the net?
 - b. Setter--the longer I watch the setter the faster I react to the set.
 - c. Ball--Hitters tend to hit where the set takes them.
 - d. Hitter--back row defenders need to watch the hitter for a long time (the way they face, the way they turn).
3. Bellies, NOT butts--we sprawl and do pancakes not rolls--need to be able to see what is happening in front of us, and get up quickly able to dig again.
4. Individual Defense Principles
 - a. The ball "knows" angles, so let the angle do the work.
 - b. Simple movements over complex.
 - c. Arms and hands respond best to unexpected events (faster than the feet).
 - d. Digging high and off the net is statistically proven to be most effective.
 - e. Volleyball is a visual motor sport with the emphasis on the visual.

Basic Drills for each skill

1. Passing drills
 - a. Toss, Pass, Catch: Partner/coach tosses ball player passes off platform and partner/coach catches ball and repeats. 20 reps and switch. Focus is on hands and wrists together and straight and simple arms.
 - b. Back and Forth: Players see how many times they can forearm pass back and forth to each other. Can begin with toss pass catch and build up to consecutive contacts. Can play ball off one bounce back to partner as well. Focus is on hands and wrists together, straight and simple arms and shuffle movements.
 - c. Triangle 3's: Stand in a triangle and work on passing to the right only, then to the left only. Go around the triangle. Can toss, pass, catch and continue that way, keeping it going as many as possible. May need to allow a bounce as well. Focus is only angling the platform.
 - d. Butterfly Passing:
 - a. 1 Sided=Coach or players can "bowl" the ball over the net underhanded to passer who must call the ball and pass to target (where setter would be). Target gets ball and runs under net and gives to coach or tosses over the net to next person ready to pass.
 - b. 2 Sided=2 passing lines on opposite sides of the court, to tossing lines opposite the passers and a target on each side of net in middle of court. Tossers toss over the net to passers and follow their toss to other side of net to become a passer. Passer passes to target and follows their pass to become target. Target shags the ball and goes to the tossing line on same side of court. Toss over the net and continue to follow pass etc. Everyone will be a tosser, passer,

target, tosser, passer target and start over again. Lots of reps, but may need to have coaches be tossers as the youngest ones will struggle to toss an accurate ball to be passed.

e. Tennis: 1 on 1 games with or without a bounce. Simply toss to one side of net, player must send pass over the net with forearm passing or setting motion. Everyone is allowed one contact to send it over the net. You may allow for a bounce if needed, but only one contact to get over the net. Loser goes off the court, winner stays on and next person rotates in to play 1 point games. Can be played 2 on 2 or 3 on 3.

f. 1-2-3 Pepper over the net: played 1 on 1, 2 on 2, or 3 on 3. Players on opposite sides of net pass over the net and try to use 3 contacts before returning it. Can be in any order of contacts, forearm pass, set, and tip or roll shot etc. Try to see how many times they can get it over the net using 3 contacts first. Using a light ball, or allowing one bounce will help slow it down for the youngest ones. Encourage 3 contacts even if playing 1 on 1. Play from 10' line in on both sides if possible.

g. Passing Progressions with a partner (over the net):

- Can allow a catch if needed to start then toss to self and forearm pass over to partner.
- Forearm pass straight back and forth--allow catch and self-toss if needed.
- Forearm pass to self then pass off the right side--angle the platform. Get them to drop inside shoulder to pass over the net to partner.
- Forearm pass to self then pass off the left side--angle the platform. Get them to drop inside shoulder to pass over the net to partner.
- Forearm pass to self then set over the net.
- Set to self then forearm pass over the net.
- Forearm pass to self, set to self and one hand over the net--tips big open hands using fingers.
- Forearms pass to self, set to self and roll spike over the net--try to jump and use your whole hand hitting up on the ball to get topspin.

2. Serving Drills

a. **Ball and a wall:** Work on the toss and big hand and serve to a spot on the wall higher than the net would be. If trouble with power, focus on a bigger step and a big strong hand--faster arm swing. Hit to wall catch the return and repeat.

b. **10' line partner serving:** Line up on opposite sides of the net--focus on keys and hit to partner over the net. Partner catches ball/shags ball--then serves back. If they get 3 over allow them to take 1 step back and continue that pattern. May want to begin with a throw and catch motion first then add the toss and hit. If they can throw it over they can hit it over. If you need to try underhand (I don't usually teach that) make sure they hold the ball below their waist and hand a fist to hit up on the ball. Most kids will lift their left hand or try to toss the ball, teach them to hit directly out of their opposite hand.

c. **Hula hoop or cone serving:** Place objects on one side of the court and allow them chances to serve and try to hit the objects.

d. **Serve and Chase:** They serve a ball then run after it and repeat. Teaches them to not watch their serve but to get onto the court quickly in case ball comes back to their side right away.

e. **Serves vs Passers:** Have servers on one side and passers on the other, Time it for 5 minutes. Passers stay and servers stay till time ends and switch roles. Can have servers chase their ball after they serve. Passers can chase the ball after they pass. Passers can become target who chases the ball and rolls back

to servers. Target then becomes a passer. Lots of variations. Give them opportunity to pass off live serves and serve to passers live.

f. **Zone Serving:** Competition serving drill, 2 teams on each side of the net. They serve to a person from their team sitting in zone 1-If the seated player can touch a serve the person that served the touched ball runs over and sits in zone 2 and the seated player runs to join her team serving. Each team serves one after the other as quickly as they can until they've hit all 6 zones. If they are advanced, you can make them hit each zone a certain number of times before they can move to the next zone. Servers can shag their ball and run back to line to add some conditioning to the drill, or they can just grab balls the other team served.

3. Hitting/Attacking Drills

a. **I throw, you go:** Coaches or players toss the ball high in the air and attackers wait to see the ball then go and hit the ball. Focus should be on the last two steps of the attack (step, close) and arm swing. Focus on jumping as high as they can off two feet and using their arms to propel themselves upwards. Kids all love to hit, so make sure to allow time for this. Lower the net to allow them to all hit over it if at all possible. Get them to swing away! Fast arms and Jumping are key here, everything else will come with time.

b. **Bounce drill:** Coaches or players bounce a ball hard on the ground and partner jumps high to hit it over the net. This should be done in the back row or around the 10' line. Run after their hit or have a partner on the other side shag and become the next hitter. Teach them to jump and swing fast. Footwork and timing will come with time.

c. **Set and Hit:** Have a partner set a ball high and then go attack it. Train them to wait and see the ball before taking off. Tell them to stay BEHIND the setter and the ball. Setter pushes ball up and out high for the hitter to go attack. Setter can toss to self then set partner--then switch roles.

4. Setting Drills

a. **Toss, set, catch**--just like passing--only use hands above head.

b. **Back and Forth**--just like passing--only use hands above head.

c. **Triangle 3's**--Same as passing using hands above head. Teach them to step left right on each set and square up to their target. Setting to right only, then left only.

d. **Linear 3's**--This will help them learn to back set--stack them in a line about 5-10' apart. First person tosses the person in the middle who sets backwards to person behind them. The third person then sets forward over the middle person to the first person who sets the middle and continues. Switch places after each person tries 5 sets. You can do what we can a 1-2 set or a catch and set. 1-2 set is when yo set yourself then push to your partner. Catch and set is simply catching the ball then toss to self and set to partner.

e. **Over the net setting**--Partner up and set back and forth over the net.

f. **Set the lines**--They can simply work on ball control while following along the lines of the volleyball/basketball courts. They set themselves while walking, shuffling along the lines. You can do this with forearm passing as well. Anything with ball control is positive. Keep the ball in the air.

g. **Target setting**--One after the other runs to setter slot 4 feet off the net--coach tosses a ball the player steps left right and pushes a set to the Outside, Middle, Right side whatever spot you want them to set too. Have a target waiting to catch the ball then run the ball to the coach. Should be fairly rapid fire with

everyone setting, running to be the next target and running the ball back to the coach then getting back in line to set etc. Can perform many reps in a short amount of time. Make them all setters!

5. Grills (Game-Like-Drills)

a. **Queen of the court**--2 on 2 or 3 on 3 games to one point. Start with a serve with teams on each side of the net. Play out one point and the winner goes to queens court. Everyone that didn't win is lined up on opposite side of the court ready to come on and play one point rallies. Each team on the serving side has one ball and as soon as the rally ends the losing team shags their ball and goes to end of serving line/side--winners either go under the net to the "queens court" or they simply get the ball and return to the serving side end line and wait their turn to play.

b. **10' tips**--short court mini games--can split the net in half and have two games going on at once or one big game from 10' line to 10' line. Allowed 3 hits and boundaries are the net to the 10' line. Fun warm-up game working on ball control.

c. **Monarch**--Very similar to queens court except the monarch side (queens side) must win the serve and then you bounce a ball to the serving side and they hit it over and play out an additional rally. To stay on the Monarch (queen) side you must win both the serve and the bounce. If you lose the serve there is no bounce and the servers run under the net and try to win 2 in a row to stay on the court.

d. **Multi ball**--another 2 on 2 3 on 3 or even up to 6 on 6 game where you start with a serve, but then toss a free ball to each side after the previous ball is dead. Earn points for each ball, ie. serve, free ball 1 and free ball 2. Whichever team wins 2 of 3 points is the winner of 1 "big" point. Play games to a certain number, or play it like queens court and have winners rotate to winning side.

e. **Circulation**--2 on 2 up to 6 on 6 where you rotate every time the ball crosses the net. Can play catch and throw and rotate, or catch and hit then rotate, or catch, set, hit then rotate. Can allow one bounce then catch, set, hit and rotate. Very active fun game which gets them to understand how to rotate in a game (clockwise) with many ways to vary the way they can play. Encourage 3 contacts per side, in any order they can make it happen. I prefer smaller numbers on the court at one time to allow more touches per player. Can play to a time limit, or a point total. If extra players, have them rotate off from front right and left back and rotate in right back and left front. Makes them think and move which will pay off down the road!

f. **Exchange**--Cooperation game in which there are players on both sides of the net who are working to use up to 3 hits on their side and send it over the net to opponents who are doing the same thing. The idea is that when your side sends it over the net you "exchange" with extra players who are off the court on your side and continue to do this each time the ball passes over the net. Typically we play with 6 on a side and each group splits into a group of 3 to exchange. Can be done in groups of 2 as well. They want to work together with the other side to see how many contacts they can get as a group.

For more ideas there is a great book you can get online with TONS of ideas that I HIGHLY recommend by USA Volleyball. Simply google USA Volleyball Minivolley and you will have the entire book. It is a GREAT resource for anyone interested in helping youth volleyball players learn to love the game!

The key is to make it FUN for the kids and make them want to keep playing! Please read that Minivolley book as there are great warm-up games and cool down games if you get more time. The kids really just want to play, so give them as many opportunities to do so as possible! I feel personally with limited practice times I would get a ball in their hands as much of it as possible and I would try to use the net as much as possible too. 3 touches per side should be the goal every time. Anyone can learn to serve early on and win lots of youth games, but the ones that make it in this game long term are the ones that can control the ball.

Thank you for your willingness to coach and help these kids learn such a fun lifelong activity