

2012 VBClinics.Com Tip Sheet

There are two rules for the sport of volleyball:

Rule #1: The team with the best outside hitting percentage will win 95% of all matches

Rule #2: The higher and farther off the net you pass the ball, the worse your outsides hit. Or, to phrase it in a more positive sense, the lower to the net you pass the ball, the better your outsides will hit.

BALL CONTROL

The issue of ball control is universal for the beach, indoors, six-person and doubles. Simply put, whenever you pass, set or dig, you *must have your arms out early—30-foot rule or 1.5 seconds, whichever comes first.* Period. *Your arms do not move in relation to your body.* By bringing your arms out early, you control the movement of players who are going to touch the ball next. As a setter, you *learn how to read the arms, shoulders and bodies—not the ball.* By learning how to react to bodies, you get a jump on the ball and seem to be in the right place at the right time. The expression “Never take your eye off the ball” comes into play; you learn how to watch the ball through your teammates' eyes and arms (and your opponents' eyes when you get really good). The second and most important reason for bringing your arms out early is that you gain an extra 30% or so more control when you get your arms/hands out early. *Learn how to move on the court with your shoulders, hands and arms out early and not moving!*

UNDERHAND PASSING

In order to pass a ball well you must put a slight amount of *backspin* on the ball. Control = backspin! You control the ball; the ball is not controlling you. There are several ways you can backspin the ball, and they all have one thing in common: *Your chest area must be going down when you make initial contact with the ball.* You can backspin a ball by *dropping your arms* at contact—a common way of digging balls and receiving jump serves. You can learn to *CUT* the ball (cut = backspin) by *bending down at the hips* when contacting the ball. If you're having trouble with this concept, I suggest you *touch the ground “before, during and after”* you contact the ball. When you execute this properly you'll notice your *arms are responsible* for the height of the ball. The most common mistake I see on the court—at all levels—is players trying to lift the ball with their backs or legs. Another joint you can use to *CUT* the ball is the knees. By learning how to “absorb” the ball when you contact it with your knees, you can again induce backspin. Another joint that could be the most important: the high waist bend. Learn how to backspin the ball by “crunching” into the ball.

There's a sequence of motions we do *BEFORE* we contact the ball. The first is to bring your shoulders out like Herman Munster. By bringing your shoulders out, you create a pivot joint responsible for the height of the ball. I prefer to do it when the ball is 30 feet or 1.5 seconds away from the contact of my arms—this issue of ball control again. If you're receiving a jump serve, do it before the server contacts the ball. On the beach, jump setters should be running to the ball with their shoulders extended. The second consistent movement is to *LOCK THE ELBOWS WHILE YOUR ARMS ARE STILL AT YOUR SIDE.* Once locked, *your arms never come unlocked.* The last movement is to keep your arms together *only when your arms are in your peripheral vision (or 90 degrees from your body).* You can track both the ball and your arms at the same time, following the ball into your arms.

SETTING

The goal of setting is to have the hitter hit the ball. In my opinion, the most important part of setting is *timing the set to your hitter's approach*. If he/she is early, bring the set down; if he/she is late, set it higher. *Use your peripheral vision to see your teammate on his/her approach*. The cardinal sin is to set your partner so he/she takes an inside-out approach; it takes away their power. The second part of setting is, of course, the issue of ball control; get your hands up early and look through your fingers at the ball. Make sure you have the correct foot forward. If you're setting out to the left side, your right foot is forward. To the right side of the court, your left foot is forward. This helps in any errors you will make; at least the ball will still be on your side of the net if you miss the set. You'll need strong fingers if you're going to hand set. When you're warming up, set some balls high enough to make your fingers sore. From there, keep setting the ball higher every day. Your fingers will eventually get strong. If you're impatient, substitute a basketball for a volleyball. For the advanced setter, I recommend setting from the wrists and setting past the apex of your jump. If you can minimize the arm movement and arching of your back, it's more difficult for the blockers to read where you're going to set the ball. For collegiate and advanced high school players, jump set, setting on the way down. **To sum up: Set the hitter not the ball.**

HITTING

The two most common errors I make when I step back on the court are: 1.) I get under the ball, and 2.) I don't extend my left shoulder, losing power and reach. The easiest way to stay behind the ball is to not start your approach too early. *Watch the setter's hands*. After you or your teammate pass the ball, *wait for a beat*. It'll feel like you're a little late for the ball, but that's how it should feel. By staying behind the ball and broad-jumping into the set, you make use of your peripheral vision and can see the ball, block, net, defense and end line much better. By broad-jumping into the ball, you also have more power. The key to increasing power is systematic. I suggest getting accustomed to *swinging your arms back* on your approach. This sets up your "off" arm reaching up in the air getting ready to hit. By reaching up with your "off" arm you have *loaded* the muscles on your "off" side—similar to tennis. By replacing your arms during the swing, you naturally hit harder. A by-product is that you have developed what we call "reach." What separates hitters is learning how to hit out of your approach. Good hitters *never* hit where they're facing. We approach one way and hit another via minute adjustments in our *wrist and elbow*. This means you're "snapping" the ball instead of hitting it. Practice swinging at the ball, keeping your elbow high and your hand "waving at your victim" after you hit. This promotes snapping and extension. Snapping is how you put topspin on the ball.

When learning how to hit, practice the four-step process:

Step 1 Throw the ball high

Step 2 Throw the ball high and have your hand face straight up. This will elevate your elbow.

Step 3 Throw the ball high, hand facing straight up, then brush your hand with the back of your hand.

Step 4 Throw the ball high, hand straight up towards the ceiling, brush your hand with the back of your hand as you snap your elbow into position, then hit the ball without following through (this is an over-correction. We follow through when we hit.)

Do these four steps 10 minutes a day before practice!!!

DEFENSE

The most challenging thing to do when playing defense is to ignore the block and the ball and all the other commotion going on around you. When playing defense, ***watch only the hitter!*** Line up the hitters from the ground up—their approach, their shoulders, their elbow, and finally ***lean toward*** where their wrist is snapping. Keep your ***arms out in front*** (ball control!) of you; you'll never have time to bring them out when the ball is hit. Keep your toes ***pointed in***, (on the balls of your feet). The most important thing is to go for every ball. ***Defense is an attitude.***

BLOCKING

The same as defense—once you know who the hitter is, watch only the hitter. Keep your hands high when you “load” your legs to jump. When you bring your hands down to jump back up, I suggest bringing them into your chest as a way of keeping them high. Make sure your elbows are locked and your shoulders are extended when contacting the ball. Follow the ball with your head once the ball has been contacted; put your head on a swivel. If it's hit to your right, open up to the right, etc. When going to the outside, ***push*** off your farthest foot; ***do not step***. On the beach, it's imperative that the digger hide behind the block ***in the middle*** of the court.

SERVING

I prefer to put the needle away from me; you might find it more advantageous to put it facing straight down. Don't point it at yourself; it hurts when you hit it. ***Start the ball high and extended*** out in front of you. You need to hit the sweet spot. By throwing the ball up from your hip, you'll find it harder to hit the ball perfectly. Step ***into the ball*** for added power. Hit the ball ***on the heel*** of your hand for added power; you remove the wrist joint from the serve. ***Hold your hand up after you serve.*** This promotes a “snapping” from the elbow instead of hitting from the shoulder. ***When you get good, you should be able to pull your hand back***—promoting more snap and movement on the ball. Jump servers, remember the three rules of jump serving: toss the ball high, broad jump into the toss, use your left arm for power.

PERIPHERAL VISION

In sports we learn how to look between the ball and the court/field or opponent. In volleyball it's a must! You need to learn how to watch two things at once. If you can split the difference, giving more visual acuity to the ball, yet more attention to what is front of you, you're on your way to becoming an athlete!

WEIGHT WORKOUT

Jump Steps: 4 at a time for guys and 3 at a time for gals

Pyramid: Work your way up to 3 plates on a bar. Do one set of 8 reps, back out and take off one plate. Do the second set of 10 reps, back out and take off a plate. Do the last set of 15 reps.

Rotator Cuff: External Rotations

1. Elbow by side, arm 90 degrees extended.

2. Elbow at 90 degrees from side, 90 degrees from arm extended.
3. Arm at opposite side, thumb down, “signal for a touchdown.”
4. Arm 45 degrees away from body, thumb pointing down to come up with thumb always perpendicular to ground.

Five Things to get started on right now

- 1 Purchase a five-foot piece of 3/16” surgical tubing for your rotator cuff exercises
- 2 Practice your arm swing against a wall. “Elbow high, hand down. Stop your hand after you hit”
- 3 Practice pivoting at your knee through an easy pass.
- 4 Start calling out the name of who is going to touch the ball next.
- 5 After you warm up hitting, hit three balls while swinging your arms back as far as you can.