

- Our goal as the LSO volleyball program is to teach the process, and not results. I will always yell at my player for doing it wrong, even if we get a point, and I will always celebrate her for doing it right even if we lose the point. Teaching, and sticking with processes is the way volleyball programs with sustained success operate. Doing things the right way for the right reason, has in my experience given better results over the year every time, and offers good consistency with the players.
- Throughout this guide, you will find “verbal cues”. These are things that if you were to yell them out at any time when your team is doing the skills in question, you will be saying something meaningful. Feel free to find other ways to say the same thing, but I find it to work best if you have a few short phrases that you repeat so many times that the kids can hear them in their sleep. You can always stop to go more in depth, but in a game, if you can’t convey to your player what they did in 1-3 words, then they don’t really know it well enough.
- When I talk about contacts, I usually refrain from saying ‘bumping’ or ‘spiking’ because those define a very narrow type of contact. With the exception of the serve, I try to categorize each contact as a pass, a set, or an attack, based on the reason WHY we are contacting the ball, not based on HOW we are contacting it. A pass is always to defend a ball from the other team. We are corralling the ball, and redirecting it to a team mate. A set, is anytime a player is trying to give a teammate a ball in a position to be attacked. And an attack, is any ball sent over the net with the intention to score a point. In one example, of a ball coming onto our side, you could say “Susie bumped it to Sally who bumped it to Cindy who bumped it over”, but those three contacts should be very different because they have different goals. Suzie forearm passed it to sally who forearm set it to Cindy who free ball attacked it over”. This may sound silly, but everything in the following packet is going to be talking about those three contact types, and serving. And each contact type will have a spectrum of aggressive options depending on the teams’ skill level.
- When you are approaching the mechanics of a new skill, it is good to keep in mind, that one thing all contacts have in common in volleyball is where we get our power and our control. You will virtually always get the power for the contacts from your legs, transfer that power through a tight core, and get the control with your arms/upper body. When you have this in mind, it should help you understand how to identify problems in your players’ skills.
- Everything in this clinic will include WAAAY too much detail in the description of the moves, in hopes that when you read this three months later, something in the text sparks a memory or our demonstrations. If I say something out loud that isn’t typed, and it helps you, there is room in the margins for notes.
- The mechanical form for these contacts should be the same for an advanced 4th grader, as it is for a 12th grader. We will teach these same tactics at high school, and we are able to do this, because the younger girls play on such a low net, and with extra light balls. Thanks to these adjustments to the younger game, there is no excuse for having improper form!!

SERVING

The goal of good serving mechanics is ALWAYS to eliminate wasted motions. This should be a simple, repeatable, smooth motion. When a player gets a clean motion learned, everything they do for the rest of their career is to make that serve more aggressive through accuracy or strength. This is one of the first things we teach (or reteach) freshman when they get to the 9th grade, because so many of them were not taught that smooth and simple are the key words, so they developed wild bad habits.

Underhand (all should know how to do this by the end of the 4th grade)

- How To
 - Hold the ball in the non-hitting hand, just above waist height.
 - In front of the hitting shoulder.
 - Start with non dominant foot slightly in front of the other, toes towards the court.
 - This eliminates 'hip swinging'
 - Step with non dominant foot
 - Emphasize weight transfer
 - While swinging a closed fist towards the ball with a
 - Straight elbow.
 - Transfer weight from back foot to front foot while following through the ball straight and smooth.
 - Finish with fist pointed to where they want the ball to go.
- Don'ts
 - Don't bend elbow, twist waist/shoulders, or lead with shoulder. These are all common mechanical mistakes made by kids who THINK it makes them stronger.
 - Verbal Cue "Slow is smooth, smooth is fast", until they get good at making accurate contact, speeding it up will not help much.
 - Or "Focus on the ball". There is no need to look at the court once they line up their serve.
 - Don't toss or drop the ball.
 - Focus on keeping the ball in the hand until the swinging fist comes through.
- Verbal cues/Phrases
 - "Big step"
 - "Long smooth swing"
 - "Point to target"
- Error-(Cause)-Solution
 - Ball has spin-(tossing/dropping the ball before contact)- hold the ball as long as possible.
 - Ball doesn't go the direction the server is facing-(they are swinging across their body)- Make sure players line up with the ball in front of the swinging arm.

Overhand (Mechanics are more important than Strength)

As soon as someone can do this properly they should be encouraged (required) to. In this context, “properly” means their elbow and hand stay high, their body is not “wild”, they toss consistently, and they make good hand contact. If they can make their serve 2/3rds of the time in practice this is a preferred method. Some kids need the extra PUSH to do this because they will not always have immediate success, and will want to revert to the ‘safer’ option.

- How To
 - Hold the ball in the non-dominant hand around chest height.
 - In front of the hitting shoulder.
 - Non-Dominant foot in front of the other.
 - Dominant hand higher and farther back than the ear, elbow at right angle.
 - Toss the ball only as high as you can reach.
 - This should be a gentle spinless lift or push up.
 - No waist dip in the toss.
 - Step with the non-dominant foot.
 - Big strong step. This is where they get power.
 - If they don’t swing, the ball should fall down just an inch in front of hitting hand, shoulder, hip, and land directly next to the non-dominant big toe.
 - If swinging. Tight abs (think of a karate chop noise). Smooth swing through with solid palm contact THROUGH the center of the ball.
 - Elbow should never drop below shoulder.
 - Hand comes through straight, smooth and hard.
 - Follow through with no wrist snap.
 - Arm goes 12 o’clock to 6 o’clock
- Verbal Cues/Phrases
 - “Big step!!”
 - “Toss the ball in front of you.”
 - “Keep your hand high”
 - “Tight abs”. Sometimes they have fun if you require a grunt every time they serve in practice.

Drill Ideas

With serving it is just purposeful repetition. Anything we can do to get them aiming at a spot smaller than the court is a good drill. The general principal is “aim small miss small”.

- Dead fish
 - Servers on opposite teams serve from opposite sides of the court, and if they miss, they go become “dead fish” on the other side. They are brought back to life as servers if a team mate hits a ball to them that they can scoot to, and catch. The game continues until the servers from one team are all “Dead fish”

- Blob
 - We did this at MRAA camp. Broken up similarly to dead fish. One team is behind the serving line on side A, and 4-6 girls from that team are the blob on side B. The other team is servers on Side B, and blob on Side A. The blob, is players holding hands in a circle. Servers are trying to serve to center of that circle. If a ball goes into the circle, one member of the blob leaves and becomes a server until there is only one person left in the blob. If that person catches a serve, their team wins. It gives servers a target to aim for, and gives the blob players a chance to communicate, work together, and move their feet to the serve.
- Target practice
 - Anytime you can mark out a target with a pad, cones, or even just a chair, having them aim at something is a great way to practice serving.
 - Anytime we have overhand servers who are working on their mechanics, it is a good idea to start them 10 feet in front of the serving line, and let them move back 5 feet after they demonstrate that they can do it, and then 5 feet again. Getting the right mechanics at a shorter serve distance is better than putting them so far back they feel the need to change their mechanics.
 - This is usually mental. You will find girls serving with perfect form from 15, 20, and 25 feet off the net, but when you move them to 30 they revert to old bad habits.
 - Any overhand server should practice a few 'perfect' tosses before actually swinging at one. I often refresh their memory on what is a 'perfect' toss, and then have them do 5-10. Then, the rule is, one perfect toss with no swing before every serve. So *toss-step-drop, toss-step-swing*.

FORARM PASSING

The purpose of passing is to control the ball, and deliver it to the setter. Anyone who came to the MRAA camp probably heard me say “The three rules of passing” 100+ times, including frequent pop quizzes to the girls. These are the same rules that my early coaches used in the early 90s, and these fundamentals have never changed. There are some advanced techniques we add to this at the high school level, but if players follow these three rules they will be way ahead of their peers.

Ready Stance

- Everyone is a bit different but the key is to be low and balanced, facing the oncoming ball. Feet parallel, maybe the tiniest bit staggered, a very slight forward lean, weight on the mid-foot towards the toes, rounded shoulders, and arms out in front of stomach/chest at least as wide as shoulder width.
 - Verbal cues for a generally low balanced stance:
 - “Bend your knees!!”
 - “Butt low”
 - As opposed to shoulders low. It’s not about head/arms low, it is always about bending the knees, not the waist.
 - “Shoulders in front of knees, knees in front of feet”
 - Not leaning so far forward they will fall with a light push.

Platform

- This is the part of our arms we want contacting the ball. The key is to make an extremely flat triangle between the tips of the thumbs, and both elbow joints. Some key points:
 - Thumbs should be directly lined up with each other, touching at every joint, and wrists together.
 - Fingers should not be crossed over each other.
 - Connection between the two hands should be solid and level.
 - For beginners make a fist with one hand, and wrap the four fingers of the other hand around the fist.
 - Straighten the elbows, almost like you are trying to over extend them.

Three Rules of Passing (please use these verbatim, and hammer them in! I promise that every bad pass at this age can be critiqued with one of these three items)

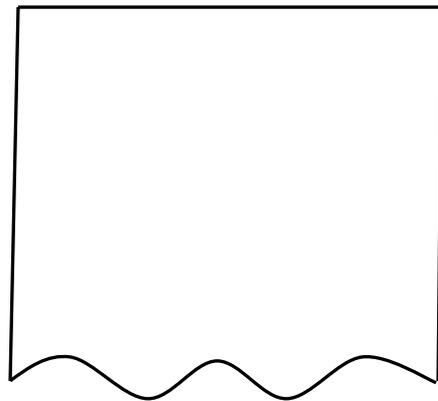
- 1. Move your feet to the ball
 - This means running or shuffling to the ball, and getting your body positioned so that the ball is in a straight line between their body and the target, and the ball is between their shoulders, between their hips, between their knees, between their feet, or “on their midline”.
- 2. Flat platform (or sometimes “strong flat platform”).
 - This means the platform from the details above.

- Also means not breaking their elbows when the ball comes, and
- Not twisting their wrists to try to direct the ball.
 - Direct the ball with feet/shoulders
- 3. Point to target
 - When they finish a pass their platform should point straight down their shoulders, through your elbows, wrists and thumbs, and the extension of that line should go directly to their target's feet. Also, feet, hips, belly button, shoulders, and face should all be towards the target.
- Additional smaller points:
 - When trying to push the ball to the net, it is important that players use their legs, and DON'T swing their arms. When in the low position, when the ball hits their platform, extend the knees and stand up. It's important that you actually see their butt move up when they are passing, and the extra strength doesn't come from swinging arms, or standing up with their hips.

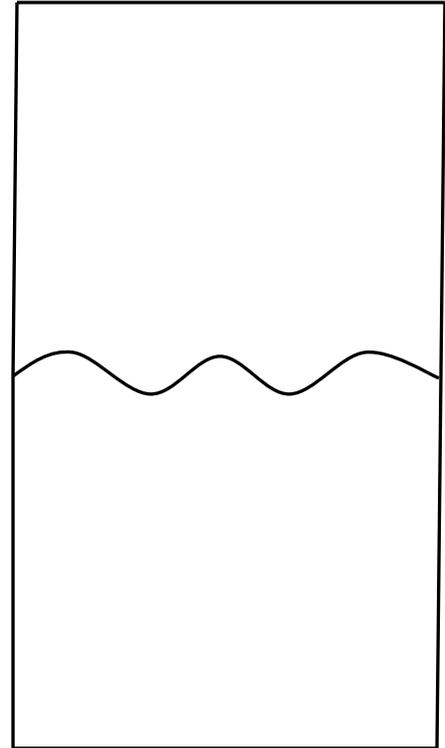
Progression Drills and Skill Advancement

It would not be the end of the world, if the above is ALL that you cover for most of the practices at this age group. It will take thousands of reps before any new player can do this with expert consistency. But below are some drill concepts to use. From top to bottom, this list is easiest to hardest.

- Before anything else, players should be able to get in the ready position and quickly put out a good strong flat platform. Practice moving in the ready position with arms apart, and make a platform quickly on command. Example is shuffling in a big circle, when the coach yells "STOP" players put their platform together as quickly as they can. Or running through some cones with arms apart, getting to certain spots, and stopping with a good flat platform.
- Circle Pass
 - Coach stands at the net with a ball handler next to them, and a target next to the ball handler. A single file line of passers in the middle back of the court. Toss to the first passer, they pass to the target, handler hands ball to coach. Passer becomes target, target becomes ball handler, handler goes to the back of the passing line.
 - Variations of this (all geared towards more movement or more communication).
 - Make the passer move more (toss farther from them).
 - Put two lines in the back, and have the players call the ball when it is in between them.

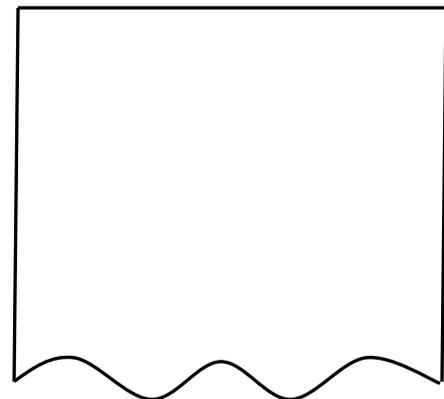


- Roll shots or lower tosses.
- 50/50
 - Split a group into two groups. ½ of the players in a single file line at the ten foot line facing the net. The other half directly across the net facing the first group. The first person passes the ball over the net and then follows the ball, ducking under the net, and getting in the back of the line on the other side of the net. The ball ping pongs back and forth, and you go until you get 50. The keys are that you can only forearm pass. Emphasize keeping the ball in front of you, moving forward through the pass.
 - Variations:
 - Split into two teams (half of each team on one side, half of each team on the other side of the net). Have the teams compete to see who can get to 50 first.
 - Make the groups get 50 in a row without the ball dropping.



- Miami Warmup
 - Everyone has a ball, and starts on the sideline. Pass the ball to yourself 20 times (as high as the antenna), and work your way over to the other sideline. Try to get there in exactly 20 as opposed to getting there after 10, and passing 10 in a row without moving. Next time across the court pass the ball 18 times, then 16, then 14, down to 2. Keys are solid platform, no extra motion with the arms, and every time you pass the ball up your hips should change levels. So, if you pass 20 times in the air, your knees should flex 20 times. Adjust to the ball with your feet, and not your hips/shoulders.

- Short Long (rotate)
 - One partner is the tosser, and is on the net. The other partner is the passer, and is on the end line. The tosser tosses a “short” ball to the ten foot line as the passer runs up to meet the ball. Then the tosser catches the ball, and throws a “long” ball to the end line. The passer should focus on opening her hips and shuffling back as opposed to backpedaling. The drill ends when the passer gets 20 touches with their partner tossing. An alternative, is that the



passer takes a short ball, then a long ball, then rotates to another tosser where she takes a short ball, and then a long ball from that tosser, before rotating to a third etc. The drill ends when the passer makes it back around to the original tossing partner.

- Passing verbal cues
 - “move with your hands apart”
 - “Too late to pray”
 - When someone puts their platform together under their chin before extending it between their thighs. Encourage arms to go from shoulder width apart to ready platform, with no extra flairs in between.
 - “That’s exactly where you were pointing”
 - When the ball goes off to the left or right because feet/shoulders/platform were pointed to the left or right.
 - “Don’t swing your arms”.
 - When a player finishes a pass, and their platform/hands are above their head or in front of their face.
 - “Don’t stir the ball”
 - When the passing motion looks like they are using two hands to stir a cauldron. Should usually be accompanied with encouragement to get behind the ball.
 - “Attack the ball!!!”
 - This age group needs EXTRA encouragement to be aggressive all the time.

SETTING

For this portion we will be talking about hand setting, and the skills related to that. There is no problem with players who are uncomfortable with using their hands, to forearm set in a match at this age. Though, a baseline ability hand set as a player is a must as you grow older.

Contact Point

- Move your feet and get to the ball, so that when you put your hands up to hand set, if their fingers disappeared, the ball would hit you on your forehead.
 - There are a lot of analogies used here:
 - Look through a window created by your thumbs and pointers
 - Should look like you're holding a big two litre upside down to drink it
 - I even heard this year, that the follow through is "like a unicorn with a giant marshmallow on it's horn, and you have to push off your giant marshmallow".

Feet/Body

- Your feet are staggered with the right slightly in front of the left.
- Shoulder width apart.
- Knees bent
- Slight forward lean
- Power comes from your whole body, but starts with the legs
 - Should have some spring in your calves, and explosion through your hips.
- For beginners, you should always square your shoulders to your target.
- For more advanced setters who are doing back sets, you should always square your shoulders to your left side hitter. No matter how far off the net the pass is.
- When setting, you need to spring forward with your legs to get the power needed. This power is translated to your arms with a tight core.
 - Often players step forward, throw their hands forward and make a < sign with their body because their butt goes backwards.
 - If your butt is moving backwards, your strength is moving backwards.

Hands

- When you accept the ball you should have "ball shaped hands".
- They should be spread wide, but soft, as far to the outside of the ball as your strength allows. Ideally, you should have a full 3 panels showing in between your thumbs and pointer fingers.
- When you have "ball shaped hands" they should look like mirrored capital "C"s
- When you follow through, your hands should look like mirrored capital "L"s
- We call this "Going Cs to Ls"
- Your hands should stay the same distance apart (a ball's width) from when they are on your forehead, to when your arms are fully extended.

- The entire time travelling between those two points, your hands need to transition from Cs to Ls together. We often say “hands are twins”.
- Hand Setting verbal cues
 - “Cs to Ls”
 - “Hands are twins”
 - “Square to your target”
 - “Hands up early”
- Drill Ideas
 - To make sure hand position/body position is right, toss the ball to the player, and have the player catch the ball. Check the staggered feet, shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, slight forward lean, ball on the forehead, Thumbs the same distance apart as the pointer fingers, ball shaped hands that look like Cs, eyes on the ball. Have the player correct anything that she has wrong from that list, return to the proper position, and set the ball back. Re-toss.
 - 50/50 with only overhead sets.
 - Miami Warmup with only overhead sets.
 - Short/Long Rotate with only hand sets.
 - Put the setter in the target position, with their feet squared to the left side hitter. Toss the ball from zone 5, and have them push the set to the left.
 - For younger girls toss some from zone 1, and have them set the right side hitter.
 - For older girls, toss exclusively from zone 5 and have the setter alternate setting to the left side and the right side.
 - For more advanced setters, vary the tosses from in front of them, to directly next to them.

OVERHEAD PASSING

This is a skill that looks a lot like setting, but is fundamentally different for two reasons. One, it's purpose is as a pass, and two it often happens on the first contact where the rules allow for a double contact. Overhead passing is a useful skill for young players, because with the rules allowing ugly contacts, they can get the ball pretty close to the target with little skill.

- Similarities to forearm passing
 - It is still important that they move their feet to the ball.
 - They should face their target
 - Players should be able to move with their hands apart, and quickly bring them up to the passing position while on the move.
 - This can be practiced the same way as forearm passing. Move in the ready position, arms apart, until a coach says “STOP” and quickly move your hands into the passing position.
- Similarities/differences to overhead setting
 - The hands should be ball shaped
 - But about an inch closer together. Instead of trying to leave an exposed panel of three rectangles, bring the hands together to prevent getting hit in the face.
 - Fingers should be hard instead of soft. Think of doing pushups on finger tips. If your fingers are strong, you won't risk injury on a driven ball.
 - Punch at the ball more than catch/throw/push it. Punch it with hard fingers in a quick hard motion.
- Verbal Cues
 - “Strong Hands”
- Drill Ideas
 - Circle Pass
 - A good variation on circle pass, is to start with nice easy forearm passes right to them, then have them set balls tossed right in front of them, then move left to right some and forearm pass, then left to right and set, then forearm pass a hit (or spin), then overhead pass a hit (or spin). This whole sequence could take ten minutes, offers a lot of touches, and keeps everyone moving.

ATTACKING

At the youngest level “attacking” is going to be sending free balls to aggressive spots, but by 4th/5th grade you should be getting into overhead swings from the ground (down balls), and by 6th grade you should be doing approaches. The emphasis is on aggressive plays in the court. So each skill level should evaluate what the most aggressive option is that their players can perform, and teach to that level.

Free Balls

- How to:
 - Turn to face the ball being set to you.
 - Facing parallel to the net.
 - Drop the net-side shoulder
 - And do the normal passing knee extension.
- Normal pitfalls
 - “Stirring” the ball into the court is always tempting.
 - Just like every other skill, all of your power comes from your legs, and is transferred through your trunk.
 - Pop at the ball by extending your knees.
 - Facing the target when sending an free ball
 - This is an attack, and not a pass (because pass implies we are trying to get it to a team mate), so the rule about facing your target doesn’t apply.
 - Young kids see success when facing the target, swinging their arms wildly, and getting some pretty aggressive balls. But consistency suffers when you do it this way, leading to a lot of balls in the net and the ceiling.

Down ball

- This is a standing (not jumping) attack of the ball.
- How To:
 - Walking approach to the ball
 - Keep the ball in front of you
 - Put your non swinging arm up, pointing towards the ball.
 - Swinging hand up and back (behind and above your ear) 90 degree elbow.
 - Step through the ball with your non dominant foot
 - Rotate your hips towards the target spot
 - Hand goes from high 90 degree elbow, to your elbow leading your hand past your ear, as your arm extends.
 - Elbow NEVER drops below your shoulder.
 - Injuries happen when you see people swing with a straight arm, or when they try to add more power to their swings and you see the distance from elbow to hip decrease.
 - Hit the ball high enough so your swinging arm is fully extended above your head and in front of your eyes (11 o'clock if looking at the hitter from the side)

- Snap your wrist
- Follow through with a straight elbow
 - Your thumb should pass by your hips and end up behind your butt, thumb pointing up.
- Common pitfalls
 - Contacting the ball with your elbow in front of your hand.
 - The power comes from the “whip” of the hand snapping over the top of your swing. If the ball gets behind the elbow, there is no power.
 - Ball has backspin
 - You did not make solid contact with your palm.
 - Ball has no spin
 - You did not snap your wrist
- Drills for down balls.
 - Without a ball. Stand with hips open, non hitting arm straight and in front, hitting arm 90 degrees and high, chest all the way open. When a coach says go, rotate your hips closed, and freeze with elbow high in front of your eye, leading your hand. When the coach says go again, extend your hand, snap, and follow through. This is three very distinct phases. After several swings, say “go” faster, so it gets more fluid. Then have the players do the whole motion without stopping at each stage.
 - Coach tosses a high ball, player approaches the ball, careful to keep it in front of her, and swings through with forward body momentum. Great places to aim are the back corners of the court. This is another drill that could benefit from a target.
 - Stress the importance of the ball being in front of the hitter.

Jumping Attack (Hitting)

- This will have many components in common with the down ball, the main difference is the approach.
- For smoothness sake, you should teach a four step approach. For this to work, you need to encourage the players to ‘transition’ back far enough off the net in anticipation of the set. In a game, it is easier to shorten that, than to lengthen a 3 step approach, and is much more natural in live action.
- Verbal cue for the timing of the approach, is “slow to fast”. You need to be at top speed at the end, not the beginning.
- This should be a high jump, not a broad jump.
- Tempo of the approach is (for right hander): Right.....Left.....RightLeft. The speed of the player, and the speed of the steps are always going slow to fast.
- Four step approach (for a right handed hitter):
 - Step one. Right foot. Casual and just enough to start momentum. Hands behind the back, one wrist clasped in the other hand.

- Step two. Left foot. Casual, but directional, this should start you towards the ball (especially important if the set isn't directly to you). Hands out in front of your chest arms almost straight out. Think forward leaning zombie.
- Step three. Right foot. Fast/explosive. Hips open to the setter. Butt low. Hands flung behind you palms to the ceiling.
- Step four. Left foot. Fast. Plant the foot as arms swing past calves and up in front of your face.
 - This is the step that transfers forward momentum into vertical momentum.
- From here (in the air), your arms do what they did for the down ball. Non hitting hand is extended in front of you pointing towards the ball, hitting arm high behind your head 90 degree elbow. Rotate your hips closed, and swing through. Elbow leads past the ear as your arm extends, snaps, follows through.
 - If your non hitting hand is pointing to the ball, it will help make sure that ball is in front of you.
- Land in control, and balanced, and soft if possible.

Drills to get your team from down balls to hitting with an approach

- First, there is no reason to move on to hitting while flying through the air, if you can't remain balanced, and contact the ball on the ground when your base is strong.
- If you can successfully downball the way to build up to hitting is to start with the end and work your way back to the beginning.
- Phase 1.
 - Standing with hips open to the court left in front of right (for right handed hitters). Throw your arms back (palms to the ceiling) while bending your knees, and swing them forward. As your arms rise in front of your chest jump, and do your hip-close-quarter-turn hitting hand high behind your ear, non hitting hand out in front, swing through elbow leading the way as your hitting hand extends, follow through land. Reset. Do this without a ball several times.
 - Do this with a ball, emphasize reaching for the ball in front of you, and rotating your hips closed. Toss from pretty close, needs to be a good controlled toss.
 - Keep in mind there won't be much power, or explosion here, it is just for working on feeling balanced in the air, and rotating your hips and swinging through.
- Phase 2.
 - Standing a few feet further from the net. Just do steps 3 and 4 from above. Start with your left foot slightly in front of the right (for righties), and then quickly finish with the last two steps. These are two fast steps, that when they are planted, your hips are open to the court, and as your arms come swinging past your calves and chest as you jump up, ¼ hip turn, arms high, elbow leads, snap through, land soft. Do this several times without a ball.
 - Do this with a ball. Coach should stand farther away, and a much higher toss. At this stage players should be told they need to wait for the ball, then quickly do

their two steps, jump $\frac{1}{4}$ hip twist, hands high, elbow leads, snap, follow through land.

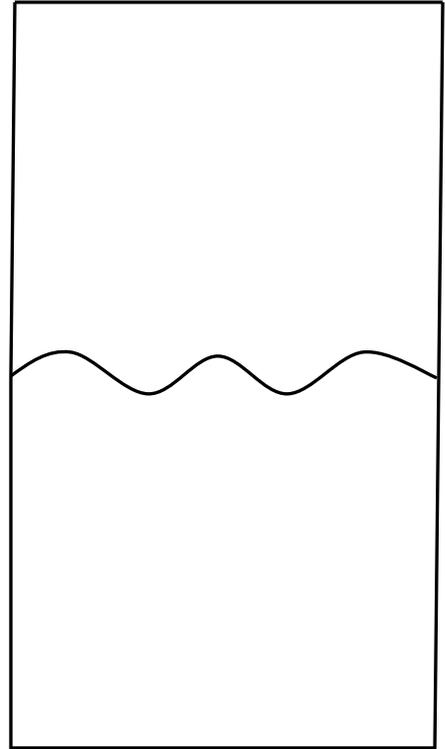
- Instruction should be “In this drill you are not allowed to be early! If you are going to make a mistake, be late!”
- The point is to time it, with explosive steps, and adjust to the ball in the air.
- Phase 3
 - Standing a few feet farther from the net. Do the full 4 step approach, completing the entire hitting motion. Do several of these without a ball.
 - Do these with a ball. In this the coach should be closer to the player again, and they should start their approach without a ball being tossed. When the player gets close to the tossing coach, the coach should try to toss the ball to the height that the player can reach, and not make them react very much in the air.
 - Phase 2 was about timing in the air, and phase 3 is about fluidity through the whole motion.
- Phase 4
 - Standing in the same spot as phase 3. Do the full 4 step approach, with a high tossed ball. In this phase, do NOT hit the ball. Do the footwork right, with a full jump and try to get the ball to land on your forehead at the top of your jump, and direct it towards the middle of the court.
- Phase 5
 - Standing in the same spot as the last two phases. Do the full 4 step approach, with a high tossed ball. In this phase do the full footwork, and a full jump, raising the hitting hand behind your head, chest open. Then rotate your hips, elbow leading through and freeze there. In this phase try to hit the ball with the point of your elbow and direct it towards the middle of the court.
- Phase 6
 - Full 4 step approach with a high toss, and swing through the ball the way you did in phase 3.

Common hitting mistakes

- Without getting into every mechanical error, the most common hitting mistake, and the hardest one to brake everyone of later, is ball positioning. Every kid ever, wants that ball right on top of their head. When it is in the air, they fight hard to move their feet to get directly under it, and it is hard to get them to understand that it actually has to be in front of them more. Make sure they are hitting the ball just slightly in front of their eyes (and as high as they can reach).
- Girls with lack of shoulder strength and stability. Every coach at every level, should consider having their girls toss tennis balls back and forth for 5-10 minutes before/after every practice. If girl's first swinging motion is a full speed swing on a volleyball, and then they go to do that 6 days a week in 7th grade, it is a recipe for shoulder injury.

COMMON TEAM DRILLS

- Cross Court Pepper
 - 4 players on each side of the court, in zones 4,5, and 6 (plus a setter in the target spot). Set up all the players the way your normal defense looks. This is a cooperative game where the point is to keep the ball alive. Use your defensive players to pass to the setter, who sets the left side hitter. Left side hitter attacks the ball in a controlled way to the other side of the net, hitting a cross court shot, thus the name of the drill. When the ball crosses the net, that team rotates while the ball is on the other side of the net.
 - Start with all forearm contacts. Nice controlled pass, forearm set, free ball with good form. It's nice to count the number that go over the net in a row. For more talented teams we often make them go a minute without a ball dropping, or until they get 15 in a row or some achievable goal.
 - More advanced teams then add in hand sets and down balls.
 - Further advanced options, only count jumped attacks towards the goal number.
 - Finally, this can be turned into a competitive game. Where points are scored by scoring shots in the opponents zones 4,5, and six. In this drill you are always leaving the right side of the court empty, so no points can be scored on a ball going to that portion of court.



- Butterfly

- Probably the most common drill in use at many levels, and HIGHLY customizable. Set up a line of 'servers' in both zone 1s, a line of 'passers' in both zone 5s, and a target on each side of the court. The 'server' baseball throws the ball across the net to the passer in zone five. The passer passes to target, and the target catches the ball or shags. Everyone follows the ball. Server becomes passer, passer becomes target, target becomes server (on the same side of the net they are already on). So from the top view, the flow of people looks a little like a butterfly. Can be counted every time the target catches one. If you want to be more advanced, you can count every time the target catches one, and also every time the ball goes uncaught (missed serve, bad pass, dropped ball).

- The benefits of this drill even in it's simplest form are many. The baseball throw is the best thing we can do for our young athletes to get the small stabilizing muscles used in a dynamic swing to strengthen before middle school. These are the most common injuries in HS girl volleyball players. Also, making our target CATCH every ball, and counting it against them if it falls, encourages the target to be ready for the next ball, and to hustle to it no matter where it is.
- More advanced: Have the servers actually serve.
- More advanced: You could add in a hitter. In this case, everyone follows their ball, target no longer catches but hits. And after the ball goes over, the server->passer->setter->hitter->server.
 - This can also be done in ½ butterfly version so it can be done with fewer players

