



Passing the Volleyball - Five Tips to Improve Your Effectiveness

Passing is such a critical skill to running an effective offense in volleyball. If the pass to the setter is bad, it reduces their options of delivering the ball to the hitters.

As I teach more and more people how to play volleyball, I have noticed that there are a few mistakes that people make over and over again while passing the ball. Ironically, these simple fixes are the teaching points we use to improve the consistency of our outside hitters and liberos. Hopefully, these five tips will improve the passers on your team as well:

1. Move your feet to the spot where the ball is going to be - Too many people think that passing is all about their arms. The fact of the matter is that when people move their feet first to get into position, their accuracy improves as well. When passing, stay on your toes to allow easy movement to the right spot. Keep your knees bent and make sure that you are in the right position *first* before you do anything with your arms.

2. Pull your hands/wrists down - I have noticed that passers use different methods to put their hands together. Many experts will say that one method is better than another. Personally, I think that the more comfortable our passers are, the more they can focus on these five points to improve their technique.

The critical point here is what they are doing with their hands or wrists. I teach them to take their hands/wrists and pull them down towards the floor as much as possible. You will notice that as you do this, there is a larger surface area of your forearms that is exposed. This will allow you to have a flatter surface to pass the ball with. Many times, people mishandle the ball because of the ridges on their forearms. Pulling the hands down is an easy fix to this problem.

3. Square up your hips and arms to the target - Many times people will try to angle their arms to the target without moving the rest of their body. In some cases, the ball may be moving too quickly to completely get in position. However, if you can, get your hips and arms straight towards the target. This will increase your accuracy in delivering a ball that a setter can run the offense with.

4. Use your forearms to point the ball to the target - The ball should be impacting the middle point of your forearm when passing the ball. If the ball is hitting your hands, wrists, or elbows, you are not going to be as accurate as you could be. The forearm is the flattest part of your arms and will give you the greatest accuracy. As you are passing, the

forearms should be angled to the target. The forearms should be used to direct the ball to the target.

5. Don't swing! Many new passers will swing their arms, and this causes the ball to go further than it should. In many cases, the ball will have enough momentum on it as it is. It will not be necessary to swing at the ball. Let the momentum do the work for you and your forearms are simply to point the ball to the target. It will be a lot easier for you to let the ball do the work. Those people that put swing, put too much of a force on the ball and the ball will go over the net rather than to the setter. When that happens, you can almost count on the fact that you are going to lose the point as one of the hitters of the opposing team crushes the bad pass. Control the momentum rather than creating it.

Blocking Fundamentals - Four Tips to Be at the Right Place and the Right Time

Ever since I started to play volleyball, I was taught how to be the middle blocker. As a result, I have always been passionate about blocking. After all, a good block is a point and it can demoralize the other team.

As I was being taught the game, I was having a difficult time reading the play on the other side of the net and being where the ball was going to be for the block. I remember the key tips that my coaches taught me, and I thought it would be valuable to other players to write an article to pass on the same information.

Important: Before the play starts, make sure that you take some time to identify the setter and the hitters on the other team. The four tips I am going to outline will work better if you take time before the play to call out the other team's setter (whether front or back row) and where the hitters are. Who is their go-to hitter? It will be easier to be in the right place if you know where all of the hitters are going to be.

The four tips focus on knowing where to be and what to be looking at. The four tips are *Ball, Setter, Ball, Hitter*. Each of these identify what you should be looking at as the play develops so that you end up where the ball is going to be.

1. Ball: The first thing you should be looking at is where the ball is going as your team serves the ball over the net. Look to see who is passing it, and where the ball is being passed to. Did the pass go where it needed to? Does the setter have to move out of position to get to the second hit? If so, their offensive options will be limited and it will make getting to the right spot even easier.

2. Setter: The next thing to watch is where the setter had to go to get the ball for the set. You also want to look at their body position. If they are going to back set it, you will notice that they will start to arch their back before they set the ball. As you are watching the setter, take a quick glance at the hitters to see if they are starting their approach. If they are, then you can bet that they will be running a quick attack.

3. Ball: As the setter sets the ball, you want to be looking at the position and location of the ball. Is the ball tight on the net? If so, blocking is going to be a lot easier. Are you going to have to step to the outside? Watch where the ball goes as it comes out of the hands of the setter.

4. Hitter: The last thing to look at is the hitter. Since you briefly glanced at their approach as the setter was getting the ball, you should already have a good idea what type of route they are going to run. What you are looking for here is their body position as they are hitting the ball. The majority of the time, the hitter is going to hit the ball in the same direction as their shoulder. Blocking becomes easier if you can line up your block along the path of the hitter's shoulder.

Just remember the four keys: Ball, Setter, Ball, Hitter and you should increase your ability to get to the right spot and not be fooled by the offense. Happy Blocking!

Want to Improve Your Volleyball Game? Follow These Tips

The other day, I was thinking back about how I got started playing volleyball. I was thinking about how terrible my skills were and as I was thinking, I started to remember the things that helped me become a better player and the things that sped up my development. I wanted to share these ideas in hopes that they would be useful for someone else. Here are the key things that I did:

1. Play Beach Volleyball - One of the skills that I was the worst at when I started playing was setting the ball. I could not get the ball to go where I wanted it, and I felt like I was always slapping at the ball. I started to play beach volleyball (two-on-two) and this really helped my skill develop. When the other team saw how bad I was at setting, they would serve the ball to my partner so that I would have to set the ball every time. Since the pressure was on me as a setter, I got to develop the skill very quickly.

The same would also be true if you were not a good passer or hitter. Since this type of volleyball will force you to be well rounded, it is a great way to develop the skills that you have wanted to develop.

2. Focus On Technique - In my opinion, volleyball is a very technique driven sport. Those people that have good techniques will always prevail over better athletes with worse technique. I was fortunate enough to be taught the game by a couple of very gifted coaches that focused on techniques of their players. Try to find a coach or another player that can teach you the proper techniques. If you cannot find one, then do some research on the internet to find the right techniques to improve your game.

3. Play Every Chance You Get - As with any type of skill, the more you work on it, the more you will improve. I played any time that I could. Whether it was a beach volleyball tournament, or an indoor league, or a pickup game with some friends, I would take every opportunity to play that I could get. In fact, I remember one job I had where a co-worker was a volleyball player. There were some lunch breaks that we would take our lunch outside and play pepper during lunch. Find opportunities to play so that your muscle memory will be sharp and learn from the repetition.

These are a few of the items that really helped my game improve over the years. I hope that they will help you as well.

Winning Strategies For Volleyball - Six Keys to Winning Those Close Matches!

Have you ever noticed that when it comes to crunch time in a game, that there are certain teams that pull it out time and time again? There are certain characteristics that these teams have that help them through the tight games. With volleyball, the situation is no different. There are teams that always seem to win but there are key things that they do. Here are a few of those key things that I have noticed over the years:

1. If someone is having difficulty passing the ball, keep serving at them. As basic as this may seem, you would be surprised how many people forget this simple strategy. Throughout the course of the game, you should be paying attention to how the people on the other team are passing. The whole point here is to find a weakness and exploit it. Even the best passers have bad passing days...

2. Keep your serves and hits on the court. Sometimes success in volleyball is not always about making the best plays. Sometimes it is about making fewer mistakes than the other team. With the game being scored by the rally point system, every mistake costs you a point. Be consistent about keeping the ball in bounds and making the other team make the mistake.

3. The setter must run the offense and identify weaknesses on the other team. Prior to the play starting, the setter should be looking to see how their hitters match up against the other teams blockers. Got a weak blocker going up against your best hitter, you would be foolish to not use this to your advantage during those rotations. Yes, it is important to keep all the hitters involved and distribute the ball so that the defense is guessing. However, when it comes to that late game moment, you must use your best offensive option as that is your job running the offense.

4. Move to see the hitter hit the ball. When you are playing defense, if you cannot see the hitter hit the ball, then you are in the wrong spot for defensive purposes. You must position yourself so that you are taking the angle away from the block, the line down the block, or a seam between blockers. Basically, if you cannot see the hitter as they are hitting, you are not helping your team defensively. In those tough matches, good defense can be the winning factor.

5. Serve to the front row passer. When one of the passers on the other team is on the front row, serve to them. This will force them to pass and hit at the same time. Chances are that passing will either get them out of the mindset of hitting, or that it will move them out of position to be a hitting option. Obviously, this works better with some hitters than others, but try it a couple of times throughout the course of the match. If you notice any success with it, come back to this strategy when you have that need for a crucial point.

6. Winning is mostly an attitude. I have noticed that in those close games, the team that expects to win is usually the one that does win. There are people that when they step on

the court, they expect to win and it usually happens. This isn't really achieved by trash talking or putting the other team down. It is a mindset and inner confidence that they are going to believe. Basically, it is never an upset if the underdog always considered themselves the better team. Know that you are going to win and expect it.

I hope these six tips will help you prevail in those close matches. Best of luck to you and your team.

For more tips, strategies, and ideas, go to www.volleyball-training-ground.com to enhance your game.