

# 44

## Volleyball

**V**olleyball is a popular and diverse sport with many variations, including indoor, outdoor, and beach volleyball; 2-, 3-, 4-, or 6-player teams; Mixed-Six (coed); games to 11 points, to 15 points, or by the clock; and the rally-point system. Volleyball is played by about 46 million Americans and about 800 million worldwide and has been an Olympic sport since 1964. It originally was developed as an alternative to basketball by William G. Morgan of the YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1895.

**Objective:** To score more points than the other team by hitting the ball over the net so that the opponents cannot return the ball or prevent it from hitting the ground in their court.

**Number of Players:** 2, 3, 4, or 6 players, depending on the type of play.

**Scoring:** Rally scoring is used exclusively in USA Volleyball and NCAA action and is being phased in at the high school level; in this system, a point is scored on every play.

**Games and Matches:** A match is the best of three or five games. Each nondeciding game is played to 25 points using rally scoring (30 points in college). A game must be won by at least 2 points; there is no scoring cap. The deciding game is played to 15. Again, a team must win by at least 2 points and there is no scoring cap.

**Overview:** The referee blows her whistle for the first serve, which begins play. After the serve, players may move around on their sides of the court, but they

may not step completely over the center line. (In college, rules allow the hand and foot to completely cross the center line and give some latitude with other body parts, such as the knee or forearm, to cross partially over the center line.)

Players may hit the ball with any part of their bodies. They may clasp their hands together and strike the ball underhand or overhand, with either an open hand or a closed fist. A point is scored on every play; the team that scores serves the next ball.

The main body of this chapter refers to indoor, six-player rules. Modifications are noted near the end of the chapter.

## COURT

The court includes the *playing area* and the *free zone* (see figure 44.1). It is divided into two equal parts by the *center line*, which runs the width of the court under the net. *Attack*

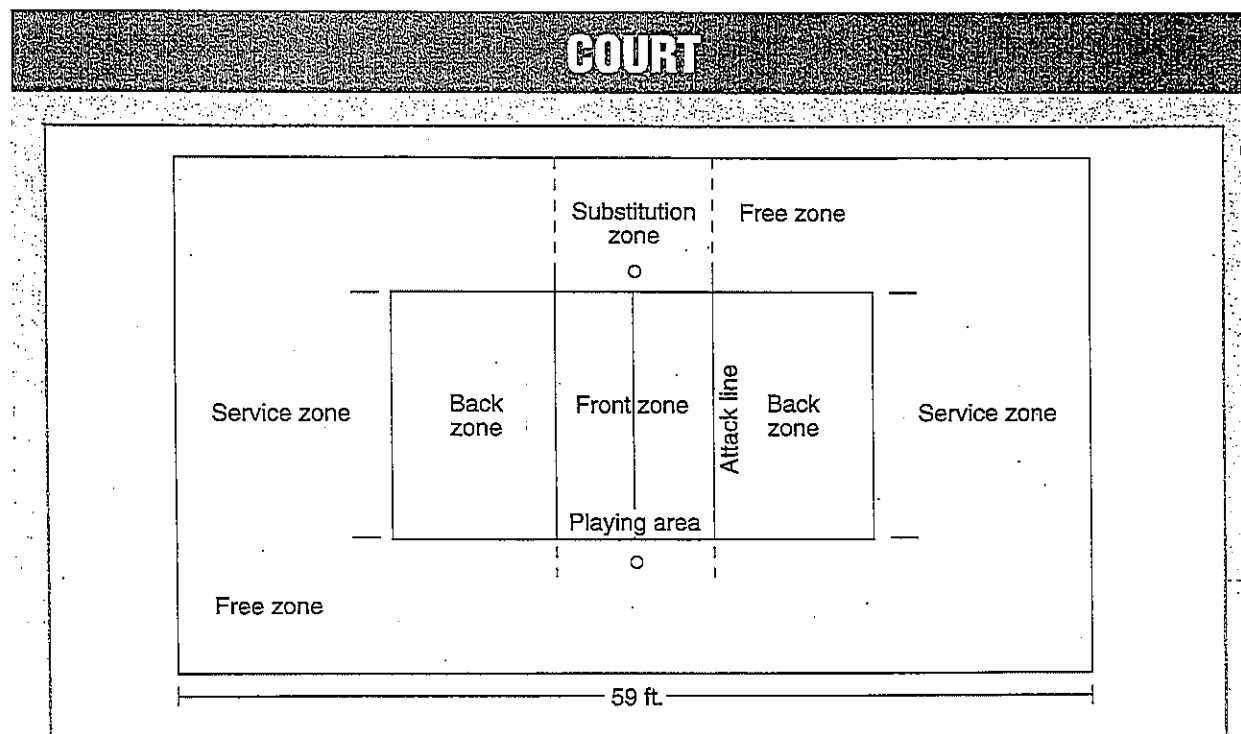
*lines* are on both sides of the net. The *net* itself is made of mesh and is a minimum of 32 feet long and 39 inches wide with a 2-inch canvas band at the top. For men, the top of the net is 2.4 meters high; for women, it is 2.2 meters high. The top and the bottom of the net are fastened to the posts to remain taut.

Two white side bands, if used, are fastened vertically to the net; they are considered part of the net. An antenna is fastened at the outer edge of each side band and placed on opposite ends of the net.

## TERMS

An **attack-hit** is a hit aimed into the opponent's court. All actions directing the ball toward the opponent, except a serve or block, are attack-hits.

**Attack lines** separate each side of the court into a front zone and a back zone. Players in



► Figure 44.1 The dimensions and features of a volleyball court.

Adapted from Federation Internationale de Volleyball 1997.

the back row may attempt an attack hit when they are behind the attack line, or when they are in front of the line when the ball is lower than the top of the net.

**Back-row** players are the three who are situated in the back zone when the serve is made.

A **block** occurs when one or more players at the net deflect the ball coming from the opponent.

A **delay** may be called by a referee when a team takes too long to substitute or otherwise delays play. The first delay results in a warning; the second results in a loss of a rally.

A **dig** is made by a player who first contacts the ball over the net (unless this player is making a block).

A **fault** results in a lost serve and a point awarded to the opposition. For more on faults, see page 282.

A **front-row** player is one who is positioned in the front zone, between the attack line and the net.

A **held ball**, which is a fault, may be called when a player does not contact the ball cleanly.

A **hit** is any contact by a player with the ball. A player may hit the ball once during a play, although if it is the team's first hit and is not a block, the ball may contact the same player on various parts of the body consecutively, provided that the contacts occur in one action.

A **match** is won by the team that wins the most games in the match.

A **playing fault** is any breach of the rules by a player. A fault results in loss of the rally.

A **rally** is the exchange of hits between the teams. The team that wins the rally gets a point and the serve.

A team's **rotation order** must be kept when it gains the serve. Each time it gains a serve, players rotate one position clockwise. Failure to do so is a fault.

**Sanctions** are given for various penalties. In the NCAA, a *yellow card* signifies a warning; a *red card* is a penalty for a more serious offense that results either in the serving team losing the serve or in the receiving team losing a point. When the referee holds up both a red card and a yellow card in one hand, the offending player is expelled from the game. When the referee holds up a red card in one hand and a yellow card in the other, the offending player is expelled for the match. USA Volleyball rules allow for a verbal warning. The yellow card indicates a penalty (loss of rally), the red card indicates expulsion from the game, and the red and yellow card together indicate expulsion from the match.

Players of the serving team may not **screen** the opponents from seeing the server or the path of the ball. Screening includes arm waving, jumping, and moving sideways as the serve is being made. It also occurs when the server is hidden behind two or more players.

A **serve** puts the ball into play. The server may move freely behind the end line when serving. See page 282 for more on serving.

A **set** is a contact that sets up a spike. The typical order of contacts is dig, set, spike.

A **sideout** occurs when the serving team does not score, and the serve goes over to the other team.

A **spike** is a hard-driven ball that is hit in an attempt to score.

A player may **tip** a ball with her fingers if she does not throw or hold the ball and the contact is brief.

## PLAYERS

Each team has six players on the court: three in the front row and three in the back row (left, center, and right in both rows). Each front-row player must have at least part of one foot closer to the center line than both feet of the corresponding back-row player. Outside players in each row must have at least part of one foot

closer to their side line than both feet of the center player in the same row. Player position is determined by the position of the foot last in contact with the floor at the time the ball is served.

Once the ball is served, players may move to any position within their side of the court. When a team gains the serve, its players rotate one position clockwise. In USA Volleyball Open play, a team is allowed a maximum of six substitutions per game. A starting player may leave the game and reenter once. A substitute player may not reenter a game after he is replaced, and he may be replaced only by the player he replaced. In all other USA Volleyball play, a team may substitute 12 times per game; a starting player may reenter a game twice; and a substitute player may enter a game three times.

Each team has an option to register a "Libero" player. The Libero player is restricted to playing in the back row and cannot serve, block, or attack-hit when the ball is above the height of the top of the net. The Libero wears a different-colored shirt from the other team members and does not take part in normal substitutions; rather, the Libero enters or leaves a game on her own, while the ball is out of play and before the whistle for service. Replacements involving the Libero do not count as regular substitutions.

## PLAY

Most of the basics of volleyball can be understood through its rules for serving, ball in play, net play, attacking, and blocking.

### Serving

Players must follow the service order recorded on the lineup sheet. A player retains the serve until the other team wins the right to serve. A player has eight seconds to serve once the referee whistles for service. If a player serves before the whistle, the play is canceled and the serve is repeated.

The server may serve from anywhere behind the end line. After completing the serve, the

player may step or land inside the court. If the server tosses the ball and it touches the ground without touching the player, this is a service error. A service fault occurs if the ball

- touches a player of the serving team;
- fails to pass through the crossing space over the net;
- touches the net, antenna, or any other object;
- lands out of bounds; or
- passes over a "screen" of one or more players.

### Ball in Play

The ball is inbounds when it touches any portion of the court, including the boundary lines. The ball is out of bounds when it touches the floor completely outside the boundary lines. It is also out when it touches an object outside the boundary lines, when it crosses the net outside the crossing space, or when it touches the net, rope, antenna, or post outside the antenna or side band. (Note: If a player, in pursuing an opponent's serve, goes out of bounds before hitting the ball, the ball is still in play.)

NCAA rules allow for the pursuit rule (pursuit of a ball that crosses outside the crossing space after the first contact).

Each team has three hits, in addition to blocking, to return the ball. A hit is any contact with the ball, whether intentional or not. A player may not contact the ball twice during a rally, unless the first contact is a block or unless two players contact the ball simultaneously. In this case it is counted as one contact, and any player may hit the ball next. A player may not receive assistance from a teammate in trying to hit a ball, but a teammate may hold back a player who is about to cross the center line or touch the net.

### Net Play

If a ball outside the crossing space has not fully crossed the vertical plane of the net, it may be played back to a teammate. A ball is "out" when it completely crosses under the net. A

ball may touch the net and still be in play. If a ball is driven into the net, it may be recovered if the team hasn't used its three hits.

- A serve that contacts the net and continues into the opponent's court remains in play.
- A blocker may contact the ball beyond the plane of the net but may not interfere with an opponent's play. A hitter's hands or arms may cross the net if the contact was made on his side of the net or within the net's plane. If any part of a player touching the floor (such as hands, knees, or feet) crosses completely over the center line into the opponent's court, however, a fault is called regardless of whether it interfered with the opponent's play.

NCAA rules allow the hand and foot to completely cross the center line and allow some latitude with other body parts (e.g., a knee or forearm) to cross partially over the center line. A fault is called when there is interference or safety concerns.

USA Volleyball allows penetration into the opponent's court beyond the center line to touch the opponent's court with one or both hands or feet, provided some part of the penetrating hands and feet remains either in contact with or directly above the center line.

A player may not touch the net. The only exceptions are incidental contact by a player's hair or an insignificant contact by a player not involved in the play. If a driven ball causes the net to touch a player, this is not a fault.

### Attacking-Hitting

An attack-hit is any action directing the ball toward the opponent's court, except for serves and blocks. Front-row players may make an attack-hit when the ball is at any height. Back-row players may make an attack-hit at any height as long as they are behind the attack line at takeoff; they may land beyond the line. A back-row player may also make an attack-hit from the front zone if the ball is below the top of the net.

### Blocking

A block occurs at the net as a player or players attempt to block the ball from entering their side of the court. At least one blocker must have a portion of his body above the net at some point during the block. A block is not counted as one of the team's three hits.

A player who blocks the ball may be the first to contact the ball after the block. A player may place her hands and arms beyond the net in an attempt to block if she does not interfere with her opponents' play. An example of interference is when an offensive player is setting a pass and a defensive player touches the ball with her hands or arms over the net. It is not interference if the defensive player touches the ball beyond the net when the offensive team is attacking.

Consecutive contacts with the ball are permitted in blocking if the contacts are quick and continuous and made during one action. A serve cannot be blocked.

## SCORING

A point is scored when

- the ball lands in bounds on the opponents' court,
- the opponents are unable to return the ball within three hits,
- the opponents hit the ball out of bounds, or
- the opponents commit a fault, or foul.

If one team is penalized, the other team receives the serve and a point. If the receiving team faults, the serving team gets a point. If the serving team faults, the receiving team gets a point and the serve.

## MISCONDUCT

Misconduct is classified as unsporting conduct, rude conduct, offensive conduct, or aggression. It may be directed at officials, players, coaches, or fans. Depending on the degree of the misconduct, a player may be warned,

penalized, expelled for the game, or expelled for the match.

## EQUIPMENT

The ball is spherical and bound in leather or approved synthetic materials. Its circumference is 25.5 to 27 inches; its weight is 9 to 10 ounces. It has 4.5 to 6 pounds of air pressure per square inch. Players wear jerseys and shorts, or one-piece outfits; no jewelry may be worn. Players wear soft- or rubber-soled shoes.

## OFFICIALS

The officials include the first referee, the second referee, the scorekeeper, and two or four line judges. The first referee stands at one end of the net and has final authority over all decisions. He may overrule other officials. The second referee stands near the post outside the playing court, opposite the first referee. He signals faults, including net, center-line, and back faults, and assists the first referee. The second referee authorizes game interruptions, substitutions, and timeouts.

The scorekeeper sits facing the first referee; he records points and timeouts and checks that substitutions are legal. Line judges stand at opposite corners of the court, opposite the

service zones (if two judges are used), or at each corner (if four judges are used). They stand at the intersection of the end line and side line and rule whether balls are in or out, signal when a ball crosses the net outside the crossing space, and indicate when a server foot-faults. Officials' signals are shown in figure 44.2.

## MODIFICATIONS

The two main variations of the sport allow for coed play and for outdoor play. The net heights suggested by USA Volleyball are indicated in table 44.1.

A re-serve is no longer allowed in NCAA and USA Volleyball rules. An exception that may be used for 14-and-under play (USAV rules) allows one service tossing error for each service (within 5 seconds for the re-serve).

Twelve-and-under competition may be conducted using a lighter ball (7 to 8 ounces instead of 9 to 10 ounces).

### Mixed-Six Play

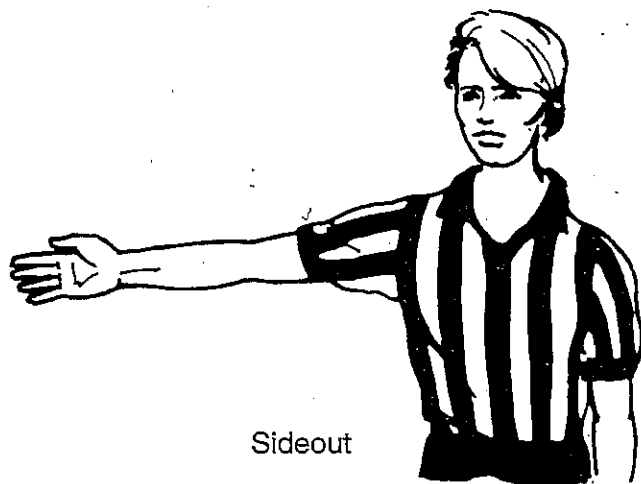
The rules for Mixed-Six (coed) play are the same as for indoor play, except for the following:

- Males and females alternate serves and court positions.

**Table 44.1 Net Heights**

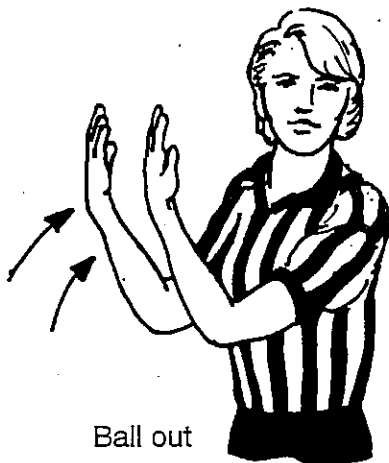
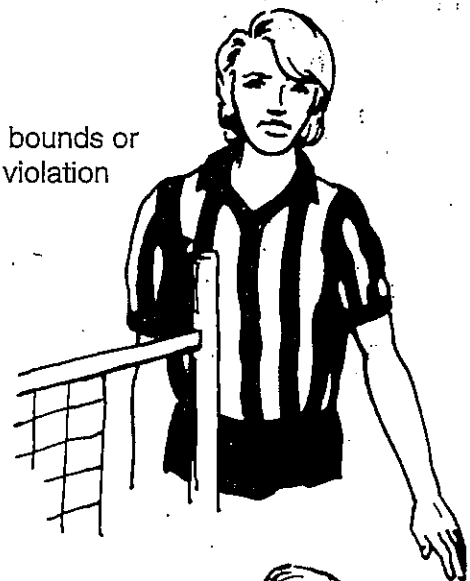
Age groups	Females/reverse mixed six (ft/in)	Males/mixed-six (ft/in)
55 and above	—	7, 9 $\frac{5}{8}$
45 and above	7, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$	—
18 and under	7, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$	7, 11 $\frac{5}{8}$
16 and under	7, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$	7, 11 $\frac{5}{8}$
14 and under	7, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$	7, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$
12 and under	7, 0	7, 0
10 and under	6, 6	7, 0

Adapted from USA Volleyball 1995.

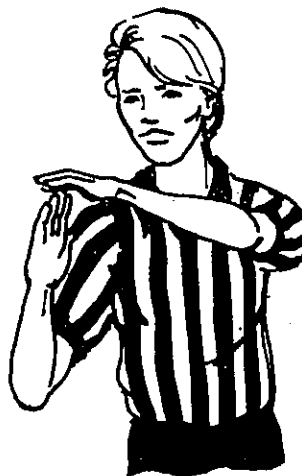


Sideout

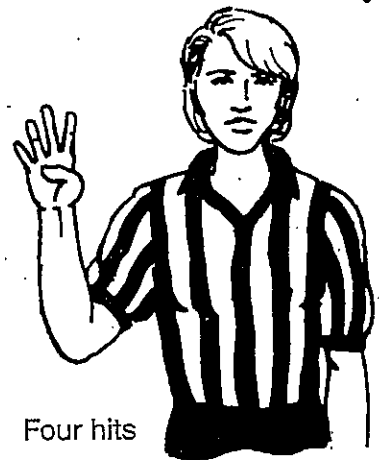
Ball in bounds or  
line violation



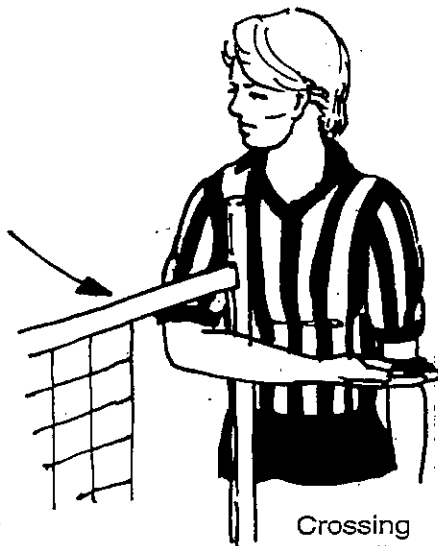
Ball out



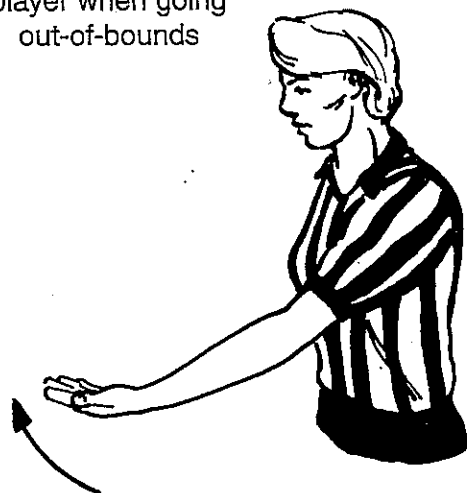
Ball contacted by a  
player when going  
out-of-bounds



Four hits



Crossing  
center line



Carried ball, thrown ball,  
held ball, or lifted ball

(continued)

► Figure 44.2 Common volleyball officials' signals.



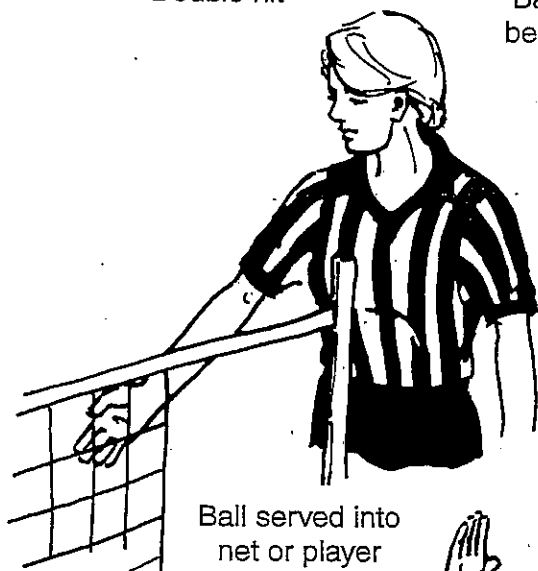
Double hit



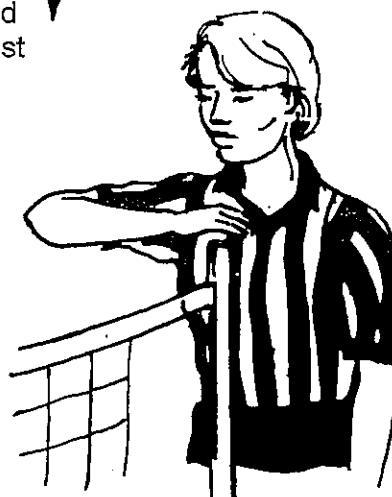
Ball contacted  
below the waist



Substitution



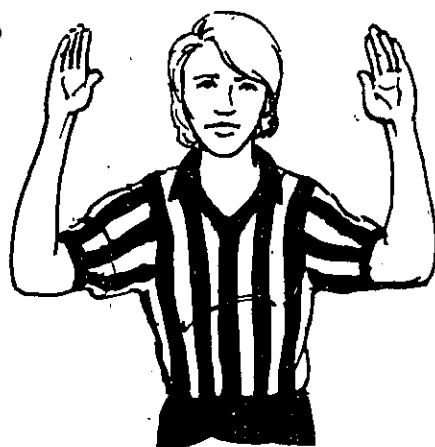
Ball served into  
net or player  
touching net



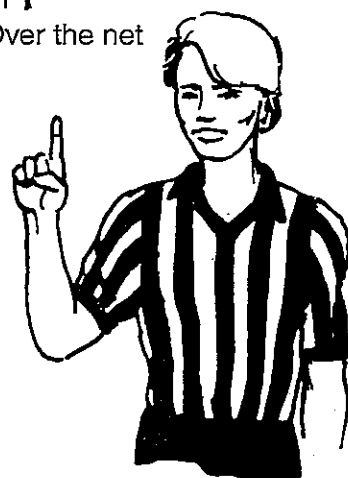
Over the net



Double fault or play over



Illegal block  
or screen



Point

► Figure 44.2 (continued)



- When the ball is played more than once by a team, at least one hit must be made by a female. A block does not count as a hit. Females may make all three hits; a male is not required to hit.
- An illegally hit ball by an illegal blocker becomes a double fault, and the opponent is awarded the point or serve.
- When only one male is in the front row, one back-row male may, after beginning in the back row, come forward of the attack line in order to block.
- No female back-row player may block.
- The net height is 2.4 meters (the same as in men's play).
- In doubles competition, no substitutions are allowed. Rosters are as follows for other play: triples competition—5 players; 4-player competition—6 players; 6-player competition—12 players. Unlimited substitution is allowed in triples, 4-player competition, and 6-player competition, as long as each player plays within her serving position during a single game.
- Players may wear jewelry, caps, visors, casts, eyewear, and so on, at their own risk. Rubber-soled shoes may be worn on grass, but nonflexible cleats or spikes are not allowed.
- The deciding game of a best-of-three games match may be a game to 15, played by rally-point rules, or a game to 7 played by scoring rules in which only the serving team can score.
- In doubles, triples, and 4-player competition, players may position themselves anywhere on the court, and the server may serve from anywhere beyond the end line.
- In doubles and triples play, the first contact after a hard-driven ball (a spike or block) can be a lift or push, as long as the motion is continuous and does not change directions.
- In doubles and triples play, if a ball is intentionally set into the opponent's court, the shoulders of the player setting the ball must be square to the direction of the ball.
- In doubles play, if a player serves out of turn, the play is allowed and that player holds serve until the opponents gain the serve. When the out-of-turn player's team regains the serve, her teammate will serve.
- In doubles, triples, and 4-player competition, players may not "dink," or tip, an attack-hit with the fingers.
- In doubles and triples competition, a player may not make an attack-hit using an overhand set that puts the ball on a sideways trajectory with the player's shoulders.

## Reverse Mixed-Six Play

The rules for Reverse Mixed-Six play are the same as for Mixed-Six play, with the following exceptions: When only one female is in the front row, one female in the back row may be in the attack zone in order to block. No male may block or spike. Male players may contact the ball above the net and send it into the opponent's court, but the trajectory of the ball upon contact must be upward. The net height is 2.2 meters (the same as for women's play). When the ball is played more than once on a side, it must be contacted at least once by a male.

## Outdoor Play

The popularity of volleyball is evidenced by outdoor participation on beaches or grass. The rules for outdoor play are the same as for indoor play, with these exceptions:

- Brightly-colored boundary lines (flat bands or tape) mark the boundaries; if they move during play, play continues. If it can't be determined whether the ball was in or out, the rally is replayed. It is the players' responsibility to correct the boundary lines if they are moved.
- Attack lines are marked, but the center line is not.
- Teams may consist of 2, 3, 4, or 6 players, either of the same sex or coed.

- In 6-player competition, a back-row player may not participate in a block.
- In 15-point games, teams switch sides each time the total score reaches a multiple of 5. In 11-point games, teams switch sides each time the total score reaches a multiple of 4. In 7-point games, switches occur on multiples of 2.

## ORGANIZATIONS

USA Volleyball  
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