

The 7 Components of a Practice

Take the time each week to plan out your practices!

Opening Circle

Take a few minutes to welcome your players to practice. Be sure to do the following:

- Devotion or Thought for the day
- Review of last game – what we learned and how we can grow
- Goal for today's practice – what skills will we be working on
- Overview of the flow of today's practice – roadmap of the next hour

Warm-up and Stretch

Spend at least 5 minutes exercising to raise your players' heart rates and warm their muscles. Warm-up can be anything from a quick game of tag to running a few laps to conditioning exercises. Never skip the warm-up and stretch section of practice!

Individual Skill Drills

This is a time for players to work on a skill and develop it as an individual player. You will find individual skill drills to incorporate into your practices in the next section. Allow your players adequate time in learning any new skill before asking them to apply it as a team.

Team Skill Games

This is a time for your learn to come together and develop their skills as a functioning group of players. The team skill drills should build on the individual skill drills, providing natural progression from individually mastering a new skill to applying it as a team. You will find team skill drills to incorporate into your practices in the next section.

Scrimmage

There is a no better way to prepare for a game and to apply the skills learned throughout practice than to put them to action in a game-type situation. Always include a scrimmage in every practice – it gives your players a chance to develop their teamwork and will enhance their comfort in game situations.

Closing Huddle

Take just a few minutes at the end of practice to review the skills you worked on and to evaluate the goals set at the beginning of practice. Encourage your players to continue to practice throughout the week with their friends and parents. Review all the necessary information for the upcoming game, including:

- Location
- What time to arrive
- Who is bringing snack

Water Breaks

Whether it is hot or cold, be sure to allow your players to get water at any point during practice. Staying hydrated helps your players focus on the skills they're learning.

PRACTICE PLAN

Practice Date _____

Time	Activity	The Plan for Today
:00	Opening Circle -overview of practice -set goals for practice -devotion	
:05	Warm-Up and Stretch	
:10	Individual Skill Drill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
:20	Water Break	
:25	Team Skill Games	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
:40	Water Break	
:45	Scrimmage	
:60	Closing Huddle -review of practice -prepare for game	Next Game Date: _____ Location: _____ Snack: _____

Terminology

It is important that we use the same terminology at every level of the program. The players have enough to process without having 3 different names for the same skill or positioning.

In that vein, here are the terms that we will use in teaching/coaching:

- ◆ Pass – the playing of the first ball that comes over the net – the pass is always supposed to go to the setter.
 - Forearm Pass – A pass executed with the forearms. In the past, you may have heard this referred to as a “bump.”
 - Overhead Pass – A pass executed with the hands in a setting motion.
 - Dig – A pass of an opponent’s attack.
- ◆ Set – the act of using either a forearm pass or overhead pass to put the ball in position for an attack.
- ◆ Attack – the act of playing the ball over the net in a manner that is aggressive – e.g. a spike.
- ◆ Spike – the act of attacking the ball from a height at or above the top of the net.
- ◆ Tip – a finger-tip attack.
- ◆ Dump – the setter playing the ball over using a “tip”.
- ◆ Block – the act of “blocking” the opponents attack by jumping above the net with one or both hands extending over the net.
- ◆ Free Ball – A ball that comes to our side but is not attacked.
- ◆ Down Ball – A ball that comes to our side but is attacked from below the net.
- ◆ Underhand Serve – A serve that is executed in an underhand fashion.
- ◆ Overhead Serve – A serve that is executed with contact of the ball above the head
- ◆ Sidearm Serve – A hybrid of the underhand and overhead serves.
- ◆ 4-2 Offense – Offense with 4 hitters and 2 setters where the setter is a front row player
- ◆ 6-2 Offense – Offense with 6 hitters and 2 setters where the setter is a back row player
- ◆ 5-1 Offense – Offense with 5 hitters and 1 setter where the setter remains the same regardless of whether he/she is in the front or back row.
- ◆ Libero – Defensive specialist that can substitute freely into the back row with the exception that they are not allowed to serve. No “official request” is necessary for the Libero player to enter the game. The Libero also needs to wear a jersey of a different color than the rest of the team.

Court Positions

- ◆ 1 – Serving position – right back
- ◆ 2 – right front – next person to serve
- ◆ 3 – middle front
- ◆ 4 – left front
- ◆ 5 – left back
- ◆ 6 – middle back

Player Position Names

- ◆ OH – Outside Hitter – player will always move to position 4 (left front) or 5 (left back)
- ◆ MH – Middle Hitter – player will always transition to position 3 (middle front) or 6 (middle back)
- ◆ S – Setter – player will always transition to position 2 (right front) or 1 (right back)
- ◆ SH – Swing Hitter – player will always transition to position 2 (right front) or 1 (right back) – used when playing a 5-1 offense.
- ◆ Libero – back row specialist – enters game to replace any person in the back row – player cannot serve – player must wear different jersey than rest of team

Playing Skills

Passing

Teaching Points

- 1) Good passing posture
 - 2) Forearm contact
 - 3) Angle platform to target
 - 4) Simple movement to the ball
- 1) **Good passing posture** – feet should be set up with the heel toe relationship. This is the heel of the right foot, slightly in front of the toes of the left foot. Knees bent; body bent at the waist with the shoulders in front of the knees. Knees should be just in front of the toes. Arms should be out in front and straight. It is important that the heels of the hands be together. You can use a hand in hand grip.
 - 2) **Forearm contact**, - Contact the ball between 1 and 6 inches above the wrist, the meaty part of the forearm. If you drop the wrists a little, then a small V should show. The ball should sit there (in the V) softest part of the arms. The passer needs to be relaxed. Let the legs do the work. Platform relaxed and the ball should be absorbed into the arms. Soft pass.
 - 3) **Angle platform to the target:**
 - a) Vertical – closer to the target, the more parallel to the floor, the arms need to be. Stay down; the ball will go straight up. If you drop or lower the arms and keep the arms in front, then you can pass the ball farther and on a 45-degree angle.
 - b) Horizontal – pass the ball to the right or left by dropping a shoulder. More you drop the shoulder, the greater the angle. Right shoulder down, and then pass right. Left shoulder down, then pass left.
 - 4) **Movement to the ball** – transfer of weight from left foot to the right foot. Try to step with the right foot if you want to put a little more power on the ball. The platform must stay controlled and stationary. Work from the legs.

Drills

Beginner - Coach toss to kids who pass back- 15 feet. Goal: learn proper passing technique

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Beginner – 3 – 6 – 9 Passing Drill (see drills) - Coach tosses to kids at 3 distances (3M, 6M, 9M). Goal: learn distance control and movement prior to pass

Beginner – “Moving Passes” Passing Drill (see drills) - Coach toss to kids at 3 different positions while coach stays in the center. Goal: learn to move laterally before passing.

Beginner – “3 Station” Passing Drill (see drills) – Same as “Moving Passes” except the players move forward for the middle station. Distance is 25 feet, 15 feet, 25 feet at the 3 stations.

Advanced – “W” drill – Similar to the “3 Station” drill. Players start in right back. Coach stands in setter position. Coach tosses ball to player to pass back to coach. Player moves to right front (~15 feet off net) then middle back then left front then left back passing to the coach at each position. Drill should be fast moving. Goal: move laterally and forwards/backwards while changing trajectory to get passes to the setter position.

Advanced – Table (basket) drill – Players start in one of the 4 (advanced) or 5 (beginner) serve reception positions. Coaches serve to player who has to pass the ball and have it land on the table (or in the basket). Player rotates to all serve receive positions. Goal: Players learn the basic positions and focus on passing the ball to the setter position.

Setting

Teaching Points

- 1) Squat under the ball
 - 2) Basket over the forehead
 - 3) Extend
1. **Squat under the ball** – knees bent – sit back into a squat position. The back should be slightly erect. Hips lined up under the ball. Knees are in front of the toes and shoulders behind the knees. Hips under the ball are important.
 2. **Basket over the forehead** – bring up the hands. Note that the fingers should be pointing out (or away), this aids in the “spring” action. Make the shape of a basket. This should be the same shape as the ball. Bring the hands together, and then spread out the fingers. Then take the fingers apart, keep the palms facing each other (thumbs pointing to eyes), cock the wrist back, just above forehead. The ball should rest on the first two fingers and the upper insides of the thumbs and remaining fingertips.
 3. **Note:** The elbow angle never decreases (if so, not using enough legs).
 4. **Extend** – extend into the ball using the arms and legs in unison. Legs and arms extend up in direction of the pass. The wrists should flex forward and the thumbs “through” the ball + out.

Drills

Beginner – Drill #1 – Form hands around the ball. Have players demonstrate the proper “grip” on the ball (see teaching point #2.) If player shows competency, move to drill #2.

Beginner – Drill #2 – Toss and catch. Toss the ball to the player from about 10 feet away. Player should move to position themselves to catch the ball using the “grip” from Drill #1. Goal: Players learn to move themselves into proper position without having to worry about actually making the set. If player shows competency, move to drill #3.

Beginner – Drill #3 – Toss and push. Similar to drill #2 except player should execute the set back to the coach.

Beginner – Drill #4 – Wall Sets. Players set the ball off of the wall. As they increase in ability and distance, have them back off of the wall, set the ball higher off of the wall and allow the ball to bounce before setting again.

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Beginner – “Line” drill – 2 players face each other approximately 10 feet apart straddling a line. Players take turns tossing the ball to each other and having the other person set it back to them. Goal: Getting kids to focus on getting their bodies square to the target. As they get better, have players set to each other.

Beginner – “Set and Follow” (see drills) – player tosses the ball to setter who sets a hitter. Players then follow the ball...tosses becomes the setter, setter becomes the hitter, the hitter becomes the shagger, the shagger gets back in line.

Advanced - Using Your Head – Coach tosses ball varying height and speed to setter position. Setter does NOT set the ball. Instead, the player should let the ball land and bounce off of their forehead. If players are in position, the set should go where it is intended. Goal: Players learn to move and get in perfect position.

Advanced – Distance control. Pair up setters. Have them do repetitions of 20-50 low sets, medium sets and high sets. Goal: Learn to control distance and speed.

Advanced – Back setting. Same fundamentals as forward setting except take step forward and arch back at moment of contact.

Serving

Underhand Serving

Teaching Points

- 1) Fencer stance
 - a) Balance important. Lefty or righty? - opposite foot forward.
 - b) Weight should start on the back foot.
 - c) Where your opposite foot is facing is where the ball will go.
- 2) The ball in opposite hand - waist level.
 - a) Wrist and elbow frozen.
 - b) As serving hand is moving towards the ball, release the ball upwards but only 1-2 inches. Less is better than more.
- 3) The feet:
 - a) The player must shift their weight from back leg to front leg.
 - b) The back leg should end up with the toe down for balance.
- 4) On the hitting arm, the arm should be straight
 - a) The shoulders should rotate to be square to the net.
- 5) Follow through
 - a) Need to have them follow through towards the target. The follow through will insure complete power transfer to the ball.
- 6) This should be one fluid motion
- 7) Contact the ball with the heel or middle of the hand. At the beginner-level, a closed fist is ok.
 - a) You want to make sure that you contact the middle of the ball.
 - b) 1 trick - take the v-ball, find the trademark and use that as a target.

Drills

All – Dead Fish – divide the players into 2 groups. Players for each team alternate taking turns serving. If the serve is successful, the player goes to the end of the line and the other team serves 1 serve. If the serve is an error, the player RUNS to the other side of the net and lays down. If another player from their team hits them with a good serve, that player is allowed to return to team line and resume serving. The game ends when 1 team runs out of servers or (hopefully) the time limit is reached where the team with the most players still serving is declared the winner. Try to limit each game to 3-5 minutes.

Beginner – “10 good serves” – Break players into 2 teams. Have the teams alternate serving. The first team to 10 “good” serves wins.

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Advanced – “Around the world” – Divide the court into 6 sections – 3 beyond 17 feet and the other 3 in front of 17 feet. Have a player from each team kneel in the #1 section (Right Back). The teams alternate serving until the player in section #1 catches a serve. The player who catches goes to the team’s serving line while the successful server goes to the next section (counter-clockwise). Game concludes when team successfully serves into each of the 6 sections.

Overhead Serving

- 1) Fencer stance
 - a) Balance important. Lefty or righty? - opposite foot forward.
 - b) Weight should start on the back foot.
 - c) Where your opposite foot is facing is where the ball will go.
- 2) The ball in opposite hand - waist level.
 - a) Arm outstretched - raise to nose - ball should come up centerline of body
 - b) Wrist and elbow frozen.
 - c) Raise your hand above your shoulder + release the ball.
 - d) The release should be 6 - 12 inches .
 - e) As you release the ball, front knee bends – similar to tennis serve.
- 3) On the hitting arm, the elbow should be high above the shoulder.
 - a) The shoulder should be square.
 - b) The player then must shift their weight from back leg to front leg.
 - c) The back leg should end up with the toe down for balance.
 - d) This should be one fluid motion
- 4) Contact the ball at the highest point of the toss (apex).
 - a) You want to make sure that you contact the middle of the ball.
 - b) One trick I use is – take the v-ball, find the trademark or the middle, then put your hand over it. Go through your routine.
 - c) You want to use the heel or middle of your hand to contact the ball.

One other thing – having trouble with one hand toss, try two. It really comes down to with what you are most comfortable.

Note: On a floater, it is important to keep the wrist frozen.

Types of Serves:

- 1) Floater – no spin serve – for this, little or no follow through – a punching action
- 2) Top spin – follow through and snap wrist – can toss the ball with forward spin
- 3) Windmill – side arm – either with topspin or as a floater – very effective change of pace serve
- 4) Jump serve – let's hope we get to teach this!!!!

Drills

Same as for Underhand serving.

Hitting

Teaching Points

- 1) **Approach – footwork – 4 step**
 - i) **Righty approach** – Right (small), left, right, together explode.
 - ii) **Lefty approach** – Left (small), right, left, together explode.
 - b) **Direction** – this is what takes you towards the ball. Arms should be in front
 - c) Should be jumping from about 2 – 3 feet from the net – knees bent when jumping - jump straight up – not on an angle (otherwise into net)
 - d) **Approach Angle**
 - i) outside hitters
(1) shoulders should be at a 45 degree angle to the net
 - ii) middle hitters
(1) shoulders should be at a 22 degree angle to the net
- 2) **Pendulum arm** - on approach – elbows bent On hop (explosion) – knees bent - arms back
- 3) **Jump and take off (for right-handers)**
 - a) Right foot – heel to toe rock – left foot push off toes
 - b) Arm swing to shoulder level
 - c) Left arm extends up – this is used to spot the ball
 - d) Right arm reaches back; arm extends up, hand open
 - e) Shoulder back (like a hammer) – body opens up to setter
 - f) Arch the back, knees bent with heels back

Key - stay back and wait for the ball – do not rush!
- 4) **Ball contact**
 - a) Left arm thrusts down
 - b) Right elbow leads – right arm reaches high
 - c) Fingers spread out – wrist should be relaxed
 - d) Contact the ball w/ lower 3rd of hand at close to max.
- 5) **Reach**
 - a) Wrist snap, fingers spread over the ball
 - b) Follow through – right arm down – across the body

Reach and SNAP:

Contact location on the ball

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General: Contact the back center of the ball

When off the net (or those with low touches): under the center of the ball

Those with high reach – over the ball (top)

Drills

Beginner – Toss and Catch - Coaches stand ~ 10 feet away and give perfect tosses to hitters who only need to worry about taking the right-left-right steps to move to the hitting position and then simply catching the ball. Goal: learn the proper footwork while maintaining the proper angle to the net.

Beginner – Toss and Hit Over – Coaches stand ~ 10 feet away and give perfect tosses to hitters who only worry about hitting the ball over the net – hitters do NOT take the 3-step approach– no jumping yet. Goal: learn the proper contact.

Beginner – Step and Hit - Coaches stand ~ 10 feet away and give perfect tosses to hitters who take the proper right-left-right step approach and then hit the ball over the net. Goal: combine the proper approach with proper contact while maintaining the proper angle to the net.

Beginner – Step and Hit #2 – Same as previous drill except hitters should end up on their toes hitting the ball at their maximum height. Goal: prepare the hitters for the next step which is actually jumping.

Advanced – Jump and Hit Over - Coaches stand ~ 10 feet away and give perfect tosses to hitters who take the proper right-left-right step approach, jump, and then hit the ball over the net. Goal: Incorporate all aspects of the spike.

Blocking

Sequence should be: watch the ball, pass to setter (make sure there is no setter dump), then focus on the hitter (where are shoulders facing)?

Footwork

Outside blocker – step (laterally) – hop – plant – jump (landing should be 2 feet)
Middle blocker – big step – crossover hop (this saves time – balance is key)

Hands

Hands should start at shoulder height and go up then towards the net. Outside blockers should turn their outside hand towards the middle of the court.

Responsibilities

Outside hit – outside sets block and the middle seals (no gap)
Middle hit – middle sets block and the outside seals

Drills

Approach the net, middle, strong side, etc (blockers move and react) Toss ball to setter – setter sets any hitter (or dumps the ball...) Blocking lines – pair up, footwork and simultaneous jump

Digging

Mentality: "Dig the ball first, and then worry about the floor"

Different types of emergency saves are:

1. Run through.
2. Drop Under.
3. Barrel roll.
4. Sprawl – natural continuation of the digging process.
5. Extension.
6. High ball dig.

1. **Run through** – run, drop inside shoulder – contact the ball and swing arms back into court – continue moving around the ball.
2. **Drop under** – lunge step to the side – drop the shoulder – swing arms to the target.
3. **Barrel roll** – drop under contact and continue to hit the floor and roll over shoulder that was dropped.
4. **Sprawl** – lunge forward and push off front foot, arms extend out.
5. **Extension** – one or two arm sprawl out to the side at an angle.
6. **Highball dig** – arms reach out to side and up – drop inside shoulder, lift outside leg.

Drills

Drill – Practice Emergency skills without the ball (though not on a concrete floor!)

Drill – Practice Run throughs, drop unders, and rolls w/ tossed ball.

Drill – Practice Sprawls and extensions from hit balls.

Key - Watch the ball – pass to the setter – when the ball is set – focus on the hitter – pick up the block – are there any gaps? If so, fill the hole.

Note: Where most errors occur – many times people react too late or do not trust their instincts.

Sample practice plans

Here is a sample plan for 4 practices that build from passing to passing and setting to setting and spiking and, finally, puts them all together:

Day 1

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	
:10 to :17	Dead Fish	Cap game at 3.5 minutes – play twice
:17 to :20	Simple Passes – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (flat arms, straight back, bent knees)
:20 to :23	Simple Sets – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (ball to forehead, elbows out, wrists bent, knees bent)
:23 to :25	Water break	
:25 to :40	Moving Passes	Footwork – maintaining good form!
:40 to :55	3 – 6 – 9 drill	Distance control for passing – 3 Meters, 6M, 9M
:55 to :57	Water break	
:57 to 1:30	Coaching / Scrimmage	Coaching tips - FUN! – keep track of good passes to setter

Day 2

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	
:10 to :17	10 serves (first team to 10 good serves wins)	Winning teams play each other
:17 to :20	Simple Passes – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (flat arms, straight back, bent knees)
:20 to :23	Simple Sets – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (ball to forehead, elbows out, wrists bent, knees bent)
:23 to :25	Water break	
:25 to :40	Set and Follow – 3 players	Not moving – good form (ball to forehead, wrists bent,
:40 to :55	3 Station Passing	Right back, middle back, left back – vary the tosses

:55 to :57	Water break	
:57 to 1:30	Coaching / Scrimmage	Coaching tips - FUN! – keep track of good passes to setter

Day 3

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	
:10 to :16	Dead Fish	2 games
:16 to :23	Serving Target Practice - 5 zones	Set up 5 target zones (2 front – 3 back) – step and follow-through!
:23 to :25	Water break	
:25 to :40	Set and Follow – 3 players	Not moving – good form (ball to forehead, wrists bent,
:40 to :55	Set & Spike – team (left 1st then switch)	Coaches toss to setter (have each setter set to everyone on team before switching)
:55 to :57	Water break	
:57 to 1:30	Coaching / Scrimmage	Coaching tips - FUN! – keep track of good passes to setter

Day 4

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	
:10 to :15	10 serves (first team to 10 good serves wins)	Winning teams play each other
:15 to :18	Simple Passes – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (flat arms, straight back, bent knees)
:18 to :22	Simple Sets – 2 players See how many they can do!	Not moving – good form (ball to forehead, elbows out, wrists bent, knees bent)
:22 to :25	Water break	
:25 to :40	3 Station Passing	Right back, middle back, left back – vary the tosses
:40 to :55	Set & Spike – team (left 1st then switch)	Coaches toss to setter (have each setter set to everyone on team before switching)
:55 to :57	Water break	
:57 to 1:30	Coaching / Scrimmage	Coaching tips - FUN! – keep track of good passes to setter

Here is another set of practice plans for an advanced team working on strategy and alignment in addition to skills.

Monday

Time	Drill / Concept	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	Introduce new players
:10 to :25	Defensive alignment	Responsibilities for defense – positioning – assignments (see diagram – rotate up)
:25 to :40	Right side defense	Digging and transition for setters and RF – use MB, LB & all 3 hitters (see drill)
:40 to :55	Serve Receive	Alignments & getting 4-person receive set up
:55 to :70	Ball control: X to Y	Ball control drill – transition from defense to offense – ball control on 3 rd hit (must be a down ball) (see drill)
:70 to :90	Scrimmage / other drills	

Wednesday

Time	Drill / Concept	Coaching Tips
:00 to :10	Warming up & stretching	
:10 to :25	Serving by Numbers	Learn the 6 court positions and work on serving location
:25 to :35	Down ball defense	How to align for a down ball (see diagram)
:35 to :45	Free ball defense	How to align for a free ball (see diagram)
:45 to :55	Hitting Coverage	How to cover hitters for blocks (see diagram)
:55 to :70	Attack ball defense	Review from Monday's practice
:70 to :90	Scrimmage / other drills	