Volleyball goals for age groups – Girls Place, Inc.

3-4th grade

Volleyball skills have advanced for the younger age groups at a pretty incredible pace in the last few years. There are always brand new players trying to learn how to pass the ball, but there are also girls who may be their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th season at Girls Place who may be getting proficient at overhand serving, so what do we need to teach the diverse range of skills?? They will all need practice at the following:

1) **Passing with a proper platform.** Girls need to learn to pass with their forearms, hands together, but not interlocked at the fingers and out of the way, feet spread about shoulder width and shoulders square to target. We coaches need to start all ages passing to a setter area target.

2) **Underhand serve** – stepping forward with the opposite foot from the hitting hand. Weight shifting from back foot to front foot. Ball needs to be held low and steady with the non-striking hand.

3) **Getting over the fear of the ball.** Coaches need to use good judgment, but need to challenge girls to step in front of the ball to pass. Girls need to move their feet to slide in front of the ball to become proficient passers.

4) **Overhead (set) pass** – Most beginners struggle, but the younger groups need to learn the proper hand position and how to use their legs and arms to set the ball.

5) **How to rotate.** Teaching rotations is a great way for younger girls to learn the zones on the court.

6) **How to call the ball and play balls that are in their area.** Beginners tend to be very quiet and keep their feet planting as if in concrete, but need to learn how to be loud calling the ball and move! If done properly, calling the ball is the best safety net on the court.

7) **How to be a good team player whether on the court or off.**

8) **How to win or lose graciously.**

9) **How to listen to their coaches, not their parents.** And to listen period. The youngest girls can be the most distracted group so you may need to stop everything and insist that they listen. A silent coach can be as effective as one who yells at players. Teach them to listen without yelling. Use sprints and wall-sits if necessary to get their attention.

10) **How to have fun.** What we hope as much as anything, is that the girls enjoy their experience, so let the younger girls be goofy sometimes, let them play games at times that aren’t even about volleyball, and help teach them to love the game. We want to prepare them for the next age group, but we want them to have fun playing volleyball. Your reward for a season of good coaching will be to see an amazing growth in many of the players, even in players you thought would never become a volleyball player.
5-6th Grade

1) By this age group, our coaching focus should be on basic form in passing, setting, hitting, and serving, and we need to teach bump, set, hit volleyball from the first practice. A serve receive free ball back over the net is not good volleyball, even if it does score a point, and we need to prepare this age for a chance to play for their middle school team, or the 7-8th level at Girls Place, so we need to teach them to bump, set, & hit.

2) To be successful, girls this age will need to be able to serve adequately and serve receive. There are servers in this age group that overhand serve the ball hard and consistently. All girls need to learn how to step in front of a hard hit serve and pass to a setter. Serve receive passing needs to be directed to a setter, always. Do not practice to the lowest player’s level, but to the highest player’s level taking care to bring the newer players along. Ask a lot from your players and they will respond.

3) Hitting becomes a bigger part of the game at this age and we need to teach proper steps to the net, and teach good form in a back row attack. Since most girls are too short to jump to the top of the net to hit, practice sets away from the net, still incorporating the proper steps. Hitting practice needs to be with setter’s setting the ball, not just coaches tossing the ball.

4) Rotations are also key. Girls this age should be learning to rotate across the front row, at a minimum. Running a 4-2 serve receive offense is simple and girls will quickly learn the front row outside hitter position, middle blocker, and setter position. Having two setters makes it easier to rotate more girls in and out of the game. Because of foot speed, it is probably necessary to make the front row part of the serve receive.

5) Players need to be good team players whether on the court or off and need to learn how to win and/or lose graciously.

6) Overhand Serve – Though many girls will be underhand serving all season, all should be working on their overhand serve. A good rule of thumb: players can’t overhand serve in a game until they can make five overhand serves in a row in practice. General rule – keep the striking arm elbow raised above the armpit. Do not allow girls to drop their elbow during their overhand serve. As with the underhand serve, the same weight shift from back foot to front foot applies. Good tosses are a must and need to be practiced repeatedly.

7) Having fun. Our coaching goal for all ages to be to teach a love of the game. Most girls won’t ever have a chance to play for their high school team, or play in college, but they should be able to play pick-up games or beach volleyball for the rest of their lives if we teach the basics and good form. Your efforts will be much appreciated by coaches at the next level, and in the future, when one of your former players is getting a chance to play for their high school team, or gets a chance to play at the college level, be proud. Teach girls to love the game and you never know how far they will take it.
7-8th Grade

1) Coach more basics and good form. **Repetition builds muscle memory.** Make sure the muscles are remembering the proper form.

2) With older girls, hitting becomes a bigger part of the game and girls need to begin to block. Most are still not tall enough to block very well, but need to start working on the instincts to block.

3) **Run a 5-1 rotation.** Since most area high schools run a 5-1 serve receive offense, we should be teaching our players the basic 5-1 with a single setter and five hitters.

4) **Introduce the libero and Defensive Specialist (DS).** This is an option at this age and works well with the 5-1 serve receive where the libero usually subs for the middle blocker. Again, running a 5-1 should help prepare players for play on their middle school or high school team.

5) Hitting from all positions. As girls get comfortable running a 5-1 and moving to the proper position (which may take most of the season), the setter needs to work on spreading the ball around to all hitters.

6) **Overhand serve** – Most girls should be overhand serving by the end of the season.

7) Players need to be good team players whether on the court or off and need to learn how to win and/or lose graciously.

8) **Having fun.** Our coaching goal for all ages to be to teach a love of the game. Most girls won’t ever have a chance to play for their high school team, or play in college, but they should be able to play pick-up games or beach volleyball for the rest of their lives if we teach the basics and good form. Your efforts will be much appreciated by coaches at the next level, and in the future, when one of your former players is getting a chance to play for their high school team, or gets a chance to play at the college level, be proud. Teach girls to love the game and you never know how far they will take it.