

Volleyball Rules Cheat Sheet

The basics under the FIVB rules, with the main US differences. Check your own league's rules.

The basics

Players: six per side on court – three in the front row (near the net) and three in the back row.

Court and net: 18 m × 9 m (59 ft × 29.5 ft). Net height 2.43 m (7 ft 11 5/8 in) for men and 2.24 m (7 ft 4 1/8 in) for women. Youth nets are lower; see learnvolley.com/court-dimensions.

Touches: up to three per side to send the ball back over the net. A block does not count as one of the three.

Scoring

Rally scoring: a point is scored on every rally, whichever team wins it – you do not have to be serving to score.

Set: played to 25 points; a team must lead by at least two points to win it (e.g. 26–24).

Match: best of five sets. A deciding fifth set is played to 15 points, still win by two.

How a point is played

Every rally starts with a serve from behind the end line. The receiving team uses up to three touches – usually a pass, a set and an attack. The rally continues until the ball touches the floor, goes out, or a team commits a fault. The team that wins the rally scores a point and serves next.

Rotation

When a team wins back the serve (a side-out), its players rotate one position clockwise, and the player who moves to the back-right spot serves. If the serving team wins the rally, nobody rotates and the same player serves again.

Common faults

Double contact: one player touches the ball twice in a row. Exception: on the team's first contact, the ball may touch the body more than once if it happens in one action.

Lift / carry: the ball comes to rest in the hands or is thrown rather than cleanly hit.

Four hits: a team touches the ball more than three times before returning it.

Net touch: touching the net during the action of playing the ball.

Foot fault: at the serve, the server touches the end line or the court, or stands outside the service zone.

Overlap: at the moment of the serve, a player is out of rotational order compared with a neighbor.

Lines, net and back row

In or out: a ball landing on any part of a boundary line is in. The ball must cross the net between the two antennas. A served ball that touches the net and still crosses over is in play.

Over the net: you may not hit the ball while it is on the opponent's side. Blockers may reach over only after the opponent's attack hit. Your foot may touch or cross the center line as long as part of it stays on, or directly above, the line.

Back-row attack: a back-row player may not attack a ball completely above the top of the net if they take off on or in front of the attack line (3 m from the center line).

Libero: a back-row defensive specialist in a contrasting jersey. The libero cannot block, and cannot attack a ball that is completely above the top of the net.

FIVB vs US: the main differences

Overlap: under FIVB rules (since 2025) only the receiving team must be in rotational order at the serve. In most US competitions (USA Volleyball, NFHS high school, NCAA college): both teams must be, except the server.

Libero serving: under FIVB rules the libero cannot serve. In the US (USA Volleyball, NFHS high school, NCAA women's): the libero may serve in one rotation.

Second-touch double contact: under FIVB rules, a double contact on the second touch is a fault. Many US rule sets (high school from 2025–26, NCAA women's, USA Volleyball) now allow multiple contacts in one action on the second touch, as long as the ball goes to a teammate rather than over the net. A lift or catch is a fault everywhere.

Attack line: in the US it is called the "10-foot line".