

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

A

A: a back-row attack near the left sideline (A-B-C-D)

Ace: A serve that results directly in a point, usually when the ball hits the floor untouched on the receiving team's side of the court

Angle: cross-court

Antenna: vertical poles attached to the outside edge of the net, that extend 32 inches (80cm) above the net and delineate where the ball has to cross the net.

Assist: Passing or setting the ball to a teammate who attacks the ball for a kill.

Attack Attempt: The attempt by a player to terminate a play by hitting the ball to the floor on the opponent's side.

Attack Line: A line three meters away from, and parallel to, the net. A back-row player cannot legally attack the ball above the net unless he takes off on his jump from behind this line.

Attack: The offensive action of hitting the ball. The attempt by one team to terminate the play by hitting the ball to the floor on the opponent's side.

Attack Block: Receiving players' aggressive attempt to block a spiked ball before it crosses the net.

Attacker: Also "hitter" and "spiker." A player who attempts to hit a ball offensively with the purpose of terminating play in his or her team's favor.

Attack Line: A line 3m from the net that separates the front row players from the back row players.

Audible: a play called in mid-rally.

Auxiliary setter: the player assigned to set when the designated setter cannot; usually the right-front player.

B

B: a back-row attack between the left sideline and the midline of the court (A-B-C-D).

Back one: a low, quick set that is attacked directly behind the setter.

Back row: the three players whose court position is near the baseline.

Back Row Attack: When a back row player takes off to jump behind the 10-foot/3-meter line and attacks the ball.

Back set: a set delivered behind the setter. A set made when the setter's back is towards the hitter.

Back slide: a quick slide behind the setter.

Baseline: the back boundary of the court.

Beach Dig: An open hand receive of the ball. (see "Deep Dish")

Block: A defensive play by one or more front row players meant to intercept a spiked ball. The combination of one, two or three players jumping in front of the opposing spiker and contacting the spiked ball with the hands.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

Block Assist: A successful attempt by any two or more front row players to intercept the ball near the net that results in the termination of the rally. Any person involved in the block attempt that terminates the rally receives a block assist.

Block Solo: A successful attempt by any one front row player to intercept the ball near the net that results in the termination of the rally.

Blocking Error: A violation that consists of touching the net, crossing the center line, blocking a set or any other violation which pertains to illegal blocking.

Blocking Error: A violation that consists of touching the net, crossing the center line, blocking a set or any other violation which occurs while making a block attempt.

Break: Abrupt change of direction in the attacker's approach.

Break point: The spot where the attacker changes direction.

Broad jump: Forward jump in the attackers approach.

Bump: Descriptive slang for forearm passing.

Bump Pass: The use of joined forearms to pass or set a ball in an underhand manner.

C

C: A back-row attack between the midline of the court and the right sideline.

Chester: To be hit in the chest with a spike (variation of six-pack).

Combination: A play that involves two attackers penetrating into a single blocker's zone of the net.

Commit Block: Blocking scheme where one player, usually the middle, jumps with the quick attacker.

Court Dimensions: 59 feet from end line to end line and 29 feet, 6 inches wide (18m x 9m).

Cross-Court Attack: An attack that is directed diagonally from the point of attack.

Cross-Court Serve: A serve landing near the opponent's right sideline.

Center Line: The boundary that runs under the net and divides the court into two equal halves.

Closing the Block: The responsibility of the assisting blocker(s) to angle their body relative to the first blocker.

Counter-rotate: Backcourt defense in which the off-blocker moves near the block and the middle-back moves to the cross-court corner.

Cover the hitter: to prepare to retrieve rebounds from the opposing blockers.

Cross: A combination where the path of one attacker crosses the path of another attacker.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

Cross Court Shot: An individual attack directed at an angle from one end of the offensive team's side of the net to the opposite sideline of the defensive team's court.

Cut Shot: A spike from the hitter's strong side that travels at a sharp angle across the net.

D

D: a back-row attack near the right sideline (A-B-C-D)

Decoy: An offensive play meant to disguise the spiker who will receive the set.

Deep: Away from the net, toward the baseline.

Deep Set: Set to be hit away from the net to confuse the blockers.

Dig: Passing a spiked or rapidly hit ball. Slang for the art of retrieving an attacked ball close to the floor.

Dink: A one-handed, soft hit into the opponent's court using the fingertips.

Double Block: Two players working in unison to intercept a ball at the net.

Double Hit: Successive hits by the same player. (Illegal)

Double-Quick: A play set which includes two quick sets.

Two hitters usually approaching the setter in the middle of the court.

Doubles: A game with two players on a side.

Down Ball: "Down" refers to the blockers who neither jump, nor raise their hands above the net. Blockers elect not to attempt to block because the ball has been set too far from the net, or the hitter is not under control (neither a hard spike, nor a free ball). All five players try to cover the backcourt and receive the attack (similar to five-passer serve-receive). If the front row players don't have time to pull back, the back court adjusts to cover.

Dump: Usually performed by the setter, who delivers the ball into the opponent's court on the second contact.

E

Extension Roll: A move to the floor which enables a player to dig the ball.

F

Five-One (5-1): An offensive system that uses five hitters and one setter.

Five Set: Set to the right front hitter with a back set ("Red" set)

Flair: A play in which the right fake crosses the one-hitter and then attacks on the right sideline. Inside out path of an outside spiker who hides behind a quick hitter.

Floater: A serve with no spin that follows an erratic path. The ball is hit with only a momentary point of contact and very little follow-through.

Follow: To move with and block an attacker. May change positions with another blocker in the process.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

Forearm Pass: Sometimes referred to as the "bump" or "dig". Join your arms from the elbows to the wrists and strike the ball with the fleshy part of your forearms in an underhand motion. Introduced in the late 1940's as a desperation play, the forearm pass is now rated by many as the most important fundamentals in volleyball.

Foul: A violation of the rules.

Four Set: A low set for the outside hitter, set 1' from the sideline, and 1-2' above the net. Sometimes called a "Shoot Set".

Four-Two (4-2): An offensive system using four hitters and two setters.

Free Ball: Returning the ball to the opponent without the intent to get a kill (slow, arcing, pass rather than a spike). Team's free-ball formation may include five, four, three, two, or one receiver. At advanced levels, the team uses no more than two (back-row) receivers.

Front: Blocker position in order to block the attacker.

Front-row: Three players whose court position is near the net.

Front slide: Quick slide in front of the setter.

G

Game plan: Offensive and defensive emphasis for an opponent. Usually organized for each rotation.

Glide: Long, smooth, run that precedes a spike.

H

Held Ball: A ball that comes to rest during contact resulting in a foul.

Hit: To jump and strike the ball with an overhand, forceful shot.

Hitter: Also "spiker" or "attacker." The player who is responsible for hitting the ball.

Hitting Percentage: A statistic derived from total kills minus total attack errors, divided by total attempts.

I

Inside: Towards the center of the net.

Inside Shoot: A playset, a 33.

Isolation: Single-player combination where the attacker fakes hitting a quick and then hits a medium-height set.

Isolation Play: Designed to isolate the attacker on a specific defender.

J

Joust: When two opposing players contact the ball simultaneously above the net causing the ball to momentarily come to rest; the point is replayed if this is called by the official.

Jungle Ball: Any gathering of people who don't really know how to play volleyball.

Jump Serve: The server uses an approach, toss, takeoff and serves the ball with a spiking motion while in the air.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

K

Key: To discern a team's next play by observation of patterns or habits

Kill: An attack that results directly in a point or sideout.

Kong block: a one-armed blocking style made popular on the pro beach circuit by Randy Stoklos

L

Left Stack: Commit-blocking scheme where the left starts behind the middle in order to follow the crossing attacker.

Line: Straight-ahead, sideline attack.

Lines:The marks that serve as boundaries of a court. 2 inches (5cm) wide.

Lineup: Players serving order, which reflects their starting position on the court.

Linesman: Officials located at the corners of the court; each linesman is responsible for ruling if the ball is legally in play along the lines for which or she is responsible.

Line Serve: A straight-ahead serve landing near the opponent's left sideline.

Line Shot: A ball spiked along an opponent's sideline, closest to the hitter and outside the block.

Load: To position the blockers so that the most effective blocker confronts the opponents most effective attacker.

Loop: Curved approach to an attack.

M

M: Back-row attack on the courts midline ("Pipe").

Middle: Either the middle-front or middle-back player.

Middle Back: A defensive system that uses the middle back player to cover deep spikes.

Middle Blocker: Usually plays in the middle of the net when in the front row and moves laterally to her blocking assignments.

Middle Up: A defensive system that uses the middle back player to cover dinks or short shots.

Mintonette: The original name of the game of volleyball, created by William Morgan.

Multiple-attack: Offense consisting of plays where two or more players attack at different places on the net at different times.

Multiple Offense: A system of play that uses sets other than just outside regular sets.

N

Net: Net shall not be less than 9.50m (32') in length and .91m (3') in width throughout the full length when stretched.

Net Height: Women - Seven feet, 4-1/8 inches high (2.24m),
Men – Seven feet, 11-5/8 inches high (2.43m).

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

O

Off-blocker: Outside blocker not included in the double block.

Offside Block: Player at the net which is on the side away from the opponent's attack.

Off-Speed Hit: A ball that loses power quickly because it was hit with less than usual force.

One-Set: A vertical set delivered from 1 to 2 feet above the net. Ideally, the spiker contacts the ball while the set is rising. Usually set for the middle hitter.

On-Hand Side: When attacking, the setter is on the same side as the hand you will use to strike the ball. Also called "strong side".

Off-Hand Side: Set delivered from left side of right-handed spiker and vice-versa. Ball crosses the body of the spiker before attacked.

Off-Speed Shots: An attack that is intentionally slow.

Ball spiked with less than maximum force but with spin.

One-footed slide: Approach to the attack that includes a one-footed jump along the net.

Open-up: To step away from the ball's path in receiving serve.

Opposite: Player opposite the setter. Usually plays right side. May set when the setter digs the first ball.

Outside: Towards the sideline.

Outside-in: Playing defense from the sideline to the inside of the court, either at the net or in the backrow.

Outside Hitter: Usually plays at the ends of the net when in the front row.

Overhand Pass: A pass with both hands open, and controlled by the fingers, with the face below the ball. A ball-handling skill using both hands simultaneously to contact the ball above the head and direct it to the intended target.

Overhand Serve: Serving the ball and striking it with the hand above the shoulder. A serve performed with an overhand throwing action.

Overhand Spin Serve: The server contacts the lower mid-section of the center of the ball; he uses the heel of the hand to initially contact the ball and then uses wrist snap to roll the hand over the ball, imparting topspin.

Overlap: A violation called when a team is lined up out of rotation when the ball is served.

Overpass: A ball that is passed across the net.

Overset: an errant set that crosses the net without being touched by another offensive player

P

Pass: Receiving a serve or the first contact of the ball with the intent to control the ball to another player.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

Pancake: one-hand floor defensive technique where the hand is extended and slid along the floor palm down while the player dives or extension rolls, so that the ball bounces off the back of the hand.

Penetration: The blocker's ability to reach over the net above the opponent's court.

Perimeter: Backcourt defense where four players arrange themselves near the boundaries of the court.

Pipe Set: A back row attack from the middle.

Play: An attack with a planned fake, usually including two or more hitters (a combination).

Play Set: A medium-high set, that combined with a quick-set, constitutes a play.

Point: A front-row position in the serve-receive formation.

Power Tip:

Power Alley: A cross court hit traveling away from the spiker to the farthest point of the court.

Pump: Play in which an attacker fakes spiking a quick set, and then hits a medium-high set at the same location.

Q

Quick: Low, fast, inside set.

Quick Set: An extremely low vertical set used to beat the opponent's blocks.

Quick/shoot: a play that includes both a quick set and a shoot set.

Quick slide: a quick attack that includes a two-footed take-off and a broad jump along the net.

Quick scoring: a format for scoring in which points can be scored by either team on every serve (Rally Scoring)

R

Rainbow: a soft shot over the blockers to the back line that has the arc of a rainbow

Rally Scoring: Scoring method where points can be won by the serving or receiving team.

Read Block: Blocking scheme where the front row players watch the setter in order to determine where to block.

Read Defense: Defensive scheme based on all players reading their opponents and their teammates.

Ready Position: The flexed, yet comfortable, posture a player assumes before moving to the point of contact.

Red Card: Given by the official to a player or coach for flagrant misconduct resulting in a point/side out to the opponent.

Red And Yellow Card: Given by the official to a player or coach for a major violation. Also received automatically after two red cards. Results in automatic ejection and a point/side out for the opponent.

Release Block: A block pattern where the outside blocker fronts the quick attacker as the middle blocker double-blocks on the sideline.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

Release Set: High set, usually delivered to the left sideline, when the play goes awry. (“Outlet”)

Reverse: A combination in which the usual quick hitter attacks a play set and the usual play-set hitter attacks a quick set.

Right–stack: Commit-block scheme in which the right starts behind the middle in order to follow the crossing attacker.

Roof: To block a spike, usually straight down for a point.

Rotation: The clockwise movement of players around the court and through the serving position following a side out.

Players must retain their initial rotational order throughout the entire game, but once the ball is contacted on serve they are allowed to move anywhere.

Rotate Defense: Backcourt defense in which the line defender moves near the block and the middle back moves behind the line defender.

Round-House Serve: The arm moves in a windmill action, and the ball is contacted directly over the hitting shoulder.

S

Seam: the mid-point between two players.

Serve: One of the six basic skills; used to put the ball into play. It is the only skill controlled exclusively by one player.

Set: The tactical skill in which a ball is directed to a point where a player can spike it into the opponent's court.

Set Attack: When a setter attempts to score rather than set the ball to a setter. Also called a shoot set.

Setter: The second passer whose job it is to position a pass to the hitter.

Shallow: Near the net.

Shank: Severely misdirected pass.

Shoot: A low, fast set to an attacker who is away from the setter.

Side Out: Change of service when a serving team has failed to score a point. Occurs when the receiving team successfully puts the ball away against the serving team, or when the serving team commits an unforced error.

Side Out Scoring: a format of scoring where points can be won only by the serving team.

Six-Packed: Being hit on the face with the ball.

Six Set: A regular outside set near the antenna the setter is facing.

Six-Two (6-2): an offense with four spikers and two spiker/setters. Setter comes from the back row.

Sky Ball Serve: An underhand serve that is hit so high it looks like it is falling straight down.

Slide: an attack approach that includes a last moment move along the net.

Slide Set: A lob set delivered 2 to 3 feet from the setter. In women's volleyball, it is usually a back set to which the hitter

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

accelerates while moving laterally along the net using a one foot takeoff.

Soft block: a technique in which the blocker angles his hands backward in order to deflect the ball and slow its speed.

Spike: Also hit or attack. A ball contacted with force by a player on the offensive team who intends to terminate the ball on the opponent's floor or off the opponent's blocker.

Split block: A double-block that leaves a space between the blockers.

Stuff: A ball that is deflected back to the attacking team's floor by the opponent's blockers.

Substitution - Allows one player to replace another player already on the court. Each team is allowed 15 substitutions per game. Each player is allowed an unlimited number of entries.

Swing: To move from one sideline to another, usually in approaching to attack.

Switch: To change court positions after a ball is served to facilitate strongest player positions.

T

Tandem: A combination in which one player attacks immediately behind another.

Tape: The top of the net.

Telegraph: To show one's intention to the opponents.

Three-Meter Line: The line extended across the court to signify the point which a back row player must leave the ground behind to attack the ball.

Three Set: A play set delivered low and fast midway between the setter and the left sideline to the spiker. It is designed to beat the middle blocker.

Thrown Ball: A ball that comes to rest at contact, or is not cleanly hit. Excessive topspin, sidespin, or backspin. Usually pertains to a mishandled set with open hands. The player has committed a foul. A judgement call.

Tool: When an attacker hits the ball off an opposing blockers arms out of bounds.

Touch: A player contacting the ball.

Transition: To switch from offense to defense, and vice versa.

Trap Set: Set close to the net that gives the blocker the advantage.

Triple-block: Block formed by three players.

Turning In: The action of the end blocker to turn a hand toward the court to prevent the spiker from hitting the ball off the block and out of bounds.

Two Set: A vertical set that travels from 3 to 5 feet above the net. Usually set for the middle hitter.

Glossary of Volleyball Terminology

U

Underhand Serve: A serve performed with an underhand striking action. The ball is usually contacted with the heel of the hand.

W

W: A serve-receive formation with three players in the front row, two in the back.

Wipe: To deliberately spike the ball off an opponent's hands and out of bounds.

Wing: The defensive players in Areas 5 and 1.

X

X: A cross in which the middle attacks a front one and the right attacks a two to the left of the middle.

Y

Yellow Card: Given by the official to a player or coach as a warning of misconduct. Two yellow cards results in an automatic red card.