



Beach Volleyball Quick-Guide 18 Feb 2026 (v 26.1)

For Further information about Beach Rules or Beach Referee Certification, please contact us at beachofficials@usav.org

Rules Changes are flagged as **NEW**. **Points of emphasis are highlighted**. NCAA rule differences are underlined.

Find USAV beach referee information at [Beach Referees - USA Volleyball](#)

Find NCAA Beach Volleyball information at [Beach Volleyball Rules of the Game - NCAA.org](#)

NET HEIGHTS: *Note: Heights are measured at center. Height at antennas is allowed to be 3/4" higher.*

- Men 7'11^{5/8"} (2.43m) **Also** Boys' Age Divisions: U19 (18 & Under) and U17 (16 & Under)
- Women/Mixed 7' 4^{1/8"} (2.24m): **Also** Girl's' Age Divisions: U19 and U17, as well as **both** Girls' and Boys' U15 (14&Under)
- Youth 6'11^{1/2"} (2.12m): **Both** Girls' and Boys' Age Division U13 (12&Under)
- Tens' & Under 6' 6" (1.98m): **Both** Girls' and Boys' Age Division U11 (10&Under)
- **Other Specifications:** Net 26' to 28' (8-8.5m) long. Antennas are required. Posts and referee stands (which are suggested) should be padded.
- **Ball:** light-colored, 9-10 oz. (260-280g) weight, with circum. 26" (66-68cm) at 2.5 to 3.2 psi (1.75-2.25 kg/cm2) NCAA 25: MOLTEN BV5005-N (options ok)
- **Court:** 26'3" x 52'6" (8.0 x 16.0 m) The short diagonal measures 37'1" (11.31m) The court includes its lines: their outside edges are the court boundary.
- **Lines** should be 2" wide and include **adjustable buckles** in all four sides. When possible, the free zone around the court should be marked with banners, etc.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME: Philosophy: Teams play without **outside** intervention or assistance of any type.

- Spectators, including parents and club-mates, are encouraged to cheer, but may not assist at any time (ex: "calling shots" is prohibited).
- Coaches, when present, may cheer the exceptional play, but may only instruct during timeouts, side-changes, and between sets.
 - o **NEW 26: NCAA: Coaches may offer BRIEF instruction between rallies. Instruction should not delay the pace of play.**

TEAMS (Players & Coaches): Two Players - no substitutes. The Captain represents the Team to the referees. (Exception: Coach-TO in Ages 18 & Under)

- Number of Coaches allowed: USAV: A coach and no more than one assistant coach. NCAA: No more than 3 coaches
- Coaches may only participate in on-court drills prior to the coin toss and official warm-up. During warmup they may advise but not drill, from sideline.
- During play, coaches observe from the player area. Instruction only takes place during timeouts, between sets, and (non-disruptively) during side-changes.
- **NEW 26: NCAA: Coaches may offer BRIEF instruction between rallies.**
- Still: Coaches may not attempt to influence or question the official's judgment at any time.

UNIFORMS: *ed note: Uniform regulations are sport guidelines. Referees should encourage compliance but not prohibit play for uniform concerns.*

- o USAV: Team uniform tops may or may not be required. When tops with numbers are used, matching uniforms are encouraged. USAV Numbers 1-99 allowed.
 - o Bikinis /briefs not allowed for Juniors. Player tops must cover midriff. Bottom lengths may vary; For shorts 1" inseam rule is in effect.
- o USAV and NCAA: Cold weather gear may be allowed both under and over uniform (Guideline: "below 60 degrees").
- o NCAA: Tank tops must cover full length of torso. Shorts min. 1" inseam.
- o Since 24: Uniform Tops "same color" but sleeve length (tanks, short, long) may vary. Uniform Bottoms same color but length may vary"
- o NCAA Uniforms may use numbers 0-99. Uniform numbers should be visible from coin toss, through match except during cold weather.

MATCH FORMAT "Ten Minute" Pre-Match Protocol: NCAA: coin toss at -10, then warm-up. USAV: coin toss at -7. *Formats may vary by venue.*

- Winner of the toss chooses **serve, receive or side**. The other captain chooses from the remaining options. Both captains state service order for the set.
- After the coin toss, the four players (only) share unlimited access to the entire court (Coaches may be on sideline, but not be involved in drills)
- Beach volleyball is played as Match Play, best-of-three sets played to 21, 21, (15). Rally scoring; win by two.
 - o Scoring may be modified by Tournament Directors for specific events, (ex: "one set to 28," or "two sets only to 21, without deciding set").
 - o All matches utilize the etiquette of handshakes at the net between opponents before the match and with opponents and the officials, after.
 - o Unless a referee is present to whistle the start and end of each rally, the players are encouraged to "call the score" before serving.
- **Service Order:** Players alternate terms of service. **Officials actively prevent wrong-server faults and may "call out" the correct server when necessary.**
- **Positional Faults:** Players (other than server) must be on court at the moment of service (any position on court). Server must initiate from the playable area.
- **Court Switch:** After 7 points of play in sets 1 and 2, the teams should switch sides. This is not a time out or water break; players switch, then resume play.
 - o Coaches may offer brief instruction during the court switch, but must not delay the match. (example: walking athletes around 2 sides of court not allowed)
- **Delay:** The time between rallies should not exceed 12 seconds. In locations without banners or ball-retrievers, this guideline may be extended.
 - o Violations result in Verbal Warning, followed by Delay Warning (yellow), with subsequent occurrences leading to Delay Penalty (red).
- **Time Outs:** Each team may call one per set. Timeouts last 30 seconds (NCAA: 60 sec) Teams are granted an extra 30 seconds to move from/to court.
 - o Thus **USAV timeouts are max 60 sec total, while NCAA timeouts may take 90 sec total.** Early resumption allowed. (Ref whistles @ 15 sec. remain)
 - o Teams are reminded that timeouts should be taken near court. (No running off to tents) Shade and water should be provided at team bench areas.
 - o Coaches in age groups U-19 (18 & Under) may call time out for their team. NCAA: Coaches may suggest a time out to their captain.
 - **Technical Timeout" (TTO)** after the 21st point of sets 1 and 2. (No TTO in 3rd set) (Events may opt to add or reduce the number of TTOs.)
- ❖ **Set Intervals:** In both USAV and NCAA the interval between sets is 2 minutes.
 - o Referee offers "first choice for set 2" to the captain of the team that lost the first coin-toss, and confirms "who will serve first for the team in this set"
 - o Then offers the other captain the remaining choice and confirms "who will serve first for the team in this set"
 - **Deciding 3rd Set:** New coin toss; by R1 same choices. Play to 15, win by 2, switch sides every 5 points. *No TTO in 3rd set*

DISPUTES: A Captain may occasionally approach the referees to request an explanation of rule. (exception: judgment calls).

- The referee(s) should be approachable and must offer an explanation based upon the rules, without prolonged discussion.
- The Captain may lodge a Protest if referees misapply or fail to apply Rules. Coaches may suggest "protest" to the Captain. (Coach may Protest in U-19)
- **COACHES are not allowed to dispute calls, or to interact with match officials at all.** *Concerns should be addressed to the event Head Referee if necessary.*

WARNINGS AND SANCTIONS: *All Misconduct and all Delay warnings or Sanctions remain in effect through the entire MATCH*

- **Delay** by a player or coach should result in a verbal warning. Subsequent Delay results in Team Delay Warning (Yellow card on wrist).
 - o Any further delay by any member of that team, throughout the **match**, results in Delay Penalty. *Multiple Delay Penalties may be assessed within a match.*
- **Misconduct** by any player or coach should be managed when possible through **verbal warning(s)**.
 - Referees may offer one Formal Warning (Yellow Card) per MATCH to a TEAM (player or coach) guilty of misconduct.
 - Subsequent misconduct by ANY player or coach on that team in that MATCH must be sanctioned by **PENALTY** (Red Card: point and serve to opponent)
- **Rude Conduct** is immediately sanctioned by Penalty (Red Card). *It is not necessary that a Misconduct Warning (Yellow Card) have been issued previously.*
 - o Players may receive a maximum of TWO Penalties per player per SET. Further misconduct results in **EXPULSION** for the SET. (Set is **DEFAULTED**)
 - o Coaches may receive a maximum of ONE Penalty per SET. Further misconduct results in the coach being **EXPELLED** for the SET. (no further action)
- **Physical aggression** at any time, or **repeated misconduct beyond the limits above**, results in **DISQUALIFICATION** (Red and Yellow Cards held apart)
 - o Disqualification of a Player results in that team defaulting the match. Disqualification of a Coach does not involve a penalty point or further consequence.

Blocks and play above the net:

- o Players must contact the ball within their own playing space (follow-through into the opponents playing space after contact is legal).
- o It is always illegal to attack a ball that is completely in the opponents' space.
- o Blockers may contact a ball in the opponents' space after the attack-hit, or **NEW 23: simultaneously with the attack-hit**.
 - o Or if in the referee's judgment the attackers are not attempting to play the ball, at any time (no attacks on opponents' side!)
- o "Joust" (simultaneous contact above the net) between opponents is legal. Any player may make the next play, as their team's 1st contact.
- o The block contact counts as first team contact; either player may make the 2nd team contact.
- o A player may block a ball in any direction.
- o "Directional" or "snap" blocks are legal unless the ball is caught or thrown. If the blocker clearly catches or throws the ball, the fault must be whistled.
 - As a guideline: the ball may be blocked quickly in one direction, with one motion.

Attacks and Tips:

- o "Open hand tipping" is prohibited. Referees use "illegal attack" (Diagram 9, Signal 21).
- o Knuckles may be used to "poke" the ball, provided that the ball **rebounds** (is not caught or thrown).
- o Fingertips (including thumb) may be used to "poke" the ball **only** if those fingertips in contact with the ball are "rigid and together."
- o Attacks with finger action (setting over the net) must be made perpendicular to the **shoulders** - either directly forward or backward.

Net Contact: It is a fault to contact any part of the net between (and including) the antennas, during the action of playing the ball.

- o The action of playing the ball includes (but is not limited to) takeoff, hit (or attempt), and landing safely, ready for a new action.

Play Under the Net, and Interference:

- o Players may contact any part of the ball until it has passed completely through the plane below the net.
- o There is no centerline. Players may contact any part of the opponents' court as long as they do not interfere with the opponents' next play.
- o A player who interferes with an opponents' ability to make their next play must be called for the fault.
 - Interference is a FAULT that results in a point, not a replay.
 - Note that this is sometimes a delayed call (the referee must wait to see if the opponents are truly hampered in their next action).
 - Incidental contact between opponents does not constitute interference (bump knees, briefly step on toes, etc.).
 - Interference can occur without physical contact (ex: fallen player under net prevents defender covering short).
 - *Point under the net with your index finger, and say "interference."* (This call will generally require explanation.)

Pursuit: Is legal in beach volleyball. Only balls which pass "over or outside" an antenna are eligible to be pursued.

- o A player may pursue the ball by any route, including under the net and/or through the opponents' court.
- o Opponents may not interfere with legal pursuit.
- o The ball must be played back on 2nd team contact "over or outside" the same antenna.
- o Third team contact must send the ball legally through the crossing space (between the antennas).

Ball Marks: The ball is "IN" if it lands inside the court, or touches a boundary line. Corner "tie-downs" are not considered boundary lines.

- o If the referee is in doubt of a line call, they should immediately initiate a "ball mark protocol". Players may not insist that a ball mark be reviewed.
 - Players cannot: alter the ball mark (or court boundaries), cross under the net to review a mark, or attempt to influence the decision of the officials.
 - The line-judge(s) may assist as the FIRST referee inspects the ball mark.
 - The referee must be careful to inspect the correct ball mark, considering ball trajectory, the effect of raised lines, and possible "splash" of soft sand.
 - ❖ If the referee determines that the line was moved significantly **during the rally in question**, they should fix the line before judging the result.

Ball Handling / Hand Setting: There are two types of ball handling faults: "Catch Balls" and "Double Contact".

- o The ball must be played with one quick motion.
- o **Balls that significantly move downwards whilst in the hands, or which visibly come to rest, are "Catch Ball" faults and should be whistled!**
- o Clearly distinct and separate contacts of the ball constitute a "Double-Hit."
 - Spin is not a fault ... but spin may be an indication that a "double-contact" fault has occurred.

Simultaneous Contact by Teammates: If teammates touch the ball simultaneously it counts as 2 team contacts. Either player may make the 3rd contact.

Defense:

- o **It is LEGAL for ANY first-team contact WITHOUT finger action to strike two or more parts of a player during a single attempt to play the ball.** Including:
 - Any style of contact: hands or fists together or **apart**, heels of hands together or **apart**, tomahawk, etc. (see finger-action below).
 - All plays without finger action, even if the ball is observed to have been clearly double-contacted.
- o First-team-contact **WITH finger action** should be judged just as any setting contact:
 - The referee should call a double-hit if the player uses finger action and the ball contact is a clear double.
 - **EXCEPTION:** If the double contact was in defense of a "hard-driven attack" then the referee should allow play to continue.
 - ❖ In judging an attack as "hard-driven," the referee must consider the following:
 - ✓ Speed and trajectory of the ball, as well as the distance between the attacker and defender.
 - ✓ The referee must judge the player's action: "reactive" (double allowed) or "intentional" handset (double-contact called).

Serve Receive:

- It is legal to receive serve in an open handed manner, but if finger-action is used, the referee must judge the contact as a set.
- o It is legal to use techniques such as: hands or fists together **or apart**, heels of hands together **or apart**, tomahawk, etc.
- o **REMINDER:** It is legal to receive serve "open handed with finger action", but strict hand-setting judgment must be applied to the contact.

Screening: The serving team may not prevent the receiving team's ability to see EITHER the server OR the flight of the ball.

- o The referee must judge that the receiving player was not able to see BOTH the server and the flight of the ball, in order to make this call.
- o **Fair play:** The Receiving team should use the "raised hand" signal to indicate a potential screen; & **the Serving team should adjust position, without delay.**
- o *The Referee may need to be an "ambassador" for the spirit of the game, and teach inexperienced players this etiquette and protocol*
- o **New for 25-27: Blockers at the net may not have their hands above their head, while their partner serves.**

• **Outdoor Safety: Players**

- o Stay hydrated. Use sunscreen, as well as clothing and headgear that protects from sun exposure.
- o Be prepared for cold or wet weather as well as for heat and sun! Play usually continues through wind or rain.

• **Outdoor Safety: Tournament directors**

- o Be familiar with "best practices" regarding lightning safety (10 mile, 30 minute). **NCAA: Host Trainer is Lightning Safety Officer**
- o In the event of high heat index, consider "water sips at switch," extending timeouts to 2 minutes, and/or adding additional Technical Time-Outs