Special Olympics Ohio

Volleyball Rules Manual

(Updated 10/2026)

All Special Olympics Ohio Volleyball competitions rules are based upon Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Rules for volleyball found at http://www.fivb.org/. FIVB or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Volleyball or Article I. Any modifications to those rules shall be found in this manual.

All Special Olympics Ohio regional and state level competitions will enforce the participation regulations for athletes and Unified partners, of which is derived from Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sport Rules. This rule shall be that each team and/or individual athlete or Unified partner, must play all eligible and rostered team members in every game unless a player is injured or has been removed due to disciplinary reasons. Coaches must notify the competition management prior to each game if players on the approved tournament roster will not be playing due to injury or disciplinary reasons, and this needs to be approved by the tournament director. Failure to play all eligible team members in each game will result in forfeit and disqualification.

OFFICIAL EVENTS

The SOOH Volleyball season runs April through June. The State Tournament is held each year in late June. Teams must qualify for the State Tournament by competing in an approved SOOH Regional Tournament.

Special Olympics Ohio provides a range of events to offer athletes of varying abilities the opportunity to compete. The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics Ohio.

Team Competition

Unified Sports Team Competition

Modified Team Competition

Format at State Competition

- 4-Team Division
    - Traditional 4 team bracket with each team receiving 2 games.
- 3-Team Division
    - Round Robin, with each team receiving 2 games. Tie breaker will be the least

points allowed total across

both games.

- 2-Team Division
    - Best of 3 Games

DIVISIONING

- Prior to competition, the head coach must submit the Volleyball Rating Summary Form (can be found the last page of this manual). Athletes will receive a score for serving, passing, blocking, attacking/hitting, communication, game awareness, and movement. To assist in filling out this summary form please use the Volleyball Skills Assessment Tests (VSAT), i.e., serve, forearm pass, spike and bump-set, for each player on his/her roster and the individual assessment rubric found at the end of this document. The Skills assessment for individuals will provide descriptions on how to score each athlete.
- Each athletes total will be determined by adding up each category.
- Teams are initially grouped in divisions according to the scores of the athlete make up on their team.
- This will be done separately for Traditional, Unified, and Modified Competition.

COURT AND EQUIPMENT:

Height of the Net

- Male and Mixed Gender competition: 2.43 meters (7 ft, 11 5/8 in) 3.2.2
- Female competition: 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in)
- Unified Sports competition:
    - Male and Coed competition: 2.43 meters (7 ft, 11 5/8 in)
    - Female competition: 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in)

Volleyball

- A lighter weight, leather, modified volleyball may be used.
- The size of the ball should be no larger than 81 centimeters (32 in) in circumference and weigh no more than 226 grams (8 oz).
- It should be as close as possible to the regulation-size volleyball.
- At State and Regional Competition, the games director will provide the balls used for all games. Only these balls will be permitted for official games.

Official Court Dimensions

- 18 meters by nine meters, surrounded by a free zone of a minimum of three meters wide on all sides.

Players' Uniforms

- The players' jerseys must be numbered from 1 to 99.
- The numbers must be a minimum of 15 centimeters (6 in) in height on the chest and a minimum of 20 centimeters (8 in) in height on the back.
- It is recommended (but not required) that the team captain have a stripe on his/her jersey

underlining the number on the chest.

- The color and the design for the jerseys, shorts and socks must be uniform for the team (except for the Libero). The uniforms must be clean.

TEAM COMPETITION RULES

Libero Player

- Any team has the option to designate two Libero players on its roster for each match. There are special rules if the Libero player is injured and cannot continue. The Libero jersey number(s) must be placed on the lineup sheet for the first set of the match, in addition to the numbers for the starting six players. The Libero player must wear a uniform of a different and contrasting color and/or design than that of the rest of the team in order to be easily recognized on the court.
- Libero playing actions: The Libero is allowed to replace any player in a back-row position. Libero is restricted to perform as a back-row player and is not allowed to complete an attack hit from anywhere (including playing court and free zone) if at the moment of the contact, the ball is entirely higher than the top of the net. A player may not complete an attack hit from higher than the top of the net if the ball is coming from an overhead finger pass by a Libero in his/her front zone. The ball may be freely attacked if the Libero makes the same action from behind the front zone.
- Libero Replacements: When the Libero replaces a player in the back zone, it is not counted as a substitution. Libero replacements are unlimited. Only the player whom the Libero replaced may replace the Libero. Replacements may take place at the start of the set after the second

referee has checked the lineup or while the ball is out of play, before the first referee blows the whistle for service.

Competition Adaptations (from FIVB Rules)

- Multiple substitutions will be allowed as follows (except for the Libero player):
- Unlimited individual entries by a substitute within the team's allowable 12 substitutions.
- Maximum 12 team substitutions per set.
- Unlimited number of players may substitute into a single position.
- A player in the starting lineup may start a set and re-enter, but only in the same position in which he/she started the set. Likewise, a substitute who has left the set may re-enter, but only in the position he/she had previously played.

Bench Coaching

- A coach is permitted to get up from the bench and move around as long as the coach is not affecting the progress of the game. Coaching from behind the end line or the sideline opposite the bench is prohibited.
- A coach is permitted to assist the athlete to move in position for substitutions.
- A coach is permitted to make a request for substitution. This request will be recognized by the referee even if the player has not yet entered the substitution zone.

Basic Ground Rules

Players

- All matches shall start with six players. In competitions other than Special Olympics World Games, in the event of injury or illness during a match whereby a team has been reduced to five players, a team may continue tournament competition. A team will forfeit their match if they are reduced to fewer than five players.
- The team roster, including substitutes, may not exceed 12 players.

Service

- The first server of each set is the right back player. Thereafter, the right front player rotates to the right back position. The team receiving first service shall rotate upon the first side out.
- A team continues to serve until it commits a violation or the set ends.
- The service alternates when there is a violation by the serving team. The ball is awarded to the opponent who shall rotate clockwise one position.
- The winner of the coin toss may choose to serve, receive or select a specific side of the court. If a deciding third or fifth set is necessary, a coin toss shall again be conducted with the same options.
- Serve shall be from the serving area. Stepping on or over the end line or outside the service area as defined by the sidelines prior to contacting the ball shall constitute a violation.
- The server must contact the ball within eight seconds after the first referee's whistle for service.

Play

- The ball may be hit with any part of the body.
- A team shall not play the ball more than three times before it crosses the net. (A touch on a block does not count as one of the three hits).
- Touching any part of the net while playing the ball is a fault. Crossing completely over the center line with any part of the body except the feet will not constitute a violation unless there is interference. It is a fault to cross completely over the center line with the foot or feet.
- Any ball hitting the ceiling will be considered playable by the team causing such contact, unless the ball crosses the plane of the net or contacts the ceiling after the team's third contact.
- Any ball hitting the side or back walls is considered "out".
- Any ball landing on the line is considered "in".
- Return of service may occur by any legal hit. (A forearm pass is highly recommended in order to return a hard hit serve legally.)

Substitution/Replacement

- Players shall substitute by position as per the adapted FIVB Rules (except when using the Libero player).

Scoring

- A match is won by the team that wins the best of three sets. A one-set match is won by the team that scores 15 (or 25) or more points with a two-point advantage. Teams change sides when one team has scored eight points if playing to 15. Switch at 13 if playing to 25. In the case of a 1-1 or 2-2 set tie, the deciding set (third) is played as a tie breaker with rally point scoring procedures to 15 points and no point cap. Teams change sides when one team has scored eight points.
- A set is won by the team which first scores 25 points with a minimum lead of two points (except the deciding third or fifth set). In the case of a 24-24 tie, play is continued until a two-point lead is achieved.
- If a team fails to serve properly, return the ball or commits any other fault, the opponent wins the rally and scores a point. When the serving team wins a rally, it scores a point and continues to serve. If the receiving team wins the rally, it scores a point and gains the right to serve.
- A served ball touching the net and continuing over the net shall remain in play, and the receiving team has three plays to return the ball to the opponents.
- FIVB International Scoring System (based on matches won, sets won and point ratio) will be used to handle all ties during competition.

Referees

- Referees shall have full authority to interpret the rules. For further questions, the Competition Management Team shall be consulted.

- Ball handling will be called in accordance with the ability level of the athletes.
- There shall be at least two line judges who shall be positioned on opposite corners in the left, rear corner of each court. Each line judge shall have responsibility to judge whether a ball is in or out for their assigned end and sidelines, as well as appropriate touch calls as instructed by the first referee. In some competitions, a four-line judge system may be utilized. In this case, two line judges will be assigned the end lines; and two line judges will be assigned the sidelines.

Protest

- Any protest involving the judgment of the officials will not be considered.
- Only the Head Coach may protest and must do so immediately prior to the authorization of the next service. If the protest involves the last point of the set, the protest must be filed within the first 60 seconds of the interval between sets. If the final point of the match is disputed, the protest must be recorded within the first 60 seconds after the final point of the match is scored.
- For a protest to be considered it must be (1) a misinterpretation of a playing rule, (2) a failure of the referee to apply the correct rule to a given situation, or (3) a failure to charge the correct penalty or sanction for a given fault.

UNIFIED TEAM COMPETITION RULES

Roster/Lineup

- The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
- During competition, the lineup shall never exceed three athletes and three partners at any time. After the match begins, only the following lineup is allowed:
    - 3 athletes and 3 partners
    - 3 athletes and 2 partners (in the event of injury or illness)
    - Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
- Libero replacement: athletes can replace athletes only and partners can replace partners only.
- Coach: Each team shall have an adult, non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition.
- Service Order: The serving order and positions on the court, at service, shall be an alternation of athletes and partners.
- Once a server has scored three consecutive points, his/her team shall rotate to the next server and continue to serve.

MODIFIED TEAM COMPETITION

Competition Adaptations

- Special Olympics Ohio modified volleyball matches will use the same size court as listed above for traditional volleyball divisions.
- The net should be set to a height of 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in).
- The service line may be moved closer to the net, but no closer than 4.5 meters (14 ft, 9 in). Athletes may serve from anywhere behind the step-in line (from the right to left side of the court). Once the serve has been contacted, the service step in line effectively “disappears”/becomes irrelevant and the play uses the

regulation 9m by 9m court.

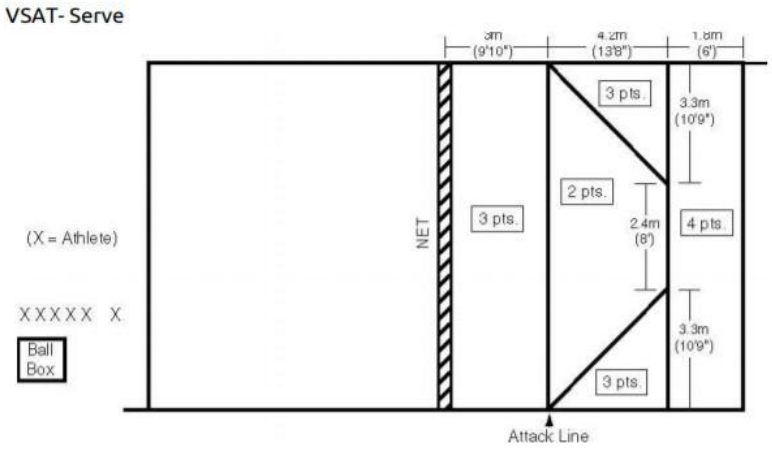
- A lighter weight, leather, modified volleyball may be used. The size of the ball should be no larger than 81 centimeters (32 in) in circumference and weigh no more than 226 grams (8 oz).
- Once a server has scored three consecutive points, his/her team shall rotate to the next server and continue to serve.
- Antennas will still be placed above the sideline on the net.
- In local competitions only, competition organizers may opt to have the teams NOT change courts in the middle of the deciding set.

Basic Ground Rules

- Same as for Team Competition in section 4.5.

VOLLEYBALL SKILLS ASSESSMENT TESTS (VSAT)

VSAT- Serve



Set-up

- Use a regulation-size court that is 18 meters (59 ft) long and 9 meters (29 ft, 6 in) wide, 10 volleyballs, net height of 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in) for women and 2.43 meters (7 ft, 11 5/8 in) for men, standards, antennae, measuring tape, tape and ball box.

Test

- Athlete is given 10 attempts from the service area.
- Athlete may serve overhead or underhand.
- Taped or chalk lines mark the court outlining the target areas which value from two to four points.

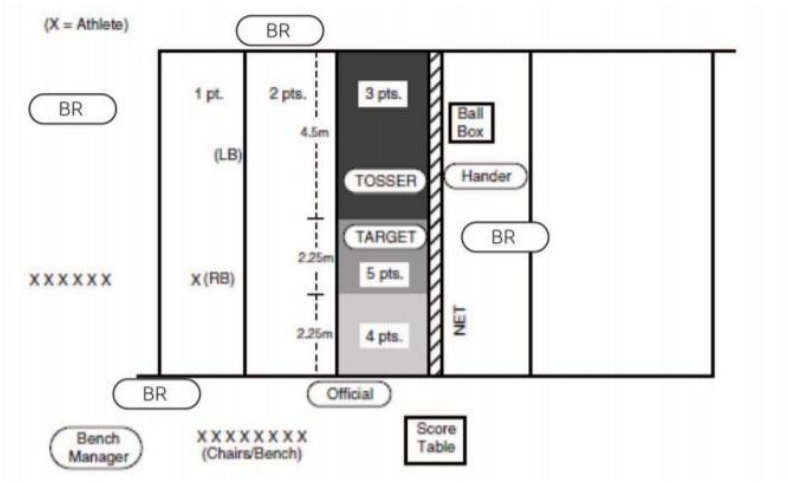
Scoring

- Balls hitting on a line score the higher point value.
- Balls contacting the net, antennae, or landing out-of-bounds receive no points.
- The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the points awarded for each of the 10 attempts.

Staging

- Volunteers administer the test and are not to interfere with any athlete who is performing the test.
- Volunteer "A" will instruct the group doing this particular test while Volunteer "B" demonstrates the actual test. Volunteer "C" will toss a volleyball to the athlete who will perform. Volunteers will retrieve the volleyballs after they land and will roll them to a volunteer who is standing near the ball box. When the athlete is finished, Volunteer "A" will give the score to Volunteer "D" who is the scorekeeper. Each volunteer is to administer the test and manage the area only.

VSAT- Forearm Pass



Purpose

- To measure the athlete's passing accuracy, height and consistency using the forearm pass technique.

Equipment

- Use a regulation-size volleyball court that is 18 meters (59 ft) long and 9 meters (29 ft, 6 in) wide, five volleyballs (modified ball permissible), net, standards, measuring tape, marking tape and ball box.

Description

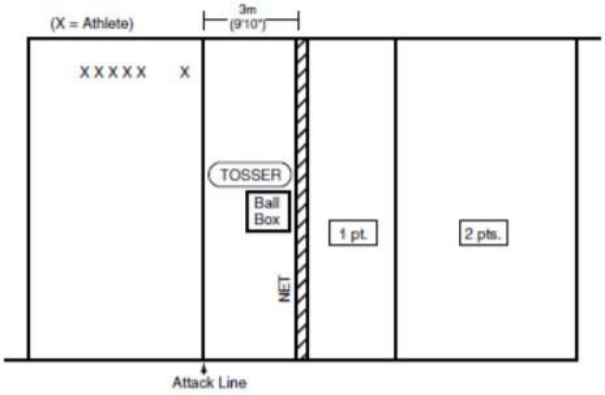
- The athlete stands at the right back position, three meters (9 ft, 10 in) from the right sideline and one meter (3 ft, 3 1/3 in) from the baseline. A ball is thrown, using a two-hand, overhead toss by a coach/official who is standing on the same side of the net in the center front position, two meters (6 ft, 6 3/4 in) from the net. The athlete receives the toss and passes the ball toward a target (a person who has his/her hands above the head and who is standing on the same side, two meters away from the net, and four meters [13 ft, 1 1/2 in] from the sideline away from the tosser). Target areas of varying point values are marked on the front court. The

event is repeated with the athlete at the left back position, three meters from the left sideline and one meter from the baseline.

Scoring

- The athlete must pass the ball so that the peak of the arc is at least net height in order to receive maximum points. A ball which lands on the line is assigned to the area with the higher point value. A ball which is passed below net height will receive only one point, regardless of where it lands. The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the points scored from his/her five attempts at both the right back and the left back positions. It is suggested that the official stand on a chair to evaluate the height of each pass.

VSAT-Spike



Set-up

- Use a regulation-size court that is 18 meters (59 ft) long and 9 meters (29 ft, 6 in) wide, five volleyballs, net height of 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in) for women and 2.43 meters (7 ft, 11 5/8 in) for men, standards, antennae, measuring tape, floor tape or chalk and ball box.

Test

- A tosser will toss the ball in front of the athlete and 2 meters (6 ft, 6 3/4 in) above the net. Tosses that are not at the proper height are repeated. The athlete stands in the court, 3.05-4.57 meters (10-15 ft) from the net, makes a spiking approach and spikes the ball over the net within the boundaries of the opponent's front court. Each athlete receives 10 attempts.

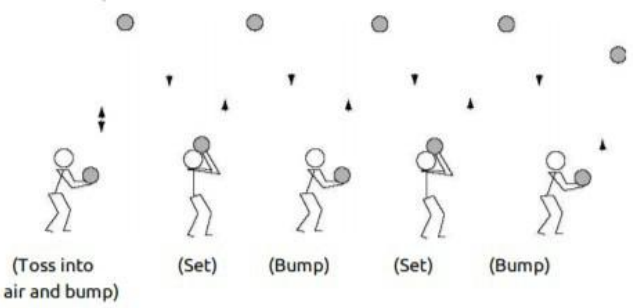
Scoring

- The athlete receives two points for each spike that lands beyond the attack line in the backcourt and one point for each spike that lands between the net and the attack line within the opponent's court. A tip (dink) or half-speed shot is not recorded as a spike. The athlete's final score shall be the total of all 10 attempts.

Staging

- Volunteers administer the test and are not to interfere with any athlete who is performing the test. Volunteer "A" will instruct the group doing this particular test while Volunteer "B" demonstrates the actual test. Volunteer "C" will toss a volleyball to the athlete who will perform. Volunteers will retrieve the volleyballs after they land and will roll them to a volunteer who is standing near the ball box. When the athlete is finished, Volunteer "A" will give the score to Volunteer "D" who is the scorekeeper. Each volunteer is to administer the test and manage the area only.

VSAT- Bump- Set



Set-up

- Use half of a volleyball court, a net with a minimum height of 2.24 meters (7 ft, 4 1/8 in) and three volleyballs.

Test

- Athlete alternately bumps (forearm passes) and sets the ball to himself/herself without stopping.
- Athlete first tosses the ball into the air and then bumps the volleyball.
- Athlete then must move under the ball to set-bump-set-bump-set, etc.
- Athlete must stay within the half-court lines.

Scoring

- Athlete is given four trials to gain his/her best score.
- The maximum score is 50 (25 bumps and 25 sets).
- Each legal hit is counted as one point, as long as the ball goes above the height of the net.
- A particular trial is finished when the athlete sets or bumps the ball twice in a row, illegally hits the ball, goes out of the court to play the ball or reaches a score of 50.

Staging

- Volunteers administer the test and are not to interfere with any athlete who is performing the test. Volunteer "A" will instruct the group doing this particular test while Volunteer "B" demonstrates the actual test. Volunteer "A" will hand a volleyball to the athlete who will perform the skill. Other volunteers will retrieve the volleyballs after they go out of bounds.

When the player is finished, Volunteer "A" will give the score to Volunteer "C" who is the scorekeeper. Each volunteer is to administer the test and manage the area only.