

Volleyball tryout checklist

A comprehensive guide to efficient, thoughtful and well-organized tryouts

1) Create a tryout plan. Have a very detailed plan for what you want to accomplish with the players. Your volleyball tryout skills checklist should include:

- Specific skills
- Hustle drills
- Team situations
- Physical testing, etc.

If the space is available, separate players by position to make comparisons more easily during skill work. During team situations, move players up and down as evaluations are made.

2) Ask yourself: what are you looking for? What is your tryout or club philosophy? Here are some questions to consider.

- Are you looking for volleyball players or athletes that can become volleyball players?
- Are you looking for players with the most skill or with the most potential?
- How are they right now vs. how good can they become with your coaching/training? What is their attitude, desire, effort – these are critical – how can you measure them?
- If you are looking for volleyball skills, make sure you test all six skills.
- If you are looking for athletes, have a combination of physical tests that can help you determine who is a good athlete and skill drills that tell you where they are at in their volleyball development.

3) Notify all staff members of their role.

- Split up experienced coaches to be paired with newer coaches. Make sure there are coaches that can toss accurately on the hitting courts and that can hit accurately on the digging courts.
- Have coaches that run drills and coaches that are evaluators only. Make sure that the evaluators either stay on one court and every player rotates to them, or that they systematically rotate to each court. Random walking around is not the best plan.
- Have a system of evaluation which is consistent with the other coaches. Break every 45 minutes (take 5-7 minutes to compare notes).

4) Have a written down tryout procedure.

- Ask the question on all drills, "What do I want to see in this drill?"
- Types of drills to incorporate:
 - Ball Control – individual ball contacts; partners (setting, passing, pepper, etc.)
 - Attacking drills – spiking from several positions on the net – minimum – Left and Right side
 - Serve and Serve receive;
 - Setting and digging – separate these to setters and liberos
- Back Court exchange is a great tryout drill – since you hit, dig and set
- Individual skill evaluation drills
 - Coleman-McKenzie test (alternate forearm pass and set – at least 6 feet above your head – see who can do 25 - 50 in row)
 - Sits Test – sit, set ball to self, stand up set ball, sit set ball – continuously – this is a great accuracy and agility test

5) Separate skill levels quickly. You want the best players to see the other best players. This will help you get a better sense of individual players' skill levels as well.

6) Have head coaches involved in picking their own teams. Volleyball tryouts can be hectic. You'll want to delegate responsibility to head coaches so they can determine the best fits for their teams. This refers back to creating a tryout plan. Avoid having a long line of girls waiting to touch a ball. Keep drills fast paced and rotate players in an efficient manner.

7) Make sure that you have the right equipment and supplies. There are numerous materials you'll need to run a great tryout. Here are a few you can't afford to forget:

- At least one ball per tryout player or at least 15-20 per court, and ball carts if needed
- Measuring devices for physical testing: height, reach, jump
- Enough evaluation forms
- Clipboards, pens and pencils
- A clock or timer
- A camera, video camera or cell so you can document footage and have data to back up your decisions
- A whistle
- Plenty of water

8) Minimize standing around. This refers back to creating a tryout plan. Avoid having a long line of girls waiting to touch a ball. Keep drills fast paced and rotate players in an efficient manner.

9) Have a way to identify athletes. Consider bringing nametags or t-shirts with numbers on the back so you can identify players quickly. This will also be helpful when you're re-watching footage to get a second look at specific players.

10) Have a way to do jump testing.

- The height of the game is ever-growing and this is a quick and easy way to tell an athlete's "potential". When making roster decisions it might be helpful to know how "high" a player hits, if the skill level is comparative but one player touches 4" higher than another, it might make decisions easier. It's also helpful to track progress throughout the season.
- Vertical jump is not only a measure of jumping ability, it is a good measure of overall athletic ability (strength, power, coordination, etc.). A true vertical jump/Sargent Jump has no approach – use the volleyball approach!

11) Schedule an alternate tryout method. If players cannot make the original tryout, have a backup method to evaluate. Watch a high school game, require an individual session, have two tryout dates to choose from.

12) Schedule parent meetings separately but at the same time as tryouts. It's a good idea to run this by you club director first, but having parent meetings at the same time gives you the opportunity to explain the tryout format, go over criteria for selection, and detail club costs and payment options.

13) Devise a method for notifying players and parents about the roster.

- Email, phone, post online? Brief it prior to tryout, and prior to leaving.
- Prepare for parents of the "unchosen ones" to contact you with questions/comments/complaints.

14) Make time for questions and follow-up. Meeting with parents before or after tryouts? Consider outlining key talking points ahead of time, including an explanation of the tryout format, criteria for selection and other important logistics, like fees, payment options, potential schedules and guidelines. It might help to have a printed handout ready, too.

And if you're meeting players right after tryouts make sure that the club director, plus a coach, are both present for those that didn't make the team to answer questions or provide comfort. Have other tryout info available so they may turn out for other clubs that day.

15) Start and end tryouts at their designated times. A successful volleyball tryout plan begins with having your resources ready. Mark off the items on this checklist and you'll be prepared for a smooth road ahead.