

BALL HANDLING

NFHS VB RULE CODE

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RULES

- **Contact**
 - Is any touch of the ball by a player
 - Excluding the player’s loose hair

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-1)
- **Legal contact**
 - *Touch of the ball by any part of the player’s body which:*
 - Does not allow the ball to visibly come to rest
 - Does not involve prolonged contact

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-5)

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HIT

- A **hit** is a contact/touch of the ball which is counted as one of the team’s three allowable plays before the ball is returned to the opponent’s side of the court

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-2)

- A team shall have **no more than three hits** before the ball:
 - crosses the net into the opponent’s playing area, or
 - is touched by the opponent

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-3)

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HIT

- **A team shall have no more than three hits** before the ball:
 - crosses the net into the opponent's playing area, or
 - is touched by the opponent
- When the team's first contact is:
 - *simultaneous contact by opponents*, or *an action to block the next contact* is considered the **team's first hit**.

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-3)

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BALL CROSSING THE NET

- A ball is considered to have crossed the net when:**
- 1) It has passed completely beyond the vertical plane of the net, or
 - 2) It is partially over the net and is contacted by an opponent (i.e.: blocked or attacked by opponent while the ball is partially over the net), or
 - 3) No part of the ball crossed the net and it is legally blocked
- (see NFHS Rule 9-4-4)

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SIMULTANEOUS CONTACT

- **Simultaneous Contact**
 - **More than one contact of the ball made at the same instant.**
 - It is permitted:
 - When one player contacts the ball with 2 or more parts of the body at the same instant.
 - It is considered one hit.
 - (Except for a block, which does not count as a hit.)
 - When teammates contact the ball at the same time.
 - any player may attempt the next hit provided their team has a hit(s) remaining.
- (See NFHS Rule 9-4-6)

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SIMULTANEOUS CONTACT

- **Simultaneous Contact**
 - When two opponents cause the ball to come to rest above the net through simultaneous contact (Joust)
 - It is not a fault
 - Play continues as if the contact was instantaneous.

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-6c)
 - When opposing players contact the ball at the same instant, the player on the opposite side of the net from which the ball falls, is considered to have touched it last.
 - The other player may participate in the next play.
 - The simultaneous contact is not counted as a hit.

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-6d)

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SUCCESSIVE CONTACTS

- **Successive Contacts of the ball**
 - Are two or more separate attempts to play the ball by one player with no interrupting contacts by a different player between the two plays.
 - A player shall not have successive contacts unless there is:
 - *Simultaneous contact by teammates*
 - *Simultaneous contact by opposing players*
 - *Successive contacts by a player whose first contact is a block*
 - The second contact counts as the first hit of the player's team

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-7)

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MULTIPLE CONTACTS

- **Multiple contacts:**
 - Are more than one contact by a player during one attempt to play the ball.
 - Are permitted only:
 - 1) When the first ball over the net rebounds from one part of the player's body to one or more other parts **in one attempt to block**
 - 2) **On any first team hit**, whether or not the ball is touched by the block.

(See NFHS Rule 9-4-8)

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PENALTIES

- Penalties:
 - **Loss of rally/point** is awarded to the opponent:
 - When a team has more than three hits.
 - When there is any illegal contact of the ball
 - When there is illegal successive contacts and/or illegal multiple contacts of the ball
- (See Rule 9-4)

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2019-20 POINT OF EMPHASIS

- 2019-20 NFHS Rules Book - Points of Emphasis:
 - Ball Handling**
 - Strive for consistency in ball handling judgement
 - Criteria used to develop judgement consistency:
 - **Only the contact point should be considered** when judging legality
 - Outside influences should not be considered, i.e.:
 - Player technique
 - Spin
 - Coaches expectations or crowd reaction
 - There is **no body/ball position or playing technique that results in automatic calls of illegal contact.**

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2019-20 POINT OF EMPHASIS

- When evaluating ball handling, it is important to understand the focus of an increase in continuity of play when judging second ball contacts that are directed to a teammate.
- When judging second ball contacts :
 - A player in good position must play the ball without noticeable double contacts.
 - **Less severe judgement is used for a contact by a player who makes a challenging or spectacular play.**
 - **Mishandle balls resulting in a blatant fault should still be called,** no matter if the play was challenging or spectacular.

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Quiz 1

Q#1: Two teammates on serve receive make simultaneous contact with the served ball. One of those players then cleanly sets the ball to the front row outside attacker who cleanly hits the ball to the opponent's side to continue play. Was the first referee correct to let play continue?

A: Yes. Simultaneous contact by teammates is allowed and considered one hit. Also, any player may attempt the next hit. The first referee correctly judged no double hit and no four hits by the serve receive team. (see NFHS Rule 9-4-6b)

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Quiz 1

Q#2: If a passer shanks a served ball and the setter, in an athletic and spectacular manner, chases the ball down and sets it, but while doing so, blatantly double contacts the ball. What is your call / no call?

A: Double Hit. You want to be lenient when a player makes a specular play on a second contact, however a blatant fault still needs to be called even in this situation. (See NFHS 2019-20 Point of Emphasis – Ball Handling)

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Quiz 1

Situation: When Team B's attacker contacts the ball while the ball is partially in the vertical plane of the net, for the team's third hit, the opponent blocker makes contact simultaneously. The two opponents cause the ball to come to rest above the net.

Q#3: Immediately following this, the ball goes directly out on Team A side. Which team wins the point and serve?

A: Team A. In this joust situation, the player on the opposite side of the net from which the ball falls, is considered to have touched it last. (See NFHS Rule 9-4-6d)

Q#4: If instead, the ball drops following the joust next to the attacker involved in the joust on Team B's side and that player cleanly digs the ball up. Should you stop play due to 2 successive contacts by that player?

A: No, let play continue. Because there was simultaneous contact by opposing players, successive contacts by that player are allowed (see NFHS Rule 9-4-7b) and that player may participate in the next play. (see NFHS Rule 9-4-6d)

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JUDGING CONTACTS

- When judging contacts, ask yourself:
 - Was the ball **caught** or **thrown**?
 - Did the ball have **prolonged contact**?
 - Did the **ball visibly come to rest on a body part(s)**?
- Also consider:
 - Did the **ball play the player** or did the **player play the ball**?
 - Was the ball **over-controlled** or **under-controlled**?

(See NFHS Sports Specific Course: Ball Handling)

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BLOCKING

- A **block** is the action of a player(s) close to the net that deflects the ball coming from the opponent by reaching higher than the top of the net at the moment of contact.
- A block may involve wrist action provided there is no prolonged contact.
(See NFHS Rule 9-5-1c)
- **The block does not count as one of the three allowable team hits.**
- Immediately following a block, a blocker can legally dig to make the team's first contact
- A **directional block** is permitted by sweeping the hands and directing the ball to an area in the opponent's court.
(See NFHS Sports Specific Course: Ball Handling)

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BLOCKING

- Watch out for:
 - A player putting impetus on the ball rather than allowing the ball to be deflected, may be considered an attacker (referee's judgement)- if so, the contact would be considered the first team hit.
 - A blocker mistiming the jump may be on the way down at contact, possibly resulting in the player throwing or catching the ball.
 - A blocker reaching back to block the ball, may end up catching or throwing the ball.

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PASSING

- Forearm passing uses the forearms in an underhand action.
- Overhead passing uses open hands and finger action.
- Remember, with the first team hit, multiple contacts
- are legal when made in a single attempt to play the ball.

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PASSING

- Watch out for:
 - A passer attempts an overhead pass, and the ball strikes the finger tips and goes backwards. This is not an automatic illegal contact call. (This is similar to a ball contacting the finger tips of a blocker and going back – that is not an automatic illegal contact.)

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SETTING

- The setter has a variety of ways to set: standing overhead set - two handed or one handed, jump set - two handed or one handed, forearm bump set, etc... The setter can set the ball at different tempos and heights.
- The setter can also dump, tip or attack the ball over the net.

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SETTING

- Note:
 - One handed and two handed sets should be judged with the same criteria.
 - Setters and Non-setters setting the ball should be judged the same way.
- Watch out for:
 - When performing a **setter dump**, If the setter takes the ball in one quadrant and releases it in another quadrant, consider calling an illegal contact due to prolonged contact or a throw.
 - **Deep dish sets** may be difficult to judge.
 - If the ball comes to rest or is over-controlled, consider an illegal hit. An example of when to make a call is when the setter takes the ball at chest level and released it at a significantly higher level. (See Referee-Aug.2016, article by Rachael Stringer)

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ATTACKING

- The attacker has many options to send the ball over the net – hard hit with a full arm swing, off-speed roll shot, off-speed tip, wipe the ball off the block, two-handed overhead shot, etc...

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ATTACKING

- Watch out for:
 - Watch the contact of the ball. Some referees are so concerned with catching the end result of the attacked ball in the opponent's court, that they leave the attacker's contact too early and miss an illegal contact, such as an illegal multiple contact on a two-handed overhead dump.
 - With a mistimed approach, there may be a catch and throw or prolonged contact on the hit.
 - When the contact is behind the attacker, watch out for prolonged contact.

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DIGGING

- Besides the forearm dig and the overhead dig, the defender has multiple options to use, such as: one hand dig – fisted or open hand, chicken wing dig, foot dig, pancake, etc...

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DIGGING

- Watch out for:
 - When the defender uses an open-hand dig, watch out for a catch, but it is not automatic. You must fully observe the contact before passing judgement.
 - Look for help from the second referee, when the play is directly under you or when your view is blocked by the digger's body or by another teammate in the area. Second referee may have a much better angle.

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OBSERVATION MECHANICS AND SKILLS

- Focus closely on the **contact of the first team hit** by the defender
- Then widen your view to gather all available information.
- Then focus on the **contact of the second team hit** by the setter.
- Then widen your view momentarily to gather, and then narrow on the **contact of the third team hit** at the net by the attacker.
- Your head and sight aligns down the length of the net, to see the ball's entry into plane of net and play at the net between the setter & hitter(s) on one side and the blocker(s) on the other.
- Then move your vision forward ahead of the ball to the **contact of the opponent's first team hit** or **where the ball will land**.

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OBSERVATION MECHANICS AND SKILLS

- **Following each contact, the eyes move ahead of the ball to the next contact location.**
You can anticipate where the next point of contact will be, by reading the play.
 - Observe how the players are setting up on offense and defense and see the initial flight of the ball.
 - There is no need to watch the apex of the flight of the ball. Once you have an idea where the contact point will be, get your vision there before the ball gets there.
- Read and anticipate.
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WATCH WARM-UPS

- Observe the different players
 - Know the setter(s) and their abilities
 - See the other players and learn their abilities and tendencies
 - This is a good time to warm up of your eyes and **get adjusted to the speed and level of play at hand.** (The pace of varsity match may be significantly different than the pace of the non-varsity match that you just officiated.)
- (See NFHS Officials Manual, Section H)

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VARIABLES AFFECTING JUDGEMENT

- General variables affecting judgement:
- Experience of the referees
 - Pressure of the match
 - Behavior of the coaches, players and fans
 - Speed of play and player skill level
- (See NFHS Officials Manual, Section H)

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VARIABLES AFFECTING JUDGEMENT

- ★ Base your judgement on:
 - **The contact that you see**
- Take in all information, but your call should not be made on the following:
 - Spin of the ball
 - Sound of contact
 - Body position
 - Reaction of the coach(es), players and fans
 - Poor technique (Ugly is not a fault.)

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CONSISTENCY OF CALLS

Consistency is important!

- From start to finish
 - Set a level/standard that can be maintained from the beginning of the match to the end. (What you call at 7-7 needs to be called at 24-24.)
 - Calling it tight can be hard to maintain
- Set to set, match to match
- Player to player
 - What you call for the setter should be the same for non-setters.
- Team to team
 - What you call for the strong team should be the same for the weaker team
- Skill to skill
 - If you're calling it loose for setting, then do the same for tipping. (If you're calling it loose, remember that mishandle balls resulting in a blatant fault should still be called.)

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NO AUTOMATIC CALLS

- Situation 1:
 - A blocked ball drops between the net and the blocker (or it rebounds into the net) and the blocker attempts to scoop it out.
 - **Judge the actual contact.** Is there an actual catch or prolonged contact?
 - Avoid an automatic call. Also, look for possible help from your second referee who may have a better angle to judge and can give you a discreet signal.

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NO AUTOMATIC CALLS

- Situation 2:
 - A player with minimal time to play a shanked ball (or a player chasing down a tipped ball) attempts an open-handed dig.
 - Again, **judge the actual contact** – is there an actual catch or prolonged contact.
 - Avoid making an automatic call just because the hand is not fisted.

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DISCREET SIGNALS

- **Second Referee can offer discreet signals** for ball handling violations that are **out view of the first referee** (i.e.: when player or teammate blocking the first referee's view)
- Examples of discreet signals:
 - Illegal Hit signal
 - Double Hit signal
 - Four Hits signal
- Second referee **shows signal in front of chest**
- If first referee judges contact legal, second referee will immediately drop the signal
- Second referee does not whistle ball handling faults.
- **Good eye contact** is important between the referees

(See NFHS Sports Specific Course: Ball Handling)

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COURT/BENCH MANAGEMENT

- If a coach engages the second referee concerning judgement calls, the ref can inform the coach that **judgement calls are not up for discussion**.
- If the coach tries to question the first referee across the court, the second referee should **intercept and/or diffuse the coach**
- If a coach continually badgers about judgement, and the referee feels the coach is delaying the match, the referee can issue an **unnecessary delay**.
- If warranted, the first referee can administer a **card for unsporting conduct**.
 Unsporting conduct includes:
 - Questioning a referee's judgement
 - Attempting to influence a decision by a referee
- "If a card or unnecessary delay of game is requested by the second referee, the **first referee shall administer the penalty**"- quoted from the 2020-21 NFHS Officials Manual, Section H, page 104.

(See NFHS Officials Manual, Section H)

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OBSERVE OTHER REFEREES

- Besides gaining direct experience, observe other referees in action.
 - Observe matches at different levels of play and see how other refs make judgements at different levels of play
 - Observe how the coaches, players and fans react to the judgement levels maintained by the other referees.
 - Consider talking to the referees about your observations and insight, after their post-match debrief with their crew (If you can, seek out a mentor or two.)
 - Then apply what you learn in the process.
 - Continue to develop and become the mentor future referees want to observe and learn from.

(See NFHS Officials Manual, Section H)

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Quiz 2

Q#1: Which of the following is a legal hit:

- a) A setter letting the ball come to rest in the hands before sending it forward to target with no spin.
- b) A middle power tipping the ball initially forward and then redirecting it to the right, to get it around the block, before ending the contact.
- c) While diving for the first ball over, the ball rebounds off a libero's forearms and then her/his head, in one attempt to play the ball.
- d) A middle aggressively approaches for a quick shoot, but the setter delivers the ball behind her/him. The middle, while in the air, reaches behind to make initial contact with the ball and then releases it significantly in front of her/his body.

A: c) - Multiple contacts during one attempt to play the ball are permitted on any first team hit. (See NFHS Rule 9-4-6a)

Quiz 2

Q#2: If you have been making calls at a certain level consistently in the first four sets. Should you change that level during the last third of Set 5, because the fans, players and coaches are reacting more, with a tighter and tighter score?

A: No. Maintain your level and consistency throughout the match. Make your calls or no calls base on that level. Avoid surprise calls and be glad that you're refereeing an exciting match. (See NFHS Officials Manual, Section H)

Quiz 2

Situation: A blocker makes contact with the ball while the blocker was above the net. Then the ball drops between that blocker and the net. Following the block, that player immediately plays the ball with an open hand.

Q#3: Should you stop play due to 2 successive contacts by that player?

A: No. A player shall not have successive contact of the ball, but as one of the exceptions - the rules further states, unless there is successive contacts by a player whose first contact is a block, then the second contact shall count as the first hit by the player's team. (See NFHS Rule 9-4-7c)

Q#4: Should you automatically make a call for illegal contact, because she/he played the ball with an open hand near the net.

A: No. Judge by seeing the actual contact. If there is prolonged contact or an actual catch, then make the call. If it is difficult to see, look to the second referee for help. The second referee may have a better angle and help you with a discreet signal that you discussed during you pre-match meeting. Only call it if it was clearly seen. (See NFHS Sports Specific Course: Ball Handling)

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END TRAINING SEGMENT

- For further insight into the topic of **Ball Handling**, consider reviewing the items listed in the [bibliography](#), if you have access to them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) NFHS 2019-20 Volleyball Rules Book
- 2) NFHS 2020-21 Volleyball Rules Book
- 3) NFHS 2020-21 Volleyball Case Book and Officials Manual
- 4) USAV 2019-2021 Indoor Rules Book
- 5) NCAA 2020 and 2021 Women's Volleyball Rules and Interpretations
- 6) PAVO 2020-2021 Women's Volleyball Officiating Manual
- 7) NCAA/PAVO 2020 Online Clinic - Part 2 Module 3: Ball Handling
- 8) Referee August 2016 YOU BE THE JUDGE 11 Points to Keep in Mind When Judging Ballhandling by Rachel Stringer
- 9) Referee July 2019 NFHS Points of Emphasis
- 10) NFHS Learning Center Sport Specific Course: Officiating Volleyball: Ball Handling
- 11) USA Volleyball Academy US20_312 Ball Handling Best Practices
- 12) USA Volleyball Academy US20_402 Ball Handling – Getting The Tough Calls Right
- 13) IREF Level 200 Module 6: Ball Handling (2015)
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- 15) IREF Level 400 Module 14: Ref Talks: Brian Hemelgarn – Ball Handling (2017)

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LET'S PLAY!

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COMPLETED

BALL HANDLING

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