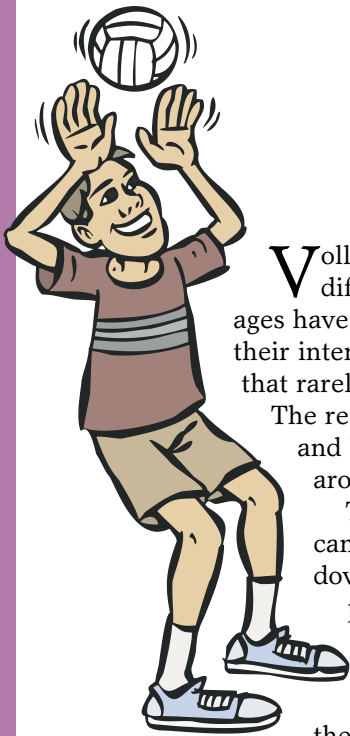




## Simplify Volleying Through Modified Game Play

by Bob Beaudet and Dan Grube



Volleyball, by its very nature, is a difficult game to play. Players at all ages have a hard time hitting the ball to their intended targets, resulting in rallies that rarely last more than one or two hits.

The resulting game, then, is slow paced and boring, with a lot of standing around and little activity time.

The following lead-up games can be used to simplify and slow down the game of volleyball so that players can experience more success during play. In these modified games, players are able to utilize and improve

their abilities relative to the basic skills of the game. As skills improve

and rallies last longer than the typical one or two hits, students are more likely to begin using basic offensive and defensive strategies important to the game. With these modified games, play will become more continuous and competitive, causing students to exert a higher degree of movement, and realize that the game can indeed be enjoyable.

### Four Square

**Equipment needed:** One eight inch playground ball (or volleyball) per group and floor tape to mark a 12-foot by 12-foot squares which includes four six-foot boxes.

**Number of players:** Four, one per square

**Grade levels:** Third and up

**Object:** Four players start, with each assigned to a square. Squares are marked A, B, C, and D. The object is to knock out a player with a higher letter in order to move up from letter D to letter A.

### Rules

- ⓐ Player in box A bounces the ball once in their own square and then serves the ball *underhand* to a player in another box.
- ⓑ The ball must bounce before a player hits it.
- ⓒ A ball that bounces in a player's box must be hit into another player's box. A ball may be hit back to any box at any time.
- ⓓ A ball must be hit using an underhand striking pattern with one or two hands.
- ⓔ Play continues until either the ball bounces twice in a player's box, the ball is hit before it bounces, the ball is hit so it bounces in the same box, or the ball is hit so it bounces outside all the boxes.
- ⓕ A player making an errant hit moves from their box to the D box. The other players all move up. The player in Box A then serves again.

*Note:* The fewer rules in four-square, the better the game will be. Children can govern their own games while focusing on the proper underhand striking pattern.

**Purpose:** (a) work on skills that will be used in Boundball (the next activity) and volleyball; (b) work on basic offensive and defensive strategies used in volleyball.

**Offense:** Hit the ball so other players cannot return it. Hit it to another player's weakness.

**Defense:** Protect your space. Move your feet to position yourself to hit the ball. Move your body to anticipate hits from other boxes.

### Boundball

**Equipment:** One regular volleyball or volleyball trainer

**One court:** Size can vary depending on number of players and player abilities.

**Option:** Can be played without a net or with a net that is close to the ground

**Number of players:** Can vary from two to six per side.

**Grade levels:** Fourth grade and up.

**Rules:** This game is played with the same rules as a regular volleyball game except

- Ⓢ Before a player can hit the ball, the ball must bounce.
- Ⓢ There is either no net (just a center line) or a net strung close to the ground.
- Ⓢ To start a point, the server hits an underhand serve over the midline. Because there is no net, or a low net, to keep play moving, the serve must be at least head high.
- Ⓢ After the ball bounces, the receiving team attempts to hit the ball back to the serving team in no more than three hits.
- Ⓢ After each hit, the ball must bounce once before a different player can hit it.

**Purpose:** Because the ball must bounce, play slows down. This allows rallies to last longer. Because rallies last longer, students have an opportunity to implement the forearm pass, set, spike sequence on offense and utilize basic defensive strategies such as covering the whole court, anticipating where the ball may be hit, and moving to get in position to hit the ball. Play can be limited to just the forearm pass based on age and experience level of the players.

## Newcomb

**Equipment:** A court and a volleyball or volleyball trainer

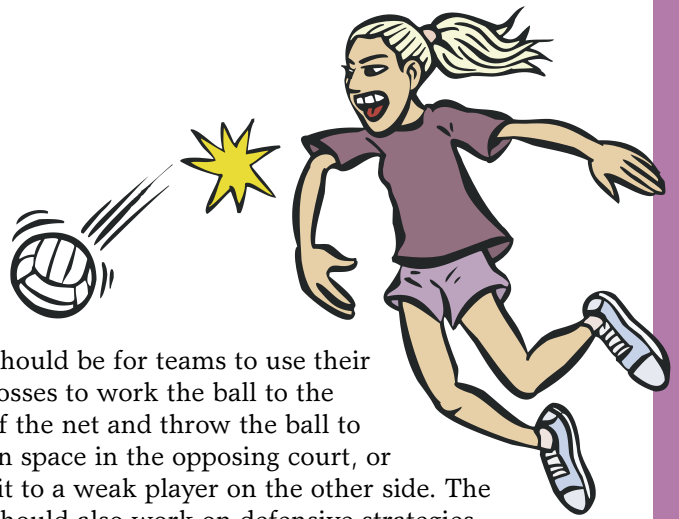
**Number of players:** Can vary from two to six per side

**Grade levels:** Fourth grade and up

### Rules

- Ⓢ Played similar to volleyball except the ball is *thrown* over the net to the opponents' side. The opponents catch the ball and can use up to two throws before using the third throw to get the ball back over the net.
- Ⓢ Use the same alignment, service, and rotation as in regulation volleyball.
- Ⓢ Rally scoring is used to award points. In other words, whenever the ball hits the floor, goes out of bounds, goes under the net, or an errant play is made by either opponent, a point is awarded. Thus, scoring is continuous.

**Purpose:** Like Boundball, Newcomb slows the game down and allows for extended rallies. The focus of the



game should be for teams to use their three tosses to work the ball to the front of the net and throw the ball to an open space in the opposing court, or throw it to a weak player on the other side. The game should also work on defensive strategies such as covering the whole court, anticipating where the ball will be thrown, and moving to the ball.

**Variation:** Since the goal of these lead-up games is to work up to a regular game of volleyball, hits can be worked in with catches and tosses. For example, as the ball comes over the net the first player might catch the ball and toss it to the setter. The setter can then toss the ball to a third player who may attempt a spike.

## One Catch Volleyball

**Equipment:** A court and a volleyball or volleyball trainer

**Number of players:** can vary from two to six per side

**Grade levels:** Fifth grade and up

### Rules

- Ⓢ This game is played with the rules of volleyball with one exception. Each side is allowed three hits to get the ball over the net. However, one of those three hits can be a catch and toss instead of a hit.

**Purpose:** Volleyball is fun when it is continuous. By allowing one catch and toss per three hits, play is more controlled, rallies last longer, students begin to understand the strategies, and the joy of the game can be experienced.

In conclusion, the four progressive activities suggested above can be used to ease the difficulty of teaching and learning volleyball in physical education classes. The activities can be used sequentially within a longer unit of instruction or individually, when revisiting the skill theme of volleying over several lessons during the year. These activities can be used for students in the middle to upper elementary grades all the way through high school. To keep students interested and motivated to continue practicing and applying the skill of volleying, one can vary these activities by adding complexity such as new rules, types of hits, and/or the number of players. This will continue to increase opportunities to use the skill in a dynamic environment. Ⓢ