

# SERVING –THINK ABOUT IT!

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The effect a good server can have on a match is underrated in volleyball—especially women’s volleyball with the shorter net. Many coaches know a good server can be valuable to a team, but it seems that players don’t realize the value of control and placement in serving to work at it. Instead, many think it’s something they do at the end of practice as a mindless cool-down or a rest between killer drills.

The serve should be used aggressively to attack an opponent’s serve-reception pattern. A successful server doesn’t always result in an **ace**, but a pass that limits what the opponent can do offensively is **great**. As a server, one should know what their most effective serve is (float, spin, jump) and the correct time to rip or place the serve.

Other considerations that a player should know before the start of the match (or should learn as soon as possible) are:

- ⇒ The opponent’s weak passers
- ⇒ The type of serve-reception pattern the opponent uses
- ⇒ The path of the setter’s release

**With that in mind, all you have to do is execute.**

## WHO TO SERVE

Work the weak passer as much as possible. A pass that only gets to the 10-foot line is a good result because the team can’t run a quick attack—which is one less option for the serving team to defend. It is easier for the blockers and defense to prepare for the slower outside attack than a quick set to the middle.

Passers are comfortable passing a ball in front between their hips and knees. So as servers, you should force them to pass off-center and high or short and to the side.

## WHERE TO SERVE

In a three person serve receive begin with serving hard down the line. Make them pass the ball on the side at shoulder level.

Next, you can serve the seam between the passers. Optimally, drive ball hard at the right shoulder of the right passer. It’s high and to the right side, which is an awkward place for a passer to control the ball. Or serve the seam between the left and middle passer, at the right shoulder of the middle passer.

Finally, for the left passer, drive the serve right at their chest and make them decide how to pass the ball. The key is driving the ball so they won’t have time to make the decision.

## OTHER OPTIONS

Serving the seams between the passers forces them to decide who will pass the ball—possibly causing some confusion while also making them move to pass. Also, serving the eligible front row outside hitter deep and away from where they usually like to go to hit can take them out of the play. Mix in a few short serves between two of the passers to cause more problems.

## PREPARATION

In practice, work on all your serves. It's better to rip it first to develop speed with a serve, then learn to control the location with that speed. Also realize what the purpose of the drill is in practice. If it's a passing drill, work on your contact for the float serve and serving at seams or at parts of the passers' bodies. Passers hate servers missing a lot of serves in passing drills.

If it's a serving drill, then you can go for the ace with your spin and jump serves.