



Serving

Teaching the athletes a repeatable routine to use each time they approach the service line is the most critical factor for a successful serve. The athletes either are coming off the bench to serve or have just been involved in a strenuous play on the court; in either case, having a steady routine for them to fall back on will give them the confidence to serve their team to a point.

Underhand Serve

Description – Underhand Serve

The athlete should position the feet behind the service line, shoulder width apart and facing perpendicular to the endline (as if planning to hit a golf ball or softball over the net). The athlete will do the following: Hold the ball in the off hand in front of the body, palm up. With the off hand, toss the ball approximately .3 meters (1 foot) straight up in the air. As the ball is coming down, swing the dominant hand with a closed fist across the body in a natural motion into the bottom third of the ball, toward the net. The amount of force the athlete needs to apply is determined by how far into the opposing court the serve is intended to land.







Special Olympics Volleyball Coaching Guide Teaching Volleyball Skills

Skill Progression – Underhand Serve

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Accurately toss the ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make contact with the ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strike the ball with a rigid, consistent contact point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get a legal underhand serve over the net	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get a legal underhand serve over the net and inbounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accurately place the ball to a designated place on the court	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

- Many athletes will not be strong enough initially to get the ball over the net from the regulation endline. If Modified competition is offered in your program, an accommodation can be made to allow these athletes to move closer to the net when they serve. These athletes should be encouraged at practices to slowly move back toward the legal service line as their strength and confidence increases, eventually serving from the regulation endline.
- Some athletes may have a physical limitation with their off hand such that they cannot toss the ball accurately with that hand. It is legal to both toss and hit the ball using only the dominant hand. Athletes can even toss the ball with both hands if that will help produce a more consistently accurate toss.
- Practicing with a whistle to initiate the serve is helpful so that athletes are practicing under the same conditions they will experience at competitions.







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Faults & Fixes – Underhand Serve

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete executes an inaccurate toss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice tossing the ball with the off hand. • Have the athlete use the dominant hand to toss the ball. • Have the athlete use a two-handed toss. 	Ball Toss drill
Athlete misses hitting the correct spot on the ball (despite a good toss)	Have the athlete practice hitting the ball with the dominant hand directly out of the off hand – no toss. Once the athlete has improved the arm swing motion, slowly reintroduce the toss.	Serve to Target
Athlete consistently serves short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the athlete understands to use the entire upper body for power, and not just the elbow. • Teach the athlete to strike the ball with a rigid striking surface such as a closed fist. • Have the athlete focus on swinging through the ball, rather than stopping at the point of contact. 	Serve to Target
Athlete consistently serves into the net hard	The athlete is strong enough; he or she needs to hit slightly under the ball to give it more arc.	Serve to Target
Athlete consistently serves left or right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The athlete may be twisting the body in one direction or the other with the arm swing. • The athlete may be curling the dominant arm inward with the elbow rather than swinging the entire arm as one unit. <p>In either case, the correction is to minimize body movement during the arm swing.</p>	Serve to Target
Athlete serves the ball long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the athlete to swing the arm slower. • Have athlete move back farther if space allows. 	Serve to Target



Overhand Serve

The athlete's position is behind the service line, facing the net, with the feet slightly staggered shoulder width apart. The foot opposite the dominant hand should be slightly forward (left forward for a right handed athlete), toes pointing at the spot the server is aiming at, with his/her body weight resting primarily on the back foot. The athlete should hold the ball in the off hand at arm's length in front of the body, palm up. The dominant arm should be held above the shoulder, with the elbow at the same height as the ear and pointing backward, and the hand pointing forward ("thumb in the ear" or "drawing the bowstring").

The athlete will do the following: Softly toss the ball 1 meter (3 feet) in the air so that it passes in front of the dominant shoulder. Shift the weight from the back foot to the front foot by leaning forward, and rotate the dominant arm high and into the path of the ball. Sharply strike the ball with an open hand, aiming at a point slightly above the height of the net. Follow through on the arm swing, rotating the upper body for more power.

A "roundhouse" service style also works for many athletes. The athlete is positioned in the same fashion as the traditional underhand service style described in the previous section. Instead of holding the ball waist high and swinging the arm at that height across the body, the athlete will hold the ball at shoulder height, toss the ball above the head and swing the arm to contact the ball above the head in one "roundhouse" motion.





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Skill Progression – Overhand Serve

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Accurately toss the ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make contact with the ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strike the ball with a rigid, consistent contact point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get a legal overhand serve over the net	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get a legal overhand serve over the net and inbounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accurately place the ball to a designated place on the court	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

The most common problem in an overhand serve is a bad toss. Many Special Olympics athletes lack the coordination with one hand to make a consistent toss. A solution that can work for some of these athletes is to have them use two hands on their toss. Everything mechanically remains the same except that the athlete uses both hands for the toss instead of one, and the ball needs to be tossed higher than normal to give the athlete time to raise the arm and swing.

The second most common problem is poor mechanics in the arm swing. Often, Special Olympics athletes have never been taught the correct way to throw a ball, which exactly translates into the overhead hitting motion used in volleyball. The correction for this problem in hitting a volleyball is to replace the volleyball with a tennis ball or other small round ball, and simply practice an overhead throwing motion correctly. The athletes should continue to use the underhand serve until they can effectively throw any ball overhead, at which time they can begin practicing an overhead serve.



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Faults & Fixes – Overhand Serve

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete executes an inaccurate toss	Practice an accurate toss.	Ball Toss Drill
Athlete misses the ball	Practice an accurate toss	Ball Toss Drill
Athlete consistently serves into the net hard	Have the athlete toss the ball slightly higher and focus on hitting the ball “up” rather than straight ahead, aiming for an imaginary spot higher than the net.	Serve To Target Drill
Athlete consistently serves into the net short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the athlete to swing the arm faster. • Teach the athlete to strike the ball with a rigid striking surface instead of a loose hand. • Make sure the athlete’s arm is fully extended above the head when making contact with the ball. 	Serve To Target Drill
Athlete consistently serves left or right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the accuracy of the toss; if the ball is tossed anywhere except in front of the dominant shoulder, the serve will tend to go out of bounds. • Adjust how the athlete is positioned at the service line; toes should point toward the target, avoiding excessive upper body movement. 	Ball Toss Drill/ Serve To Target Drill
Athlete serves the ball long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the athlete to swing the arm slower. 	Serve To Target Drill



Serve Drills (Underhand and Overhand)

The drills listed here can be used for both Underhand and Overhand Serving.

Ball Toss Drill

Drill Description

Have the athlete assume the correct serving position (perpendicular to the endline, feet shoulder width apart, off hand holding the ball in front, palm up). The athlete will repeatedly toss the ball straight up and back down into the same hand. The height of the toss will initially be very low, perhaps only a few centimeters (2 inches). Once the athlete has gained confidence with a very low toss, slowly increase the height of the toss until the athlete can consistently toss the ball straight up and down 0.3 meters (1 foot).



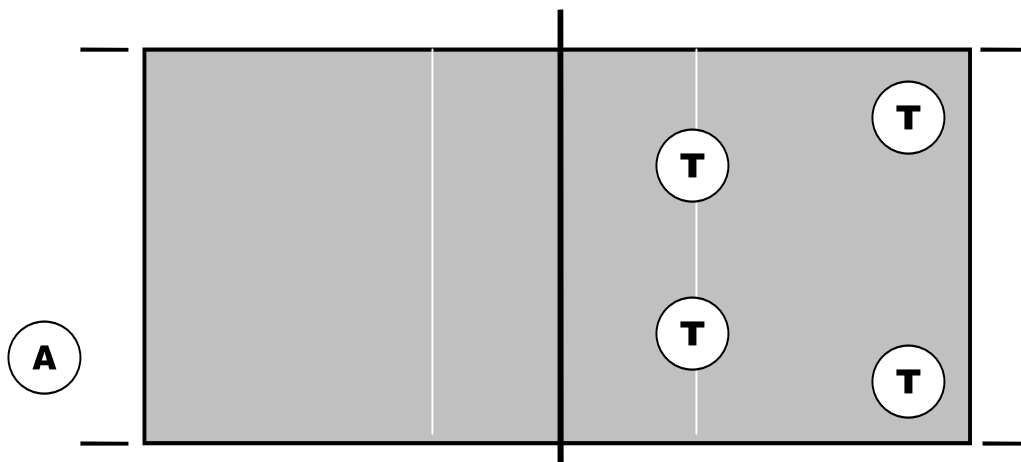
Serve to Target Drill

Drill Description

Have the athlete assume the correct serving position. The coach will place targets on the opposite side of the net – two targets 3 meters (10 feet) from the net and 2 meters (6 feet) from each sideline; two targets 2 meters (6 feet) from the back line and 1 meter (3 feet) from each sideline. The targets can be folding chairs laid flat, open newspapers, chalk outlines, or even teammates sitting or lying on the floor. The targets should all be horizontal to better train the servers to serve into the court but away from the opposing players who will be standing (vertical).



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Each athlete will serve 10 balls to these targets as verbally and visually identified by the coach (deep right, short left, etc.). Immediately following each serve, the athlete will run to a prescribed defensive position on the court, mimicking game conditions, and then run back to the service line for the next serve. For each target the athlete can hit, one point is awarded. As an example, each athlete can have personal performance goals to raise their score of 3 points at the first practice to 6 points by the end of the season.

A variation for athletes who lack the strength to get the ball over the net from the regulation endline is to position them at the 3-meter (10-foot) line for the drill. This will allow them to practice their basic mechanics while gaining the strength they will need to eventually serve from behind the endline. Slowly moving these athletes away from the net will increase their confidence as they get stronger.