

FALL 2026 VOLLEYBALL RULES

(Updated 7/14/26)

*Recent rule changes will appear highlighted and italicized.***Rule 1: Facility**

1. All matches will be played at the Field House South Gym unless otherwise noted. Alcohol and tobacco are not permitted inside the facility, or in the parking lot.

Rule 2: Player Eligibility

1. All Intramural Sports eligibility rules apply. Please check the [Intramural Sports Rules and Regulations](#) carefully.
2. Prior to participating, all players must check-in with the Sport Programs Supervisor. To check-in, each participant must have a photo available through IMLeagues, or must provide a University of Iowa or government-issued photo ID.

Rule 3: Team Composition

1. The match shall be played between two teams of six players each.
 - a. A minimum of four players is required to avoid a forfeit.
2. For Co-Rec volleyball leagues, teams must always have a minimum of one man and one woman on the court. Additionally, a team's on-court lineup can never have a gender difference greater than two.

Rule 4: Equipment

1. Caps with bills are not allowed during intramural play. Rubber or elastic bands may only be used to control hair.
2. Athletic shoes and athletic attire are required.
3. Jewelry is permitted; however, the Sport Programs staff reserves the right to require any jewelry or items to be removed that is deemed unsafe.

Rule 5: Beginning a Match

1. Before the start of the match, opposing captains will compete in rock-paper-scissors, the winning captain shall choose one of the following options.
 - a. Team area
 - b. Service
 - i. If the captain chooses the serve, their team will serve the first set and the third set, if needed.
 - ii. The loser of rock-paper-scissors will serve the second set. After each set of a match, the teams will change playing areas.
 - iii. In the third set, teams will change sides once a team has scored eight points.
2. All matches will start at their designated times. There is a 10-minute grace period until forfeit is declared. Sport Programs Supervisors will declare a contest a forfeit and have the discretion to amend the 10-minute forfeit time rule in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

Rule 6: Match Procedures

1. The first team to win the best 2-out-of-3 sets wins the match. Sets one and two will be played to 25 points with rally scoring, and a team must win by two. There is a cap of 30 points, meaning a team could win 30-29. Set three will be played to 15 points with rally scoring, must win by two, and the cap becomes 20 points.

2. Court Boundary: The ball will be declared out-of-bounds if it hits a basketball goal, rope, wall, or any other object not part of the court. A team may play the ball off the ceiling on its own side. A struck ball that hits the ceiling before or after traveling to the opponent's side of the net shall result in the attacking team losing serve and a point. A ball being over any part of a boundary line when landing is in. It is permissible to run out-of-bounds to play a ball. The ball is dead when it touches a net antenna or does not pass entirely between the net antennas.
3. Net Height: 8' for Men's/Open and Co-Rec play; 7'4" for Women's play.
4. Time-outs: Each team can call one 30-second time-out in each set.
5. Rotation: All players are required to play every position on the court as they rotate. Players will rotate clockwise to the next position after their team sides out. Each player must play all six positions including three in the front row and three in the back row, or two in the back row if a team is playing with less than six players. The positions must be played in the clockwise order, or the other team will be awarded a point and the serve. (Ex: The server rotates to middle back, middle back rotates to left back, left back rotates to left front, left front rotates to middle front, middle front rotates to right front, and right front rotates to serving position). If facing the net, the serving position will always be in the back row on the right.

Rule 7: Substitutions

1. *Substitutions may only be made on a rotation basis. Following a point won by the receiving team and the subsequent rotation, the front right player may exit the game, and a substitute may enter the game in the right back position. (Updated Summer 2026)*
 - a. *Example: After being awarded the serve, A1 (sub) steps into serve and the front right player steps off during rotation.*
2. *All substitutes must make one complete rotation. (Updated Summer 2026)*
3. *A player late in arriving for a team of less than six can only rotate in when their team has the serve and must enter in the right back position. (Updated Summer 2026)*
4. *Substitution Procedure: (Updated Summer 2026)*
 - a. *The substitute must enter the substitution zone. The substitution zone is located between the center line and attack line on either team's side of the court by the 2nd Referee.*
 - b. *The 2nd Referee will whistle and signal the substitute into the game at the next dead ball.*

Rule 7: Game Play

1. The Serve: The server shall stand with both feet behind the rear boundary line and serve from any position behind the boundary line. There are no restrictions as to how the ball may be served except that it must be clearly hit, not thrown or pushed.
 - a. It is illegal for the receiving team to block or spike the ball directly off a serve.
2. Legal Contact: Legal contact is a touch of the ball by a player's body, above and below the waist. Players are not permitted to scoop, hold, or throw the ball. The ball must not visibly come to rest on the player's hands, fingers, or any other part of the body.
 - a. A player shall not make successive contacts with the ball unless they have blocked a ball at the net.
3. A ball, other than a serve, may be recovered from the net provided the player avoids contact with the net and does not catch or hold the ball.
4. The ball must always be returned over the net by the third contact unless a block is the initial contact in which case the ball must be returned by the fourth contact.
5. Blocking: Blocking is an act at the net which intercepts the ball coming from the opponent's side by contacting the ball as it crosses the net, before it crosses the net, or immediately after it crosses the net.

- a. An attempt to block does not constitute a block unless the ball is contacted during an attempt.
 - b. Only front row players may block.
 - c. The team that has blocked shall have the right to three more contacts with the ball to return it to the opponent's side.
 - d. When the ball, after having touched the top of the net and the opponent's block, returns to the attacker's side, the team then has the right of three more contacts to return the ball to the opponent's area.
6. Net play: A player may:
- a. Reach under the net if one doesn't interfere with an opponent's attempt to play the ball.
 - b. Reach over the net to complete a spike which began on the player's own side of the net.
 - c. Reach over the net to block, but not interfere with the opposing team's play.
 - d. Have their foot touching the opponent's court as long as some part of the foot is on the sideline.
 - e. NOT touch the net.
7. Back-Row Play: A back-row player is allowed freedom in moving about the court but may not jump and attack ("spike" or "kill" the ball) in front of the 10-foot line. A back-row player may never block the ball. Players must be in legal positions until the ball is served. When playing with only four or five players, two players will be considered back row players, with the latest server being one.

Rule 8: Officials

1. The official(s) shall have the authority to warn, penalize, or disqualify any player(s), substitute, or spectators for violations of sportsmanship including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Disrespectfully addressing an official or staff member.
 - b. Questioning the official's judgment or decisions.
 - c. Use of disconcerting acts or words when an opponent is about to play the ball.
 - d. Showing disgust with official's decisions.
 - e. Using profane or insulting language or gestures toward an official or other player.
 - f. Baiting players of the opposing team.
 - g. Disrupting the game so that it may not be continued in an orderly fashion.
2. Players, and spectators conducting themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner shall be assessed penalties in the following manner:
 - a. A yellow card will be issued as a warning.
 - b. A second yellow card will result in a point/loss of rally awarded to the opponent. This is equivalent to a red card. If one player receives two yellow cards, it will result in an ejection.
 - c. A red card issued alone for a single offense will result in a point/loss of rally to the opponent. A red card will also result in an ejection for the offending player from the remainder of the match.
3. The official shall have the power to declare side out, award points, enforce substitution procedure, and determine rule infractions.

Rule 9: Unified Volleyball Differences

1. Unified Volleyball is played with a larger, softer volleyball
2. After an attacking hit that crosses sides of the net, the receiving team is allowed to let the ball contact the ground once before playing the ball.
 - a. The initial ground contact must land in bounds for the ball to be live. The ball can then carry out of bounds after the initial ground contact and still be considered in-bounds.
 - b. If the ball contacts the ground twice consecutively without the receiving team touching the ball, the ball will be judged in-bounds or out of bounds based on the first ground contact.

- c. The ball is not allowed to contact the ground besides the initial contact when receiving an attack.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If there is inclement weather and Intramural Sports are scheduled, check the [Intramural Sports website](#) for cancellation information. The Sport Programs Staff will also attempt to notify participants scheduled to play that night. You can also sign-up for Intramural Sports notifications through the [Recreational Services app](#).