



JVA Training Curriculum

12U

[Overview](#)

This is the Foundation Phase, also nicknamed the “*Romance State*” when players truly develop their love for the sport of volleyball. The overall goals for this age are to develop individual skills, understand basic team tactics, and grow the passion for modeling the game.

The impact of a role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical. Players of this age have a high arousal level in relation to the training of basic skills. This is the “golden age of learning” and the most important age for development of skill and love of the game. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by “doing.” This is also an important time to introduce and teach principles of team play and teamwork. It is critical to establish discipline from the beginning.

[Coach Description, Requirements and Role](#)

An ideal 12U Coach is a teacher and enthusiast who possesses volleyball skills and knowledge of key factors of basic team development/management. A 12U Coach should have the ability to demonstrate or utilize someone who can (Assistant Coach, create modeling with older players). A 12U Coach needs to give a lot of encouragement.

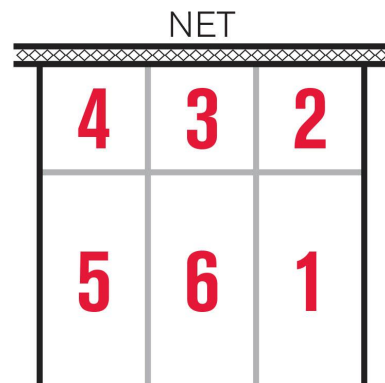
A 12U Coach has the important role of establishing a strong, solid training culture among the athletes and team. Teaching correct skill development and proper technique is essential. The coach must also emphasize that there will be no more parents coaching from the sidelines, or feedback during practice or games, unless the athlete is hurt or there is an emergency. In addition, the athletes need to be encouraged to communicate directly with their coach in regards to their playing time and skill development. The coach should be transparent when possible.

At this age it is important to find the right times for the athletes to learn to work through tough situations during a game, even if it means dropping a set or losing some points. The athletes need to have the opportunity to fail and grow from it.

Skill Development

Serving

- Technique:
 - Posture
 - right handed servers = left foot slightly in front of right
 - left handed servers = right foot slightly in front of left
 - toes pointed towards target
 - Toss
 - able to toss ball consistently in front of your hitting shoulder
 - Arm Swing
 - start with high hand and elbow back by ear
 - Hand Contact
 - contact the ball with the palm of the hand so there is a pop on the ball to create the float serve. If there is pop on the ball there is good contact with the palm. If it is only the heel of the hand that contacts the ball, a thud sound, and if towards the fingers it sounds like a slap.
 - Weight Transfer
 - understand how to take one step and rotate hip through the ball to generate speed and power
- Mentality
 - no back to back errors as a team or individual
 - make the opponent pass after timeout (don't miss a serve after timeout)
 - serve the sub
 - stay away from libero
 - deep court serves
- Result
 - able to serve all 6 zones
 - able to serve below a serving cord (between top of the antenna and the top of net tape)
 - serve ball at 30mph. The ball begins to move/float at 28 mph



- introduce the jump float serve. It may not be used in competition, but it needs to be ready for refinement by 13U

Serve Receive/Passing

Players need to develop a soft touch/sound platform...not swing. Players will learn the basics of platform adjustment (tilt). Players will learn basic movement (load and launch/shuffle step).

- Technique
 - Footwork
 - ability to shuffle behind the ball, drop step and t-stop
 - don't let platform drop between legs when moving
 - Players should not be taking crossover steps when passing a serve receive ball or free ball
 - Posture
 - feet at least shoulder width apart. You can consider feet more than shoulder width apart for more balance and platform area between the knees
 - medium height posture (not super low)
 - bend at the knees and ankles to create a bottom down position
 - knees over toes, shoulders over knees
 - head forward and thumbnails pointed towards the ground
 - Eye Work
 - introduce reading a serve
 - identify if it is going short or deep based on speed of ball and servers arm
 - make athlete say short, mine or deep as the ball is coming to them
 - begin to introduce terminology of serves
 - top spin = drop ball
 - float = going to move side to side
 - Touch
 - introduce slow ball PUSH faster with shoulders
 - introduce fast ball PUSH slower with shoulders
 - learn how to cushion the ball for a soft pass and understand "quiet" platform skills.



- Angels
 - understanding how to create an angle by dropping the shoulder to point “platform to target”
 - left and middle back = take the ball midline or off to your left
- Mentality
 - no ball hits the ground without effort
 - no fear to pass the serve, want the ball
- Result
 - being able to pass a ball to target
 - pass grade goal = 2.0 on a 3.0 scale
 - consistently pass free balls to target 60-70%
 - Consistently receive serve to target 45-55%

Setting

This is the age where you should start identifying future setters. Seek out your best natural athletes (regardless of height) and encourage them to set. Stress the fact that they will be involved in every rally and will become the focal point of every team they play for. Have multiple athletes training as setters to create a large pool that will shrink as the athletes move up in age groups.

- Technique
 - Footwork
 - understand footwork to target position
 - able to do *left, right, set* footwork and 4 step footwork to set a pass 10 feet off of the net using *left, right, left, right* footwork
 - able to get hips around the ball and square to the target
 - receive ball over top of forehead (ball should hit your forehead if it were to slip through hands)
 - semi-circle footwork- every setter should be able to do proper footwork to a ball in front of target, off the net and behind the target
 - Hand Shape
 - hands in shape of a ball, small triangle and thumbs back
 - pointer finger and thumbs should have even distance of space
 - understand “wrinkles in wrist” and thumbs back
 - finishing with a small triangle follow-through every time



- receiving balls with elbows bent and release with elbows straight
- players as young as 10U can start with medicine balls to improve hand and upper body strength
- emphasize starting with big hands, finishing with big hands when releasing the ball and freezing with big hands.
- Legs
 - understand knees bent when you receive the ball/straight when you release the ball
 - legs are what helps you push the ball to target
 - must have feet under the ball so you can take the weight transfer step
- Out of System Setting
 - every athlete should be able to platform set a ball 5 feet off of the net and 5 feet inside the court
 - To platform set an out of system ball take the ball sideways and down/up body weight to target
- Mentality/Decision Making
 - introduce to athlete that setting is not like “passing out candy”, not everyone gets the same amount
 - begin to teach the athlete to set the “hot” hitter when they are on
 - you can give the same hitter multiple sets in a row
 - introduce the setter being an offensive option
- Result
 - LOCATION IS KEY AT ALL AGE GROUPS
 - put up a hittable ball
 - able to set a 4, 2 and 8 all with hips square to the outside target
 - able to platform set an out of system ball 5 feet off and 5 feet inside the court at 60% accuracy

Attacking

- Technique
 - Footwork and Posture
 - FEET TO THE BALL
 - able to make correct 3-step approach (1st step = drive step and 2nd/3rd step = plant step)
 - shoulders forward
 - understand arms forward on first step and back on plant step
 - use arms to explode off the ground

- understand how to jump straight up
- floating is minimal
- able to do proper block transition footwork
 - step, cross, hop footwork
- able to do proper base to read defense to transition footwork
 - step, cross hop footwork
- able to do proper serve receive to transition footwork
 - turn, run, slant to get all the way outside (even with the 10ft. line)
- Hand Contact
 - Spend quality time perfecting the hand contact. Teach the hard, wide hand, shaped like the ball.
 - understand how to apply top spin to ball by snapping wrist. Creating spin is the number one thing to learn as a young player
 - understand to contact the ball with arm fully extended
- Mentality
 - If you make a mistake, make an aggressive mistake
 - Always want the ball even after an error
 - Approach hard on every ball
- Result
 - hit a ball to zone 1 and 5
 - block, serve receive and play defense then transition to make approach
 - understand body-to-ball position (Is a ball hittable)
 - attacking 60-70% of 3rd contact balls

Defense

It is very important to teach this age group to execute floor techniques. This will help keep the athletes from getting hurt or sliding on their knees. It is also important to repeat footwork appropriate for ball play during training such as run throughs, shuffles, run to the ball and jump stop.



- Technique
 - Footwork
 - step, cross hop for base to read
 - shuffle through a defensive ball

- take a big first step to the ball by pushing off opposite leg
- step to the ball and then push off FRONT leg to increase defensive range
- introduce floor moves and how to execute them (STAYING OFF YOUR KNEE), such as run and roll, run and slide, side layout, barrel roll.
- Posture
 - bending at the knees not the waist
 - bending at the ankles
 - weight forward
 - head and shoulders forward (lead with the head)
 - hands neutral to be able to play balls with platform or hands
- Positioning
 - understanding base to read and moving to the dig position for one of these systems
 - perimeter
 - rotation
- Mentality
 - defense is an Attitude
 - all out pursuit
 - every ball is YOUR ball. No hesitation
 - mentality to KEEP BALL OFF THE FLOOR
- Result
 - no ball hits the floor
 - be able to dig balls high and off the net
 - perform basic defensive components: Position, Posture, Passion
 - show an understanding of basic defensive systems (freeball, down ball, etc.).
 - dig downballs to target 50-55%



Blocking

This is the skill you can spend the least amount of time training and focusing on, however it is still important for the players to learn the proper technique, basic footwork, and understand the basic goals of blocking.

- Technique

- Footwork
 - feet shoulder width apart, legs loaded
 - space between you and net
 - step, cross, hop for middle blocking footwork
- Hand Shape
 - fingers spread apart
 - thumbs pointed towards ceiling
 - understand going over the net not straight up
- Set Up & Timing
 - pin blocker set the block
 - hitter's hitting shoulder should slice the pin blocker in half
 - athlete jumps when their attacking arm starts to go forward
 - understand if the setter is in front row or back row and who your hitter is
 - only single blocking the middles at this age
- Vision
 - introduce on, off, over eye work
- Mentality
 - learn how to get in front of the hitter every time
 - block the path before blocking the ball
- Result
 - be able to find your hitter
 - be able to do proper footwork to get in front of your hitter
 - understand a stuff block isn't the only successful block
 - teach slowing ball down is equally as helpful

Team Systems Development

- Positions: Even though at this age players will play a variety of positions, they should have a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the setter, the left side hitter, middle hitter, and the libero.
- Players should understand who they are opposite from in the line-up to help them with rotations.
- Players should know the rules of the libero position (how they rotate, setting in front of the ten foot line, who they can serve for)
- Court awareness: Knowing when a ball is out of bounds. Transitioning off the court to hit, setters getting to the net first. Defense according to opponent hitting angles and set.

- Importance of communication with teammates, MINE, OUT, IN, etc. Learn it early.
- Players should understand 3 across serve-receive formation
- Offensive Systems: 4-2, 6-2 and 5-1 offense, out of system vs. in system offense, free ball offense according to setter location

While the focus of this age group should be on maintaining balance and learning correct technique, simple defensive tactics need to occur. The tactics need to be implemented and trained, but more importantly...explained. The more cerebral athletes become at an earlier age the better the chance for Volley Savvy athletes in the older age groups. Players should play a variety of positions with emphasis placed on player development first—team development second!

Mental Development

The number one priority should be to develop pure joy for the game, and an eagerness to learn. There is so much to learn at this age, and therefore it is so important to focus on one or two concepts at a time so players do not become overwhelmed or discouraged. Effort, focus and energy should be stressed above outcome or errors. This is the age to establish a player's confidence and no fear of making mistakes.

Teaching athletes the importance of “how you practice is how you play” mentality should be established during this age, and the mindset of improving with every training session.

A player must learn to not be afraid of the ball or the floor. A player should be able to dig a hard driven down ball attack and confidently receive a topspin serve without fear or concern for their well being. Consequently, the athlete should be able/comfortable going to the floor in relentless pursuit of the ball.

Teach the importance of respecting the opponent and having good sportsmanship, while also developing the hunger to compete and win.

Strength and Agility Development

It is recommended to do all fitness with the ball, and in fun engaging activities.

- Flexibility
- Agility
- Quickness
- Leg strength
- Speed
- Balance
- Plyometrics

At the 12U level athletes should start to develop an idea for how to win games (serving certain people, hitting open spots on the court, going after someone who is struggling). They can begin to understand the preparation that can be done before a match, and gain independence, as well as leadership skills by doing the little things consistently. Athletes can begin to visualize the things they do well before a match to get their mind focused, and understand that it is the work put in when no one is watching that separates the GOOD athletes from the GREAT athletes.