How to Serve a Volleyball: Overhand Serve

Serving is one of the fundamental skills in volleyball—to be a good player, you have to be a good server. A killer serve is the first step to solid, offensive volleyball and will keep your opponent off balance by limiting their own offensive opportunities. There are two main types of serves in volleyball: The underhand serve and the overhand serve. Both types of serves can be broken down into three main components:

**Serving posture:** The athlete’s body position—correct weight distribution and ideal arm and foot placement—before the actual serve.

**The toss:** The lifting or throwing of the ball into the air before contact is made. Discussions about the toss usually focus on correct ball positioning, the ideal toss height for each type of serve, and preferred toss techniques.

**Contact point:** The position of the server’s hand upon the moment of contact. The contact point is significant because it determines the trajectory of the ball.

**Overhand Serve**

Once you master the underhanded method, you might want to consider learning how to overhand serve. While the former is great for putting the ball into play, it is easy for the opponent to pass, and the overhand serve—generally faster and more powerful than its underhand counterpart—is far more aggressive and can be used as a valuable offensive weapon.

**Serving Posture**

The belief that the overhand serve requires a significant amount of upper body strength is a myth—the majority of a server’s power is actually generated through the legs as a server’s body weight is transferred from their back foot to the front foot. Because a server’s power is determined by the ability to transfer their weight correctly, it is important to make sure your starting position is correct. Here are some things to keep in mind and notice that the overhand serving stance is not all that different from an underhanded serve position:

- Feet should be about shoulder width apart and slightly staggered (the foot opposite your hitting arm positioned in front).
- The majority of the server’s body weight should be shifted to the server’s back foot.
- Hips should be positioned so they are facing square towards the net.

**The Toss**

The toss is one of the most crucial—but often overlooked—elements of a successful overhand serve. Here are some things to keep in mind when tossing the ball for your serve:

- The server should toss the ball with the hand opposite their serving hand.
- The toss should only be two to four feet above the server’s head and tossed in front of the server’s strong hand.
- A consistent toss is the key to being a consistent server, so a server should take the extra time to practice until it is consistent.

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Contact Point
A server should aim to contact the center of the ball so as to keep the trajectory of the ball as flat as possible. A serve that is low to the net is very difficult to pass. Here are a few focus points regarding the contact point:

- You want to contact the ball on the upper part of the palm of your hand.
- Spreading your fingers as far apart as possible before contact will help ensure that you don’t contact the ball with the fingers.
- A consistent contact point will result in a consistent serve

Try the Overhand Serve
To execute the overhand serve follow the steps below:

- Start in the serving posture discussed above (staggered feet, square hips).
- Hold the ball in the hand opposite your serving arm.
- Bring the ball in front of your serving arm’s shoulder while still keeping your hips square to the net
- Gently toss the volleyball two to four feet high, in front of your serving shoulder.
- Step towards the tossed ball with the foot opposite your serving side.
- Contact the center of the ball with your serving hand.
- As you contact the ball, make sure to follow through until your serving arm is completely extended out in front of your body.
- Practice, practice, practice.

Serve it Up
Serving is one of the few skills in volleyball that one can practice alone so it is a great thing to practice if you have extra time. Also, because serving practice doesn’t require a net (hitting the ball against a wall is a good way to get reps in) you can practice almost anywhere. So take advantage and grab a ball and get to it.

Read more at: http://volleyball.isport.com/volleyball-guides/how-to-serve-a-volleyball

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