How to Serve a Volleyball: Understand 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.

This guide will discuss both basic types of serves in terms of the concepts outlined above because each stage is critical to the successful execution of the serve.

**The Underhand Serve**
The underhand serve is a great option for beginning players because it is the easiest of the three types of serves to master. Since every rally begins with a serve, the primary goal of any inexperienced server should be to just put the ball into play.

**Posture**
Practicing good underhand serving posture prepares you to be a consistent underhand server and can also prepare you for overhand serving. Here are some serving posture tips to keep in mind:
- Feet should be slightly staggered with the foot opposite your hitting arm out in front.
- The majority of the server’s body weight should be shifted to the back foot.
- Hips should be positioned so they are facing square towards the net.

**The Toss**
Though the underhand serve does not require the server to toss the ball into the air, the mechanics are still similar to the overhand serve toss:
- The server should hold the ball in the hand opposite their serving hand—the hand that will eventually hit the ball over the net.
- The server should bring the ball across their body so that the ball is positioned in front of their hitting arm.

**Contact Point**
The ideal contact point for the underhand serve is slightly below the center of the ball, because the ball needs to have an upward trajectory in order to make it over the net. Other things to keep in mind:
- The server should aim to hit the ball on the bottom half of the ball, slightly below the center of the ball.
- The point of contact determines the direction and trajectory of the served ball.

Source: http://volleyball.isport.com/volleyball-guides/how-to-serve-a-volleyball
Remember to follow-through straight ahead—the direction of your follow through will also affect the track of your serve.

Try the Underhand Serve
Now that you’re armed with a multitude of underhand serving knowledge it’s time to get on the court and start practicing.
Follow the steps below, and you’ll be a serving machine in no time:

- Start in the correct serving posture, with feet slightly staggered and hips square to the net (discussed above).
- Hold the ball in front of the hip on same side as your serving hand. (For example: if you are right handed hold the ball in front of your right hip.)
- Bring your serving arm back behind your body in a quick underhand motion.
- Step forward with the foot opposite your serving arm.
- Swing the serving arm forward towards the ball.
- Contact the ball with the heel of your hand, slightly below the center of the ball.
- Practice, practice, practice.