

Red Ball Skills Mentor's Guide

Version 1

1-04-16

Mentors:

- These guidelines are meant to assist you with your instruction and development of your trainees. The objective is to use consistent methods so all trainees follow similar paths as they move from one skill level to the next.
- You will find below 7 sections, 1 for each Skill. Within each Skill are the 3 Levels. Included are Mentor Demonstrations, Drills, Deficit Drills, and Advancement Instructions. (Some are still in TBD status)
- Please feel free to develop your own drills, and share with the mentor team by submitting updates to Harriet Rogers. Updates will be made to the master copy and posted to the website.

The Red Ball Sub Committee sincerely thanks you all for donating your time and expertise to mentor – teach – develop – encourage our current and new club members!

SKILL	Level	Description of Skill
SERVE	1	Difficulty tossing/contacting ball for overhead serve
	2	Occasionally unable to serve overhead over the net
	3	Consistently completes overhead serve into designated areas

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

Level 1

Mentor Demonstration

The mentor demonstrates the following:

- Location in the court – right back corner within arm’s length from sideline and backline
- Body position – facing toward the direction the ball will travel
- Eye contact – consider the distance to the net and to the desired destination of the ball
- Holding the ball in the non-serving hand
- Call out, “Service!”
- Connecting the serving hand to the ball – hand position and force
- Follow through – be ready to receive the returning ball

Serve Drills – Level 1

Drill #1 – Technique

This drill is performed by a minimum of 2 players and 2 mentors.

Variations can be multiple players, though a mentor is required for each side of the net.

Player 1 is on side A. His/her mentor is nearby in a position to observe yet not physically interfere with the player.

Player 2 is on side B. His/her mentor is also nearby to observe.

1) Pre-Serve

Player 1 demonstrates:

- Body position – using his/her arm to determine serving location
- Feet position – athletic and balances stance
- Ball placement – in the non-serving hand
- Eye contact with the ball
- Call out, “Service!”

2) Serve

Player 1 demonstrates:

- Contact of his/her serving hand with the ball in an upward arcing direction
- Visual tracking of the ball

3) Follow Through

Player 1 demonstrates:

- Immediate move to a defensive position, ready to receive the returning ball

4) Player 2 demonstrates readiness to receive the serve

5) Player 2 retrieves the ball, and moves to the serving position on side B

6) Player 2 performs steps 1-3

7) Player 1 performs step 4-5

This is repeated 5+ times, at the discretion of the mentors

Deficits and Drills:

Drill #2 – Tracking the ball

Train the eyes to follow the ball, establishing muscle-memory.

1) Practice eye-hand coordination with the ball

- a. back and forth between hands
- b. one-handed up and down
- c. bounce (dribble) the ball (out of the water)
- d. bounce and catch the ball (out of the water)
- e. bounce the ball off the wall and catch (out of the water)
- f. toss the ball with the mentor or fellow player (in the water)
- g. pass/set the ball with the mentor or fellow player (in the water)

Drill #3 – Keeping Balanced

Develop muscle-memory using repetition.

- 1) The player verbalizes his/her feet positioning for the serving stance, then verbalizing the steps in the Pre-Serve.
- 2) The player holds the ball in the serve position for at least 5 seconds
- 3) The player serves the ball without losing balance
- 4) The player quickly moves to a ready-position, holding that position for at least 5 seconds
Repeat these steps for a number of repetitions at the discretion of the mentor.

- This drill can be done simultaneously with the same or another drill being performed on the other side of the net
- This drill can be done simultaneously with the same or another drill being performed on the other side of the net
- The mentor can help the player develop a serve routine to also develop muscle memory.

Drill #4 – Dealing With A Fear Of Making A Mistake

- Practice the pre-serve, serve and follow through, using the above drills, variations, or new drills.
- Encourage the player to hit the ball harder or softer, depending on the issue.
- Remind the player that even the best players take risks in order to improve.
- Encourage!

Drill #5 – Serving With Physical Strength Limitations

- Demonstrate the serve using different hand contacts. For example, use the palm of the hand, or the fist, rather than the fingers.
- Have the player try these serve variations several times before ruling them out.
- Have the player experiment with switching hands, serving with the otherwise less-dominant hand.
- Have the player experiment with using his/her knees to use the body to help propel the ball.
- Remind the player to breathe – not hold his/her breath.

Advancement to SERVE Skill Level 2

Work with the player on his/her serve until s(he) can get the ball over the net 60% of the time. Once this milestone has been met, sign the player's Skills sheet as achieving a Level 2 for the SERVE.

Level 2

Player Demonstration

Have the Level 2 player demonstrate the following, as prompted by the mentor:

- “Show me your location in the court.” Look for the player to position in the right back corner within arm’s length from sideline and backline.
- “What’s your body position?” Look for the player to face toward the direction the ball will travel.
- “Tell me what’s next.” They should state (s)he is making eye contact with the ball, and is looking at the destination to send the ball.
- “Show me your pre-serve position.” The player should be holding the ball in the non-serving hand, feet positioned correctly.
- “Ok, go ahead and serve the ball.” S(he) should call out, “Service!”, following with connecting the serving hand to the ball, get the ball over the net, and follow through, ready to receive the returning ball.

Serve Drills – Level 2

Drill #6 – Remediate Issues

- 1) Pre-Serve
 - Remediate any issues by having the player practice the Pre-Serve steps.
- 2) Serve
 - Have the player practice successful serving. Notice if s(he) develops her/his own style.
- 3) Follow Through
 - After the serve, the mentor (or another player) can return the ball to the server. The server should practice retrieving the ball. An alternative is to utilize other players to receive the serve and hit the ball back to the server.
 - Another alternative is for the mentor to observe the server’s follow through in game play.
 - The player should demonstrate s(he) immediately moves to a defensive position, ready to receive the returning ball.

Advancement to SERVE Skill Level 3

- Work with the player on his/her serve until s(he) can get the ball over the net 90% of the time, consistently following up with a ready position to receive the returning ball.
- Once this milestone has been met, sign the player’s Skills sheet as achieving a Level 3 for the SERVE.

Level 3

Player Demonstration

- Have the Level 3 player demonstrate his/her serve.
- Consider prompting the player – see Player Demonstration for Level 2.

Mentor Demonstration

- Demonstrate the correct steps in the Pre-Serve, Serve, and Follow Through.
- Demonstrate changes in the serve with changes in body position.
- Demonstrate looking to place the serve, choosing a person or place to serve to, and successfully serving to the intended person or place.
- Demonstrate the toss-up serve.

Serve Drills – Level 3

Drill #7 – Remediate Issues

1) Pre-Serve

- Remediate any issues by having the player practice the Pre-Serve steps.
- At Level 3, the player should not be serving from a shallow position in the court.

2) Serve

- Remediate any issues by having the player practice the Serve steps.
- Prompt the player to verbalize where his/her serve will go, and observe what may have prevented the player from meeting his/her objective.
- Have the player practice and perfect his/her toss-up serve.
- Encourage the player to vary the force and trajectory of the serve.
- Encourage the player to vary his/her body position when serving.
- Have the player practice successful serving. Notice if s(he) develops her/his own style.

3) Follow Through

- After the serve, the mentor (or another player) can return the ball to the server. The server should practice retrieving the ball. An alternative is to utilize other players to receive the serve and hit the ball back to the server.
- Another alternative is for the mentor to observe the server's follow through in game play.
- The player should demonstrate s(he) immediately moves to a defensive position, ready to receive the returning ball.

SKILL	Level	Description of Skill
PASS / SET	1	Unable to receive and/or pass/set to a teammate
	2	Occasionally completes a pass/set to a teammate
	3	Consistently completes a pass/set to a teammate

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

Level 1

Mentor Demonstration

The mentor *demonstrates* the following:

- Verbalizing thoughts
 - Who is serving?
 - Where does (s)he tend to direct the ball?
 - Is it usually short? Long? Along the sideline? Hard and fast? Slow and high? Unpredictable?
 - Where are my teammates?
 - Who is behind me, in front of me and beside me?
 - Are they ready?
 - Where is the ball?
 - Am I ready?
- The ready position for receiving a serve
 - Balanced
 - Feet in an athletic position
 - Hands out of water and ready
 - Body facing the ball
- Thinking ahead
 - Who am I going to pass to?
 - Should I communicate with that person ahead of time?
- Verbalizing the visual tracking of the served ball
 - Where is the ball?
 - Where is it going to go?
 - I'm ready to receive the ball
- Moving to receive the ball
- Receiving the serve/passing the ball to the setter or hitter

- Verbalizing the visual tracking of the passed ball
 - Did the ball go where I wanted it to go?
 - Who did I pass it to?
 - Did s(he) successfully set it to another player?
 - Did s(he) hit it over the net?
 - Did I see who hit the ball on the opposing team?
 - Did I see the ball when it flew over the net to my side?
 - Am I tracking the ball until it is out of play?
- Following up to the ready position to respond for the 3rd hit if needed, or for the ball returning for play
- Following up when falling during play, readying for the next play
 - Getting back in position, athletic balanced stance, hands out of the water
 - Popping up out of the water when submerged
 - Visually tracking the ball

Pass/Set Drills – Level 1

Drill #1 – Pass/Set

- 1) Player 1, standing in the 2nd row, center court, holding the ball, passes the ball to Player 2 located in the right front position at the net
- 2) Player 2 sets the ball to Player 3 in the left front position at the net
- 3) Player 3 hits the ball over the net
Repeat this 3-5 times
Players switch positions in a counter clockwise fashion:
 - Player 1 moves to the right front position at the net
 - Player 2 moves to the left front position at the net
 - Player 3 moves to the second row center court position
- 4) The mentor provides instruction/critique/encouragement before the next round – when appropriate
Repeat the drill until all 3 players have been in each position
- 5) Player 2 Receive the serve / Pass
Verbal communication
Visually track the ball
Readiness
Body position
Hand positioning
Hitting the ball again after hitting it simultaneously with another player
- 6) Set
- 7) Follow Through
Help!

Getting out of the way
Popping back out of the water

Deficits and Drills:

Not tracking the ball

Losing balance in the water

Afraid of making a mistake

Physical strength

Physical response (timing)

Fear of getting hurt

Gloves

Use beach ball to practice technique and develop muscle memory

Not able to reach above the head with one or both arms

Not moving to receive the ball

Advancement to PASS / SET Skill Level 2

Work with the player on his/her serve until s(he) can consistently pass or set the ball 60% of the time.

Once this milestone has been met, sign the player's Skills sheet as achieving a Level 2 for PASS / SET.

Level 2

Player Demonstration

Have the Level 2 player demonstrate the following, as prompted by the mentor:

Pass/Set Drills – Level 2

- 1) Pass
Remediate any issues by having the player practice passing the ball.
Practice passing to different players in varying positions on the court.
- 2) Set
Remediate any issues by having the player practice setting the ball.
Practice passing to different players in varying positions on the court.
- 3) Follow Through

Advancement to PASS / SET Skill Level 3

Work with the player until s(he) can consistently pass or set the ball 90% of the time.

Once this milestone has been met, sign the player's Skills sheet as achieving a Level 3 for PASS / SET.

Level 3

Player Demonstration

Have the Level 3 player demonstrate his/her receive/pass and set.

Observe the player in game play.

Play next to or behind the player in game play to provide dynamic coaching and immediate feedback.

Encourage the player to do high sets.

Consider prompting the player – see Player Demonstration for Level 2.

Consider inviting the player to observe the mentor in blue ball play.

Mentor Demonstration

Demonstrate the correct steps in receiving the server/passing the ball.

Demonstrate the correct steps in successfully setting the ball.

Observe red ball Level 3 game play with the player (from the pool deck or via videos) and provide critique of passes and sets.

Drills

1) Pass

Increase the level of difficulty for the player to receive and pass the ball.

Provide immediate feedback.

A PASS / SET Level 3 player server should demonstrate movement toward receiving/passing and setting the ball. S(he) should not be stationary in position.

2) Set

Have the player practice setting to different players of differing skill levels, and in different positions on the court.

Discourage the player from punching or hitting the ball over the net without setting.

Have the player communicate to their teammates.

3) Follow Through

OVER NET (ATTACK/HIT)	1	Difficulty in getting over the net when at front row
	2	Occasionally gets over the net when at front row
	3	Consistently gets over the net when at front row

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

Level 1

Mentor Demonstration

The mentor should demonstrate the following:

Over Net (Attack/Hit) Drills

- 1) Body positioning
- 2) Tracking
- 3) Timing

Deficits and Drills:

- 4) Not tracking the ball
- 5) Losing balance in the water
- 6) Afraid of making a mistake
- 7) Physical strength
- 8) Physical response (timing)
- 9) Fear of getting hurt
 - Gloves
- 10) Not able to reach above the head with one or both arms
- 11) Not moving to receive the ball

Advancement to OVER NET (ATTACK/HIT) Skill Level 2

Work with the player until s(he) can consistently hit the ball over the net 60% of the time.

Once this milestone has been met, sign the player's Skills sheet as achieving a Level 2 for OVER NET (ATTACK/HIT).

Level 2

Player Demonstration

Have the Level 2 player demonstrate the following, as prompted by the mentor:

Drills

- 1) **tbd**
- 2) **tbd**

3) tbd

Advancement to PASS / SET Skill Level 3

Work with the player until s(he) can consistently hit the ball over the net 90% of the time.

Once this milestone has been met, sign the player's Skills sheet as achieving a Level 2 for OVER NET (ATTACK/HIT).

Level 3

Player Demonstration

Have the Level 3 player demonstrate his/her attack/hit skill.

Observe the player in game play.

Play next to or behind the player in game play to provide dynamic coaching and immediate feedback.

Consider prompting the player – see Player Demonstration for Level 2.

Consider inviting the player to observe the mentor in blue ball play.

Mentor Demonstration

Demonstrate the correct steps in body positioning, readiness, timing and hand position.

Observe red ball Level 3 game play with the player (from the pool deck or via videos) and provide critique of passes and sets.

Drills

4) Increase the level of difficulty for the player to hit the ball over the net.

Provide immediate feedback.

An OVER NET (ATTACK/HIT) Level 3 player server should demonstrate positioning to receive the set and hit it over the net. S(he) should not be stationary in position.

PLAY BALL OFF NET	1	Unable to play ball off net
	2	Occasionally plays ball off net
	3	Consistently attempts to play ball off net and keep ball in play

Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

Should we change this percentage?

KEEP BALL IN PLAY	1	No ball control; punches at ball; misses ball
	2	Occasionally able to control ball
	3	Good ball contact/control with power

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

# OF HITS	1	Difficulty passing the ball for 3 hits
	2	Occasionally passes the ball for 3 hits
	3	Consistently passes the ball for 3 hits

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better

RULES	1	Difficulty keeping the rules straight, or haven't read the rules. Difficulty keeping score, rarely participates in set-up/take down
SCORING	2	Know some of the rules. Occasionally needs to be reminded to move the score. Occasionally participates in set-up/take down
EQUIPMENT	3	Has read all the rules. Consistently keeps score. Consistently participates in set-up/take down.

Difficulty = Less than 20% Occasionally = 60% or better Consistently = 90% or better