

# BNCC / OAcres Outdoor Volleyball Playing Rules

Taken from USA Volleyball Beach/Outdoor Rules with differences stated from USA Indoor rules

1. **Game formats.** The advent of rally point scoring (RPS) has hit the beach, so get ready for anything! USAV includes provisions for many permutations—RPS to 30,25,21,15 or Side out scoring (SOS) to 15 or 11. This isn't that different from indoors, really, though people seem to be using rally scoring indoors fairly uniformly now. Now that the AVP is using RPS matches now, rally is being used increasingly on the beach as well. Some formats allow a combination of RPS and SOS (when one team reaches a certain score) in the same set.
2. **In league play at the BNCC,** a match will consist of three sets to 25 points with a 27 point cap on each set. (This format will be used until time restraints warrant a change due to time spent shagging balls between plays or late starts, etc.)
3. **Switching sides within games.** Wind, sun, and variable lighting on outdoor courts at night all point to the need for switching sides within games. In tournament play at the BNCC, Side out scoring (SOS) games to 15 switch when the sum of the teams' scores is a multiple of 5. SOS-11 point games switch on multiples of 4. Rally point scoring (RPS) games to 21 points or more switch on multiples of 7. Rally games to 15 switch on multiples of 5. If a switch is missed
4. **Lower ball pressure.** Outdoor ball pressure is 2.5-3.2psi. Indoor balls are much harder at 4.3-4.6psi.
5. **No center line.** There is no center-line in outdoor volleyball. You can penetrate under the net provided you do not interfere with your opponent.
6. **No antennas.** Indoor rules strictly stipulate the use of antennas to define the crossing space over the net. Outdoors, however, antennas are rarely used except in pro competition. In the absence of antennas, the posts act as antennas for all purposes except player contact.
7. **Ball "In"**  
The ball is in when it touches the ground of the playing court, including any part of the boundary lines.
8. **Ball "Out"**  
The ball is "out" when...
  1. It lands outside the boundary lines, without hitting them
  2. It hits a person or object outside the court
  3. It hits the antennae, cables, ropes, posts, or netting outside the antennae
  4. It completely crosses the net totally or partially outside the crossing space
9. **No position or back-row faults (*doubles, triples, 4's*).** In 2's, 3's, and 4's competition, players can start and play anywhere. Only the service order must be obeyed. This conveniently removes all concern about back row attacks/blocks. In 6's competition, however, the indoor rules apply.
10. **Touching the Net.** Players can't touch any part of the net or antennae. After a player contacts the ball they may touch the net posts, ropes, or anything outside the **total length of the net**, provided the contact doesn't interfere with play.  
If the net touches an opponent because the ball was driven into the net, it isn't a fault.  
Incidental contact with the hair in the net isn't a fault. Contact with the net due to wind or the elements is not a fault.
11. **Screening rule (2's and 3's).** Like the indoor rule which prohibits only groups of 2 or more passive players from screening, the outdoor rule prohibits individual player screening as well. It states "On an opponent's request, a player must move sideways or bend over or down [to prevent screening]." In the pros, you will often hear the receiving team request that the blocker move left or right so they can have a clear view of the server. Of course, it's illegal for a single players to wave their arms, jump, or move with the server in both outdoor and indoor rules. In 2000-2001, the rules were modified to make screening in 4's and 6's identical to the indoor rules.

12. **Executing Serve.** At the moment of contacting the ball to serve or at ground take off for a jump serve, the server must not touch the court, end line, or ground outside the service zone.  
After the contact, the server may step outside the zone or into the court.  
If the line moves because sand or grass pushes it, it isn't a fault.
13. **No penalty for serving out of order (doubles only).** If an out-of-order server is discovered, no penalty is charged. The offending player continues serving, and that team's service order is simply reversed such that no one player serves 3 times in a row.
14. **Service tossing error (no longer a difference).** This was new for 1997-98--no service tossing errors are allowed under outdoor rules. USAV made this change to come into line with FIVB rules. USAV Indoor rules adopt this change for 1998-99.
  1. *If the server releases the ball for service and does not complete the service, the team will be penalized with a loss of rally.*
15. **Serve contacting the net is not a fault.** As in USAV indoor competition, it is not a fault when the serve contacts the net.
16. **Contacting the Ball.** The ball may touch any body part including feet and must be hit, not caught or thrown.
17. **Stricter calling of sets on the first ball.** Outdoors, it is illegal to double contact the first ball if the ball is not hard-driven and if "finger action" is used. This is similar to the way the indoor rules read prior to 1995. Indoors, it's now legal to double contact any first team contact, which has led to some ugly, yet legal handling of free balls and serves. To legally double a first ball when using finger action (i.e. setting), you have to be defending a hard-driven attack. That means, you're not receiving a serve. It also means you're defending an opponent's attack on a ball that's moving fast enough such that the referee can judge that you didn't have time to play the ball any other way.  
Outdoors, it is conceivable (but unlikely) that a serve could legally be "set" by the receiving team, however, this contact is judged with the same scrutiny as a normal set (not double contacted, etc.).
18. **Hands.** There is a common misconception that hand sets can be judged based on the number of rotations by the ball in the air. No such criterion has appeared in any recognized beach volleyball rule set in recent history. Rotation of a set ball *may* indicate a held ball or multiple contacts during the set but in itself is not a fault.  
It's also worth noting that the AVP has followed the trend of the FIVB and USAV in loosening up on hand setting calls. The purpose of this change is to encourage longer rallies, and decrease the number of rallies decided by the officials. Even so, we still encourage you to call your own mishandled sets!
19. **Restriction on setting the ball over the net.** Indoors, there are no restrictions on this action. In fact, the term "set" is not even defined in the indoor rules. However, outdoor rules (doubles and triples only) require a "set-over" to be perpendicular to your body. An exception is made for sets to a teammate that happen to get blown over the net:  
*If the ball is intentionally set into the opponent's court, the player must contact the ball with two hands above his/her shoulders and set it directly forward or directly backward with relation to his/her body.*  
*Commentary: A legal set directed toward a teammate that crosses the net because of the elements is not a fault, regardless of the player's body position.*
20. **Block counts as a team contact in outdoors doubles and triples.** This rule was changed for 1997-98 and it states, *For doubles and triples competition only: Blocking does constitute a team contact, and any player may make the second contact of the ball after the block.* Indoors, the block is never considered one of the team's three allowable contacts.
21. **No open hand tips/dinks.** In *doubles, triples, and 4's*, this is a no-no outdoors. Alternatives include palms, heel of the hand, locked straight fingers, knurled fingers, or the back of the hand.
22. **Legal to lift/push/carry a hard driven ball.** Outdoors (used to be doubles and triples competition only but for 97-98, extended to 4's and 6's too), it is legal to momentarily lift or push a "hard-driven ball" on the first team contact. This type of contact allows for overhand "beach digs" that would be ruled as lifts indoors. "Hard-driven ball" is defined as "an attack-hit or blocked ball traveling at a high rate of speed, as

judged by the referee). Outdoor rules state, "*In that case, the ball may be momentarily lifted or pushed, provided the attempt is one continuous motion and the player does not change the direction of that motion while contacting the ball.*" As of 2004-05 and beyond, it is also legal to double contact such a hard-driven ball.

The spirit of this rule is to keep the ball in play longer. In doubles, obviously there is a lot of court to cover, so the rules give some leniency to allow for longer rallies.

**USA Volleyball, FIVB and AVP beach rules** allow a momentary lift in defense of a hard-driven ball (defined as "an attack-hit or blocked ball traveling at a high rate of speed"), giving rise to open-palmed overhead beach digs that might be whistled as lifts indoors. They also allow multiple contacts using finger action in a single attempt to defend a *hard-driven* attack.

23. **Simultaneous Contacts.**

1. When two teammates touch the ball simultaneously it is considered two hits (except when blocking)
2. If there is simultaneous contact above the net by opposing players, the team that ends up with the ball has 3 hits available to return the ball. If the ball goes "out" it is the fault of the team on the opposite side.
3. If simultaneous contact above the net leads to a held ball, it's not a fault and play continues.

24. **Can retrieve a ball from opponent's side of the net** Indoors, once you've hit the ball completely across the net (either inside or outside the crossing space), your team can no longer play it. Outdoors, however, your partner may be able to bail you out of a shamefully shanked pass that crosses the net outside of the crossing space:

1. *A ball completely crossing the net below the net or entirely outside the antennas (posts) may be recovered within the limits of the three team contacts.*
2. *A ball completely crossing the net above the net and within or over the antennas (posts) may not be recovered.*

25. **No "girl rule" in co-ed play** Indoor mixed-six rules stipulate that a female must play the ball if "a team contacts the ball more than one time during an offensive action." No such stipulations exist in USAV Beach rules for mixed-six play.

26. **Multiple Misconduct Warnings Possible (2's)** In doubles competition only, a player may be issued multiple misconduct warnings in a game. In 3's 4's and 6's, the rule is the same as indoor--once a warning is issued, the next step within that game must progress to a misconduct penalty (loss of rally and point for other team).

Any questions regarding rules of play can be directed to:

Rocco Lucci  
Director of Volleyball Operations at the BNCC  
[rocco@BNCCsports.com](mailto:rocco@BNCCsports.com)  
Work (716) 677-9100