

MARIN MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC LEAGUE

Volleyball Rules & Expectations

What Middle School Volleyball Is All About

The purpose of middle school athletics is to provide a fun, safe, positive, and educational experience that promotes skill development, personal growth, and healthy competition. Through participation, student-athletes develop confidence, character, discipline, teamwork, and respect for others while learning the values of sportsmanship, responsibility, and perseverance. Middle school athletics are designed to foster a lifelong appreciation for physical activity and encourage every participant to reach their full potential in a supportive and inclusive environment.

AT A GLANCE

Format	6 vs. 6 — boys and girls play separately
Match Format	Best of 3 sets — first team to win 2 sets wins the match
Sets 1 & 2	Played to 25 points (must win by 2)
Set 3 (if needed)	Played to 15 points (must win by 2)
Timeouts	2 per team per set (60 seconds each)
Start Time	4:00 PM for first matches unless arranged otherwise
Net Height — Girls	7 feet 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches
Net Height — Boys	7 feet 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches
Minimum Players	A minimum of five (5) players is required to begin a match

How a Match Works

NFHS Rules: Games are played under current NFHS Volleyball Rules unless modified by league rules. A volleyball match is made up of sets (sometimes called games). MMAL uses a best-of-three format — the first team to win 2 sets wins the match.

- Sets 1 and 2 are played to 25 points. A team must win by at least 2 points. Both sets have a maximum score of 30 points.
- If a third set is needed, it's played to 15 points — still win by 2.
- Teams switch sides of the court after every set.
- The league will use a rally-scoring system where a point is awarded on every single rally, regardless of which team served.

Serving

- Each rally begins with a serve from behind the back boundary line.
 - The server must not step on or over the line while hitting the ball.
 - The server has 10 seconds after the referee's whistle to serve.
 - Let serves are legal — if the ball hits the net and still goes over, it's in play.
 - Coaches may allow modified serving rules for developmental levels if approved by the league.
 - **Dropped Serve:** Each player may use two dropped serves per rotation.
 - **Serving Rotation:** A server may serve a maximum of 10 consecutive points. Once the server reaches 10 points, the team retains possession of the serve, but the players must rotate, and the next player becomes the server.
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Rotation

Whenever your team wins the serve back from the other team, all players rotate one position clockwise. This means every player takes turns in every position — including serving.

On the court at all times:

- 3 players at the net (front row)
- 3 players in the back row

Back row players cannot block or attack the ball at the net.

Ball Contact Rules

- Each team may contact the ball up to 3 times before sending it over the net.
- A player cannot hit the ball twice in a row — except on a block (the first contact).
- The ball may be played off any part of the body.

In vs. Out:

- Ball is IN if it touches the floor anywhere on or inside the boundary lines
 - Ball is OUT if it lands completely outside the lines, hits the ceiling, or hits the net antennae
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Net Rules

- Players cannot touch the net while the ball is in play.
 - Players may not completely cross the center line and interfere with an opponent.
 - Incidental contact under the net that doesn't interfere with play may be allowed under NFHS rules.
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The Libero — A Special Position

Liberos can freely substitute in and out of the **back row** an unlimited number of times, without counting against a team's official substitution limits. A libero can only be subbed out for the exact player they replaced. There must be a completed rally between any two libero exchanges (unless the libero is replacing the player in position 1 to serve).

- The libero may serve, but only for one specific player in the rotation.
- The libero may NEVER block or attempt to block.

- ONE libero only per team and cannot change during the set unless of injury.
 - Must be declared before set starts
 - **They must wear a jersey contrasting in color from their teammates.**
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Substitutions

- 18 substitutions are allowed, following NFHS procedures.
 - Players must enter and exit through the designated substitution zone.
 - The libero has her own special substitution rules (see above).
 - Once a substitute enters the game for a specific player, that substitute may only re-enter for the same player throughout the set.
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A Note on Net Height

Many middle school leagues modify the net height for developmental purposes. Common middle school boys' net heights include

- 7 feet 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (same as girls) for beginning or developmental programs.
- 7 feet 8 inches for younger middle school divisions.
- 7 feet 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches for advanced 7th-8th grade competition.

**The MMAL program focuses on participation and skill development, a 7 feet 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ net is often the most appropriate and commonly used height for both boys and girls middle school volleyball. It promotes*

- A lower net means longer rallies and more exciting play.
 - Players develop better technique when the ball is actually getting over the net.
 - Increased success for newer players
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Mercy Rule

Coaches are expected to prioritize sportsmanship and player development — intentionally running up the score is not in the spirit of the league.

Officials & Scorekeeping

The goal is to have one (1) licensed official assigned to each match. The licensed official will serve as the **Up Referee**. Other officiating positions, including the **Down Referee** and **Line Judges**, may be filled by qualified volunteers.

- Referee decisions are final.
 - Coaches may politely ask for rule clarification — they may not argue judgment calls.
 - The home school must provide an official scorekeeper at all games. The scorekeeper must be seated at the scorer's table.
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Ejections & Conduct

If a player, coach, or spectator is ejected from a match:

- The home team reports the incident to the league commissioner within 24 hours, including the person's name and role.
 - The ejected person may not attend or participate in the next league contest.
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Safety Rules for Everyone

- Players must wear proper volleyball attire and athletic shoes
 - **Jewelry:** Only small stud earrings and medical identification bracelets are permitted. All other jewelry, including bracelets and necklaces, must be removed before participating.
 - Knee pads are strongly recommended for players.
 - No spectator may enter the court unless a player is injured and they are a parent or trained medical professional.
 - Any athlete showing signs of injury, illness, heat-related concerns, or concussion symptoms will be removed from competition and evaluated according to school and league protocols.
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Uniforms & Equipment

- A CIF-approved leather volleyball is used for all games.
 - Net antennae are required.
 - An official's stand is required and must be padded.
 - The home team and visiting team shall wear jerseys.
 - Jersey numbers shall meet rulebook requirements. If the school has no approved jerseys they may, by consent of the league prior to the season, use their current jerseys.
 - No two players on the same team may share a number.
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Sportsmanship

Coaches, players, and spectators are all expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. This includes:

- Respect for officials, opponents, teammates, and facility staff is expected.
 - Unsportsmanlike behavior may result in ejections or additional disciplinary action.
 - Coaches are responsible for the behavior of their players and their team's spectators.
 - No intentionally running up the score — coaches should prioritize sportsmanship and player development.
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League Champions

- League Champions will be determined by the winner of the Championship Match held at the conclusion of the season.
 - Championship banners will be awarded to League Champions in each division.
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Fun • Safety • Skill Development • Confidence • Character • Teamwork • Sportsmanship