

Newport Volleyball Club
Grass Rules 2026
Adapted from AVP Grass Rules

PARK RULES:

GENERAL RULES/PARKING:

- Parking is available at all NVC fields unless otherwise specified.
- No alcohol is permitted at any Middletown/Newport public parks
- Carry-in/carry-out trash policy is strictly enforced, do not leave belongings or trash in or around the parks
 - The Town of Middletown, The city of Newport, nor NVC, are responsible for lost belongings
- NVC is permitted to use facilities for designated times of play. If someone outside NVC is using the space, please inform an NVC staff volunteer member.

PREPARATION OF THE MATCH, STRUCTURE OF PLAY:

PREPARATION OF THE MATCH –

Net construction and warm-ups

- Nets are to be set up at 5:30 PM
- Doubles court is 52'6" x 26'3"
- Fours court is 60' x 30'
- Warm-ups take place between net set up and the game start time (promptly at 6:00 PM)

Coin toss, rock-paper-scissors, odds-or-evens, etc.

- Winner determines the following:
 - The right to serve or receive the service, or;
 - The side of the court
- The loser of the coin toss (or whatever means were used to determine first team choice) will determine the other choice
- For the second set in the match, the loser of the coin toss (or whatever means were used to determine first team choice) gets first choice of the above options

Substitutions

- Substitutes can be brought in from BYE teams in the same division during regular season league play
- Substitutes must be NVC members in good standing and have signed the proper waiver
- In playoffs, substitutes must be approved by the league director
- In the event no substitutes from within the division are available, substitutions are at the discretion of the league director

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT –

Playing area

- The playing area includes the court and the free zone
- The free zone is considered any area outside of the playing court that allows for pursuit
- Players may not enter into another court, even after hitting the ball

Court dimensions

- Short court: for doubles, 52'6" x 26'3"
- Big court: for fours, 60' x 30'

Height of the net

- Net shall be 7'4" for RCO and Women's divisions
- Net shall be 8' for genderblind fours and Men's divisions

Ball

- Wilson is the official grass volleyball brand of NVC

Player's equipment

- Players may play barefoot or with shoes not consisting of hard/sharp plastic/metal spikes

GAME AND RALLY WINNER –

Set duration

- Sets will be played to 21, 25, or 28 points, depending on the format designated for play.
- Each set must be won by 2 points, cap at 2 points above the winning score.
 - Example: If playing to 21, win by 2 capped at 23.
- Teams switch sides when the combined score is a multiple of 7

Rally scoring

- A point is scored after each completed rally, regardless of which team served to begin the rally
- NVC does not use "side-out" scoring
- A rally is a sequence of playing actions from the moment of the service hit by the server until the ball is out of play, or a fault is committed
- A team wins a rally:
 - By successfully landing the ball on the opponent's court;
 - When the opponent team commits a fault/penalty;

Fault/penalty

- A team commits a fault by making a playing action in violation of the rules
- League play is self-refereed, the players involved are to uphold the rules with honesty
 - In the event of a disagreement on a fault, the point can be replayed
 - replays of points are used in the event of a disagreement on a fault or an instance during a rally that makes play unsafe (ex: ball from another court enters the field of play)

PLAYING ACTIONS – STATES OF PLAY:

Ball in play

- The rally begins from the service hit after the announcement of the score by the serving player

Ball out of play

- The rally ends when the ball lands on the court or a playing fault has been committed.
 - Exception: If a player commits a fault, such as touching the net, during the continuation of playing the ball, it is a fault, regardless of when the ball touches the ground

Ball “in”

- The ball is “in” when it touches the ground of the playing court, including the boundary lines

Ball “out”

- The ball is “out” when it:
 - Falls on the ground completely outside the boundary lines;
 - Touches an object outside the court, or a person out of play;
 - Touches the ropes, posts, or antenna;
 - Crosses completely the vertical plane of the net, totally or even partly outside the antenna on the second or third hit
 - Exception to the vertical plane out of bounds rule, if the ball is hit outside the antenna on the first hit, it can be retrieved with the second hit but must return to the field of play outside of the antenna

PLAYING THE BALL:

Team hits

- Each team is allowed a maximum of 3 hits before sending the ball into the opposing court
- Each team must play within its own playing area and the free zone
- Team hits include not only intentional hits, but also unintentional hits
- A player may not make two consecutive contacts on the ball, except off of a block touch

- A block touch, in both doubles and fours, counts as a contact, but does not count towards the total number of team touches
 - A ball that contacts a block but goes out of bounds is a fault against the blocking team
- Two players may contact the ball at the same moment
 - When this happens, it is counted as two hits (except for blocking) – in doubles, either player can initiate the third hit

Characteristics of the hit

- The ball may touch any part of the body
- The ball must be hit, not caught or thrown
- The ball can rebound in any direction
- Exceptions:
 - In defensive action of a hard-driven ball. In this case, the ball can be held momentarily with the fingers as well as double-contacted as long as it is with one action of playing the ball

Hand setting/finger action

Plays involving finger action require special attention depending on the division of play

- If the play is defensive and reactive in nature, momentarily held or double-contacted balls are not considered faults
- If the player decides/intends to employ finger action, as in the case of passing or setting, the action must be “clean”
 - Clean action – when employing open handed setting, the action must be one single action and the ball must release from contact simultaneously
 - Rotation of the ball, while often used as an indicator, is not enough to constitute whether a ball has been set cleanly
- Open handed setting (also known as dumping) cannot be used as an attack
 - Balls that have been set with open hands cannot cross the plane of the net, regardless of intention

NVC division specific rules

- In doubles and fours, open handed setting cannot cross the plane of the net, either as an attack or unintentional push
- As a defensive action:
 - Beginner level – faults will be called for open handed receives
 - Intermediate level – receives must be clean
 - Advanced level – receives must be clean
- As a setting action:
 - Beginner level – relaxed rules, only call faults in the instances of lifts and double contacts that are not simultaneous
 - Intermediate level – must be clean
 - Advanced level – must be clean

FAULTS

Four hits

- A team hits the ball four times before the ball crosses the plane of the net

Assisted hit

- Within the playing area, a player is not permitted to take support from a teammate or any structure/object in order to reach the ball

Held ball

- A contact on the ball that is prolonged, stopping the original trajectory of the ball, holding it still, then changing the trajectory of the ball

Double contact

- A player hits the ball twice in succession or the ball touches various parts of their body successfully in two or more distinct motions
 - Contact on the ball with various parts of the body in one distinct motion is not a double contact fault

Contact with the net

- Any contact with the net by a player is a fault, regardless of the play
- Clothing is considered part of the player, so if any clothing contacts the net, a fault is called
- Exceptions:
 - Incidental contact of the hair is never a fault
 - Loose clothing that contacts the net and does not affect the play is not a fault
 - Once the player has hit the ball, he/she may touch the post, rope, or any object outside the length of the net provided the action does not interfere with play
 - When a ball is driven into the net and causes it to touch an opponent, no fault is committed

Other faults at the net

- A player touches the ball, or an opponent, in the opponent's space before the attack-hit
 - Contacting the ball on the opponents side of the court is only permitted when the opponent is not in the space
 - Examples of a fault in this case include:
 - Blocking a set of the opposing team
 - Contacting the ball before the opposing team makes contact during a play
- A player crosses into the opponent's court or playing zone while the opponent is in the same space
 - Any contact underneath the net is a fault, as it risks safety of the players
- A player cannot block a service

- A player cannot block (screening) the line of sight of a service
 - The player blocking the sight of a service may be asked to move or alter their position to allow for easier sight
- Male players cannot block on a women's height net under any circumstances in the RCO format

Service faults

- The server cannot step on the boundary of the playing field before or during contact with the ball in service
- The server cannot contact the ball from beyond either sideline
- The server cannot contact the ball with two hands or arms
- The server cannot toss the ball, allow it to fall, then retry a serve
- The server cannot catch the ball after a toss for service
- The server must alternate after the receiving team wins the rally, it cannot be the same player that served prior to losing the service right
 - In the event of an out of order service, a point is awarded to the opposing team as well as the serve. The order must be corrected immediately

Attack hit faults

- A player hits the ball after it has crossed the plane of the net into the opposing team's playing space
- A player hits the ball "out"
- A player completes an attack by using an "open-handed tip or dink" directing the ball with the fingers (finger action)
- A player completes an attack on the opponent's service, when the ball is entirely above the top of the net
- A player completes an attack using an overhand pass or set
- IN RCO: A male player completes an attack on a ball above the height of the net within 10' (within the 10-ft line) of the net

PLAYER AT THE NET

Reaching beyond the net

- In blocking, a blocker may touch the ball beyond the plane after the opponent has performed an attack hit
- A player is permitted to pass their hand beyond the net after their attack hit, provided that the contact was made in their own playing space

Penetration into the opponent's space, court and/or free zone

- A player may enter into the opponent's space, court and/or free zone, provided that this does not interfere with the opponent's play

SERVICE

The service is the act of putting the ball into play by the correct serving player who, positioned in the service zone (anywhere behind the baseline, between the two sidelines), hits the ball with one hand.

Service attempt

- Players are only allowed one service attempt or toss

Service order

After the first service in a set, the player to serve is determined as follows:

- When the serving team wins the rally, the player who served previously, serves again
- When the receiving team wins the rally, they gain the right to serve, and the player who did not serve last time will serve

Execution of the service

- Before, and at the moment of the service hit, the server must not touch the court or boundary of the court
 - After the service, the server may step or land inside the court

Service reception

- A service is never considered a hard driven ball, therefore, it cannot be received with a double contact
- If a player uses finger action, the contact must be clean

ATTACK HITS

ALL actions to direct the ball toward the opponent, except when serving and blocking, are considered attack hits

- This definition is important, as it affects the rules for male contacts within the 10-ft line of the court

RCO attacks

- An attack completed by a female player can occur anywhere on the court (except opponents court) and at any height
- An attack completed by a male player above the height of the net must occur behind the 10' line
 - The 10' line must be indicated during set up of the courts
 - The attacking male player must not contact the 10' line prior to or during contact with the ball
 - The attacking male player may land within the 10' line after completing an attack hit
- An attack completed by a male player underneath the height of the net can occur anywhere on the court (except opponents court)

BLOCK

Hits by the blocker

- Contact with the ball during the block does not count towards the total number of hits by the team
- The first hit after the block may be executed by any player, including the one who has touched the ball at the block

Block within the opponent's space (penetrating the plane)

- In blocking, the player may place their hands and arms above the net and beyond the plane into the opponent's court provided that their action does not interfere with the opponent's play
- It is not permitted to contact the ball beyond the net until the opponent has executed an attack hit

TIMEOUTS

Number of team timeouts

- Each team is entitled to two 1-minute timeouts per set
- A timeout can be taken while a rally is not in play
- Both timeouts can be taken by a team in sequence

Technical timeouts

- Technical timeouts do not affect team timeouts
- At the end of a set, a technical timeout of 3 minutes is given to both teams prior to the next set starting
- During a change of sides, a technical timeout of 30 seconds is given to allow the teams to get set up on their new sides
- When necessary, a technical timeout of 5 minutes can be taken for medical needs

DELAYS TO THE SET

Types of delays

An improper action of a team that defers the resumption of the set is a delay and includes, among others:

- Prolonging timeouts, after needing to continue the set
 - Both team and technical timeouts
- Showing up late to the games

Sanctions for delays

- Delay penalties will result in the forfeit of a point per minute of delay
 - If a team arrives to a game 5 minutes late, they will start the set with a score of 0-5
- If a team has committed multiple delay penalties (3 or more), discretion is up to the league director/night coordinator

Absences

- A team must inform the league director at least 24 hours prior to play about an absence
- If a team misses a league night and does not inform the league director, a financial penalty will be given to the absent team
 - Failure to pay any financial penalties will result in suspension of club membership

EXCEPTIONAL SET INTERRUPTIONS

Injury

Should a serious accident occur while the ball is in play, play must stop immediately. The rally is then replayed, unless the injury does not impact the determination of the point. An injured player is given a maximum of 5 minutes recovery time in one match (both sets).

- If a player is injured and cannot continue:
 - In RCO doubles, the team forfeits, unless a suitable substitute is found in a timely manner
 - In fours, the team must continue play with 3 players, unless a suitable substitute is found in a timely manner

External interference

- In the case of any external interference that impacts play or player safety, play must be stopped and the rally replayed

MISCONDUCT

Misconduct that occurs before, during, in between, and/or after play will not be tolerated. Misconduct is defined in the NVC registration process, as well as on the website. Misconduct may lead to suspension of membership.