

Ready Positions

There are two ready positions commonly used in sitting volleyball depending on the situation presented.

Reception ready position is used primarily for serve receive and it allows the athlete to move behind the ball before contact.

Defense ready position is lower to the ground and has limited abilities for weight transfer. Instead, the body positioning is lower to the floor and 'loaded' to respond to where the ball is directed.



Position #1: Reception

Sit tall with chest and head up

Place legs comfortably in front of body or slightly to the side with the knees slightly bent

Arms down beside hips with hands on the floor ready to push in any direction

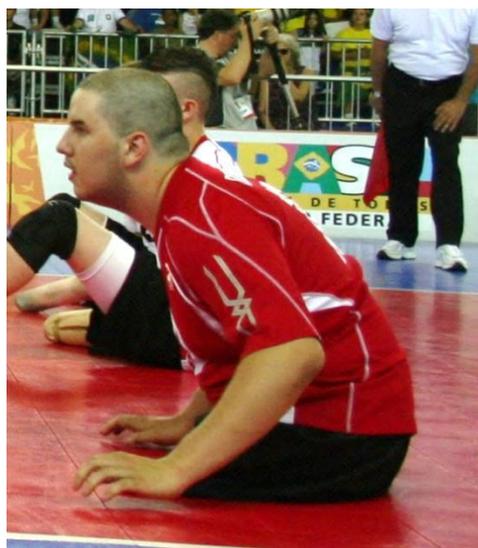
Stay alert and use both hands and feet to move behind ball once in play

Position #2: Defense

Keeping back straight and head up, lean forward at the waist

Legs are bent and angled to the side, widening the amount of court covered and allowing body to get closer to the floor

Once in position to receive the ball, lift arms in front of body with elbows extended and palms up



Movement

When teaching movement techniques, there are a couple of basic movements that should be developed; however, it is important to allow the athlete to experiment and determine what movement techniques, or variations of, work best for them.

Forward Push/Pull

- Propel body forwards by pushing back with the hands while extending the feet/foot in front of body then aggressively pulling the feet/ foot in towards the body

Bicycle Kick

- With one leg slightly to the side of body (simulating a 'hurdler' stretch), drive the knee forward, plant the heel and aggressively pull the leg back to the starting position. Once the foot is beside the hip and buttocks, extend and push the foot behind body. Drive the knee forward and repeat. This will create a circular pattern of motion around the hip.

Backward Pull/ Push

- Propel body backward by reaching back with the hands (behind body) and then pulling them back towards body. At the same time, flex the leg in front of the body, plant the foot and then aggressively extend leg and push away from the body. This is where the majority of the propulsion will come from.

Crab Walk

- With both hands and feet on the ground, lift the buttocks off the ground and walk backwards, pushing with the hands and feet. This is a quick way to cover long distances but ensure to put buttocks back on ground before playing the ball.

Lateral Side Kick

- Rotate body so that one hip is in contact with the ground. Extend the top leg (not in contact with the ground) away from the body and then pull leg back into body before repeating.

Side Pull/Push

- Rotate body so that one hip is in contact with the ground. With both hands, reach out to the direction of travel and pull them towards body while extending top leg away from body in a pushing motion.

Forearm Pass

Forearm passing is not as commonly used in sitting volleyball due to the lack of passing angles available while sitting on the floor. Because the ball has to travel very close to the ground to be received with forearm pass, it often does not allow as many opportunities to make adjustments or to generate effective power. As a result, the overhead pass is more commonly used and athletes will position themselves to ensure that they can take as many balls overhead as they can.

- Move into position so that the ball is directly in front of body
- Overlap fingers on the left hand with fingers from the right hand and bring thumbs together
- With hands joined and thumbs together, extend arms and lock elbows to form a strong and flat platform
- Rotate shoulders so that they start square to where ball is coming from and then finish facing target after contact
- Power is generated through slight swinging of the arms and shrugging of shoulders upon contact
- By changing the angle of the platform, the height and trajectory of the ball will change (ie: higher platform = higher ball; lower platform = lower and faster ball)

Due to the speed of the sitting game, it may not always be possible for athletes to get fully behind the ball in order to forearm pass it with two hands. Because of this, it is important that they are comfortable playing balls with one hand and on either side of their body.



Overhead Pass and Setting

The overhead pass is the most common first contact skill in sitting volleyball. In a study done at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece, 85% of the first contact balls off serve receive were taken with an overhead pass. In addition to serve receive, overhead passing can be used for digging hard driven balls because of the control the athlete can have. For these harder driven balls, athletes can roll backwards during contact to further absorb some of the velocity and increase the height of their pass. This will result in a lower contact point (in relation to their body), but this is legal as long as the athlete maintains the speed of the release of the ball.

- Move into position on the floor so that the ball will be directly above forehead
- Place hands above forehead, with thumbs facing the eyes so that the hands form the general shape of the ball.
- Position arms about 45 degrees in front of body and slightly bend elbows
- Absorb the contact through flexion in the wrists and fingers and then quickly extend elbows, wrists and fingers to release the ball
- Follow through with thumbs and palms facing target and arms fully extended



Attacking

The philosophy behind attacking in sitting volleyball varies from traditional volleyball in that it is not so much about putting the ball to the floor as it is about putting the other team in trouble. Because the court is smaller and there is no time differential that is created when blockers are jumping, it is difficult to score directly off the attack. As a result, a variety of different shots are used to challenge the opposition defenders. These include tips, high shots off the blockers' hands, strategically placed roll-shots, and a speed offense to catch the blockers before they are set up. All techniques, however, start with the following fundamental technique.

- Start by positioning the body 3-4 feet off the net
- Using the bicycle kick movement, and pushing with your arms, slide to the ball after it is set
- Position body so that the ball is slightly behind the hitting hand
- Pull hitting arm back, keeping the elbow high and pointed to the ground. This simulates pulling back on a bow and arrow.
- The non-hitting hand can either be resting on the ground or raised in the air pointing at the ball as the target
- Once in position, with the arm drawn back, swing through the ball, leading with the elbow and snapping the wrist at contact. Aggressively rotate the shoulders and trunk through the contact for additional power generation.

Be conscious to avoid 'lifting' when attacking to gain a higher angle on your opponents. This often occurs when additional pressure is put on the non-hitting arm or legs to prop the body up a little higher. This is an illegal play.

There is no physical, trainable variable such as jumping that can give one player an attacking advantage, so athletes must be smart and creative when attacking. When evaluating attack effectiveness, the focus should be how difficult it was for the opponent to defend.



ATTACKING



Serving

Serving can be very effective in sitting volleyball to put pressure on opponents. Because of the lower net height and the challenges in moving on serve receive, points can be generated from the serving line. This is why front row players are allowed to block the serve on the opposition side. Both float serves and spin serves are used in sitting volleyball, however, the spin serve can be slightly less effective because of the angle of the ball going over the net. Because there is no jumping, there is no 'downward' angle put on the ball which is largely why it is effective in traditional volleyball.

- Sit behind the endline with legs out in front of the body
- In non-hitting hand, raise the ball to shoulder height with the arm extended
- Pull back on your hitting arm, keeping the elbow high and thumb pointed to the ground (simulating pulling back on a bow and arrow)
- Toss the ball gently 1-2 feet out of your hand
- Keeping the elbow high, swing through the ball, following through in the direction of your serving target
- When following through, an aggressive snap will result in a topspin serve, while keeping the wrist rigid on follow-through will result in a float serve

VARIATION: Attack Serve

The attack serve is based off the same technical aspects as the attack and its objective is to overpower the passers or serve off the opponent's block and out of play.

- Sit with the legs bent in front of body about 2m behind end line
- Toss ball high and in front of body with hitting hand
- Using the bicycle kick movement, move so that hitting arm is under ball
- Non-hitting hand is on ground for balance and power
- Pull back hitting arm, keeping the elbow high and the thumb pointed to the ground. This will simulate pulling back on a bow and arrow.
- Continue to slide through the ball, swing arm through keeping the elbow high and snapping wrist at contact. Rotate shoulders and trunk around non-hitting arm for increased power.



Blocking

Blocking plays a large role in sitting volleyball due to the high volume of balls that are played at or close to the net. Because there is no time differential related to the jump, blockers only have to worry about positioning themselves in front of the attacker and being solid with the hands. This is more difficult than it sounds because of the challenge of moving, especially laterally along the net.

- Start at net with the hands on the ground, ready to move from side-to-side. Legs can be in front of the body and over the centre line provided they do not interfere with opponents.
- Once in position in front of the attacking opponent, raise arms with hands open and fingers spread wide and rigid.
- As hitter is making contact, press hands over the top of the net and rotate wrists so that the thumbs point up. This will give more strength when blocking with the hands.
- Keeping hands big and strong, press into the opponent's court.
- As the ball makes contact with the block, follow through by snapping wrists downwards and directing the ball into the opponent's court.

As blockers become more experienced, they can start playing 'games' with the opponent attackers by showing the block and then pulling hands down when they recognize that the opponent does not have a direct shot to the court.

When blocking a serve, the blockers at the net are taking away an area of the court to make it easier for the passers. Essentially, they are creating 'alleys' for the servers to hit, which will funnel the balls to the passers. Discipline is very important when blocking the serve and athletes at the net must be aware and not reach after served balls as this can negatively affect the passers in the back court. Service blockers' first priority is to take away court from the servers.

