

Why do we train the way we do?

Volleyball is a sport that demands quick motor responses to visual cues, with every play being unique due to its inherent randomness. This means that training in isolated skills without variability is ineffective. We emphasize the importance of practice that mirrors game scenarios because motor patterns are specific; the goal is to transfer skills from practice to game settings efficiently.

What is the main focus of our training?

Context: We train our athletes within the game's context, leveraging the inherent randomness of volleyball to teach them to observe and respond appropriately. Recognizing that no two plays, serves, or passes are the same emphasizes the interconnectedness of the game's elements. This approach aims to eliminate the discrepancy often observed between practice performance and game execution. If training does not simulate real game scenarios, one might question its effectiveness.

We equip our players with the skills to use the right "tool" from their volleyball toolbox at the moment it's needed. This method prepares players to adapt to varying game paces, crucial for advanced levels where speed and anticipation are key. For our younger athletes, we stress strategic ball placement, fostering their ability to think ahead and move efficiently on the court.

Do we only scrimmage, especially with older players?

While scrimmage plays a role in our training, it's not the sole focus. Our approach is context centric and nuanced, catering to the learning needs of both younger and older players. Recognizing that learning is inherently messy, we are comfortable with an environment where players can develop through trial, error, and adjustment.

Our coaches are dedicated to teaching our athletes how to make the connections between observation and response. This is not a matter of merely allowing play, but involves active coaching within the game's context. They guide players in linking visual cues to appropriate actions, an essential skill for developing coherent, effective players.. This training philosophy transcends the notion that "the game teaches the game." It underscores the significant, active role of our coaches in facilitating not just play but insightful, contextual learning and adaptation.

I've heard that the club does not focus enough on volleyball fundamentals. Is this true?

It's a common misconception that we don't prioritize volleyball fundamentals. In reality, our approach to fundamentals might differ from traditional methods, but it's both intentional and strategic. Our training focuses on Simplicity, Specificity and Context, teaching players to observe, anticipate, and react effectively to the game as it unfolds. This method is rooted in the understanding that volleyball is highly dynamic and unpredictable, requiring players to develop a broad set of skills that are adaptable to any play scenario.

We emphasize situational practice that mirrors real-game settings, believing that this is more beneficial than isolated skill drills. This approach aims to improve not only the physical capabilities of our players but also their cognitive understanding of the game, which is fundamental to their development. Our coaching staff is continuously updated with the latest research in motor learning and sports science to ensure that our methods are effective and beneficial for player growth.

In summary, our focus is on developing well-rounded athletes with a deep understanding of the game's fundamentals, which includes both physical and mental aspects. This ensures our players are not only skilled but also adaptable, making them capable of thriving in the fast-paced and ever-changing nature of volleyball.

If volleyball is so random and difficult to learn, how do your bedrock principles of simplicity, specificity and context apply?

Addressing the inherent randomness and learning challenges in volleyball, our bedrock principles of simplicity, specificity, and context become even more crucial. Here's how these principles guide our approach to training and development:

Simplicity

In the face of volleyball's complexity and unpredictability, simplicity becomes a beacon for both understanding and execution. We strip down skills and strategies to their most fundamental elements, ensuring players grasp the core concepts before adding layers of complexity. This simplicity aids in creating a solid foundation upon which players can build as they grow and face more challenging scenarios. It allows for clearer communication, easier comprehension, and more straightforward application of skills in varied game situations.

Specificity

Specificity in training means that every drill, practice scenario, and coaching directive is designed to mirror real game situations as closely as possible. This principle addresses the game's randomness by preparing players for the specific challenges they will encounter. By focusing on skills and situations that directly translate to in-game performance, players can more effectively apply what they've learned when it matters most. This specificity ensures that practice time is spent on what truly improves performance on the court.

Context

Understanding and responding to the game's dynamics require a deep contextual understanding. Our training embeds players in scenarios that mimic the unpredictability of actual games, teaching them to recognize patterns, anticipate outcomes, and make split-second decisions. Context in our training means that players learn not just the "how" but the "why" behind each skill and strategy. This deepens their game intelligence and enables them to adapt their play to the constantly changing circumstances of a match.

In essence, these principles form a coherent strategy to tackle volleyball's inherent challenges.

- Simplicity ensures that players are not overwhelmed but instead focus on mastering key skills.
- Specificity guarantees that what is practiced is directly applicable to what players will face in games, making their learning relevant and immediately usable.
- Context provides the understanding needed to navigate the game's complexities, making our athletes not just players, but students of the game, capable of adapting, learning, and thriving amidst its unpredictability.

Why shouldn't I say "Move Your Feet" to volleyball players during practice or games?

While it might seem helpful, simply telling players to "move their feet" can be less effective than instructing them in ways that engage their observational and decision-making skills. This common phrase doesn't address the underlying reasons why a player may not be moving effectively. Instead, it's more beneficial to ask players, "What are you looking at?" or "What are you responding to?" These questions encourage players to be mindful of their focus and intentions on the court.

Our coaching philosophy emphasizes teaching players to understand the dynamics of the game, such as where the ball is, where it's likely to go, and the positions of other players. By focusing on these elements, players naturally improve their movement without needing to think about their feet explicitly. This approach helps develop their ability to anticipate and react, which are crucial skills at higher levels of play where the game speeds up significantly.

Encouraging players to think about their positioning and response to the game's flow fosters a deeper understanding and a more intuitive play style, which is ultimately more effective than mechanically moving without purpose. This method aligns with our broader training focus on 'eye work' and situational awareness, which are vital for becoming proficient in volleyball.

How do the foundational principles of simplicity, specificity, and context set your club apart?

Our club stands out through a distinctive commitment to the principles of simplicity, specificity, and context, underpinned by a strong emphasis on research and professional development. This approach enables us to refine traditional coaching methodologies and embrace strategies that are not only effective but also innovative.

Simplicity in our training philosophy means we prioritize clear, understandable, and fundamental motor learning concepts. This ensures that every athlete, regardless of their starting point, can grasp and apply key skills efficiently. By distilling complex volleyball techniques into their most essential forms, we make learning accessible and progression achievable for everyone.

Specificity guides our coaching strategies to be directly relevant and tailored to the unique demands of volleyball. We design our training sessions around specific skills and scenarios that our athletes will encounter in real matches,



ensuring that every drill and practice has a direct impact on their in-game performance. This focused approach enhances the transfer of skills from practice to competition, making our athletes well-prepared and confident.

Context enriches our training environment, providing athletes with a deeper understanding of the game's intricacies. We incorporate situational learning and decision-making exercises that reflect the dynamic nature of volleyball, teaching our players not just how to perform skills but when and why to use them. This contextual awareness fosters a more adaptable and intelligent player, capable of navigating the fluidity and unpredictability of the sport.

Our dedication to continuous research and professional development ensures that our application of these principles is always evolving and improving. We challenge traditional coaching paradigms by adopting evidence-based practices that acknowledge the diverse fundamentals of volleyball learned through different cultures and coaching philosophies. This holistic and innovative approach differentiates us, preparing our athletes not just for the challenges they face on the court today but equipping them with the adaptability and insight to excel in the future.

What about the learning environment and team dynamics?

We strive for a welcoming and inclusive environment where every athlete feels valued. This extends to combating negative behaviors like exclusion and promoting a culture of effort and teamwork. We believe in focusing on what players can control: their effort and how they support their teammates. Furthermore, we advocate for positive communication among parents and between parents and coaches, especially concerning discussions about children.

How does our club approach the concept of teamwork, and what does this mean for playing time and athlete development?

Our club ethos places a significant emphasis on teamwork and the integral role each athlete plays in contributing to the team's collective success. Being the best teammate possible is a foundational aspect of our philosophy, which brings with it several key considerations for parents when choosing our competitive club environment.

- **Competitive Nature:** It's important to understand that our club operates within a competitive framework, distinct from recreational play. The fees associated with travel volleyball provide athletes with access to premium training facilities and opportunities; however, this access does not directly correlate with guaranteed playing time. Our focus is on fostering a high-caliber competitive environment where playing time is earned through a combination of factors including skill, commitment, and teamwork.
- **Playing Time Considerations:** We approach playing time with a structured and transparent methodology, emphasizing communication and partnership with parents in their child's athletic development. Our strategy includes:
 - **Clear Communication:** We ensure that our playing time policy is effectively communicated to both players and their parents. This openness fosters a shared understanding of expectations and the factors influencing playing time decisions.
 - **Competitive vs. Developmental Minutes:** Our club differentiates between competitive and developmental minutes to provide clarity and purpose behind playing time allocation.
 - **Competitive Minutes:** Allocated during critical phases of a game where the outcome is in the balance. These minutes are earned by those who demonstrate the ability to positively impact the game under competitive pressures.
 - **Developmental Minutes:** Focused on the growth and improvement of all players. These minutes offer valuable game experience and learning opportunities, contributing to each athlete's overall development.



Eligibility Thresholds: We maintain two fundamental thresholds for playing time eligibility:

- **Threshold 1:** Athletes must adhere to academic, behavioral, and cultural standards as outlined in our parent handbook. Meeting these criteria is a prerequisite for eligibility.
- **Threshold 2:** Performance and contribution to the team's success are the primary determinants of playing time. We strive for clarity in our communication, ensuring players understand the specific criteria and expectations.

By emphasizing the importance of being a great teammate, our club nurtures an environment where athletic gifts are celebrated, but the qualities that contribute to team cohesion and success are valued just as highly. This approach ensures that our athletes not only excel in volleyball but also develop valuable life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience.

What's our stance on team dynamics and inclusivity?

We strive for a supportive and inclusive team environment, condemning behaviors like exclusion or bullying. Effort, positivity, and being a good teammate are the core values we instill in our players. Our goal is to ensure every athlete feels welcomed and valued, fostering a healthy team culture.

We encourage parents to adopt a supportive mindset, understanding that learning volleyball is a process marked by ups and downs. It's crucial to focus on the long-term development of players rather than immediate perfection. We also stress the importance of positive communication about other players and their families, promoting a respectful and community-oriented atmosphere.

Club Volleyball Basics (FAQs)

Q: What is club volleyball?

A: Club volleyball, also known as travel ball, consists of non-scholastic teams formed for the purpose of practicing and competing. These teams often participate in competitions sanctioned by organizations like USAV, AAU, and JVA, with the goal of competing at national events.

Q: What are the different levels of teams at NWAJS?

A: We offer various team levels, including Adidas (1), Elite (2), National (3), Premiere (4) Fusion (5). Each level is designed to meet athletes' competitive needs, from those new to the sport to those aiming for national qualifiers.

Q: When are club-team tryouts?

Tryouts for our 2025–2026 teams occur in July and August. Athletes must attend the full tryout block for their age group. For dates and details, visit: www.nwajstorm.com/tryouts

Q: What should I consider before trying out?

A: Prospective athletes should review the information on our General Information page, which provides helpful tips and details about the tryout process.

Q: How long is the club volleyball season?

A: The club season typically starts in November, following tryouts, with tournaments running from January through June or July, depending on the age group.

Q: How do I join NWAJS's club volleyball team?

A: Joining requires participating in our annual tryouts. Selection is competitive, and not all attendees may receive an offer. More details are available on our Tryouts Page.

Q: How does NWAJS support the college recruiting process?

A: We actively assist athletes in the college recruiting process through dedicated coordinators and the use of platforms like Sports Recruits and HUDL.



Q: What do your club fees cover?

Your club fees go directly toward creating a high-quality, safe, and developmentally focused experience for your athlete. This includes:

- **USAV or AAU Memberships:** Required for athlete eligibility and insurance coverage
- **Coach Certifications & Background Checks:** Ensuring your child is led by qualified, trained staff
- **Court Rentals & Facility Costs:** Access to consistent, high-level practice spaces
- **Practice Gear & Team Shirt Package:** Includes Storm-branded gear required for training
- **Tournament Entry Fees:** Covers registration for local and travel tournaments
- **Administrative Operations:** Scheduling, communication systems, and support staff
- **Training Equipment & Video Tools:** Cones, balls, net systems, video playback, and more
- **Ongoing Coach Development:** Investment in training our coaches in Storm's research-based methods

We do not mark up uniforms or add hidden fees. Each family also has access to optional fundraising opportunities and can apply for financial aid if needed.

This approach ensures that every dollar is used to support athlete growth, competitive excellence, and the overall experience for families in the Storm community.

Q: When are monthly fees due?

A: Fees are due monthly, with automatic payment plans set to withdraw on the 10th of each month. A commitment fee is required to secure a spot on the team.

Q: Does NWAJS offer financial aid or scholarships?

A: While our resources are limited, we strive to provide financial aid where possible and offer various fundraising opportunities to help cover costs.

NWAJS Teams, Practices, and Tournaments**Q: When and where do NWAJS teams practice?**

A: Teams practice 2-3 times per week at ARVH Athletics in Springdale and possibly Harvest Racquet & Athletics in Rogers, depending on space needs.

Q: How many athletes are on a team?

A: Teams typically consist of up to 10 players (Sometimes 11, in rare exceptions 12), balancing fair play with adequate coverage for injuries and other commitments.

Q: What age division am I in?

A: Age divisions are determined by USA Volleyball Junior Age Definitions. Please refer to their guidelines to verify your eligibility.

Q: Does NWAJS travel to out-of-state tournaments?

A: Yes, all our teams travel extensively, participating in both local and national tournaments to provide a balanced competitive experience.

Q: Why can't we find out where tournaments are ahead of time?

A: Tournament schedules and locations are often confirmed close to the event dates due to registration timelines and logistical adjustments.



How should parents engage with the club and their children's development?

New this season: each age group now has a designated Family Ambassador — a veteran Storm parent who can help answer questions about travel, uniforms, schedules, and expectations. These ambassadors help bridge the gap for new families and offer support throughout the season.

Q: What types of teams are offered and what are their goals?

We offer a structured progression of teams including Adidas (1s), Elite (2s), National (3s), Premier (4s), and Fusion Teams. Fusion Teams allow athletes with prior club experience to form their own team under Storm's system and policies. Additionally, our All-Star Postseason program provides teams ending in March the opportunity to opt in for a National-level experience.

