

REFEREE TECHNIQUES (2019-2021 Rules Book)

1. **Roster verification:** Rosters, if used, are verified pre-match by the scorer, assisted by the 2nd referee. Both referees visually review uniforms for legality.
2. **Coin toss procedures:** USA Volleyball does not designate “home” or “visitor” teams, so the 1st referee designates a side of the coin for each team during the pre-match and deciding set coin tosses. The coin is tossed and caught, and the result immediately revealed without turning the coin over. If the coin is dropped, it shall be re-tossed. The captain who wins the coin toss has the options of serving or receiving the serve, or the side of the court to occupy. The opposing captain then chooses from the remaining options.

NOTE: We recognize that junior teams often have more than one player serving as team/game captain, and that special team circumstances may result in the coach sending multiple players to the captains’ meeting. It is acceptable for multiple team representatives to attend the captains’ meeting, and the first referee will need to confirm which player will be representing the team for the toss.

3. **Pre-set line-up check:** When checking line-ups at the start of each set, the 2nd referee stands at the sideline of each team’s court with both teams’ line-up sheets in hand to verify player positions. The 2nd referee does not enter the court. The scorer and assistant scorer are recommended to use the score sheet and Libero Control Sheet, respectively, to verify player positions with the 2nd referee to help ensure the correct players are on the court for each team. The game ball remains at the scorer’s table until line-ups have been verified and Libero replacements authorized. Once the line-up sheets have been returned to the scorer, the game ball is tossed or rolled to the first server.
4. **Referee signal sequence:**
 - a. When the fault is whistled by the 1st referee, the 1st referee indicates which team wins the rally by extending the arm in the direction of the team that is to serve next (palm perpendicular to floor), then signals the nature of the fault and the player at fault, if necessary (Rule 22.2.3.1). All signals are repeated by the 2nd referee except the authorization to serve and a served ball that fails to pass to the opponent through the crossing space.
 - b. When the fault is whistled by the 2nd referee, the 2nd referee indicates the nature of the fault and the player at fault, if necessary. The 1st referee then indicates the next team to serve and the 2nd referee repeats that signal. The 1st referee does not signal the fault or player at fault (Rule 22.2.3.2).
5. **2nd referee position at end of rally:**
 - a. When the 2nd referee’s whistle ends a rally, he/she will step to the offending team’s side of the net before signaling the fault.
 - b. When the 1st referee’s whistle ends the rally, the 2nd referee steps to the offending team’s side of the net and repeats the signals of the 1st referee. When facilities do not present enough space for the 2nd referee to easily step to the offending team’s side, the 2nd referee simply steps laterally away from the post and repeats the 1st referee’s signal sequence.

NOTE: When the 2nd referee has relevant playing-ending information or is offering discreet assistance, he/she must avoid transitioning and signaling simultaneously, which may result in the information or signal being obstructed by the net post or equipment.

6. **Attack Hit Fault signal (Signal 21):** Completely extend the arm straight up, above the shoulder, hand open, and then bending at the elbow, make a downward motion toward the opposing team. The final position of the arm should not obstruct the referee’s view.
7. **Blocking fault/screening signal (Signal 12):** Completely extend both arms straight up from the shoulders (elbows are not bent), palms facing away from the body.
8. **Improper request signal & technique:** An improper request is signaled with a “wave off” – a sweeping motion with the arm extended, open hand, palm facing away from the body, on the offending team’s side of the court. The 2nd referee communicates this to the coach at the earliest opportunity, without delaying the match. At the end of the rally, the 1st referee signals the improper request by placing the palm over the opposite wrist, on the offending team’s side of the court. The improper request is recorded on the score sheet at the end of the rally.
9. **Same player makes third and fourth team hits:** Signal “double contact” (Signal 17).

10. **Indication of which player(s) contacted the net:** Indicate the player at fault by pointing toward the player with an open hand.
11. **Completed attack-hit from an overhand set by a Libero in the front zone:** Signal attack hit fault (Signal 21), and then indicate the Libero by pointing toward the Libero with an open hand.
12. **Identification of game captain:** During pre-match line-up checks, the 2nd referee indicates the game captain to the 1st referee by placing the arm in the chest area, hand open and palm facing the floor, and then pointing, open hand, toward this player. This technique should also be used when the captain is replaced by substitution or the Libero. The captain should acknowledge this designation by raising a hand. It is not necessary for the 2nd referee to repeat this procedure at the start of each set unless the game captain changes or the 1st referee requests the information.
13. **2nd referee “ready” signal:** Indicate by holding both hands in front of the body, just above head height, palms toward 1st referee. Used by a 2nd referee after any regular game interruption or a delay to the resumption of play. Also used by the scorer upon completion of recording a substitution(s), or at the end of a time-out. “Ready” means that the scorer has recorded all necessary information, the 2nd referee is in proper position, all players have taken their positions on the court, and the 2nd referee is ready for play to resume. The 1st referee is still obligated to complete a court scan, check that the server is in possession of the ball, and ensure team readiness before authorizing the next serve.
14. **Time-out administration:**
 - a. The 2nd referee has primary responsibility for whistling to acknowledge a time-out request; however, the 1st referee may assist by whistling if the 2nd referee does not quickly recognize the request. The referee who whistles the time-out will signal (Signal 4) with the vertical hand of the signal on the side of the requesting team and point toward the requesting team’s bench with an open hand. Only the referee who whistles to acknowledge the time-out request will show this signal; the other referee does not repeat the time-out signal unless it is necessary for clarification or communication purposes. The 2nd referee will informally display each team’s time-out status to 1st referee at the beginning of the time-out.
 - b. Players are not required to leave the court and go to the bench area. Coaches and non-playing team members may not enter the court.
 - c. The 2nd referee whistles at the end of 30 seconds and ensures both teams re-take the court.
 - d. Upon conclusion of each team’s second time-out, the 2nd referee notifies the coach (or captain, if necessary) by visually displaying the time-out signal (Signal 4) and then showing two fingers. The 2nd referee then notifies the 1st referee in the same manner, then returns to position for the resumption of play and signals “ready.”
 - e. It is not necessary to notify teams after their first time-out unless requested to do so by the coach/captain. Similarly, the referees do not visually display each team’s time-out status at the end of any time-outs unless necessary for clarification.
 - f. Teams may re-take the court prior to expiration of the time-out, unless it is necessary for the court to remain clear.
15. **Substitution procedure:** A request for substitution requires that the incoming substitute has entered the substitution zone before the request is acknowledged (whistled), except for a substitution related to an injury. Verbal or hand-signal requests for substitution by the coach or captain do not constitute a formal request and are not acknowledged (whistled).
NOTE: The 1st referee does not repeat the 2nd referee’s signal for substitution unless it is necessary for clarification; however, if the 1st referee whistles to acknowledge a substitution request, he/she will show the substitution signal.
16. **Substitution notification:** With the ninth, 10th, 11th, and 12th team substitutions, the 2nd referee notifies the coach by displaying the substitution signal (Signal 5), followed by the number of team substitution used during the set (10 – clenched right fist, 11 – clenched right fist plus index finger of left hand, 12 – clenched right fist plus index and middle finger of left hand). The 2nd referee notifies the 1st referee of a team’s 12th substitution in the same manner, then returns to position for the resumption of play and signals “ready.” If requested by the 1st referee, the 2nd referee also informs the 1st referee of the ninth, 10th and 11th substitutions in this manner.
17. **Multiple substitutions by one team:** Only one incoming player may be in the substitution zone at a time awaiting authorization to enter. Subsequent substitutes must wait outside the substitution zone until the first pair of players has been authorized to enter by the 2nd referee. For multiple substitutions by a team during the same dead ball, there can be no significant delay between substitutions.

18. **Requests for game interruption by opponents during same dead ball:** When opponents request a time-out or substitution during the same dead-ball period, each team's request is acknowledged with a separate whistle. Multiple substitutions by the same team require only one whistle.
19. **1st/2nd referee duties:**
- The 1st referee controls the pre-match warm-ups with assistance from the 2nd referee who times the warm-up segments while the 1st referee tends to other pre-match duties.
 - Either referee may whistle net faults, and attack-hit or blocking faults.
 - The 2nd referee whistles antenna faults on his/her side of the court, including a served ball that has not been whistled by the 1st referee.
 - At the end of the match, the 1st referee checks the score sheet for accuracy, and then signs it.
20. **2nd referee discreet assistance techniques:** Discreet assistance from the 2nd referee should only be offered when, in the 2nd referee's opinion, a fault has occurred. Expectations regarding these techniques should be the subject of the referees' pre-match briefings. NOTE: Discreet signals, which are indicated using only one hand (ex: 2 hits, 4 hits, attack-hit fault, etc.) should be signaled with the hand corresponding to the team at fault. If the view of the 2nd referee is obstructed, the discreet signal may be made with the more visible hand.
- 2 hits vs. 4 hits: The 2nd referee should use the appropriate discreet assistance only after the same player has hit the ball twice in succession ("2 hits") or after a team has touched the ball four times and the third and fourth hits were not by the same player ("4 hits"). NOTE: "4 hits" should not be used to indicate "no touch" by the blocking team.
 - Attack-hit fault: The attack fault signal (Signal 21) should be shown in the chest area. Before whistling this fault, the 2nd referee should allow the 1st referee the opportunity to whistle the fault or to communicate that the play was legal (USAV 24.3.2.4).
 - Blocking fault: The 2nd referee may whistle this fault immediately, or a discreet blocking fault signal (Signal 12) may be shown in the chest area with hands only, shoulder-height.
 - Requesting an individual sanction: The 2nd referee should whistle, step to the offending team's side of the court, and verbalize the sanction and offending team member. Other hand signals are not necessary to request an individual sanction.
 - Requesting a delay sanction: Display the delay sanction signal, without a card in chest area.
 - Ball in/pancake play: Step to the side of the court where the ball hit the floor, maintain a position visible to the 1st referee, and give the "ball in" signal. If the 1st referee does not see this assistance, the signal should be made more visible. If the 1st referee does not quickly recognize the assistance, the 2nd referee should whistle this fault.
 - Ball handling opinions: The 2nd referee should not offer ball handling opinions during a match. Only if the 1st referee has requested such assistance during unusual plays (i.e., the 1st referee is screened from viewing the play) should the 2nd referee offer an opinion.
 - Touch information: At the end of a rally in which the 2nd referee has observed a player touching the ball before it lands out of bounds, the 2nd referee should offer a visible "touch" signal (Signal 24). If the 1st referee does not notice this assistance, the signal should quickly be made more visible and the 2nd referee should step laterally, away from the post.
21. **Deciding set coin toss:** For the deciding set coin toss, the 2nd referee conducts the coin toss near the scorer's table. During this time, teams are released to their benches while each team's game captain attends the toss. The coin toss takes place during the three-minute interval between sets. The referee holds the coin above the head and whistles to call the captains to the toss. After the coin toss, the 2nd referee notifies the 1st referee of the result and directs the teams, without whistling, to change courts or to remain at their current benches for the start of the deciding set. The scorer is immediately notified of the result in order to prepare the deciding set score sheet; and, if the 1st referee conducted the toss, he/she immediately returns to the stand.
22. **Change of courts during deciding set:** The 1st referee signals for teams to change courts immediately after the eighth point has been scored by a team. Teams are not directed to the end lines during this court change, but they should change sides by going counterclockwise around the post to their respective right side (or under the net near the sideline if space does not permit the players to pass outside the posts). To prevent teams from crossing under the net in the middle of the court, the 2nd referee enters the court to his/her right and directs the team on the right to change sides as described above. The 2nd referee also ensures the team on the left changes sides accordingly. The 2nd referee returns to the scorer's table after the court change to ensure the

scorer is ready to resume. The 2nd referee and scorer should confirm each team's court positions before continuing.

23. **Set/Match point:** The 2nd referee verbally/visually confirms set or match point with the scorer and then places an index finger against the shoulder corresponding to that team. For example, if the team to the 2nd referee's left has earned set/match point, the index finger of the right hand is placed against the left shoulder (or vice versa for the team on the right).
24. **Ball hitting an antenna:** When the ball is hit into an antenna, the referee whistles and signals "out," and if necessary, indicates with an open hand the player who hit the ball into the antenna. The referee does not point toward the antenna before or after signaling "out" for the antenna fault. If the 1st referee whistles the antenna fault, he/she first shows the team to serve next before signaling the antenna fault.
25. **First referee whistling positional faults on receiving team:** The 1st referee normally checks position faults for the serving team only; the 2nd referee is authorized to check position faults for receiving team only. If the 2nd referee does not call a blatant positional fault after ample communication/notification by the 1st referee, the 1st referee may whistle this fault. This occurs only on very rare occasions.
26. **Sanction procedures:** Referees must recognize the difference between emotions or reactions during competition and conscious decisions or actions that result in unsporting conduct.
 - a. For a player on court: The 1st referee directs the player being sanctioned to approach the 1st referee's stand to acknowledge the sanction. The 1st referee displays the appropriate card(s) to the sanctioned player and verbalizes, "This [warning (yellow card), penalty, expulsion or disqualification] is for your unsporting conduct." If the sanction is a penalty (red card), the 1st referee then signals to award a point to the opponent and ensures the 2nd referee and scorer are aware of the penalty point.
 - b. For a team member on the bench: The 1st referee whistles to call the game captain to the stand and then displays the appropriate card(s) and verbalizes, "This [warning (yellow card), penalty, expulsion or disqualification] is for player (or coach) 'X'. Please inform him/her of the [sanction]." The captain must go immediately to the bench to inform the team member, who acknowledges the [sanction] while the 1st referee displays the appropriate card(s). If the sanction is a penalty (red card), the 1st referee then signals to award a point to the opponent and ensures the 2nd referee and scorer are aware of the penalty point.
 - c. For delay sanctions: The 1st referee calls the game captain to the stand and verbalizes, "This delay sanction is for [delay action]," while displaying the appropriate signal. The captain may inform the coach of the sanction for clarification purposes. If the sanction is a delay penalty, the 1st referee then signals to award a point to the opponent and ensures the 2nd referee and scorer are aware of the penalty point.
 - d. For verbal warnings: Verbal warnings must be accompanied by a whistle and are issued through the game captain. Multiple warnings to the same team member during the same set/match are permitted for minor unsporting conduct.
 - e. For simultaneous sanctions to opponents: When individual sanctions are assessed to opponents for simultaneous unsporting acts, the team member from the serving team is sanctioned first, followed by the team member from the receiving team.
27. **Notification of illegal Libero replacement:** The assistant scorer notifies the 2nd referee of an illegal Libero replacement before the contact of the serve. The replacement is corrected and a delay warning (or penalty) sanction is the resulting sanction.
28. **Line judge position during time-outs:** At midpoint of respective end line.
29. **Line judge position when server is within 1-2 meters of the line judge:** When a server takes a position within 1-2 meters of the line judge, the line judge must step away from the server along the imaginary extension of the end line. After the service contact, the line judge should quickly return to the position at the intersection of the end line and sideline.

BASIC MATCH PROCEDURES FOR REFEREES

The following are basic officiating procedures for conducting USA Volleyball matches.

1. OFFICIALS

- a. The officials should be certified USA Volleyball referees and qualified or certified USA Volleyball scorers.
- b. The prescribed USA Volleyball uniform and certification patch should be worn by all referees.
- c. At a minimum, referee equipment includes a whistle with lanyard, a set of yellow/red cards, a flipping coin and a watch or timing device.

2. ARRIVAL

- a. Referees should arrive at the playing venue no less than 30 minutes prior to the start of the competition.
- b. The tournament director or event manager should be located at that time, and playing formats, ground rules, warm-up procedures and other protocols should be determined.

3. MATCH PREPARATION

- a. Referees or scorers should examine the court and playing equipment prior to the first match: identify court lines, playing area, and any floor obstructions; determine rulings for overhead obstructions; examine the playing equipment (including net, antennae, posts, referee stand and game balls); and verify the net height and ball pressure.
- b. Referees or scorers should ensure pens, pencils, score sheets and Libero Control Sheets are available at the score table. Line-up sheets and rosters may also be required.

4. REFEREES' PRE-MATCH DUTIES

- a. Prior to the coin toss, the 1st and 2nd referees must discuss their match responsibilities, as well as communication techniques that will be used between them during the match. This should include, among other things: discreet signals from the 2nd referee; addressing conduct issues; and ensuring consistent application of ground rules.
- b. Preferably prior to the coin toss, or immediately thereafter, the referees will meet with the officiating crew to give instructions to the line judges (1st referee) and scoring crew (1st or 2nd referee).
- c. Conduct a coin toss between the team captains prior to the start of the timed warm-up period. Once tossed, the coin is caught, and the result immediately revealed.
- d. After the coin toss, the 1st referee will supervise warm-up periods and may request the 2nd referee to time their duration. Note: In the event team does not choose to use its time on the court, the court shall remain unoccupied.
- e. During the warm-up period, the 1st referee must verify the legality of each team's player and Libero uniforms. All players must wear uniforms as prescribed in Rule 4.3 and/or Rule 19.2 and USAV Rule 19.2.
- f. The 1st or 2nd referee will blow a whistle to indicate the end of the warm-up period and that players are to clear the court.
- g. Referees and other officials take their assigned places.

5. START OF THE FIRST SET OF THE MATCH

- a. Teams line up on the end line of their respective team courts. When both teams are ready, the 1st referee will blow a whistle and motion for players to take their positions on their court. Teams often greet each other at the net prior to taking their court positions.
- b. The 2nd referee, using each team's submitted line-up sheet, the scorer using the score sheet, and the assistant scorer using the Libero Control Sheet, will verify that players are in the correct positions on the court. Prior to the start of play, changes and/or substitutions can be made under the provisions of Rules 4.1.3, 7.3.2, 7.3.4 and USAV 7.3.4. NOTE: A substitution prior to the start of any set is permitted.
- c. Upon completing the line-up check, the 2nd referee will permit Libero replacements to occur and confirm that the assistant scorer has recorded them.
- d. The 2nd referee then retrieves the game ball from the score table and delivers it to the first server of the match. The 2nd referee will then take a position on the receiving team's side of the net and indicate "ready" to the 1st referee. The 1st referee whistles and beckons for the first service of the set. This marks the time the set officially begins.
- e. Prior to the contact of the serve, serving team players should be in their correct positions on the court, with no distracting movements. Continual or distracting movement may be construed as screening. The 1st referee must be aware of screening during all service actions.

6. DURING THE MATCH

- a. Each referee has specific duties and responsibilities during the match as outlined in Rules 23 and 24.
- b. Judgment and ball handling decisions, as well as match control, flow and tempo, are very important for any 1st referee.
- c. Match administration (substitutions, time-outs, etc.), communication with the team benches and score table, and positioning/focus during net play are important aspects of working as a 2nd referee.
- d. Scorer, assistant scorer and line judge duties are clarified in Rules 25, 26 and 27.

7. PROCEDURES FOR REGULAR GAME INTERRUPTIONS

- a. Substitutes enter the substitution zone and wait for the 2nd referee to acknowledge the request and authorize the substitute to enter the court. Only the referee who whistles the substitution request will show the substitution signal, unless repeating the signal is necessary for clarification. Entry into the substitution zone is the only legal request for a substitution, except for injury situations or substitutions prior to the start of a set. For multiple substitutions by the same team during one dead ball period, each substitute must enter the substitution zone in succession, one pair at a time, and must wait until entry is authorized by the 2nd referee. There can be no delay between incoming substitutes. When opponents request substitutions simultaneously, the 2nd referee asks one team wait while the other team's substitution is administered and recorded. After this substitution has been recorded, the 2nd referee will whistle to recognize the substitution for the other team and then authorize the substitute to enter the game.
- b. When the coach or game captain requests a time-out, the 2nd (or 1st) referee should immediately whistle, show Signal 4, Time-out, and then indicate the team by pointing, open-handed, toward that team's bench. Only the referee who whistles the time-out request will show the time-out signal. The 2nd referee will then visually inform the 1st referee of the number of time-outs each team has taken. After 30 seconds have elapsed, the 2nd (or 1st) referee must whistle to end the time-out. Teams should immediately retake the court. The 2nd referee verbally and visually notifies each team's coach, and visually notifies the 1st referee, only when that team's second time-out has been taken. The 1st referee prepares for the next rally.

8. END OF THE SET AND START OF THE NEXT SET

- a. A set officially ends when the whistle is blown for the fault resulting in the winning point. The set interval begins when the 1st referee executes Signal 9, End of Set. Following the whistle indicating the end of a set, the 1st referee will direct the teams to change playing areas and benches immediately, with the exception of the interval before the deciding set. In all but the deciding set, the players proceed to their right until they reach their new bench area with the team on the left passing behind, or if court space is limited, directly in front of, the 1st referee and proceeding to the bench. Team personnel and substitutes change playing areas in front of the score table.
- b. The 2nd referee will collect the line-ups from both teams as quickly as possible during the set interval; however, line-ups must be submitted no later than 2:30 during the set interval. With 30 seconds remaining in the interval, the 2nd referee will blow a whistle and teams shall immediately report to the court and line up in their proper positions to start the set.
- c. When a deciding set will be necessary, the teams follow a different procedure at the end of the set prior to the deciding set. Following the whistle indicating the end of the set, the 1st referee will release the teams to their respective benches. Each team's captain immediately meets at the score table where the 2nd (or 1st) referee will conduct the coin toss for the deciding set. The coin toss takes place during the three-minute interval. Once the choice of sides has been determined, the referees, without whistling, direct the teams to their appropriate team areas. The procedure for the start of the deciding set is the same as stated in 8b.

9. CHANGE OF TEAM AREAS DURING A DECIDING SET

- a. When teams change team areas during a deciding set of a match (Rule 18.2 & USAV 6.3b), the 1st referee will blow a whistle and show Signal 3, Change of Courts. Teams will change playing areas as noted in 8a above, without delay and with player positions remaining the same.
- b. Substitutes and other team personnel will change team areas in front of the score table.
- c. The 2nd referee and scorer will quickly verify that players are in their correct positions on the court.

10. AT THE END OF THE MATCH

- a. Following the whistle indicating the last rally of a match, the 1st referee will whistle again and display Signal 9, End of Match.
- b. At nationally sanctioned competitions after displaying the end of match signal, the 1st referee steps down and stands to the right (Team A side) of the stand. The second referee crosses the court and stands to the left of the stand (Team B side). The first referee will then whistle and direct teams to shake hands at the net.

The teams may shake the referees' hands as well. NOTE: Alternatively, for non-national competitions, after the 1st referee has whistled and signaled the end of the match (10a above), the 1st referee will blow a final whistle and motion for the teams to proceed to the center of the court to shake hands with the opponents.

- c. The 2nd referee will ensure that the game ball is returned to the score table.
- d. Both team captains shall thank the referees.
- e. The 1st referee will then review the score sheet to verify the final results and ensure the scorer has signed the sheet. The 1st referee will then sign the score sheet(s).
- f. Referees will then immediately depart the playing area.

11. PROTEST PROCEDURES (USAV 5.1.2.1)

- a. Protestable situations now include a scoring discrepancy.
- b. The coach may handle the protest procedure for any age level; the team or game captain is encouraged to participate for educational purposes.
- c. A protest must be lodged immediately at the end of the rally in which the protested situation occurred; a serve negates a protest of any previous rally.
- d. The last rally of a set/match must be protested within 60 seconds of the end of that set/match.
- e. The coach may not cross the court to speak with the 1st referee; the 1st referee may leave the stand, if necessary, to confer near the team bench.
- f. Judgment decisions are not protestable.
- g. For tournaments with a Protest Committee: Referee(s) stay at the court; send responsible work team member to tournament staff.
 - Referees wait on their respective side of the court; no discussion among referees or with any coach, team member, work team crew, or spectator.
 - Coach and player behavior are still subject to sanction.
 - 1st referee informs Protest Committee which team lodged the protest and then speaks with that coach and/or captain.
 - Protest Committee may request a conduct sanction during this time if behavior is unsporting; the sanction is assessed prior to the next serve at the conclusion of protest proceedings.
 - Protest Committee may approach any member of the officiating team to collect facts to make a ruling.
 - Protest Committee informs both teams of the decision and may assist with preparing the teams and court to resume play.
 - The coach may discuss the decision or ruling with the Protest Committee after the match.