



FOUNDATIONS OF BLOCKING

Ball, setter, ball, hitter. In other words, you should determine where the *ball* is going, then glance quickly at the *hitter* you are responsible for blocking to see if the hitter is already approaching for a quick hit. You should then look at the *setter* to determine the type of set that is coming, then look to see where the *ball* is heading. Lastly, look at the *hitter* and notice the speed and angle of the hitter's approach and arm swing. You should also use peripheral vision to remain aware of the actions of the other attackers.

Never Quit. You must have the desire and commitment to always block, even if you are not in your desired position. Wherever you are, GO UP! You will still take out a part of the court the ball can go to. Sometimes it is necessary to jump twice.

Lead with the hands. Press your hands over the net to the ball and hold. You should not move your arms down on the net or toward the ball; your arms should be in the correct position as they go up and over.

The better the pass, the higher the hands. To block quicks effectively, your hands should be higher while waiting (this speeds up reaction time). If the opponent's pass is right on target, you should expect a quick attack and prepare with higher hands.

Turn hands and shoulders in. Your block should be directed into the court. Preferable the middle back (#6) position. This will help prevent out-of-bounds deflections. BLOCK TO SIX!

Seal the net. Extend your arms close enough to the top of the net so a ball won't be hit between the arms and the net on your side. Your arms should remain still once they are up, not come down to the ball.

Penetrate. Reach over the net at the ball.

Square. It is important for blockers to square the feet, hips, and arms to the net. When blockers have to move quite a distance in a short amount of time, they tend to not swing their last step all the way around and square to the net. If this happens you will not close the block effectively and may deflect a ball out of bounds or allow a "hole" in the block and an open court shot for your opponent.



Jump hip-to-hip and shoulder-to-shoulder with other blockers. When blocking you should be close enough that you have lower- and upper-body contact. This decreases the chances of having seams, or holes, in the block.

Get on the hitter soon. Be aggressive and ahead of the hitter's approach, in the same way that a defending basketball player stays between the player he or she is guarding and the basketball hoop. TAKE THE CHARGE!

Don't always jump with the setter. If the setter jump-sets, middle blockers have a tendency to jump with them, especially if they have attacked a time or two. For at least three rotations, the setter is in the back row and cannot attack the ball, and the majority of the time the setter is in the front row, he or she will not attack. If you are drawn into jumping with the setter, you will be late blocking the real hit. You need to be prepared to block the setter when they are in the front row, and if you practice the defensive technique "ball-setter-ball-hitter" you can usually tell if the setter is setting or attacking, and then block.

There is a time to block and a time not to block. If a set is not a good set (that is, if it is off the net, too low, or out of bounds), it would be smarter to stay on the ground (down). Blocking everything can cause more problems than it helps. Blinding the defense, deflecting balls, diverting balls out of bounds, or trapping balls between yourself and the net can hurt your team more than an occasional block will help.

Identify where the offense is. You MUST identify the opponent's hitters and determine whether the setter is coming from the front or back row. The outside blockers must identify the hitter's movements.

Decide how many blockers you are putting up on each hit. Always try for at least two, even on quick middle hits. If the middle attacker is a good hitter, we'll put three blockers up. If not, the left-front and center will come up and the right-front will back off (unless the setter is left-handed). Most on-hand hitters hit more balls to the right. Bringing in the left-front block will take that angle away.