



**NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS**

2026 VOLLEYBALL RULES CHANGES and POINTS OF EMPHASIS (includes rationale and comments)

RULES CHANGES

Legal Uniform 4-2-1a, 4-2-1i(3)(NEW), 4-2-2	Libero uniform bottoms may be any color and are no longer required to match the team uniform bottoms. When two liberos are designated, there is no requirement that both liberos wear the same color uniform bottom. Rationale: Allows more flexibility in the libero uniform bottoms while ensuring that the libero uniform top continues to contrast with their teammates. Comment: The libero must be easily distinguishable from their teammates on the court. Permitting liberos to wear any color uniform bottom allows flexibility for teams while maintaining the integrity of the contrasting uniform.
Second Referee Responsibilities 5-5-3b(21)	Between sets, the second referee will provide a double whistle warning at two minutes, 30 seconds (4:30 when intermission is used) instead of 2 minutes, 45 seconds. Rationale: Improves pace of play between sets by notifying teams earlier to make their way onto the court for the officials to administer lineup checks before the final audio signal and resumption of play. Comment: Providing 15 additional seconds to the second referee for the administration of lineup checks before the final audio signal and resumption of play improves the pace between sets. Teams will still have 3 minutes (5 minutes when intermission is used) between sets before the final audio signal.
Player Positions 5-7-3c, 5-7-3d, 6-4-2, 8-1-6, 9-8-2, 10-3-6c, 10-4, 11-4-1b	A team may designate up to two liberos, but only one libero can be in the game at a time. When two liberos are designated, either libero may serve in one position in the serve order. If the L1 and L2 serve, they must serve in the same position throughout the set. Each libero may wear a different uniform, as long as that uniform clearly contrasts from non-libero teammates. A libero may not wear a number that a non-libero teammate is wearing, and each libero uniform must be a different, unique number. When a team designates two liberos and one is injured/ill, a new libero may be re-designated.

	When a team designates two liberos and one is disqualified; the team must continue with one libero. Rationale: The change to allow for up to two liberos, provides more student-athletes with an opportunity to participate by creating an option for coaches without having to utilize a substitution.
Player Positions 6-4 PENALTIES 1c (NEW), 12-2-8b NOTE (NEW)	If non-playing teammate(s) (bench players) enter the court during play, it is illegal alignment. A loss of rally/point is awarded to the opponent. Rationale: More appropriately assesses illegal alignment (loss of rally/point awarded to the opponent) to non-playing teammates who enter the court while the ball is in play. A player who enters the court during play may still receive a conduct violation if they engage in disconcerting acts, disrespectful language, etc. This penalty realignment allows officials to appropriately penalize teams based on participant actions. Comment: When a non-playing teammate(s) (bench player) enters the court during play it is illegal alignment (loss of rally/point awarded to the opponent) unless the non-playing teammate(s) enters to engage in behavior that would facilitate a conduct violation (disconcerting acts, disrespectful language, etc.). It remains a conduct violation if a coach or team attendant (anyone not in uniform) enters the court while the ball is in play. It remains a conduct violation if a coach or team attendant (anyone not in uniform) enters the court while the ball is in play.
Screening Rule 6-5-1	Players on the serving team are not permitted to raise their hands above their heads during service until the ball has passed beyond the net. Players may quickly raise their hands above their heads to give hand signals and then lower their arms immediately. Players may also stand with their hands locked together behind their heads to protect the back of their heads during service. Rationale: Discourages player positioning during the serve that prevents the receiving team from viewing service contact and/or the flight of the ball and assists officials when evaluating the existence of screening. This change aligns with all other volleyball rules codes. Comment: Players on the serving team are not permitted to raise their hands above their heads during service until the ball has passed beyond the net. There is no game-playing need for players to raise their hands above their head during service. This positioning has been used to disguise potential screening making it harder for officials to adjudicate the rules.

Court Protocol 9-2-1 NOTE1 (NEW)	Players shall not wear any audio or video devices during the match. If referees notice devices on players prior to the match, they should notify the coach to direct the player to remove the device. If discovered during play, the player should be assessed an unsporting conduct penalty. Rationale: Clarifies the prohibition of electronic communication with and by players during the match and aligns with other NFHS rules codes. Comment: Clarifying the prohibition of the use of audio and video equipment by on-field players, reinforces fair play and ensures that electronic communication is not used during competition. This language aligns with other NFHS sport codes.
Conduct: Players, Coaches and/or Team Attendant 12-2-8m (NEW)	It is an unsporting conduct violation if coaches, non-playing teammates or team attendants use props on the bench during celebrations. Rationale: Clarifies appropriate bench conduct for consistent enforcement by eliminating the use of props in bench celebrations while promoting sportsmanship and preventing disruption and potential safety concerns. Comment: The use of props by bench personnel as a part of bench celebrations is an unsporting conduct violation as their use has the potential to create disruptions and present safety concerns.

RULE REMINDERS

The Ball 3-2-1 NOTE	Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, state associations may adopt the use of a non-smooth or textured volleyball. There are no restrictions on color or shape of panels for textured volleyballs. Rationale: Allows either boys or girls to adopt a textured volleyball with no restrictions on color or shape of panels to be inclusive of all current textured volleyballs on the market.
Legal Uniform 4-2-4b	Numbers with a leading zero (01, 02, 03, etc.) will be non-compliant beginning in 2028. Legal uniforms must be numbered 0-99. The use of the number double zero (00) on uniforms is illegal. Rationale: Clarifies legal numbers and eliminates confusion when signaling while aligning with other rules codes.

Legal Uniform 4-2-4d, f	Beginning July 1, 2029, the number on the front of the uniform must be centered on the upper half of the uniform top, eliminating the measurement requirements from the shoulder seam to the neckline. Rationale: Removes officials from the position of measuring uniforms to verify the legal distance of the number from the shoulder or neckline, creates consistency in number placement, and allows for number placement variances due to player body types.
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EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-5-1	Added language within <i>Section 5: Termination of Set/Match</i> from 5-4-4d stating that the match becomes official and there shall be no change of score after the scoresheet is initialed by the second referee.
5-2-1b	Clarified current language when a fault is whistled by the second referee.
5-4-3c(1)	Clarified procedural language now that entire teams are allowed to stand on the end line during the prematch ceremony.
5-4-4a	Rewritten for clarity.
7-1-1a, 7-1-1 PEN.3, 7-1-2a, 7-1-4 PEN.	Rewritten for clarity.
9-9-1h	Corrected language due to 2025-26 rule change for an illegal replacement attempting to enter the set.
12-2-8	Replaced “substitutes” with “non-playing teammates” to more appropriately describe teammates who are on the bench.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Host Management Best Practices	By rule, hosts must provide a safe, stable platform. The first referee (R1) should carefully examine the stand prior to the match, and if the R1 determines that the platform is unsafe, the match will still go on, and the R1 will work from the floor. Referees should not use ladders, chairs, boxes, trash cans or similar substitutes that could endanger the well-being of the official. Regularly evaluate volleyball equipment for signs of wear like frayed nets or cables, posts that are bending inwards, and padding that no longer protects or fits tightly — plus any parts that no longer hold proper tension. Any time you see a post or net that has been taped or improvised to keep it working, it is a sign the system is not performing — or protecting athletes and officials — the way it was designed to and should be replaced. To set the match up for success, it is imperative that assistant officials (scorer, libero tracker, timer and line judges) are secured by host management and have reported to the first referee no less than 20 minutes prior to the starting time.
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Electronic Devices	At no time during the match may an official use an electronic device to review a decision of the referee. At no time shall the first or second referee consider replay. A team may use electronic devices during the match as long as they are not in restricted areas as determined by the host and as long as the first referee determines that they are not interfering with the contest. Referees are permitted to wear headsets for communication purposes. Officiating Volleyball: Using Wireless Communication (8 and a half minute great video!!) State associations may have policies to further address the allowance and/or restriction of electronic device use during matches.
Bench Personnel- Non-Playing Teammates	Non-playing teammates (bench players) and other bench personnel have a role to positively support their teammates by celebrating and encouraging those playing on the court with spontaneous cheers. It is not legal for anyone on the bench to use props. A towel is athletic equipment and is not considered a prop if used in conjunction with a spontaneous celebration. Game officials shall not address spectators at any time; however, referees have the responsibility to notify game management of any spectator misconduct. Unsporting conduct by spectators is the responsibility of the host management. In the absence of host management, the responsibility for addressing spectator behavior shall revert to the host head coach.
Identification of the NFHS Authenticating Mark on Game Balls	All game balls are required to display the NFHS Authenticating Mark. Game officials must remain vigilant and report any non-compliant game balls to the state association office.