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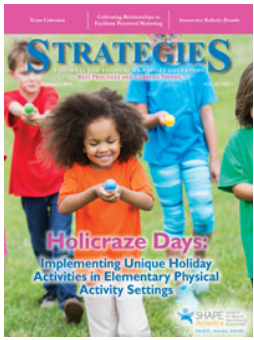
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Helping Physical Educators to Implement the Mini-Volleyball Approach

By Anthony Meléndez Nieves, Luis Estrada Oliver, and Farah Ramírez Marrero

Because of the many challenges in the learning and teaching process, various methods are required to teach sport skills (da Silva, Okazaki, Okazaki, Sasaki, & de Campos, 2007). Modified games have become a useful pedagogical framework to teach different types of sports in physical education class (Arias, Argudo, & Alonso, 2011). Simplifying, adapting and modifying physical education activities can be beneficial for student learning (Griffin & Butler, 2005). Mini-volleyball is a viable format to maximize beginners' participation and learning opportunities.

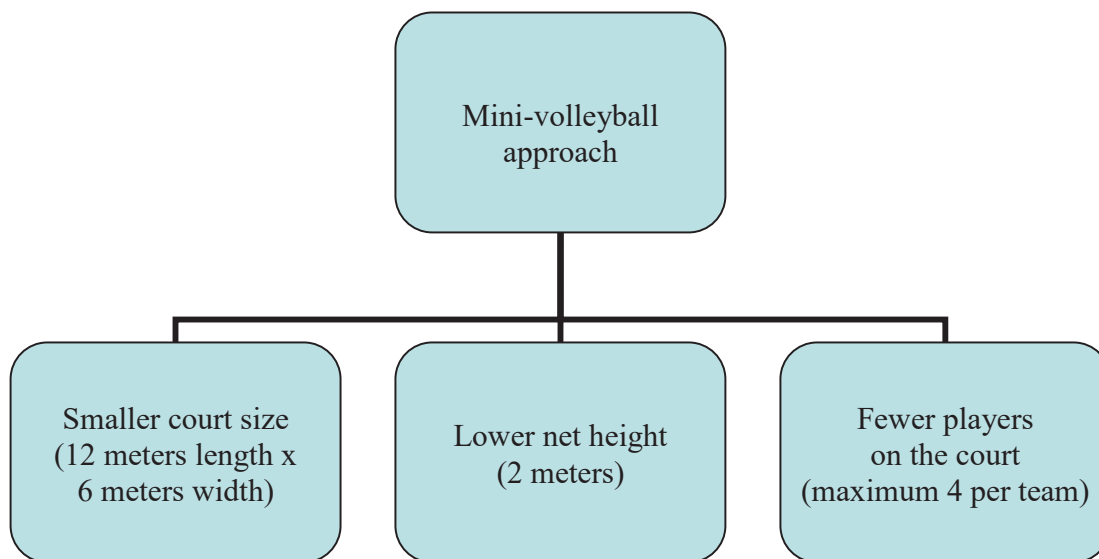


Figure 1. Implementation of mini-volleyball

This concept is a modified game that has been used worldwide as a framework for teaching the sport of volleyball (Kessel, 2009; Sample & Waitl, 2012; Vôlei, 2016). The purpose of this article is to explain how to implement the mini-volleyball approach and to provide different teaching strategies for beginners.

How to Implement Mini-Volleyball

Figure 1 shows three adaptations that can be made in order to implement mini-volleyball: 1) reduce the court size to 12 meters long by 6 meters wide, 2) lower the net height to 2 meters, and 3) reduce the number of players to a maximum of four per team.

What Are the Benefits of Mini-Volleyball?

Modifying the space allows for more opportunities to actively participate in game play. Meléndez et al. (2018) reported a significant difference between the total number of contacts made per rally in mini-volleyball versus traditional volleyball. Comparatively, for traditional volleyball, the average contact per rally was 5.56 compared to 8.91 in mini-volleyball. Moreover, mini-volleyball produces increases in skill-level knowledge, decision-making, skill execution, and game performance (Mahedero, Calderón, Arias-Estero, Hastie, & Guarino, 2015). The modification of the net and number of participants also provides an appropriate learning environment that promotes active participation. Participation or contact time is essential for the development of physical literacy in individuals, and is one of the best means to improve any skill (Magill, 2011). Therefore, physical education teachers must be creative in designing a learning environment that promotes contact time and participation. Mini-volleyball also:

- Develops all-around players: Participants have the opportunity to play all positions in the game.
- Teaches tactics and strategies: Reducing the number of players on the court allows each student to experience more tactical scenarios.
- Promotes equity: Regardless of gender and skill level, all students will have similar participation rates and time playing in the game.

Equipment Modifications

The selection of various types of equipment (i.e., balls) can also promote the development of specific skills.

Balloons: Using balloons for individual skill drills can be appropriate for introducing volleyball. Balloons eliminate the fear of getting hurt by the ball, are easier to track, and offer plenty of time to prepare and execute the volleyball skills because it takes more time for them to fall to the ground.

Beach balls (16 to 20 inches): These provide a bigger surface than volleyballs, thus increasing the student's opportunity to execute and develop individual skill drills (see Figure 2).

Oversized light volleyballs: This ball combines a greater hitting surface with slower movement pace (see Figure 3).

Regular-sized light volleyballs: This ball is designed to assist beginner players in achieving the necessary skills to participate in the game (see Figure 4).

Individual Volleyball Skill Drills

Self-toss and catch: Students toss and catch the ball, simulating the forearm pass position.



Figure 2. 16-inch beach ball



Figure 3. Oversized light volleyball



Figure 4. Regular-sized light volleyball

Self-toss and forearm pass: Students toss the ball into the air and then execute a forearm pass.

Self-toss and set: Students toss the ball into the air and then execute an overhead pass.

Continuous self-forearm pass: Students execute self-forearm passes continuously.

Continuous self-combo pass: Students execute self-overhead and forearm passes continuously.

Wall setting: Students stand about two feet from the wall and continuously execute the overhead pass to a designated target on the wall.

Underhand wall-serve drill: Students stand about 10 to 15 feet from the wall and execute the underhand serve to a designated target on the wall.

Partner Volleyball Skill Drills

Toss and catch: Select a partner and choose a comfortable distance from which to toss the ball with a high arc to catch using the forearm pass skill.

Toss and pass: Select a partner and choose a comfortable distance from which to toss the ball with a high arc to execute the forearm pass skill.

Toss and set: Select a partner and choose a comfortable distance from which to toss the ball with a high arc to execute the overhead pass skill.

Continuous forearm pass: Practice forearm passing back and forth continuously from a comfortable distance.

Continuous overhead pass: Practice overhead passing back and forth continuously from a comfortable distance.

Continuous combo pass: Practice forearm and overhead passing back and forth continuously from a comfortable distance.

Underhand-serve net drill: Execute the underhand serve from a comfortable distance from the net to your partner on the other side of the court.

Progressive Modified Games

Tossing and catching games: The purpose of this modified game is to develop offensive and defensive concepts and tactics. Participants try to get points by tossing the ball into the empty spaces of the opponent's side. The defensive team must not let the ball touch the floor on their side by catching the ball and then throwing it back over the net to the opponent's side.

Exaggeration: This strategy seeks to exaggerate through games the content that is being taught. For example, if the content that is going to be taught is the forearm pass, then the focus of the modified game must be the forearm pass. Therefore, students will play a four versus four game using only forearm passes. The variables of the overhead pass and attack are eliminated with the intention for students to focus on the forearm pass.

Gradually increase the number of players: Start playing one-on-one games and gradually increase the number of players per team (two vs. two, three vs. three, and four vs. four). Teachers can implement throwing-and-catching modified games or forearm and overhead passes.

Modified Rules

The underhand serve rule: Implementing the underhand serve rule can be important when working with beginners since the goal should be to increase the number of contacts during rallies to improve the students' experience (Meléndez et al., 2018). The server may also move closer to the net or select a distance from which to serve.

The all-around rule: All students must play all positions, and they are not allowed to switch positions or change formations after serving the ball. This rule is important because it promotes equity regardless of the ability of the students.

Conclusion

Certainly, mini-volleyball can contribute to promoting more participation opportunities and develop physical literacy in participants. The modification of the rules, the number of players, and the size of the court creates a positive learning environment adjusted to the developmental level of the players. Physical education teachers should consider mini-volleyball as an alternative for teaching the sport of volleyball.

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Submissions Welcome!

Readers are encouraged to send “Educator’s Corner” submissions to *Strategies* Managing Editor Laura Strecker at lstrecker@shapeamerica.org.

The purpose of the Educator’s Corner column is to feature short articles about one specific, practical teaching lesson that practitioners at the K–12 level can immediately implement in their classroom. Articles focus on either health or physical education and contain a brief introduction, followed by very practical, quick-hitting information such as bullet points or lists. Submissions should not exceed 1,000–1,500 words (or roughly four typed, double-spaced pages).