

# Smashball

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**Purpose:** The skill that every child wants to learn in volleyball is spiking (hitting). Smashball is a progressive volleyball learning program that begins with this skill and teaches students the flow of the game in a way that might seem “backwards” to traditional volleyball units.

**Equipment:** As many volleyball nets as possible. Enough volleyballs for ½ of group. Tape or poly spots to define “courts” – Badminton-size courts works well. Set the net height so ALL students can stand and reach at least one hand above the net.

**The basics (rules and levels) for the session can be found** at <http://www.smashbal.nl/>

I have modified the activity to fit PE in the following ways:

1. Players do not rotate positions each time the ball goes over the net. I have players rotate after each point ends (no matter which side scores the point).
2. Use a Play-Teach-Play method to help students understand “WHY” the skills are important to practice. Give students the basic rules of a level and demonstrate. Let students play for a short time then teach and practice a skill that is necessary for successful play.
3. Teach and practice skills as they are introduced within the different levels of the game.
4. Add basic rules of the game as they come up during play: In vs Out of bounds, net rules, lift, etc.

## **Levels and Skills in order of introduction:**

1. **Serving** – At each level of play a serve always begins each point, so I teach underhand serving before starting on Level 1 play.
  - a. **Cues:** Hold the ball in non-dominant hand with non-dominant foot forward. Swing dominant hand through ball and follow through toward the target.
2. **Level 1 play** – Serve from the 3m line. The receiving team lets the ball bounce one time and catches it or may catch it on the fly. This player moves quickly to the net and SMASHES the ball into the opponent’s side. The ball may bounce one time on a side during play.
3. **Stationary Top-spin Hit** – After introducing Level 1 and allowing students to play for a short time, stop and teach “hitting”. Students find a partner and practice top-spin striking over the net.
  - a. **Cues:** Toss ball well above striking shoulder / Draw striking arm back like pulling a bow and arrow / Extend arm upward forcefully to contact ball as high as you can reach / Contact below equator and reach into the “Cookie Jar”.

4. **Level 2 play** – Add a 3<sup>rd</sup> player to each team. One person on each team will be designated as a “setter” and cannot play any ball that is smashed. They will be positioned near the net on the right side of the court. One team serves from the 3m line and the receiving team may let it bounce once or catch on the fly. The receiver **TOSSES UNDERHAND WITH 2 HANDS** to the setter, who then waits for the tosser to get in position to hit. The setter then tosses the ball so the hitter can **SMASH** it. Play continues as in Level 1 except the setter is now included in each play.
5. **Approach and jump to hit** – After introducing and Level 2 and allowing students to play for a short time, stop and teach a proper approach to hit a “set” ball.
  - a. Cues : Left, pause, Right, Left foot pattern (for right dominant hitter) / Watch ball and adjust using steps / Explode upward an last step / Arm motion exactly like top-spin hit above.
6. **Level 3 play** – Similar to Level 2 play with the following changes: a. The server moves back to 7m, and b. The receiving team must catch the **SERVE ONLY** on the fly. The game is then played out exactly as in Level 2. Serving is now an advantage, so the team that wins a point continues serving.
7. **Quick Feet** – At Level 3 the served ball must be caught on the fly (no bounce) so it’s important to identify the trajectory of the serve and move quickly to intercept.
  - a. Cues: “Ready position” / Read the trajectory / Explode and Refine (large fast steps to move toward a spot where you judge the ball to land, then small steps to adjust the body to catch the ball in a “passing” position).
8. **Level 4 play** – Similar to Level 3 play with the following changes: a. The receiver of **THE SERVE ONLY** must **PASS** the ball to the setter, b. The setter is the only player who can retrieve the pass and **MUST TOSS THE BALL FROM THE PLACE WHERE THEY CATCH IT**. Then each point is played out exactly as in Level 3. Winner of a point serves.
9. **Passing** – At Level 4 the served ball must be passed to the setter. Encourage high passes to simulate the importance of proper setting.
  - a. Cues: Thumbs together and pointed down / Elbows squeezed together / Contact forearm / Legs do the driving

You can continue the progression past the game of Smashball by adding true setting, slowly increasing the height of the net, and requiring the same pass/set/hit sequence during all play.