

## Radiball

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Radiball is very similar to Newcombe Ball in the sense that players are allowed to catch the ball. Where it differs is what happens after each catch. In Radiball, after catching the ball, players must pass the ball to a teammate or get it over the net with a forearm pass, overhead pass, or hit/spike.

The way they do this is to immediately after the catch toss the ball to themselves and perform the pass or hit necessary for the occasion. There are three basic versions of the game: One catch, two catch and three catch Radiball.

Three catch Radiball is what I have my younger classes play. I teach them basic versions of the overhead serve, forearm and overhead pass, using modified equipment, from a self feed and from a partner feed. By the time they are in third grade they are able to do all these skills from a self feed in a game. For instance, a rally will start with an overhead serve (If I have a second grade class for example, a floater ball is served, the server being allowed to serve from closer to the net). A player on the receiving team will catch the ball, self toss and pass (forearm or overhead) to another player, who will do the same for a player close to the net (i.e., a front court player). This player is to catch the ball, toss it and hit it over (same action as the overhead serve). For elementary children, I have a three second possession rule; players may hold the ball after a catch for no more than three seconds before they pass or hit it. This saves the time wasting "I love all this attention so I think I'll keep the ball longer" tendencies that occur in the absence of this rule.

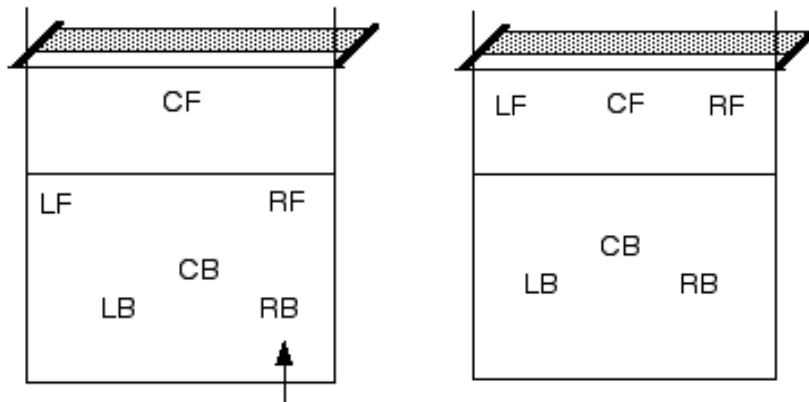
By third or fourth grade some of my students are ready for the two catch version. At this time I let them jump and hit the ball over the net. However, if they do a jump and hit they may not catch the ball first. This is voluntary at first, then usually mandatory by the end of fourth grade. The first pass should go to the center front player so that they can catch and set up another front court player for a spike.

Usually by fifth grade I have introduced one catch radiball. The first OR second pass/contact may be preceded by a catch. Sometimes I enforce it on the serve receive (to get the best chance of controlling the pass in order to practice set and spike within the game), and sometimes on the second pass (set). The latter option allows for a realistic serve receive setting, but enables the setter to get to the ball and have an excellent chance to make a set under control for the spiker to hit. Sometimes I let the teams choose which contact is preceded by a catch. Now they have to figure out on the fly whether they can catch or not (if the serve is caught, the pass cannot be, for example).

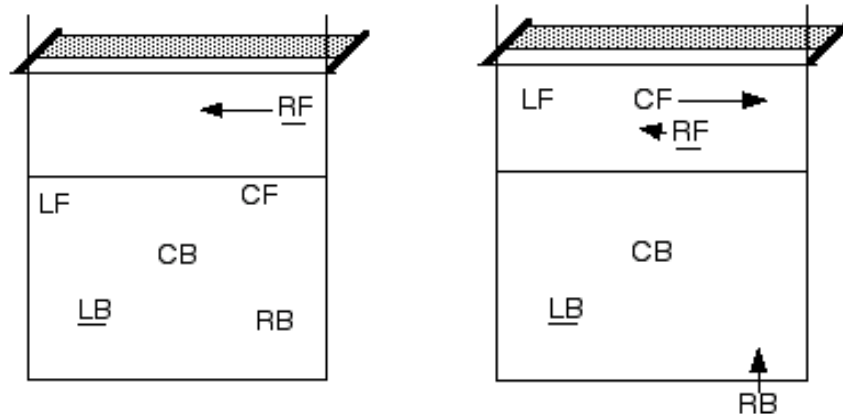
In sixth grade I usually provide options such as regular volleyball with modified equipment (lower net, floater or foam ball). However, they still have the one catch option also – for example, if I want them to use regulation ball and court, I will use one catch radiball.

In seventh grade I may refine the sixth grade rules a little, or play regular volleyball, depending on the classes. However, I want my classes by this time to play real volleyball, including sets and spikes, and so I will reintroduce one catch when necessary to optimize this. I may introduce blocking and defence here, in which case I will go back to one catch until they are comfortable with the new skills.

By eighth grade, classes are ready to go from the 6-6 offense (everybody hits when at left or right front, everybody sets when at center front). By now I and my students know who the best setters and spikers are on each team, so they can specialize. At this point I will go to one catch radiball (usually for the second contact) to give the setter time to switch into position and set under control and with optimum precision. The diagrams below indicate 6-6 and 4-2 offenses and how the front court players move in order to get the designated setter into position.



***Positions on court for 6-6 offense for serve receive (left) and serving (right)***



***Positions on court for 4-2 offense for serve receive (left) and serving (right). The setter has to switch from right front (RF) to center front position on serve. (Note: prior to the serve, all players must be in their “regular” rotation, meaning the specialist setter at RF must be in front of the back court players and to the right of the center front player). Setters are underlined.***

At high school level, I still use radiball in order to develop team and individual skills within the game. For example, if teams are not setting up spike attacks, I will go to one catch radiball to maximize spiking. If my classes are able to play at a decent level, I then go on to advanced skills and strategies my high schoolers might never have thought possible (two person blocking, deep and short defensive cover, different types of set, different spike plays, even a different offense such as a 5-1 or an International 4-2. I even teach back sets to my eighth graders). Each time, I will usually start with one touch radiball until they are able to perform (if at all) these advanced skills and strategies in a regulation game. Needless to say, this all depends on the setting and the students.

Throughout this whole evolution of the game of volleyball through use of the game of radiball, we use regular volleyball teams, positions and rotations (e.g., 6 on 6, three up and three back, clockwise rotation prior to serving). I adjust the courts to smaller size if necessary. I may use one or two subs who rotate in on serve (I often have a two or three serve rule to speed up rotation if subs are being used). Since the purpose is for my classes to play volleyball at a competent level, I keep teams, positions and courts as close to the regular configuration as possible.

In a “regular” volleyball game, even in high school, there may be no hits/spikes at all; utilizing radiball rules, I frequently have many rallies that contain the classic sequence of any good volleyball game: pass, set, spike. Of course, the ultimate goal is to achieve this within a regular volleyball game. Radiball, in the meantime, provides an enjoyable and practical alternative and a highly effective way to slow down the action in order to refine skills and strategies within the game.