



More than just volleyball.

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Joining The Club: A Parent's Perspective

Your daughter is bit by the volleyball bug. She loves to play! You'd like her to continue developing her skills. Whether she's a beginner or has played on school teams for several years, club volleyball is a good next step.

Why club? Volleyball is one of the most popular girls' sports today. In one high school survey, it ranks third — only basketball and track and field have more female participants. Every U.S. state sanctions girls' volleyball.

That popularity has led to the formation of numerous volleyball clubs for school-age girls. The clubs, which are overseen by USA Volleyball, offer specialized training and tournament competition to help young ladies work on their skills. This helps them improve for school play. And most college recruiters consider club volleyball experience essential.

Club volleyball is a great way to keep improving beyond the school season. Players work on overall skills, specific position, and knowledge of the game. Younger players learn fundamentals by trained coaches. It helps prepare middle school students who want to play in high school; in fact, many high school coaches consider club volleyball a plus. Depending on the club, students can learn life skills, too, such as time management and discipline — and, of course, improve their physical fitness. On the social side, girls can make many new friends from other schools.

So, how do you choose a volleyball club for your daughter? Following are suggestions from parents, coaches, and former players.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

All volleyball clubs are not created equal! But with a little research, you can learn what's offered at clubs in your area. Compare and contrast, and decide which club is best suited for your daughter.

- 1. Determine her needs.** Consider your daughter's age, ability, and goals for the sport. If she's a beginner, where can she get good, solid training? Does she want to improve her skills for her junior high or high school team? Does she want to play in college? Perhaps most important: Will she know who her club coach is before the season starts? The coach should know what she needs to improve on in order to get her to the next level.
- 2. Learn.** Visit club websites and social media. Request an information packet, if one is available. What is the club's philosophy on coaching, player development, etc.? What makes the club different from others in the area? Look for a calendar that lists tryout dates, club kickoff meeting, special events, etc. Read about the club's coaches (playing and coaching experience, certification). Ask for parent

references. Though it varies, find out where teams typically travel for tournaments. How many in a season? Are they usually one-, two-, or three-day events? Will this work into your family's schedule?

3. **Visit.** Have your daughter attend open gym sessions or clinics. Meet the club director, coaches, and board members/staff. Get a feel for the training facility.

4. **Other considerations.**

FINANCIAL. Club volleyball is an investment in your child. Still, you'll want an idea of what it costs. Club fees typically cover overall operating expenses, uniforms, tournament entry fees, and coach expenses. Add to that travel expenses throughout the season for out-of-town tournaments. And you might want to purchase club spirit wear for your daughter and you! Team-bonding activities may be scheduled at local attractions, restaurants, etc. If you're on a budget, ask if club fees can be paid monthly. Are fund-raisers scheduled to offset costs? Find out whether the club awards scholarships to promising players whose families have financial constraints.

CLUB PHILOSOPHY/MISSION STATEMENT/HANDBOOK.

Does the club have these? What makes it stand out from other clubs? What expectations does the club have of its players? Its parents? What are its policies concerning travel, in-season sickness/injury, conflict resolution, etc.? Does the club focus on athletic improvement only, or is it committed to helping each athlete achieve her potential as a well-rounded individual on and off the court? Are positive qualities emphasized (i.e., responsibility, accountability, honesty, independence, resourcefulness, time management, respect, hard work, self-confidence, competitiveness, paying it forward)?

TEAMS, TRYOUTS. There are several levels of club teams; they're based on player age, skill level, tournament difficulty, etc. Each fall, volleyball clubs hold tryouts to fill their teams; this mostly involves girls 13 and under, though older players still can try out for available spots. High school-age players may receive an invitation to join a team; by tryout time, high school-age teams may be almost complete, with coaches looking to fill just a few specific positions. Find out whether the club has spots open on the team appropriate for your child. If your daughter cannot make a club tryout, will the club schedule a private one?

TRAINING, CONDITIONING. Typically, club teams practice two days a week. Does the club require players to attend additional strength/conditioning sessions? Can players take private lessons from club coaches to work on specific skills?

THE COACHES.

Finally, a friendly reminder from a parent who's "been there."

"PLEASE remember that our coaches are people too...they are human and they can make mistakes. They sacrifice far more than any club could adequately compensate them for. They give their time, energy, and dedication because of their passion for the game and desire to make a difference in your daughter's life. These coaches give up personal family time to be in the gym with your daughter multiple times a week and at tournaments on the weekend. These people have full-time jobs and are often forced to use personal vacation time in order to travel to tournaments to coach your daughter's team! Please remember these facts and give the coaches your respect and appreciation for the commitment they make to the club and your daughter."

BE MORE INFORMED. FIND THE VOLLEYBALL CLUB THAT'S THE BEST FIT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER. SHE WILL REAP THE REWARDS. HERE'S TO A GREAT CLUB SEASON!



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