

Starting a Junior Club Handbook

Chapter 1: General Information and FAQ's

As the sport of volleyball continues to grow among all age brackets, it is quite common to hear the question, "What do I have to do to start a club of my own?" Although it does require some effort, it is very gratifying for those who have chosen to provide additional opportunities for juniors to learn to play and expand their knowledge of the sport.

General Information

1. What is Junior Volleyball?

Junior volleyball is a branch of USA Volleyball, the national governing body of volleyball in the United States. USA Volleyball works in conjunction with International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) to provide equal opportunities and maximum enjoyment for participants and spectators, while maintaining the values of fair play and peaceful involvement. As a part of USA Volleyball, junior volleyball clubs must adhere to the rules, standards, and code of ethics as established by that governing body.

2. Who is eligible to play club volleyball?

Junior volleyball is divided into participants of like age groups and like genders for competition. USAV and the Arizona Region offers play for 11s through 18s for girls and 13s - 18s for boys. Younger players may play on these teams but the identified age groups for the tournaments are as specified. The Arizona Region divides teams into like competition. There are currently 3 division levels for girls used in the Arizona Region tournament schedule: Open Division, Championship Division and Club Division. For boys the levels are Open Division and 14 and under. There is a net height difference between boys 14 and under and 15s and older.

Teams must meet the age and gender requirements for each of these divisions in order to participate at the national level. No age waivers are accepted at the national level; therefore, no waivers are granted to players on teams that travel to National Qualifiers or to the Junior National Championships unless explicitly defined in the age definitions document. The age division breakdowns are determined and updated annually by USA Volleyball. The current age definitions document can be found in this handbook or on the AZ Region website.

Regional age waivers are available on a very limited basis for athletes who need to apply in a lower division. Such waivers are granted on a case-by-case basis and are honored only within the Arizona Region. The intent of the age waiver is for players in rural areas that have limited clubs/teams available with which to play or for players that are in the grade below where their birthdate would require them to play. An Age Waiver Form must be submitted prior to team placement and be approved through the Arizona Region Registrar before the player is assured a place on the lower age team. No more than two players with an age waiver may play on any one team. In many cases, it is asked that the younger players play up on an older team instead of older players in a younger age group. No age waivers are granted for players on Open Division teams or teams that frequent National Qualifiers or plan to attend the Jr National Championships.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions were compiled in order to give parents insight when shopping for a club for their son and/or daughter but may be useful in gaining perspective and preparing answers to these questions as the club begins to organize.

Age Divisions

USA Volleyball has strict guidelines concerning age. Click the "Age Definitions" link on the Juniors home page of our website, plug in a birth date and it will tell you what age division a player must play in for the upcoming season. This converts to the new season each July 1st.

Gender Competition Guidelines

The Arizona Region follows the USA Volleyball Gender Competition Guidelines. Primarily an athlete must participate on the team of the gender they were born. There are rules and safety issues regarding an athlete born male participating on a female team. See the USAV website for specifics.

What Clubs are out there?

Click on Club Directory under the Juniors link on our website for a complete list of all the clubs in the state by area.

- Where did athletes from local Jr Highs or High Schools play club? Were they happy there?
- Do you want a club that practices close by? Are you willing to travel 30 minutes or more to attend practice, possibly 3 times a week, with a certain club?
- Does the club offer a team in the appropriate age division?

Philosophy

- Know what YOUR philosophy is . . . what do you want from a club during the season?
- Are you determined to attend Nationals - not all clubs seek bids to the National Championships? Persistent for a club that helps athletes to get scholarships? Are you looking for a club to prepare for high school? Is your son/daughter looking to play with their friends on a team?
- Ask the Club what THEIR philosophy is concerning playing time, travel team, non-travel teams, conflict with school/church functions.

Cost

- How much do tryouts cost? Is payment required for each tryout or does one fee cover all tryout sessions?
- How much is due up front after committing to the club?
- How often are payments made? Monthly, 1 or 2 installments?
- Are travel expenses included in the payments or are they separate?
- Are Nationals or Post-Season play included? If not, when is that payment due? Is that refundable if the team does not make it to Post-Season play?
- What if my son/daughter gets hurt during the season? Do I have to pay for the part of the season when my son/daughter is hurt?
- Is fundraising available to offset the cost?
- What player equipment is covered in the cost? jerseys? warm-ups? shoes? kneepads? socks? bags?

Members on the team

- How many players are kept on the team?
- Is playing time guaranteed?
- When will the final roster for each team be determined?

- If the coach and/or the team is not consistent with what our family was told before we signed the contract, will we be granted a refund and released to go to a different club?

Level of Commitment

- Many players are active in other sports or activities. Try to have a feel for what your schedule might be like in your other activities so you will know if there are any or many conflicts. Always check with the club to see what is tolerated.
 - Very Cooperative - they will work around anything and everything
 - Cooperative within reason - there are a few instances that the club may excuse you for being late or absent.
 - Full Commitment - some clubs expect some or all of their teams to put club volleyball first. They expect you at every practice and every tournament.

Practices

- How many practices are there per week? Will this number change prior to a tournament?
- How long is each practice?
- Where are the practices located?
- Are parents permitted to watch?

Tournaments

- How many tournaments will the team play in each month?
- How many are in-state tournaments?
- How many are out-of-state tournaments?

Travel

- How many tournaments are "travel" tournaments? Travel most likely means out of state or multi-day tournaments in another part of the state where overnight stay is required.
- How are travel arrangements handled?
- Does the team travel together or is it up to the parents to get and keep the player there?

Coaches

- How many coaches are staffed per team?
- What are their qualifications?

Private Lessons

- Is there an opportunity to take private lessons from a coach in my club? We already have an arrangement with a coach in another club, is that okay?

Communications

- How does the club communicate with the parents/players? Do they have a web site? Facebook page? Monthly meetings? Newsletters? Handbook? Team App?
- What is the chain of command if there is an issue?

Other Perks/Requirements

- Car Pooling?
- Club/Team outings throughout the year?
- Clinics/camps throughout the year?
- College recruiting help?
- Does the club have their own facility?

Open House Period

- There is an established Open House period for girls where prospective players may go and find out about a club prior to the tryout start date. The Open House period is a 10-day period immediately prior to the established tryout start date. The club may offer a maximum of 3 sessions lasting no more than 2 hours per age group during the Open House period. This is to allow the player the opportunity to attend more than one club's Open House.
- The club may ask the player to run through some exercises or drills to evaluate their skills. The club may just talk to the parent and player about what their club has to offer.
- The club **MAY NOT** offer a player a position on a team in their club, **MAY NOT** take any commitment fees or down payments and **MAY NOT** require or allow any player to commit to their club until after the completion of the TRYOUT session.
- The club **MAY NOT** require a player to attend more than one of their sessions for that age group. This is the time for the player to find out where they want to play.
- The club **MAY NOT** prohibit a player from attending another club's open house session.
- There is no Open House Period for boys fall season. There is no conflict with school volleyball during the time leading up to tryouts for boys.

Tryout Start Dates

- The established tryout start dates are as follows:
- For the 12's - 14's: the first Saturday in November. For 2024 season that date is Nov 4th.
- For the 15's - 18's: the first Saturday following the last state HS Championship match - for 2024 season that date is Nov 18th. There is a blackout date of Nov 10th for all Open House periods for players to attend the Girls State HS Championships.

Committing to a Club

The AZ Region and USA Volleyball consider a commitment to a club to be very serious and to last for the entire season. That means that players are not expected to change clubs mid-season. The commitment to a club commences when a player signs a club contract and/or pays the club commitment or initial fees with the intent of joining the club. The commitment lasts through the last day of the Junior National Championships in July. If a player asks to be released prior to the end of the JNC tournament a Player Release form must be filled out and the release approved by the Region. There are reasons a player may not be released including money owed to the club and eligibility issues.

The business relationship between a club and a player is outside the purview of the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball. Each club is an independent business. Financial issues between player and club are to be handled as any other business arrangement. The Arizona Region cannot legally enter into this business arrangement. The Arizona Region does have some regulation as to what clubs can do but not in regards to their business operations with their players.

Know the Rules

Refer to the Policies Manual for more information regarding the Arizona Region recruiting rules and guidelines, tryout dates, and other important information. It is also very important for parents to be aware of the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) participation regulations and the NCAA recruiting and participation regulations to avoid any inadvertent violation of these rules that would preclude a junior player from further participation in high

school or collegiate volleyball team participation. Many coaches do not know or understand the rules and may offer advice that could jeopardize that eligibility.

A female player that is participating on any level (Freshmen, JV or Varsity) high school team is not eligible to participate in skills camps, clinics or open gyms from the start of the high school season in August until the end of their school team participation in October or November. Any club that allows any high school player to participate in clinics, camps or open gyms prior to the end of their school team involvement has jeopardized that player's school eligibility and therefore is subject to sanction for the upcoming season.

A club may not ask a player to commit to their club (either verbally, financially or in writing) prior to the established tryout date for their age group. Any offers are non-binding by both the player and the club and may be subject to sanction.