

IDENTIFICATION OF A SETTER

Before you can begin to apply all of your knowledge to training a setter, you must have the right person. The following is a basic checklist for your initial search.

Physical Qualities

- Height:** Although there are many great small setters, height added to the qualities listed below is certainly an advantage.
- Speed:** The setter must have the ability to move the feet quickly, enabling him or her to get to the ball fast.
- Eyes:** The setter must demonstrate quick eye movement and good peripheral vision.
- Ambidexterity:** The setter must be able to hit the ball with either arm. This is a trainable skill if the player already has good upper body strength. A left-handed setter has an advantage.

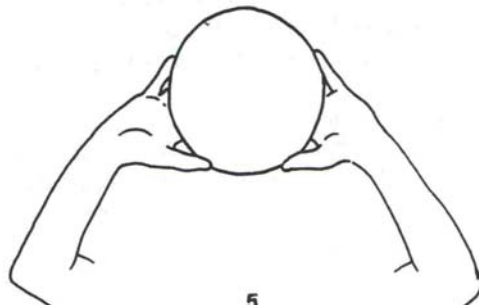
Mental Qualities

- Personality:** If a player's off-court personality shows leadership, independence and self-motivation, then that player will probably demonstrate the same qualities on the court. A setter must be the kind of person who keeps his or her head when others are losing theirs.
- Intelligence:** Your setter should be able to make quick, smart decisions, always working with the hitters.
- Responsibility:** Because of a setter's leadership role, the setter must be strong enough to accept more responsibility than any other player, even the responsibility of a loss.

SETTING BASICS

Understanding the two triangles:

1. The first triangle – the smaller one – is made from the two thumbs and the index fingers. The thumbs make up the base (or tangent) line and the index fingers make up the other two lines of the triangle.
2. The second triangle is made by the two elbows.
3. It is important to maintain the two triangles simultaneously. Setters must be able to see the ball through the smaller of the triangles. This forces them to handle the ball in front of their foreheads.



The two main points in performing the catch and release are:

1. To stop the spin of the ball while catching the ball and
2. To release the ball with control.

In order to perform both tasks, setters are required to use their wrists, elbows and knees to absorb the ball's impact. The setter must also get their hands up earlier than they think they have to.

The catch remains the same for the back set as for the front set. However, at the moment of release, setters are required to turn their thumbs and arch their backs to send the ball in the opposite direction.

The importance of the jump set is to quicken the pace of the offence. However, by jumping, setters are no longer able to use their knees to control the ball. Therefore, they must move right under the ball in order to maintain the triangles so as to have more control.

It should also be stressed that setters must learn to make the appropriate movements at the peak of their jumps.

TRAINING THE SETTER

A setter is like a quarterback on a football team or a director of an athletic department – no one could be successful in these positions without proper training and experience. Put in the time to provide the direction necessary to mold your setter into the director of your team. A setter's technical development requires time, patience, organization and effort. Following is a guideline for this development.

Your setter needs to practice these basic sets. Include movement forward, backward, sideways, movement from the back row, neutral movement, and jump sets.

1. The Basic High Set
2. The Back Set
3. The Jump Set
4. The Quick Set
5. The Side Set
6. The Shoot Set
7. The One-Hand Set

After training your setters in the proper techniques, you must not forget to train their eyes. The more comfortable and experienced the setter becomes with basic setting, the more he or she will be willing to look away from the ball and at the total court. Many setters focus their eyes only on the ball, unaware of what their opponents are doing. This one skill being able to look away from the ball to see the entire court – takes many hours of practice through eye-movement drills. The more efficient the eye movement becomes, the more successful your setter will be in the total team effort. It will be easier to get one-on-one situations for your hitters or to tip and hit at the most opportune time if the setter has total court awareness.

Eye checks may be incorporated into most of your setting drills after your setter becomes familiar with basic setting skills. The following eye check progression is taken after the pass and before the set:

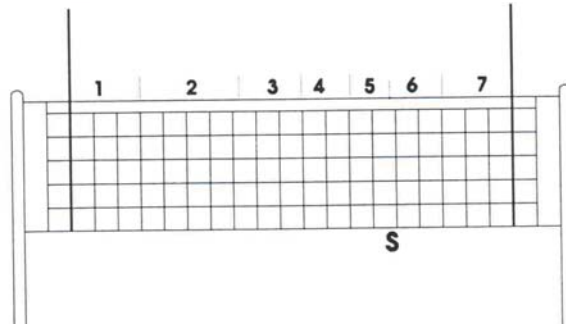
1. Eye check to the left front. This check will also help in preparing the body to square off toward the left front.
2. Eye check to the opposing right front blocker.
3. Eye check to the opposing middle blocker this one is critical.
4. Eye check to the right front hitter.
5. Eye check to the opponent's back-court defense.

Training in each of these eye checks will prepare the setter for any given situation. Peripheral vision also becomes important because there are many times when the setter needs to see the blocker – the middle blocker especially immediately before setting the ball.

TYPES OF SETS

All of the different sets can be effective in a game, but when and how you use them is what separates the good setters from the great. Some of the most popular sets are used because they are the only set the setter knows or the only sets she makes consistently to the same spot. Some setters will always choose to set the best hitter. Coaches must be aware of this so that the setter doesn't become trapped and unable to make any other sets.

The numbering for the types of sets are named with the first number being the position of the net and the second number being the height of the ball:



Position of Net:

- 1 position = left sideline
- 2 position = 1-2 metres (3-6 feet) inside the court
- 3 position = centre of court
- 4 position = 1 metre (3 feet) in front of setter
- 5 position = forehead of the setter
- 6 position = immediately behind the setter
- 7 position = right sideline

Height of Ball:

- 0 = normal high ball – 4-6 metres (12-18 feet) above net
- 1 = 30 centimetre (1 foot) above net
- 2 = 60 centimetre (2 feet) above net
- 3 = 1 metre (3 feet) above net, etc.
- 9 = an extremely high set – 6 metres (18 feet) above net

The most common sets are listed below. There are also many combination plays, but in this section only the two most common, the X and the Split Set, will be described.

1. High Ball Outside (or 10)

The setter sets the ball from the right side of the court, near the net, high in the air so that it comes down on the left side, right in front of the outside hitter. The ball should reach seven to 10 feet above the net and one to two feet in from the net. If the ball were to fall to the floor, it would land about one foot outside the sideline. All setters should try to master this set because it is commonly used and can often get you out of a tough situation. But even though this is one of the safest and easiest sets to make, it should only be used when the team has a good outside hitter and the opponent has a small blocker.

A good time to set the ball to the outside is when there is a short blocker matched against the best outside hitter. Another time is when the middle blocker has moved to the middle of the net, expecting the hit to come across there, and then has no time to get to the outside to help with that block. Consequently, there is just one blocker on the outside.

2. Quick Middle (or 51)

This refers to a ball that is set one foot above the net in the middle of the court. This set is released more quickly than the High Ball Outside and is more of a touch and release than a push. This is a quick ball where the middle hitter goes straight to the setter and jumps just as the setter is about to make contact with the ball. It is up to the setter to put the ball in the hitter's hand with a quick flick of the wrist and no follow-through.

With this set, the setter needs to make sure her body is facing the hitter. If her left shoulder is pointing toward the hitter, she won't be able to see the hitter without turning her head. While a setter usually takes a step with her left foot toward the ball, she doesn't with this set in order to keep her left shoulder away from the hitter.

This set should be a jump set, especially if the setter is short, because the ball will clear the top of the net much more quickly and speed up the offense. Since the middle hitter will need to jump for her hit, forcing her to wind up in advance, this action can alert the blockers to the planned hit.

The Quick Middle should be one of the first sets used in a game. Showing the other team that you have a strong middle who can hit will draw their attention to that spot on the court, freeing up your outside and opposite hitters to make the kills from their positions on the court.

3. Back Quick (or 61)

With this set, the ball has the same tempo as the Quick Middle, but is set about one foot high and right behind the setter's head. The setter still steps into the ball with her left foot and squares her body, but after the ball is released, the follow-through with the left leg takes her body forward slightly. The height should be the same and you must have a feel for the hitter. Again, if the hitter likes the ball at two or two-and a-half feet rather than one foot, the setter should know this and adjust accordingly.

For this set, the setter is *not* working to put the ball in the hitter's hand; she is setting to a specific spot. She has a slight backward lean on the release of the ball, and a quick flick of the wrists instead of an extension of the arms.

4. Shoot Set to the Outside (or 11)

A shoot refers to a ball that travels across the court at a fast speed. A Shoot Set to the Outside is a quick ball that is pushed across the court, one to two feet above the net, sometimes higher depending on your hitter. The Shoot Set should end up in front of the outside hitter, right by the antenna on the outside or left side of the net.

To set a Shoot Set, the setter's position is the same as the high set, with the left foot toward the ball and the right foot facing the target. The difference comes when the setter releases the ball. Her hands should finish the set six to 10 inches lower than they would for a high outside set. If you were to draw a line from your setter's hands to the antenna, the hitter would make contact with the ball where the line intersects the antenna. Some setters will jump set the ball so that the Shoot Set travels in a straight line. If she can jump and reach the ball and release it so that it travels a foot or two above the net, then there would be no arc to the ball.

A Shoot Set is used when you are trying to match up your hitters one on one with the blockers. Most of the time, there will only be one blocker in front of your hitter, because the set is so fast that the middle blocker will not get there in time. If executed correctly, it is a very effective set, but it is also one that requires a lot of time and work between the setter and hitter.

5. Back Set (or 70)

This is a set that sends the ball behind the setter toward the antenna. It is not as high as the High Ball Outside but should be high enough to give the hitter a chance to make any adjustments she needs. The footwork is basic but the ball is released to the back.

The ball must be set overhead, but it should look like it is being set over the right shoulder. The setter needs to rotate her right shoulder back just as or after she releases the ball. This rotation takes the body toward the net and the ball away from the net, and it also helps position the setter for her next move, which is covering the hitter. A very experienced setter will set directly over her head with little or no bending of the back and the set will be perfect. But in the beginning, she must make sure she steps with her left foot first and finishes with her arms extended fully toward her target as she rotates to her right to cover.

The common problem with this set is that the ball sometimes shoots past the antenna because there is too much arch in the setter's back. If there is not enough of an arch, the ball goes straight up and not out, or the ball goes too close to the net and sometimes into the antenna. And if the setter turns or rotates to the left, it takes the ball into the net.

6. Back Court A-B-C

It is called a back-court set because the ball is hit by a player in the back court even though the ball must be set in front of the 10-foot line. How close you want to set the ball to the net is based on the person hitting the ball. The hitter must jump or take off behind the 10-foot line, and no part of her feet should touch the line until after contact is made with the ball. She can land in front of the line.

The body position, the footwork, the height of release and follow through for this set are the same for the High Ball Outside. The only difference here is that the right foot points away from the net a few degrees. This foot will determine how far off the net you will make the set, and with experience, this will not matter too much.

Make sure the ball is at least three feet inside the 10-foot line. The body stays in the same position as if you were setting the outside. That way you don't give away your target.

The back court player lines up with the A position on the outside, the B position in the middle (which is sometimes called the "Pipe"), and the C position behind the setter.

The best time to set the A is when you pull your outside hitter in for a quick play which forces her blocker to move toward the middle of the court, leaving the outside line open. You never want to set the Back Court A when there is an outside hitter in the outside position, because it will cause confusion as to whose ball it is.

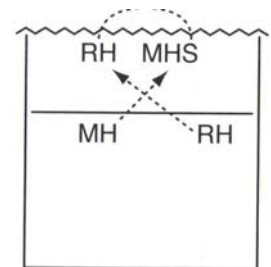
The Pipe or B is set when the opponent's middle blocker is so effective that every time your middle hitter jumps, the middle blocker jumps. At that point you can surprise everyone with a quick Pipe that is lower than the other two back court sets. It must be lower and quick because you don't want the middle blocker to land on the floor and jump again. With the middle blocker landing while your middle hitter is hitting, she'll have more court to hit instead of sharp angles. In the B set, everything is the same; except the ball is released more to the left side of the face and the hands finish straight up, with the ball falling right behind the middle hitter. Never set the B or Pipe if the middle blocker did not jump.

The C is a back set that is not as high as an outside set, but not as low as a Pipe set. It's somewhere in the middle. This set is more effective when the setter calls a play that also takes the right-side hitter to the middle of the court for a combination play. Most of the time will force the blocker to come inside and block, opening up the right side of the court. These sets, even though they might be to your best hitters, are sometimes not your best choice. In the C set, the body and footwork are the same as the back set except the ball is released over the left side of the face with the same rotation. Never set the C if you have your right-side hitter back there.

7. X

The X set is intended to confuse the blockers. As a setter, you have to see who or which blocker jumps, then choose to whom you will set the ball – your middle or your opposite hitter, also called the right-side hitter.

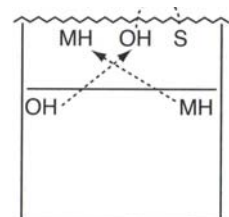
What makes this combination play an X is the crossing of these two players. The most common X play is where the opposite hitter, or right side, comes to the middle of the court and crosses behind the middle hitter. She then hits a ball that is set slightly higher and to the left shoulder of the middle hitter. The X can also come from the outside, where the outside hitter comes into the middle of the court and hits a two ball slightly higher than the middle set. You can also run an X on a 31 Set with the right-side player, but your best choice would be to set a Back Court C because with this X you are jamming all the blockers to the left side of the court and no one will be over there to challenge the set.



This play is a good choice when you see that your opponent's middle blocker jumps with the middle hitter. If the middle blocker does not jump, you need to identify that and set the ball to the middle hitter.

8. Split Set

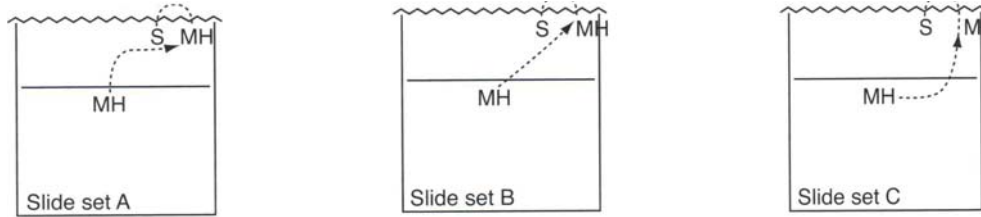
The Split Set is similar to the X except it is a much quicker set where the outside hitter or the right-side hitter comes between the middle and the setter. It uses only a Shoot or Quick Middle toward the middle of the court.



9. Slide Set

The Slide Set is a quick back set behind the setter to the antenna. With this set, the setter calls the middle to the center of the court, but instead of setting a Quick Middle, the setter sets the ball away from the middle and back toward the antenna. The middle, from the center of the court, quickly drops back from the net and runs around the setter. Then she jumps off the left leg as she attacks the ball.

There are two other ways to run the slide. Instead of going toward the setter, the middle hitter can go in a straight line toward the ball and the antenna, or go along the 10-foot line and then turn toward the ball and at the antenna.



The footwork and body position are the same as the back set except the ball is released lower than the regular set. Some hitters prefer speed where they have to chase the ball before it gets too far and some hitters prefer height. A setter should know her hitters and their preferences.

10. Setter's Tip

The Setter's Tip is a quick left-handed push of the ball over the net when the opponent is expecting a set. The setter should appear to be setting the ball but at the last moment, the left hand comes over the right and pushes the ball to the floor. Before you tip you must know where the open spot is and how to get the ball there as quickly as possible.

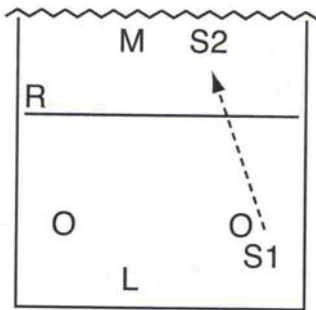
Tipping for a setter starts with a high jump. The higher you can jump, the higher you can reach above the net and the harder or more quickly you can get the ball to the floor. If you can't get that height over the net, then the wrist is used. With a quick flick of the wrist to the open spot, the ball will get there just as fast. All of this will come with time and hard work.

There are five situations in which it is appropriate to tip:

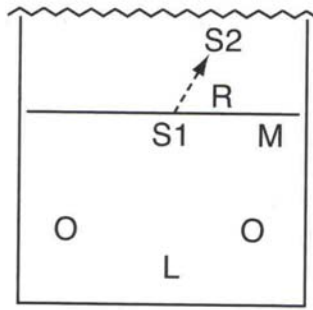
- When opponents are switching position during a rally.
- After a long rally.
- When a weak spot in the defense has been determined.
- When the left back player is serving. (Many times teams do not cover this position and the server is slow in switching into position.)
- Against a player-back defense.

SETTER ROTATIONS

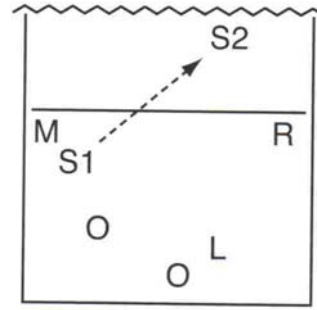
The images of the rotations below assume a 4-person serve receive. Note that in each diagram, S1 indicates where the setter starts and S2 shows where the setter goes. O is the outside hitter, L is the libero (or backrow middle if a libero is not being used), R is the right side/opposite, and M is the middle hitter. The position reflects where the setter is.



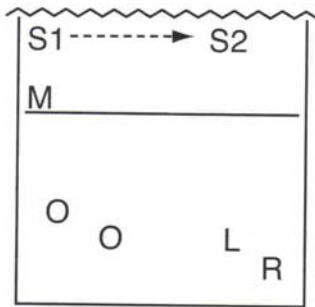
Position 1



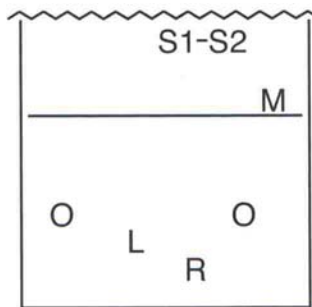
Position 6



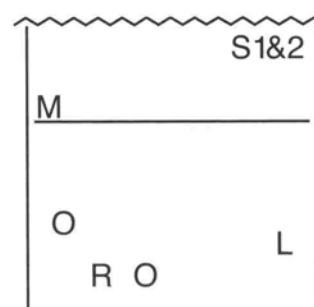
Position 5



Position 2



Position 3



Position 2

SETTER'S MENTAL CHECKLIST

1. Memorize terminology, symbols, and signals of the offense.
4. Rank each hitter by position.
5. Identify any special considerations for each hitter. (Do they have trouble lining up off-hand, need more time transitioning, hit better when set tighter on the net, and so on?). Include cues that will improve their hitting.
6. Rank each hitter by his or her ability to hit the following sets:
 - a. High sets
 - b. Combination sets
 - c. Quicks or slides
 - d. Back-row sets
7. Know attackers' set preferences, speed, height, and distance from net.
8. Know who to set in tough situations.
9. Read attackers' reactions to repeated errors and pressure and know which attackers you can go back to.
10. Assume all attacks will be blocked and cover. Give the attacker a second opportunity to hit. Play defense first in transition, then prepare to set.
11. Take advantage of what we do best, *now*.
12. Identify the "hot" attacker in each game or match. The hot attacker is not always the team's best attacker, but the best attacker *at the moment*. Feed the hot attacker, not every time, but a large majority of the time and when the team needs a kill.
13. Never force a difficult set to the hot attacker. It might result in a mishandled ball or a poor set. Distinguish between risk-taking situations and percentage plays and know when to do each.
14. Set in random patterns. Be unpredictable in position and type of set. Do not make it easy for blockers to know what you plan to do.
15. Set in predictable, sequential patterns. Lure the blockers to commit to a specific pattern. Alter the pattern once the block adjusts.
16. Set quick until the opponents can stop it.
17. Establish an effective first-tempo attack first, before running second-tempo play sets.
18. Force blocker movement inside, then set wide, forcing the blocker to reach away from the court or float out to block the ball.
19. Direct the attack to a weakness in the opponent's block.
20. Consider the initial start positions of blockers, that is, spread toward sidelines or pinched inside.
21. If the pass goes to the far right side and the middle blocker follows, set quick to the left front attacker.
22. Force slow middle blockers to move to the outside with lower and quicker sets to the antennae.

DRILLS

Hand Position Drills

Following are some drills for teaching your setter(s) proper hand position:

1. Toss the ball to self 2 to 3 m straight up (6 ft. 6 ins. to 9 ft. 10 ins.) and catch it in front of the face, stressing proper hand position on the ball.
2. Same as No.1, only increase the difficulty by making the player move before catching the ball. Toss the ball forward, to the sides and backward. Stress that the player must get under the ball. When the ball is low, the player must catch the ball by placing one foot in front of the other, bending the knees and dropping the hips below the knee of the lead foot.

Setting Drills

The following drills can be used for either front or back setting. Jump setting can also be used for these elementary drills.

1. Individual: Volley 3 to 5 m in the air (9 ft. 10 ins. to 16 ft. 5 ins.), let the ball bounce, move underneath the volley and set up again. Stress extending the legs so that the body is moving up into the ball.
2. Individual: Toss to self and volley at the wall. Stress movement into the ball and follow-through.
3. Individual: Volley at the wall; let the ball bounce and volley at the wall. Stress moving behind the ball before contact and moving forward into the ball prior to, during and after contact. This is a very difficult drill to perform correctly as it requires quick, continuous movement.
4. Partners: Continuous volleying, 1 m apart.
5. Partners: 3 to 5 m apart (9 ft. 10 ins. to 16 ft. 5 ins.), continuous volleying. A volleys to self, A volleys to B; B volleys to self, B volleys to A. Stress moving forward in direction of the pass while passing to partners.
6. Triangle: A passes to B, B passes to C, C passes to A; continuous volleying, both directions.
7. Triangle: Same as No.9, only return the volley in the direction it came from and then pass to the next player.
8. Triangle, four players: Same as No.9, only after making the pass, continue forward to replace the player who received the pass.
9. Square formation, five players: A volleys to B, then follows the pass to replace B after B volleys to D; D volleys to C, then C volleys to E.
10. Square formation, large group: Follow the pass.
11. Individual: Volley the ball straight up, volley it forward 3 to 4 m (9 ft. 10 ins. to 13 ft. 1 in.) and run forward under the ball; volley straight up and then volley it forward.
12. Individual: Same as number 1, only pass the ball backward, then straight up; sideways, then straight up.
13. Individual, 2 m (6 ft. 6 ins.) from wall: Continuous volleying at wall while shifting back and forth along the wall; also move closer to and further away from the wall.
14. A sets along the net and then retreats and sets again; consecutively performed by both partners.
15. Your setter is between two partners: The setter alternately moves from the attack line to the net and turns 90 degrees to set to partners.
16. Group of three, give and go: After passing, the players must run outside the sideline before making the next pass.
17. Partner, short then long: Partner at the net passes the ball short then long; B must move short then long.

Setter Movement Drills

These drills are advanced and must be preceded by basic fundamentals. All tosses may vary in height and in placement on the court. The set direction can be predetermined by the coach. All types of sets – jump sets, tips, hits, set/half roll – can be implemented as any part of the drill. The coach should move around and toss from every position on the court.

Setting Attackers

These drills are designed to improve your setter's accuracy and consistency in a game-like situation. It is also important for your setter to develop timing and rhythm with your team's attackers to enhance their effectiveness.

1. You toss the ball to the net. The setter runs in from the 3-meter line and you yell out a type of set to be set. The setter must wait for the call. For example, you toss the ball and the setter runs in, you yell "back," and your setter sets a back set. Then increase the difficulty. For example, the player must jump set every time.
2. You toss the ball at the net. The setter runs in from the 10-foot line. If the blocker jumps, the setter sets outside. If the blocker does not jump, the setter sets middle.
3. Sets with outside hitters: You toss a ball to the net and the setter runs in and sets the ball. Work on consistent sets: set forward and behind, short and deep, all varieties of sets. Penetrate from the middle and left positions.
4. Set with the middle hitters and vary the location of the toss along the net: The setter puts the ball the same distance in front of self; when the setter must go to the left of center court, the middle hitter comes behind for a back set.
5. Set with middle hitters: Similar series as No.4, except the coach's pass is more than 2 m (6 ft. 6 ins.) back from the net.
6. Set with two or three hitters: You toss to the setter, who must now choose among three hitters.
7. Lob over an easy serve that one of the three passers receives. The setter sets; setters and hitters change positions each time.
8. Simulate a free ball: Bounce a ball on the floor, the players drop off the net and the setter penetrates. Underhand toss the ball over the net; set, hit, etc.
9. Same as No.8, except you add blockers. The setter should attempt to prevent a two-player block from forming.

When you are at the right stage of training for an advanced setter, change these drills by adding little items to make them more difficult. For example, the setter must jump set every ball, must look across the net before setting the ball and must know if the hitters are early or late. Most importantly, the setter must first get to the net, then react to the pass and/or situation and set the ball. Also, the position for each set, no matter what, must be the same each time so that no one will be able to determine where the ball is being set.

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