



Stages of Learning Examples

Stage 1: Learning how to pass

When learning how to pass, the coach would spend time talking about how the “Ball only knows Angles”, how to form the platform from the hands up to the shoulders, and the posture of the body (Head over shoulders, shoulders over knees, knees over toes) while performing the action.

When working on the forearm platform, coaching feedback sounds like, “There’s that platform, excellent job keeping your wrists even and your elbows facing up!”

When working on the posture, coaching feedback sounds like, “That is it! I see you are keeping your shoulders over your knees and your hips are back. Keep that up every time you pass the ball.”

Stage 2: Passing in Serve Receive

When learning to pass in serve receive, we know the athlete can keep/maintain a proper passing platform. Now our feedback is towards their routine before the serve, where they are looking towards before the serve, their movement towards the ball after the serve, and managing their understanding of passing quality.

When working with your athletes in this stage, coach feedback after the pass can start by asking, “What were you seeing out of the server before the serve? Where were you looking? What were you noticing about the ball’s trajectory?” With the athlete’s answers, we can give feedback like, “I liked that you noticed their hand position on contact and that you paid attention to the server the entire time they were serving. This gives you information on what type of serve they are using and prepares you for where they are serving to.”

We could also get into education here. “Do you know why we want to track the ball as early as possible? We are using our eyes to gather information to predict where it will be when it gets to our side of the net. Hopefully we are making moves towards the ball to get a pass high and off the net in a place where our setter can comfortably set the offense.”

Stage 3: Adjustments in Serve Receive

When navigating Stage 3, we are discussing decisions made within a phase of the game. In this example, we are discussing what adjustments we would make based on the server that is serving, the rotation we are in, and how we plan to side-out based on our offensive tendencies this match and their serving tendencies.

At this point, our athletes know how to pass, where to pass, why they are passing, and now just need to get a ball to the setter to run the offense. Coach feedback would happen in an encouraging way if your athletes have not gotten out of the rotation and they were looking for feedback. Feedback would then start by asking, “What are we considering here? What do we know about this server? Who are they targeting and what do we need to protect so we can side out?” From your athlete’s answers, you may respond with affirmations and reassurance that they are thinking in the right way to make this next play.

You may also challenge their notion if they have not considered an aspect that would be crucial for peak performance (like who they have been serving in this rotation all match). It is crucial that the athlete be validated within your response here to keep their attention focused externally. Invalidation of their decision-making potentially shifts their attention inward as they are trying to figure out who to listen to: their authentic self or their coach (for the sake of conformity).