

"FOUR SECRETS OF SPIKE APPROACH"

This report is written by Volleyball Advisors

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Volleyball Spike Approach

In this report we break down volleyball spike approach to four categories.

- 1) **4- Step Approach.** A right handed player takes a step with a right foot (step 1), then another step with a left foot (step 2) and finally "the plant" (step 3 and 4) to perform a jump.
- 2) **Setting Up "the Plant".** Steps 3 and 4 should be placed ("about shoulder width") to form "a tight spring". "The spring" combined with the powerful hip extension and arm action will lift you up.
- 3) **Jump.** Created forward speed is an important factor to lift the player up.
- 4) **Arm Action of a Jump.** Extend your both arms behind your body. Start a powerful arm swing with both fully straightened arms at the moment you start setting up "the plant."

We can not repeat enough how crucial volleyball approach is for your spike. When learning to spike players should take approach to their daily practice routines. **Please notice these tips are made for the right-handed player, the left-handed player naturally takes steps the opposite way.**

4- Step Approach (first two steps and "plant")

A four-step approach is the most common volleyball approach. For the right handed hitter it means that a player takes a step with a right foot (step 1), then another step with a left foot (step 2) and finally she makes "the plant" with her right foot and the left foot next to each others to perform a jump.

Between the step 2 (left foot) and "the plant" (step 3 and 4), the player will throw her straightened arms behind her body (palms up). She will start a powerful arm swing with her extended arms when the step 3 touches the ground. That arm swing will assist her to pull herself up to the air.

"The plant" (step 3 and 4) is performed almost simultaneously, the step three hitting the ground just before the step four before jumping into the air. The step 4 (left foot) should be placed a little closer to the net than the step 3 (right foot), so they are just a little bit on different levels.

Setting Up "the Plant"

When placing the "plant" the feet need to be fairly close to each others (about the same distance when you are standing regularly). They should not be more than 18 inches separate; otherwise plant is not able to act as "a tight spring". Also her stomach and chest should be leaning towards thighs, so

she is able to use strong lower back muscles to generate a higher jump.

When the player lands to “the plant”, she should start a powerful “lift up” with her arms and lower back (hip extension) to assist the powerful leg push.

If in the beginning focusing on the arms and feet at the same time feels overwhelming, the player could first start practicing just the steps without paying attention to the arm swing. In that case she would ignore the section of arm swing (bolded above in the previous chapter) and leave it after the footsteps are learned.

Speed in Volleyball Approach Highly Important

The purpose of an approach is to create speed so you are able to transfer that forward speed to upward momentum, which will lift you up when jumping. **The most important step is the step 2 which should be a very explosive and powerful step. The step 2 will create the speed for the approach.**

Faster your approach is - the higher is your jump. One common false in approach is that it is not fast enough. That can be determined from the distance between the step 2 and “the plant”. Longer distance between the step 2 and “the plant” means you just created more speed and you will be able to jump higher. You can determine this when looking at athletes who jump high; they will constantly have a longer distance between the step 2 and “the plant” (which means they have created more speed on their approach).

Arm Action of the Jump

Arms are essential lifting you up to the air. Everybody can experiment this by measuring your jump by reaching towards basketball rim by standing underneath it. Reach high by using arms versus reach high with unused arms (holding your hands together when lifting up). The first jump should take you several inches higher.

After taking the step 2 (left leg) you should extend your both arms behind your body, your palms up. You start a powerful arm swing (arm action for your jump) with fully straightened arms when your right foot (step 3) reaches the ground.

When your feet are taking off the ground, you straightened arms are pointing down to the ground (and ready to pull the forward speed straight up). You let the arm swing continue until your head level before starting to prepare one of your arms to swing the ball.

How to Practice Volleyball Approach?

Approach could be practiced by repeating the four approach steps. This could be easily being practiced even in the back yard of your home.

For example making total 20-25 approaches (divided into the sets of 5) each day or at least few times a week would not take very much time at all and would make a great progression to your volleyball spike. 40-50 approaches in a day would be maximum amount if doing them nearly full speed. Give plenty of rest, 2-4 minutes between each set of five approaches. As a result of rest you will get a chance to recover and perform your approaches with a good speed.

The most important thing is to focus on the second step and creating speed with it. It is acceptable and even recommended for athletes not to jump into the air after approach steps, especially in the beginning phase of learning approach. First it is very exhausting if those approaches are practiced with the full speed. Secondly it is also recommended not to practice plyometric type of exercises (explosive jumps) every day because you will take at least 48 hours to recover from them. This recovery is especially important when your jumps are performed with a full power.

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