

Playing Club Volleyball in Alaska

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 Alaska Region offer age divisions of play for 12s 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. There is a net height difference between girls 13 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 on the AK Region website or through USA Volleyball.

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 Alaska Region. Other regions may honor age waivers, but it is at the individual regions' discretion. 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 request must be submitted prior to team placement and be approved through the Alaska Region 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. For more remote areas that have no other club within 50 miles, a third age waiver may be granted. 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 required for a player to play in an older age group.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions were compiled in order to give parents insight when shopping for a club for their daughter/son 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.

[AGE CLASSIFICATION \(usavolleyball.org\)](https://www.usavolleyball.org/age-classification)

Gender Competition Guidelines

The Alaska 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.

Things to think about when choosing a club

What Clubs are out there?

Click the Juniors link on the AK Region website for a complete list of all the clubs in the state.

Location

- 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 looking for a club to prepare for high school?
- Is your son/daughter looking to play with their friends on a team?
- Is your child interested in playing in college? Have they done their research into college level volleyball? Does the club offer help with the recruitment process?
- Ask the Club what THEIR philosophy is concerning playing time, travel team(s), non-travel teams, conflict with school/church functions.

Out of State Travel

- Do you want to travel out of state for tournaments, if so, how many times in a season and what are the associated cost of travel?
- Are you determined to attend Nationals – not all clubs seek bids to the National Championships?

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.
 - o Very Cooperative - they will work around anything and everything
 - o Cooperative within reason - there are a few instances that the club may excuse you for being late or absent.
 - o 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 the coaching qualifications?
- Is there an opportunity to take private lessons from a coach in my club?

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 its own facility?

Tryout Start Dates

- The established tryout start dates are as follows:
- Travel team summer tryouts may begin after the Girls Jr National Championships each year. No commitment to a club can be signed and no deposits collected until the date specified by the AK Region. For 2024, the travel team signing date is August 5th, 2024.
- Fall tryouts for middle school and younger (typically 14U) may begin on Oct 1st of each year, however no commitment contracts or money may be collected during the two-week tryout period. If a club has a tryout after the October 14 commitment date, they may sign players immediately.
- Fall tryouts for high school players, (typically 15's – 18's), will begin on the first Sunday after the completion of AK State HS Championship match – for 2024 season that date is Nov 17th. No commitment contracts or money may be collected until November 29, 2024. If a club has a tryout after the November 29th commitment date, they may sign players immediately.

Committing to a Club

The AK 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 midseason. 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 current club and the Region.

The business relationship between a club and a player is outside the purview of the Alaska Region of USA Volleyball. Each club is an independent business. Financial issues between players and clubs are to be handled as any other business arrangement. The Alaska Region cannot legally enter into this business arrangement. The Alaska Region does have some regulations as to what clubs can do but not in regard to their business operations with their players. The Alaska Region can refuse membership to a player who has pending legal action against them.

Know the Rules

It is very important for club directors, coaches, and parents to be aware of the Alaska Schools Activities Association (ASAA) 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.