PILLAGER HUSKIES JO VOLLEYBALL

PLAYER & PARENT HANDBOOK

2026–27 Season · Team First. Growth Mindset. Respect the Game.

Pillager JO Volleyball Association (PJVA), a nonprofit organization · PO Box 3, Pillager, MN 56473 · pillagerjovolleyball.com

Welcome

This handbook contains the information you need to know as a member of the Pillager JO Volleyball Program. Please read it together, parent and player, and make sure you both understand the program's expectations.

We believe in-season school sports and activities take priority over JO Volleyball. We will do our best to schedule practices and events around school activities.

Mission and Program Philosophy

Pillager JO Volleyball Program's mission is:

- **Team First:** No one is bigger than the program. We win and lose as a team.
- **Growth Mindset:** Mistakes are opportunities. Learn, adapt, and get better.
- **Respect the Game:** Show respect to teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents at all times.

Program Goal

The goal of the Pillager JO program is to grow every athlete's skills so they can compete and succeed at a higher level of volleyball. The program works to align with the Pillager School volleyball program for continuous improvement and consistency.

Divisions and Teams

Pillager JO Volleyball offers eight age divisions, 10U through 17U. JO Volleyball is open to Pillager athletes only.

Division	Track	Teams and rosters
10U, 11U, 12U	Travel or Local	Expected two teams per level, depending on registration. No cuts.
13U, 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U	Competitive tryout	Teams will be capped at about 10 players, and it is anticipated one team per level. Cuts are possible.

10U–12U: Athletes are placed on either the Travel track (more competitive, traveling farther for tournaments) or the Local track (tournaments closer to Pillager). Families choose Local only or Local and Travel on the application.

13U–17U: Evaluations are competitive. Not every athlete who tries out is guaranteed a roster spot this season.

Play Up Guidelines for Families

At Pillager JO Volleyball, athletes are placed in age-appropriate divisions to support healthy development, confidence, and long-term success. In some cases, an athlete may be considered to "play up" in a higher age division(s). This decision is based on team need and athlete readiness, not preference or convenience.

How play-up decisions are made:

1. **Team Need.** A play-up evaluation only occurs if the older team has a roster or positional need, or if the younger team has an excess of players.
2. **Skill Level.** The athlete must demonstrate skills above their current age group and comparable to the older group.
3. **Developmental Fit.** Playing up must benefit the athlete socially, emotionally and developmentally.

Important notes for families:

- Playing up is not guaranteed, even for highly skilled athletes.
- Evaluations are based on objective criteria, not parent request.
- Pillager JO may revoke play-up status if development or team fit changes.
- Athletes who remain in their age group are still fully supported and valued.

Athletes may not play down.

Team Selection and Evaluations

Evaluations assess each player's passing, setting, hitting, serving, blocking, sportsmanship, coachability, attitude and leadership. Every athlete is scored the same way, on the same rating form. Teams are not based on friendships, parent requests or prior team experience.

To keep the process fair, the board recruits evaluators from outside the Pillager community. Established JO coaches also take part.

Coaches do not evaluate their own children, and Pillager School volleyball coaches are not part of team selection.

Feedback is provided upon request of the parent or player. If you request feedback, we will share the evaluators' notes along with clinic options your athlete can attend to keep improving.

The full schedule and process are in the Tryout Evaluation Process, and the skills expected at each level are in the Tryout Skill Ladder.

Practices, Open Gym and Tournaments

Open gym runs Sundays in November through January, 6:00–7:30 PM at Pillager School. The pre-tryout open gym on Sunday, Nov 15 runs 4:30–6:00 PM. Open gym is not required, but it is highly recommended.

Team practices begin in late February, after the basketball season, and are held twice per week. Gym space is reserved on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays. Practice times are shared with families along with team placements.

Tournaments are full-day events, usually with pool play in the morning and bracket play in the afternoon. Every team will attend at least five tournaments. The tournament calendar is posted as soon as it's available, and families will be notified of locations in advance.

Officiating: 13U–17U teams will not be required to referee. Some younger teams may have tournaments where they are asked to referee.

Pillager JO Tournament: April 10–11, 2027. Save the date!

Attendance and Missed Practices

Our teams depend on every athlete being present. Please review this policy carefully.

- **School activities come first.** Athletes are excused from practices and tournaments for school sports and school activities, with no effect on playing time.
- **Illness.** Athletes are excused from practices and tournaments, with no effect on playing time, so long as the athlete produces a note from a doctor.
- **Other absences affect playing time.** Missing a practice or tournament for any other reason — including family vacations and other activities — is unexcused. For each unexcused practice missed, the athlete will sit out one set at the next tournament. For example, an athlete who misses two practices for a family vacation will sit out two sets.
- **Club sports:** If your athlete plays club sports, list them on your application and send your club schedule to the board as soon as possible so we can plan around it.

Let your coach know as early as possible about any absence.

Tryout attendance

Athletes are expected to attend every session for their tryout group. If an athlete must miss because of illness and can provide medical documentation, the board will work with the family to arrange an evaluation. Absences for other reasons will be considered as part of an athlete's commitment to the team.

Playing Time and Player Development

Pillager JO Volleyball will strive to give all athletes court time. In tournaments, playing time may not be equal.

Coaches set lineups with the goal of playing every athlete in each match, though not necessarily in each set or for equal time. Our goal is for every athlete to improve during the year, and that takes time on the court.

Expectations of Players

- Be on time, prepared, and present at all practices, games, and events.
- Bring a positive, coachable attitude every day.
- Demonstrate strong work ethic and sportsmanship.
- Maintain open and respectful communication.
- Take responsibility for your performance and actions.

Attitude and Conduct

Coaches may sit a player at practice or in a game for behavior problems, attitude or unsportsmanlike conduct. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Players who show poor sportsmanship or hurt the team's performance may be removed from practice or a tournament.

Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Arguing with teammates or coaches
- Refusing to follow directions
- Unsportsmanlike conduct toward teammates or opponents

As representatives of our community, all players, parents, coaches and fans at a volleyball event are expected to behave appropriately and to show respect and good sportsmanship toward others and toward property.

Communication and Parent Concerns

If a player is unsure of their role on the team, they should talk to the coach. Keep in mind that coaches may not have an answer right away while they are still getting to know the players.

All parent concerns must be sent respectfully by email to the board at pillagerjovolleyball@gmail.com. The board will discuss the email with the coach and then respond to or meet with the parent.

> **At no time will a player or parent confront a coach before, during or immediately after a tournament.**

24-hour rule

Please wait at least 24 hours after a practice, match or tournament before raising a concern about playing time, positions or game decisions. This gives everyone time to step back so the conversation can be calm and productive. Concerns about an athlete's safety or well-being can be raised right

away.

Fees, Payment and Refunds

2026/27 season fee: $250, which includes a $25 registration fee paid when you register. The $25 goes toward the $250 total.

The remaining $225 is due within one week after you are notified of your placement for athletes placed on a team.

All fees are non-refundable. One hundred percent of player fees are used for tournament registration, coaches' wages, insurance, equipment and mini camps.

Refunds due to injury are decided by a board vote, case by case, depending on when in the season the injury happened.

Volunteering

At times we may ask families to help. We ask that everyone work together and pitch in when needed.

Volunteers earn credit for volunteering at Pillager JO fundraisers:

- 1 hour = 10 credits ($10 toward the JO program fee)
- A maximum of 50 credits ($50) may be earned per player per season.
- Unused credits from last season carry over to this season.
- Parents may volunteer on behalf of their player.

Sponsorships are also available to help cover program costs. Contact the board to learn more.

Coaches

- Each team will have up to two coaches (a head coach and an assistant coach).
- All coaches apply for their positions, interview with the board, and complete a background check.
- All coaches complete required coach training before the season.
- Coach pay is set by the board before the season starts, based on the available budget.
- Coaches are expected to attend every practice and tournament, or to find a replacement if they have a conflict.
- Coaches must review and sign the Pillager JO Coaches Handbook (Appendix A, available separately).

Stay Connected

Email	pillagerjovolleyball@gmail.com
Website	pillagerjovolleyball.com
Facebook	Pillager Huskies JO Volleyball

Heja app	Pillager JO Volleyball (join code VS-690107)
Mail	PO Box 3, Pillager, MN 56473

2026/27 Board of Directors

Role	Name
President	Sarah Smith
Vice President	Jay Personius
Secretary	Kelly Brown
Treasurer	Karla Skwira
Communications / Social Media	Misty Cremers
Technology	Jason Brown
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Pillager School District: Participation, Waiver, and Release of Liability

Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk

I am aware of the dangers and the risks to my person and property involved while participating in: Pillager Off Season Volleyball Practice and Tournaments 2026/2027.

I understand that this activity involves certain risks for physical injury. I understand that equipment, if any, which may be provided for my protection may be inadequate to prevent serious injury. I also understand that there are potential risks of which I may not presently be aware.

Nevertheless, I voluntarily elect to participate in this activity with knowledge of the danger involved, and I hereby agree to accept and assume any and all risks of property damage, personal injury, or death.

The Pillager School District does not insure participants or groups that are not under authority of the school district’s operations in the above-described activity and participants who want to be covered must obtain their own insurance.

Waiver of Liability and Indemnification

In consideration for being allowed to voluntarily participate in the above-referenced activity, on behalf of myself, my personal representatives, heirs, next of kin, successors and assigns, I forever:

a. waive, release, and discharge Pillager School District, its directors, officers, and employees from any and all negligence and liability for my death, disability, personal injury, property damages, property theft or claims of any nature which may hereafter accrue to me, and my estate as a direct

or indirect result of my participation in the above referenced activity or event; and

b. defend, indemnify, and hold harmless Pillager School District, its directors, officers and employees, from any and all claims of any nature, including all costs, expenses, and attorney's fees, which may in any manner result from or arise out of this agreement, except for claims resulting from or arising out of the District's sole negligence.

I hereby consent to receive medical treatment which may be deemed advisable in the event of injury, accident or illness during this activity or event. This release, indemnification, and waiver shall be construed broadly to provide a release, indemnification, and waiver to the maximum extent permissible under applicable law.

The undersigned participant or Guardian of said participant, affirm that I am freely signing this agreement. I have read this form and fully understand that by signing this form I am giving up legal rights and/or remedies which may otherwise be available to me regarding any losses I may sustain as a result of my participation. I agree that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder will continue in full legal force and effect.

The handbook acknowledgment and waiver are signed on the tryout application.