PILLAGER HUSKIES JO VOLLEYBALL

TRYOUT SKILL LADDER, 10U-17U

What evaluators expect to see, level by level, from an athlete trying out for a Pillager Huskies Junior Olympic team — built around USA Volleyball's age-progression pathway and adapted for our program. New families: use this ladder to see the basic skills needed to make a team.

This skill ladder is meant to be a general guideline.

2026–27 teams: **10U, 11U, 12U (Travel and Local tracks) · 13U · 14U · 15U · 16U · 17U** · VolleyLite ball at: **10U, 11U & 12U** · Contact: pillagerjovolleyball@gmail.com

How to read this ladder

Each level lists what evaluators watch for across eight areas: serve, serve-receive/pass, set, attack, block, defense/dig, athletic & team play, and coachability & attitude. Skills build cumulatively — a 14U tryout still rewards clean 11U-level ball control, just at faster speed. Coachability and attitude are scored at every level and at every tryout station. The number of 10U–12U teams depends on registration. See the Tryout Evaluation Process for this season's tryout stations and schedule.

10U Ball-handling basics

Learning the game · fun and effort come first · VolleyLite ball · Travel & Local tracks

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Underhand serve from a shortened line clears the net more often than not.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Forms a forearm platform with arms together and moves her feet toward the ball.
Set	Shows a basic overhead hand shape and can push the ball up to herself or a teammate.
Attack	Swings overhead at a tossed ball; any approach footwork is a bonus.
Block	No blocking expectations at this level.
Defense / Dig	Starts in a ready position with knees bent and goes after every ball.
Athletic & Team	Learning rotation and base position; hustles on and off the court.
Coachability & Attitude	Listens to the coach, tries new skills right away, encourages teammates and has fun.

11U Ball control fundamentals

First live rotations · love of the game comes first · VolleyLite ball · Travel & Local tracks

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Serves overhand from behind the 10-foot line and clears the net consistently.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Gets the body behind the ball and passes with a flat platform rather than reaching or batting at it.
Set	Soft, controlled overhead hand contact; can direct a set generally toward the middle of the net.
Attack	Knows the difference between a tip and a hit; starting to time a 2–3 step approach.
Block	No blocking expectations at this level.
Defense / Dig	Holds an athletic ready position and pursues the ball without hesitating on contact.
Athletic & Team	Understands base position and covers her own area; calls “mine” on routine balls.
Coachability & Attitude	Listens when coached and makes the change on the next rep; stays positive after a mistake.

12U Consistency under a real rotation

Reading the serve · first taste of a target zone · VolleyLite ball · Travel & Local tracks

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Serves overhand from behind the end line (the full serving line), getting most serves over and in.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Passes to a defined target zone rather than just “over”; begins reading serve trajectory early.
Set	Repeatable overhead sets to an outside target, with footwork to get under the ball first.
Attack	Runs a 3-step approach with an arm swing; uses tips and roll shots with real placement intent.
Block	Moves along the net with proper footwork and attempts a single block with correct hand position.
Defense / Dig	Reads basic pursuit angles and holds a zone-based defensive responsibility.

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Athletic & Team	Understands the full six-player rotation, calls the ball on every contact, and begins to settle into a primary position — outside, middle, setter, or back-row/libero.
Coachability & Attitude	Applies feedback within the same drill; supports teammates and keeps energy up during games.

13U Transition to full-size ball

First positional identity begins to form · Full-size ball · competitive tryout

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Overhand floater is the primary serve; can place it to a general zone — deep, short, or a corner.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Passes under game speed and spin with far fewer shanked contacts on a hard-driven serve.
Set	Sets more than one hitter and shows early setter footwork — getting to the ball and squaring to target.
Attack	Approach timing syncs to the set; chooses between a line shot and an angle shot on purpose.
Block	Uses shuffle or crossover footwork and closes the block with the hitter instead of guessing.
Defense / Dig	Plays an introductory rotational team defense and digs driven balls with a controlled platform.
Athletic & Team	Continues to settle into a primary position — outside, middle, setter, or back-row/libero.
Coachability & Attitude	Takes correction without excuses, asks questions, and bounces back quickly from errors.

14U Positional specialization & tempo

Serve-receive systems get real structure · Full-size ball · competitive tryout

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Overhand floater is the primary serve; can target a specific passer or zone on coach's call.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Runs an efficient 2–3 passer pattern with clear communication on overlap.
Set	Develops consistent sets to outside, middle, and right-side hitters. Quicker sets may be introduced when foundational skills and team readiness allow.

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Attack	Shows shot variety — line, angle, cut, off-speed — and adjusts when the pass is off target.
Block	Starts reading setter tendencies; coordinates footwork and hand seal with a second blocker.
Defense / Dig	Plays assigned coverage responsibilities inside a system (rotational) team defense.
Athletic & Team	Position groups are largely set: outside, middle, right side, setter, libero/defensive specialist.
Coachability & Attitude	Self-corrects between reps, owns her mistakes, and lifts teammates when things get hard.

15U Building consistency and confidence

Full-size ball · competitive tryout

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Overhand serve and begins serving intentionally to different areas of the court. A standing serve is appropriate; jump serving is optional.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Works toward controlled passes to a target, moves to the ball, and communicates with other passers.
Set	Develops consistent sets to outside, middle, and right-side hitters. Quicker sets may be introduced when foundational skills and team readiness allow.
Attack	Builds consistent approach timing and controlled contact. Begins using placement, tips, and roll shots to find open court.
Block	Develops safe footwork, timing, and hand position for a single block. Begins coordinating a double block when appropriate.
Defense / Dig	Learns assigned defensive positions, pursues the ball, and works toward controlled digs and transition to offense.
Athletic & Team	Builds court awareness, understands rotations, communicates, and supports teammates.
Coachability & Attitude	Gives consistent effort, responds to feedback, stays engaged after mistakes, and shows respect.

16U Improving execution and purposeful play

Full-size ball · competitive tryout

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Builds a consistent, effective serve with increasing accuracy to specific zones or passers. Placement and consistency are valued with either a standing or jump serve.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Improves control against varied serves, communicates responsibility for seams, and works toward more consistent passes to the setter.
Set	Improves location and decision-making on both good and off-target passes. Develops additional set options as appropriate to the team's experience.
Attack	Develops line and cross-court placement, controlled off-speed shots, and adjustments to different sets and blockers.
Block	Improves single-block technique and coordination with a second blocker, including movement and closing gaps. Triple blocking is not an expectation.
Defense / Dig	Builds consistency within the team's defensive system and transitions more effectively between defense and offense.
Athletic & Team	Strengthens positional understanding, communication, and composure during competitive play.
Coachability & Attitude	Applies feedback, takes responsibility for effort and preparation, shows respect, and encourages teammates.

17U Strengthening consistency, decisions, and leadership

Full-size ball · competitive tryout

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Serve	Uses a reliable serve strategically, targeting specific areas or passers while balancing pressure and accuracy. Jump serving is optional.
Serve-Receive / Pass	Works toward consistent passing under game pressure, communicates clearly, and adjusts to different serving styles.
Set	Develops consistent location, sound decisions, and effective communication with hitters. Uses the offensive options the team has learned; mastery of every advanced set is not required.
Attack	Improves shot selection, placement, and consistency against single and double blocks. Adjusts to off-target sets and recognizes opportunities to score or keep the ball in play.
Block	Strengthens timing, positioning, and coordination in single, double, and triple blocks.

Skill Area	What Evaluators Expect To See
Defense / Dig	Improves reading, positioning, controlled digging, and transition within the team's defensive system.
Athletic & Team	Demonstrates growing court awareness, composure, accountability, and leadership appropriate to the athlete's role.
Coachability & Attitude	Leads through effort and respect, accepts instruction, supports teammates, and handles challenges with maturity.

About the VolleyLite ball

A lighter, slightly smaller ball used at 10U, 11U and 12U to reduce arm sting and injury risk while players build correct overhand serving and hitting mechanics, ahead of the move to a standard full-size ball at 13U.

Which levels field a team, and how many teams each level has, can change year to year with registration — see pillagerjovolleyball.com for the current season's teams and coaches. This ladder is a general developmental framework aligned with USA Volleyball's Junior Olympic age pathway. Tryout scoring uses the rating form described in the Tryout Evaluation Process.