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# **NITROBALL**

*Activity Instructions*

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## **Forward**

In the news there continues to be alarm for the decreasing health of our children and adults due, in large part, to lack of exercise and inappropriate eating habits. Schools and parents are under growing pressure to produce “high achieving” students, frequently measured solely by standardized test scores. Many parents, legislators, and even educators believe this requires more time sitting on a seat in a classroom instead of being outside in a playground. The result of this belief is less physical activity, lower enjoyment of school, and minimal, if any, increase on standardized tests.

Adults are not immune from the obesity epidemic. To combat it, many adults pay money to a gym that allows members to lift weights, only to put them down or walk on machines that don’t take them anywhere. Such activities tend to be solitary exercises, and, over time, can hone some muscles and increase heart rates. But where is the fun?

Research continues to show the importance of the connection between the mind and the body. Physically active people do better in overall health as well as on standardized tests. Staying healthy requires a wide range of activities, which, ideally, involve the whole body, other people, and minimal training or equipment. NitroBall™ provides all of these. Plus, it’s fun!

**Douglas P. Dias, Ed.D., Principal  
Canton High School**

## Acknowledgements

Sarasota County School District ... they created the need to begin "inverted volleyball."

Cohen Camps/Camp Tel Noar (Hampstead, New Hampshire) ... the summer "home" of Nitroball™.

Canton Public School Community and Personnel:

- Students of Canton High School who began "Nitrofever," Dr. John D'Auria, Robin Billings, Dr. Doug Dias, K-12 Wellness Department for 101% participation and support, Henry McDeed and Kate Coleman for pushing me to get Nitroball™ into Canton and the rest of the world, and Mr. Ed McDonough for building such an awesome promotional video!
- The ENTIRE Canton Community who voted Nitroball™ the "*Best Activity Idea in America!*" ... many thanks for their unwavering support! Go Bulldogs!

The *Canton Citizen* and *Patriot Ledger* for exploring and covering Nitroball™.

Gopher Sport for sponsoring the "*Best Activity Idea in America*" which afforded Nitroball™ the platform to be seen, heard, and played all over the world!  
GO GOPHER!

My parents for pushing me to always think big...

My two children, Wyatt and Lucas, for being the two best friends anyone could ask for...

My wife and best friend Melissa for always encouraging me to explore my dreams...

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**Part I: Introduction****History & Evolution of NitroBall™**

Back in the summer of 2005, NitroBall™ evolved out of necessity and has since transformed into a fast and furious game now focusing on fitness and fun! Originally, NitroBall™'s primitive form was “born” from the need to utilize tennis courts for Physical Education classes. I was teaching a summer wellness course that contained a physical activity component. Due to construction at the school, no other courts or fields were available except the tennis courts—now our only option for organized play. I grabbed some volleyballs from the available storage area and took them outside with absolutely no idea what we were going to do! We started playing volleyball, but quickly grew tired of the low nets. At some point I instructed the students to start hitting the ball down instead of up and “inverted volleyball” had begun!

Within a few classes I had narrowed the focus and incorporated the “must bounce before every hit” rule and NitroBall™ was in the formative neophyte stages. At this point in time one major rule (that was later changed in Canton, Massachusetts) mandated that two hands must be used for *every* hit or strike. This kept the game far more controlled but also much slower.

Four years later, upon moving back to New England and working over the summer as Athletic Director at Camp Tel Noar in Hampstead, New Hampshire, I proposed adding NitroBall™ as an elective class and as an activity in the open sports classes. Camp Administration supported this and “neophyte” NitroBall™ had landed in New England.

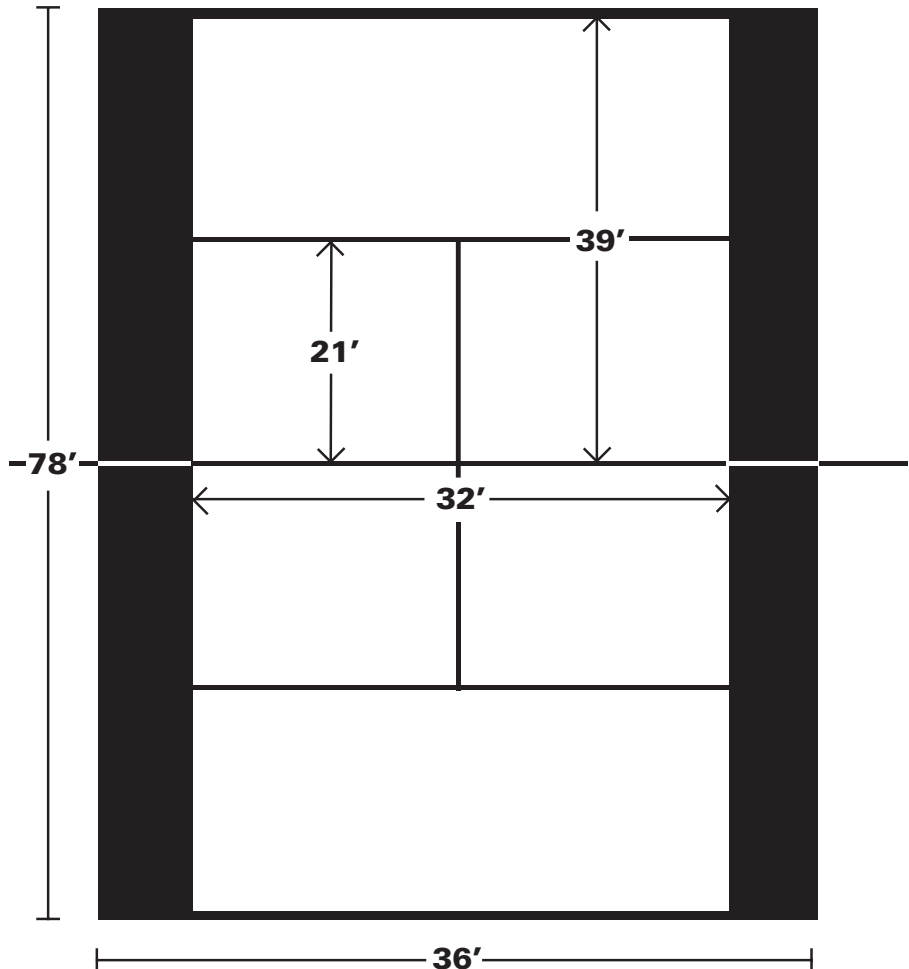
At the same time I was fortunate to be working during the school year as the K-12 Director of Wellness for the Canton Public School District in Canton, Massachusetts. We designed an upperclassmen elective PE class called “Net and Racquet Sports Class.” The students in this class were incredibly energetic and competitive. We finished our curriculum early, so I introduced them to NitroBall™ for a day or two...they *loved* it!

The students and I toyed with removing the two-handed strike rule and the explosive sport of NitroBall™ was officially born. The game sped up and became lightning fast, with the propensity to explode...hence the NitroBall™ name. Eventually, rules were changed to maximize indoor or outdoor (mostly tennis) courts in a manner that could support more students in a fun and exciting fitness-orientated pursuit. The end result is the new and exciting game sweeping the nation and other parts of the world, known now as NitroBall™.

## Court & Equipment

A typical NitroBall™ court measures 78'L x 36'W (the size of a doubles tennis court), with the service line 21' from the net and the baseline 39' from the net. The net should be 36" to 42" high. NitroBall™ can be played indoors in a gymnasium or outdoors on a tennis court. Official indoor NitroBall™ is played with an official NitroBall™ and a 32' x 36" NitroBall™ net (available through Gopher Sport). NitroBall™ Nets are specifically designed for the wear and tear of indoor and outdoor NitroBall™ games (Pickle-Ball® and badminton nets are not recommended as they are not designed to hold up to the velocity of a fast-moving ball). Portable game standards or volleyball standards can be lowered to hip height for a regulation indoor game. Outdoor NitroBall™ is played on a tennis court utilizing the tennis nets and an official NitroBall™. Now you're ready to ignite NitroFever in your community!

## Official NitroBall™ Court



## **Part II: Curriculum Standards**

### **National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE)**

The game of NitroBall™ is a fast-paced activity that encourages cooperation, collaboration, movement, fitness, fundamentals, and fun! It has the added benefit of supporting, encouraging, and sustaining the six NASPE national standards outlined below.

The NASPE standards have been created to develop physically-educated individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. The purpose of the national standard document is to provide a framework for a quality physical education.

- **Standard 1**  
Demonstrates competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.
- **Standard 2**  
Demonstrates understanding of concepts, principles, and strategies as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.
- **Standard 3**  
Participates regularly in physical activity.
- **Standard 4**  
Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical activity.
- **Standard 5**  
Exhibits reasonable personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
- **Standard 6**  
Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

### **Benefits of NitroBall™**

1. Increases cardiovascular skills and endurance
2. Improves agility
3. Develops hand-eye coordination
4. Expands gross motor skills
5. Increases mental alertness
6. Encourages collaboration and cooperation
7. Builds teamwork and tolerance
8. Develops strategic thinking abilities
9. Makes use of existing indoor/outdoor courts
10. It's FUN!



## **Part III: Rules, Regulations & Recommendations**

### **Warm-Ups & Warm-Downs**

Before and after playing NitroBall™, it is important to incorporate stretching and other warm-ups to help prevent soreness and avoid injury.

### **Objective**

Score more points than the opposing team by passing, striking, or hitting the NitroBall™ over the net so the opponents cannot legally return the ball.

### **Number of Players**

General guidelines are 6-8 players per team for Upper Elementary, 4-6 players per team for Middle School, and 4 players per team for High School or College.

### **Court Setup**

A typical NitroBall™ court measures 78'L x 36'W (the size of a doubles tennis court), with the service line 21' from the net and the baseline 39' from the net. The net should be 36" to 42" high. Play indoors with the official NitroBall™ net or outdoors on a tennis court.

### **Games and Scoring**

NitroBall™ uses rally scoring in which a point is awarded each time the ball is served. The first team to score 21 points wins (team must win by 2 points with 25 as the scoring cap). The team that wins 2 out of 3 games wins the match.

### **Serving**

Players take turns serving in a clockwise rotation, with the server standing at a pre-determined location (between the service line and baseline on a conventional tennis court). Other teammates must be on the court when the ball is served, with two players between the service line and the net and the other two between the service line and baseline. The server can hit the ball with a conventional underhand serve or bounce the ball on the court then hit with an underhand serve. Overhand and sidearm serves are not allowed. Two serves are allowed for Upper Elementary or Middle School players; 1 serve for High School or College players.

### **Game Play**

Once the ball is served, players can move in any formation on the court. The serving team continues to serve until the other team scores a point; the serve is then awarded to that team. A service fault occurs if the ball fails to make it over the net, touches a player of the serving team, strikes anything other than the net, lands out of bounds, or the server's foot steps over the serving line. If this occurs, the serve is awarded to the other team.

## Game Play

- The ball MUST bounce off the court before EVERY strike (except the serve).
- A player may not hit the ball twice consecutively.
- Each team is given three hits per side.
- Kicking or heading the ball is not allowed.
- Blocks are illegal as the ball must hit the ground before every strike (this includes attempted blocks/passes and intentional/unintentional strikes).
- The ball can be struck with one hand or two hands.

## Scoring

A point is scored when:

- The ball bounces twice on the opponents' side.
- The opposing team is unable to return the ball within three hits.
- The opposing team cannot legally return the ball into the court.
- The opposing team hits the ball out of bounds.
- The opposing team commits a fault or foul.

## Officiating

NitroBall™ was designed to promote social skills, honesty, and sportsmanship. As such, teams are encouraged to officiate their own games. The player who is closest to the ball can make the call. In a tournament situation or even in recreation or school settings, an adult, intern, or teacher could officiate the game. The younger the players, the more game supervision might be required. General guidelines include:

- Upper Elementary: Supervision will most likely be required until boundaries and expectations are clear.
- Middle School—College: Once they're familiar with the rules, they can easily officiate their own games.
- Tournament/Fundraisers: Students can officiate, but an adult officiate is recommended for the semi-final and final matches.

## Modifications

- Increase or decrease the number of players on each team to make it easier for beginners or to challenge advanced players.
- Rather than playing 3 games to 21 points, adapt these numbers to suit your class schedule and level of play.
- Implement a one or two-hand rule to maximize activity and/or increase success.
- Employ a "no spike" rule with younger players, meaning players cannot spike the ball at all or must be behind a certain line when spiking the ball.
- Implement a "second serve" rule, giving servers more practice and increasing success rates.
- Adapt the service line for various ages/skill levels. For instance, move the service line closer to the net for younger players.
- Add your own ideas!

## **Part IV: Basic Skills – Offense & Strategy**

NitroBall™ is a sport that incorporates gross motor skills, mental alertness, hand-eye coordination, agility, reaction time, teamwork, and cardiovascular stimulation, to name a few. The great feature of NitroBall™ is that it is a fast-paced game that has the ability to stimulate fitness but does not necessarily demand specific athletic skills to be successful and have fun. However, there are skills that are necessary to practice and develop if the game is to progress accordingly:

To play the game of NitroBall™, you must be able to control and manipulate the ball on your side of the court, strike the ball, and ultimately score points. Many of the strikes in NitroBall™ resemble volleyball strikes.

### **Serves**

The serve begins each round of play and therefore is arguably the most important skill of NitroBall™. Players rotate on the court so each person has the opportunity to serve. In NitroBall™, serves must be underhand. There are four types of underhand serves in NitroBall™: short, deep, target, and gyro.

#### **Underhand Short**

This is a simple serve but can prove effective when used correctly. This serve uses an underarm striking motion, similar to a pendulum on a grandfather clock, where the trajectory ends up being low. The short serve typically lands somewhere near mid-court (service line) up to the net. This is a good serve to start the game and can be used throughout the game along with other serves to keep the opposition guessing.

#### **Underhand Deep**

This is also a simple serve but requires more accuracy and strength. This is an effective serve to keep the opposing team “honest” and on their heels. A good deep serve lands beyond the opposition’s service line. An excellent deep serve will land right before the opposition’s baseline. This deep serve causes the opposition’s first strike to be very deep and actually off the court.

#### **Underhand Target**

This serve is indigenous to NitroBall™. This type of serve is typically aimed at an opposing player who may not be completely “aware” or “awake” in the game. The trajectory is a hard, fast line drive aimed toward the opposing team. If an “underhand target” serve lands properly it causes the opposing player to move so quickly that they cannot get into position to play the ball.

## **Underhand Gyro**

This serve is challenging to master and was borrowed directly from the beach volleyball circuit. The NitroBall™ is struck very hard in an upward trajectory and as it descends it “vibrates” or “sizzles” on its way down. The trajectory resembles an upside down “V”. It is difficult to play the ball from a defensive perspective because it is spinning on the way down as it builds up speed.

## **Offensive Attacks**

These are shots that are used to attempt to score points. They are normally aggressive or assertive strikes that are struck with deliberate strength and intention to bounce out of the court or past the defenders.

### **Spike**

This is the most effective offensive strike in NitroBall™. With the height of the net virtually every player can perform the spike. The ball is hit hard in a downward or forward angle.

### **Hammer**

This shot is performed exactly the way it sounds. You make a fist and hit the ball downward as hard as you can in a downward motion, very much like hammering a nail. Typically this strike is near the net and hit in the direction of the sidelines.

### **“Shoot” or “Chuck”**

This is a hard horizontal set that “fires” forward, much like a line drive in baseball. The shoot or chuck is a legal hit with two hands that is less powerful as a spike but more accurate due to the forward setting motion. Typically a shoot/chuck is deep to the back corner.

### **Drop**

This is a light, strategic hit near the net. It is typically preceded by a fake spike so as to deceive the defense into backing up. The ball is touched or hit lightly so that it simply drops over the net.

## **General Passes or Strikes**

These types of strikes are basic to NitroBall™ and are used to move the ball between players. Sometimes these strikes are used to move the ball over the net if an offensive shot is not available.

### **Bump/Forearm Pass**

The bump/forearm pass is one of the most often used passes in NitroBall™. Normally the bump is used to receive a serve (but not mandatory) and pass the ball from back players to forward players. The NitroBall™ bump is very similar to a volleyball bump or forearm pass. The hands are interlocked in one of many

fashions, the arms are straight, and the ball is struck above the wrist but below the elbows. Knees are bent and flexed during the striking notion with the arms and body aimed at the target. Normally the bump/forearm is a very good offensive or defensive pass. However, it is not as precise as the set/overhead pass and is normally the first hit in an offensive series which sets up the set/overhead pass.

### **Set/Overhead Pass**

This is a “setup” pass in NitroBall™, maybe more so than in volleyball. This is the premiere pass used to facilitate an offensive strike such as a Spike or Hammer. The hands are held above the face or forehead with fingers spread out and the two thumbs and two index fingers forming a triangle or window. The elbows are bent or slightly bent so as to generate force upward or forward to move the ball with power and precision. The feet are the base, spread out shoulder width apart with one foot slightly more forward than the other. Much of the power of the pass is generated from the simultaneous spring of the knees and elbows.

### **Push Pass/Inverted Set**

This is a completely indigenous pass known only to NitroBall™. The ball comes to the player off of the court, key to NitroBall™. The passer or player then pushes the ball directly down into the court so that it bounces to another offensive player on his/her team. Because the player has struck the ball *into* the court, the next player can now strike the ball directly without the ball hitting the ground. This allows for a much more traditional spike usually at a much higher altitude or angle. The end result is quite often a very deep spike towards the baseline or sideline that is not typically returnable by the opposition.

## **Part V: Basic Skills—Defense & Strategy**

Defense is about positioning players on their side of the court where they can best return and play the ball. Defense is at least 50% of the game, sometimes a little more or less depending on the game, competition, and overall situation. Teams need to set up and play defense according to a number of variables, most notably their own players' skills, the opposition's strengths, and the strategies of both teams involved.

### **DEFENSIVE MOVES**

#### **Ready Position**

The most successful "ready position" in NitroBall™ is a hybrid form of the volleyball and badminton ready positions. Feet should be shoulder width apart with knees bent. Weight is set on the toes to the arches in a slight forward lean position so the legs are flexed and ready to move quickly in any direction. One foot, usually the dominant foot, is etched a little forward ready to "quick step" toward a ball hit their way. Arms are usually extended forward with hands cupped as in the "bump" strike position. Some skilled players will actually play the ready position with their fingers up and their elbows slightly to the side as in a basketball defensive stance. This variable ready position is usually used by the front net players who have excellent reflexes and response skills. In this position they can "pop" the ball up quickly for a quick pass to a teammate.

#### **Bump/Forearm Pass**

This defensive pass is very similar to the offensive bump/forearm pass. Normally the bump is used to receive a serve (but not mandatory) and pass the ball from back players to forward players. The NitroBall™ bump is very similar to a volleyball bump or forearm pass. The hands are interlocked in one of many fashions, the arms are straight, and the ball is struck above the wrist but below the elbows. Knees are bent and flexed during the striking notion with the arms and body aimed at the target. The bump/forearm is normally a very good offensive or defensive pass. In a defensive move, the bump is primarily used to receive the serve, defend a hard strike such as a spike or hammer, and to transition the defense into an offensive attack.

#### **Dig**

The dig is a specialized defensive maneuver, typically used in a last ditch effort to play or defend a ball that has been struck very hard. A typical dig consists of a mobile, outstretched body with an arm completely outstretched in an attempt to strike the ball with a clenched fist. Most times it is a "lunge" at a ball that has possibly already gone past the defender who is expected to play the ball. Normally

the traditional dig is one-handed. Digs in NitroBall™, however, can be one-handed or two-handed depending on the angle of the ball and the player attempting to play the ball. Digs typically are underarm or sidearm but can even be in an overarm motion at times. The dig is a last-ditch effort to make a play so that a teammate can continue the play or to drive the ball itself over the net to the opponent's side of the court to continue the game play.

## **FORMATIONS AND POSITIONS**

The formations and positions are another very unique piece of NitroBall™. You will most likely not recognize these formations or positions as they too are indigenous to the new sport of NitroBall™. Keep in mind, this sport is very new so feel free to experiment and develop new formations of your own! The following are some of the standard and advanced formations that we have seen and utilized.

### **Block Formation**

This scheme is exactly as it sounds. The formation looks like a “block” with one player at each natural corner of the court. Of course, they are not at the acute corners of the court as the players generally stand in the middle of each one of the quadrants of the tennis court. Positions include:

- Hammer: Front line player that is your primary striker and offensive player who is set up by the “Prep” and attempts to score points with heavy offensive strikes.
- PrepStrike: A front line player who needs to be able to strike at times. However, their primary function is to set up or “prep” the Hammer with a good pass to go on the major offensive attack.
- Fullback(s): These are the two back defensive line players who also need to be able to attack at times. Their main responsibility though is to play defense and transition the ball with precision to the front line to wage an offensive attack.

### **Diamond Formation**

This formation resembles its name as well. This is a more advanced scheme with its own unique positions. The diamond is played with one player up close to the net in the center of the court, two players equally far apart near or just behind the service line, and one player right at or behind the baseline forming a “sweeper” for the team. Positions include:

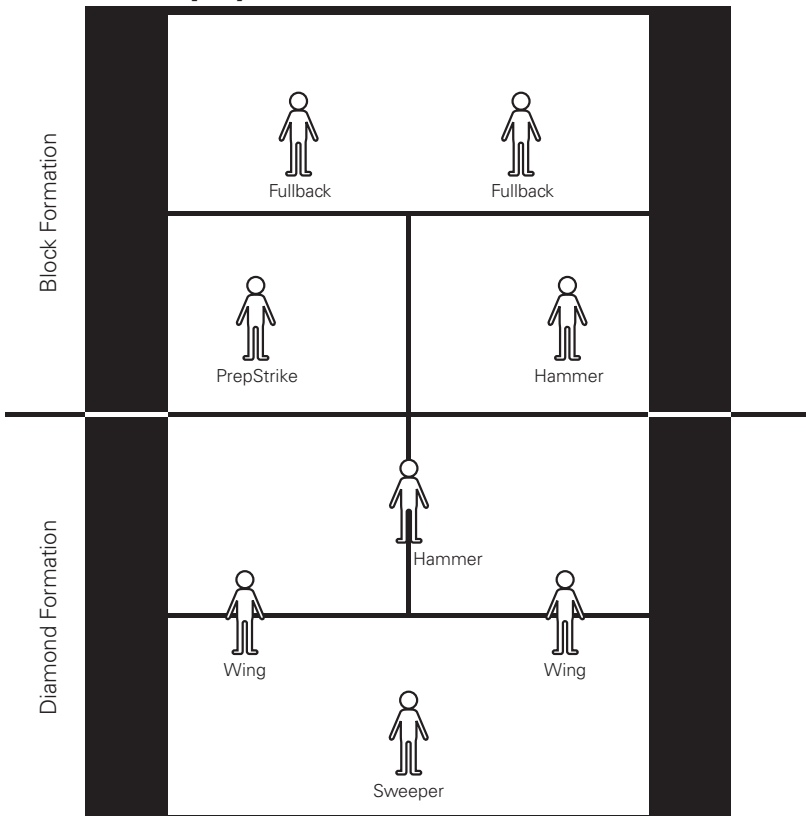
- Hammer: This position is very similar to the Hammer in the Block formation. The major difference is this player is typically alone on the front line. The defense knows this player is going to be on the attack a lot so the Hammer

in this formation must be skilled at both power strikes and deceptive shots such as the drop or shoot. Being skilled at both will help keep the defense off balance and on edge as to what is coming next.

- Wing(s): These two players are like midfielders in soccer. They need to be skilled at offense and defense. Their primary goal is to set up the Hammer for effective offensive attacks. However, they need to be skilled at attacking as well as offensive set-ups in order to keep the opposition honest. Defensive skills are naturally needed for these positions as well.
- Sweeper: This is the last line of defense, literally. The sweeper needs to be incredibly fast and have exceptional reaction skills. This person is “running” the backline all by themselves and needs to be able to not only get to a fast-moving ball, but they must play it efficiently and effectively. Some offensive skills are definitely needed for this position in an attempt to maintain a fluid offensive and to keep the defense on its toes.

Make up your own formations ... I would love to hear about them!

## 4 vs. 4 Gameplay: Model Formations





## **Part VI: Curriculum & Lessons**

One of the great aspects of NitroBall™, amongst many, is that you can literally PLAY the game the very first class, regardless of the age group. I have found the best way to **LEARN** NitroBall™ is to **PLAY** NitroBall™! Many sports require multiple lessons and weeks of time in order to play a visible form of the sport itself. NitroBall™ is unique in that during the first lesson you can briefly explain the game and rules, practice a few key skills (serving for example), and then let your students experience NitroBall™ as they play the game. Each successive lesson or class period can focus on a new strike, defensive maneuver, strategy, etc. ... or “stack” on top of previous lessons, which is the way I prefer to teach it. You can literally observe the game skills of your students advance and transform during the unit or timeframe in which you are teaching. Very rewarding and refreshing!

Of course, your goals may vary depending on the group that you are instructing. For example, if you are teaching a Physical Education class then you certainly will want to conduct some skill work and practice each lesson. I always try to begin each Physical Education class with some fun and innovative movement-orientated “skill and drill” segments. This is typically followed by some form of culminating or modified traditional game play in order to incorporate these skills into an authentic game setting. You may, however, be working in a recreation or camp setting where you need to play a fast-paced and fun game that does not take days or weeks to learn. In this instance, NitroBall™ fits the bill too because once the rules are explained and clarified it is very easy to launch a game quickly and effectively.

Regardless of your goals, please take a look at the following lesson plans and suggestions depending on the age level that you are working with.

**Modifications are highly suggested and welcomed!** You are the professional and you know what is best for the constituency of students you are instructing, taking into consideration your goals relevant to movement, cooperation, fitness, teamwork, skill acquisition, fun, etc. ... the sky is the limit for you and your participants.

Again, have FUN, play hard, and modify as you see fit!

The following lessons are designed for high school and college-aged students. Modifications for middle and upper-elementary school students will be discussed afterward. Lessons are designed to be quick and repetitive with a few variations to gain and maintain interest. Feel free to mix and match according to your assessments and the skill level of the class you’re instructing. Each drill is designed to specifically emphasize one of the major skills in NitroBall™, such as the bump, set, or spike. Some of the more advanced skills such as the dig or gyro serve can easily be substituted into the serve drills, MVP drill, or the Triangle drill. These are “base” practices that can be used interchangeably with other skills as you see fit.

## Lesson #1

### Purpose

Students will learn the rules of NitroBall™, practice bump and set passing skills, learn and practice the underhand serve, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Introduction/Rules/Demonstration
- Partner Pass Drill (2 groups of 2 students on each half of court)
- Square Up Drill (2 groups on each side join to form a team to practice passing)
- Rapid Fire Serve Drill (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified game to 7 points; allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

### CLASS ACTIVITIES

#### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

#### Drill: Partner Pass

Create familiarity with hitting the ball and allowing it to bounce before each strike.

1. Divide students up into pairs of two and assign two pairs (four students total) to each half of the playing court. Each pair of students will need a NitroBall™.
2. Once the bump/forearm pass and set/overhead pass have been covered and demonstrated (see following page), instruct the partners to hit the ball back and forth to each other using only the bump and set passes, with a bounce before each strike. Partners should strive for a predetermined consecutive number of hits or count the number of successful hits as they go.

#### Skill for the Drill: Bump/Forearm Pass

1. Feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly forward, knees flexed, weight slightly leaning forward.

2. Arms are extended and in front of the body, parallel with each other to create a “cradle” above the wrist and below the elbow for the strike. The hands can be held together or interlocked.
3. Upon striking the ball, the shoulders and hands lift up slightly and the knees extend upward to create the energy needed to move and direct the ball.

**Skill for the Drill: Set/Overhead Pass**

1. Feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly forward, knees flexed, weight slightly leaning forward.
2. Arms are above or near the forehead; hands are in front of the face with fingers spread wide and both thumbs and index fingers forming a triangle or window to look through.
3. Elbows are slightly bent and pointing outwards; when the ball is contacted the elbows flex upward to generate power to propel the ball in an upward motion.

**Drill: Square Up**

Combine the two pairs from the drill above to form a team of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball “pepper” drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a row.

**Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 10+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds.

**Skill for the Drill: Underhand Serve**

1. NitroBall™ is in non-dominant outstretched hand, across the body toward the opposite hip.

2. Feet shoulder width apart with “ball foot” slightly forward in an almost runner’s “set” position.
3. Make fist with striking hand, arm straight; swing in a “grandfather” clock pendulum motion into the ball.
4. Transfer weight from back foot to forward foot as heel of fist is swung into the ball.
5. Follow through with transfer of weight and energy.

## 4 vs. 4 Gameplay

Even if you only have five minutes left in the class, I recommend *playing* the game so students get a taste of what “live” NitroBall™ feels like. Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

## Teaching Reminders

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Control of the ball is more important than power; master the skills first.
3. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

## Safety Reminders

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

## Wrap-Up Questions

1. What are 1-2 important components of a successful NitroBall™ serve?
2. When does the ball need to bounce before you hit it?

## Lesson #2

### Purpose

Students will review the rules of NitroBall™, review the bump and set passes, review and practice the underhand serve, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Demonstration
- Square Up with Bulldog 3 Step Drill (four students on half court practice passing)
- Triangle with PrepStrike Drill (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- Rapid Fire Serve Drill (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified game to 7 points; allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

### Drill: Square Up with Bulldog 3 Step

Form teams of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball “pepper” drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a row. This lesson incorporates the Bulldog 3 Step Rule: Take 3 steps or less to get to every strike of the ball. This rule is designed to develop skill and emphasize speed.

### Drill: Triangle with PrepStrike

This is the next step in developing successful NitroBall™ skills. Students stay in groups of four but spread out on the court. Three students form a large triangle on the court, with one student moving into the middle. The middle student assumes the “PrepStrike” position. Students attempt to hit the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike who then hits it back. After the PrepStrike successfully passes the ball to each person in the group twice, they may switch places with someone else in the group.

## Drill: Rapid Fire Serve

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 10+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds.

### Skill for the Drill: Underhand Serve

1. NitroBall™ is in non-dominant outstretched hand, across the body toward the opposite hip.
2. Feet shoulder width apart with “ball foot” slightly forward in an almost runner’s “set” position.
3. Make fist with striking hand, arm straight; swing in a “grandfather” clock pendulum motion into the ball.
4. Transfer weight from back foot to forward foot as heel of fist is swung into the ball.
5. Follow through with transfer of weight and energy.

## 4 vs. 4 Gameplay

Even if you only have five minutes left in the class, I recommend *playing* the game so students get a taste of what “live” NitroBall™ feels like. Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

## Teaching Reminders

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
3. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

## Safety Reminders

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

## Wrap-Up Questions

1. What are 1-2 important components of a successful Bump? Set?
2. Why should we strive to get to a ball within 2-3 steps?

## Lesson #3

### Purpose

Students will review the rules of NitroBall™, practice and review the underhand serve, practice offensive strikes, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules Discussion/Demonstration
- Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step Drill (4 students on half court practice passing)
- MVP Drill (Multiple vs. PrepStrike Striking Drill & Skill)
- 5-Minute Rapid Fire Serve Drill (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified game to 7 points; allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

### Drill: Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step

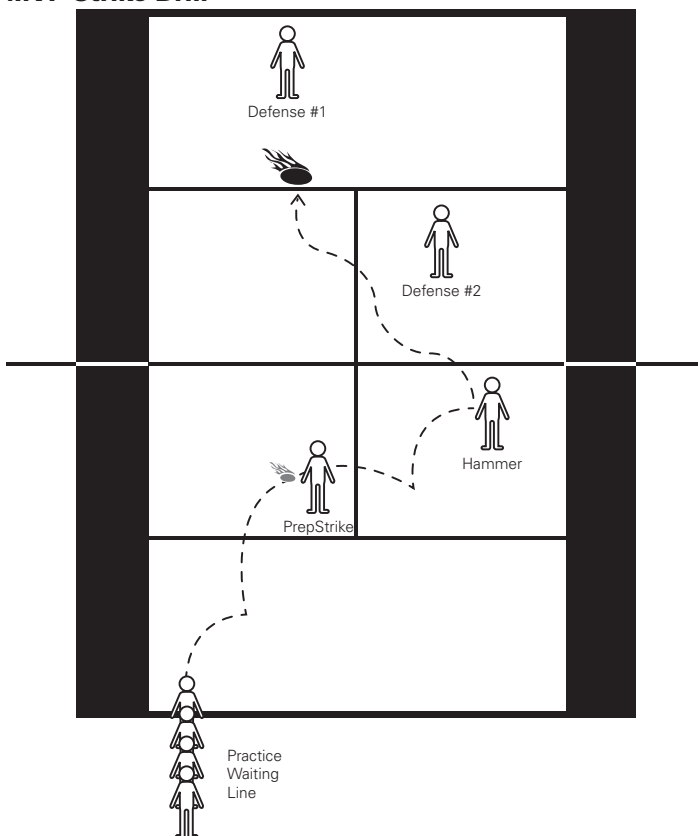
Form teams of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball “pepper” drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a row. This lesson incorporates the Bulldog 2 Step Rule: Take 2 steps or less to get to every strike of the ball. This rule is designed to develop even more skill and speed.

### Drill: MVP Strike Drill

1. Demonstrate the drill first. Then combine the two teams from the Square Up drill into one large practice team. Each court should have 3-4 NitroBall™s.
2. Send two students to the opposite side of the court as “opposition” or “defense.”

3. Assign a "Hammer" and a "PrepStrike" on the offensive side of the court at the front net, as in a game simulation.
4. The remaining 4+ participants form a line behind one another near the back left of the offensive side of the court, near the service line. Each should have a NitroBall™, if available.
5. The first student in the service line tosses the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike. The PrepStrike waits for it to bounce then bumps or sets the ball to the Hammer. The Hammer strikes the ball towards the two defensive participants. The two defenders can hit the ball *once* and then should catch the ball (this facilitates gameplay.)
6. The Hammer goes to the back of the line. The PrepStrike passes to each person in the line once and then moves into the striking line.
7. When the PrepStrike moves out of the passing position, move the two defenders into the striking line and send two new participants to the defensive positions.

## MVP Strike Drill





### **Skill for the Drill: Spike**

1. Every player *should* learn to spike since jumping is not necessary to be effective in NitroBall™.
2. The striking hand and arm are raised above the head, as if raising the hand to answer a question. The hand can be in a fist or cupped position. The strike should be near the heel of the hand.
3. The strike should lead in this rotation if possible: hips, shoulder, elbow, and finally the hand as all parts move forward to create power.
4. Contact is made in front of the body with follow through of the arm moving in the direction of the intended target space.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 12+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

### **Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Follow through with your strike when you are the offensive Hammer player.
3. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
4. "Closest to the ball makes the call" during gameplay.

### **Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

### **Wrap-Up Questions**

1. What are 1-2 important components of a successful NitroBall™ spike?
2. Why is it helpful for *everyone* to learn to spike in NitroBall™?

## Lesson #4

### Purpose

Students will review the rules of NitroBall™, learn and practice the underhand serve, practice passing and teamwork, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Demonstration
- Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step Drill (4 students on half court practice passing)
- Triangle with PrepStrike (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- 5 Up & Down Modified Gameplay (Passing Drill/Gameplay)
- 5-Minute Rapid Fire Serve (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified Game to 7 points; allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES**

### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

### **Drill: Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step**

Form teams of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball “pepper” drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a row. This lesson incorporates the Bulldog 2 Step Rule: Take 2 steps or less to get to every strike of the ball. This rule is designed to develop even more skill and speed.

### **Drill: Triangle with PrepStrike**

This is the next step in developing successful NitroBall™ skills. Students stay in groups of four but spread out on the court. Three students form a large triangle on the court, with one student moving into the middle. The middle student assumes the “PrepStrike” position. Students attempt to hit the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike

who then hits it back. After the PrepStrike successfully passes the ball to each person in the group twice, they may switch places with someone else in the group.

### **Drill: 5 Up & Down**

This drill will emphasize passing, communication, and teamwork.

1. Form teams of four students on each side of the court, then begin playing NitroBall™ with the modifications listed below.
2. Each team must “climb and descend” the ladder starting with one strike per side, then two strikes per side, then three strikes per side, etc.
3. The teams must start with one strike and ascend to five, and then descend back to one strike in order. If either team deviates from the number of expected strikes, play stops and the opposing team is awarded the point.
4. This is what we call a “rapid fire” tournament played to five. Once a team scores five points they move to another court to play another team.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 12+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds. Encourage them to vary their serves: short, long, fast, soft, etc.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

### **Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Remember to control the ball and make good passes.
3. Collaborate and determine what point total you will play to given the amount of time left.
4. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
5. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

### **Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

### **Wrap-Up Questions**

1. What are 1-2 important components of a successful serve?
2. Is it important to utilize the three hits per side? Why or why not? Explain.

## Lesson #5

### Purpose

Students will review the rules of NitroBall™, learn and practice the underhand serve, practice passing, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Demonstration
- Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step (4 students on half court practice passing)
- Triangle with PrepStrike (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- 3 Point Shoot Out (Modified gameplay to practice the “shoot” strike)
- 5-Minute Rapid Fire Serve (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified Game to 7 points; allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES**

### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

### **Drill: Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step**

Form teams of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball “pepper” drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a row. This lesson incorporates the Bulldog 2 Step Rule: Take 2 steps or less to get to every strike of the ball. This rule is designed to develop even more skill and speed.

### **Drill: Triangle with PrepStrike**

This is the next step in developing successful NitroBall™ skills. Students stay in groups of four but spread out on the court. Three students form a large triangle on the court, with one student moving into the middle. The middle student assumes the “PrepStrike” position. Students attempt to hit the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike who then hits it back. After the PrepStrike successfully passes the ball to each person in the group twice, they may switch places with someone else in the group.

### **Drill: 3 Point Shoot-Out**

This drill helps encourage teamwork (passing) while also emphasizing a very effective offensive strike known as the “shoot.”

1. Teams of four play a modified game to 3 points, similar to most other modified games.
2. Students can use any pass or strike on their side, but when they send the ball over the net they must use a “shoot” or “chuck.”
3. If any team fails to use a “shoot” to send the ball over the net, gameplay is halted and the opposing team receives the point and the ball to serve.
4. Since teams are only playing to 3 points, they will need to rotate to other courts quickly. Encourage them to pair up and “challenge” a team that they have not played yet as soon as they finish a game.

#### **Skill for the Drill: Shoot” or “Chuck” Pass**

1. Feet are shoulder width apart with one foot slightly forward, knees flexed, weight slightly leaning forward.
2. Arms are at or near the chest/armpit level; hands are in front of the face/chin with fingers spread wide and both thumbs and index fingers forming a triangle or window to look through.
3. Elbows are slightly bent and pointing outwards; when the ball is contacted the elbows flex forward to generate power to propel the ball.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 12+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds. Encourage them to vary their serves: short, long, fast, soft, etc.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

**Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before every strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Collaborate and determine what point total you will play to given the amount of time left.
3. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
4. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

**Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

**Wrap-Up Questions**

1. What are 1-2 important components of a successful NitroBall™ “Shoot”?
2. Are multiple strikes important to learn in NitroBall™? Why or why not? Explain.

## Lesson #6

### Purpose

Students will learn the rules of NitroBall™, learn and practice the underhand serve, learn and practice offensive strikes, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Demonstration
- MVP (Multiple vs. PrepStrike Striking Drill and Skill)
- Triangle with PrepStrike (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- Rapid Fire Serve Drill
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified game to 7 points; do not allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

### CLASS ACTIVITIES

#### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

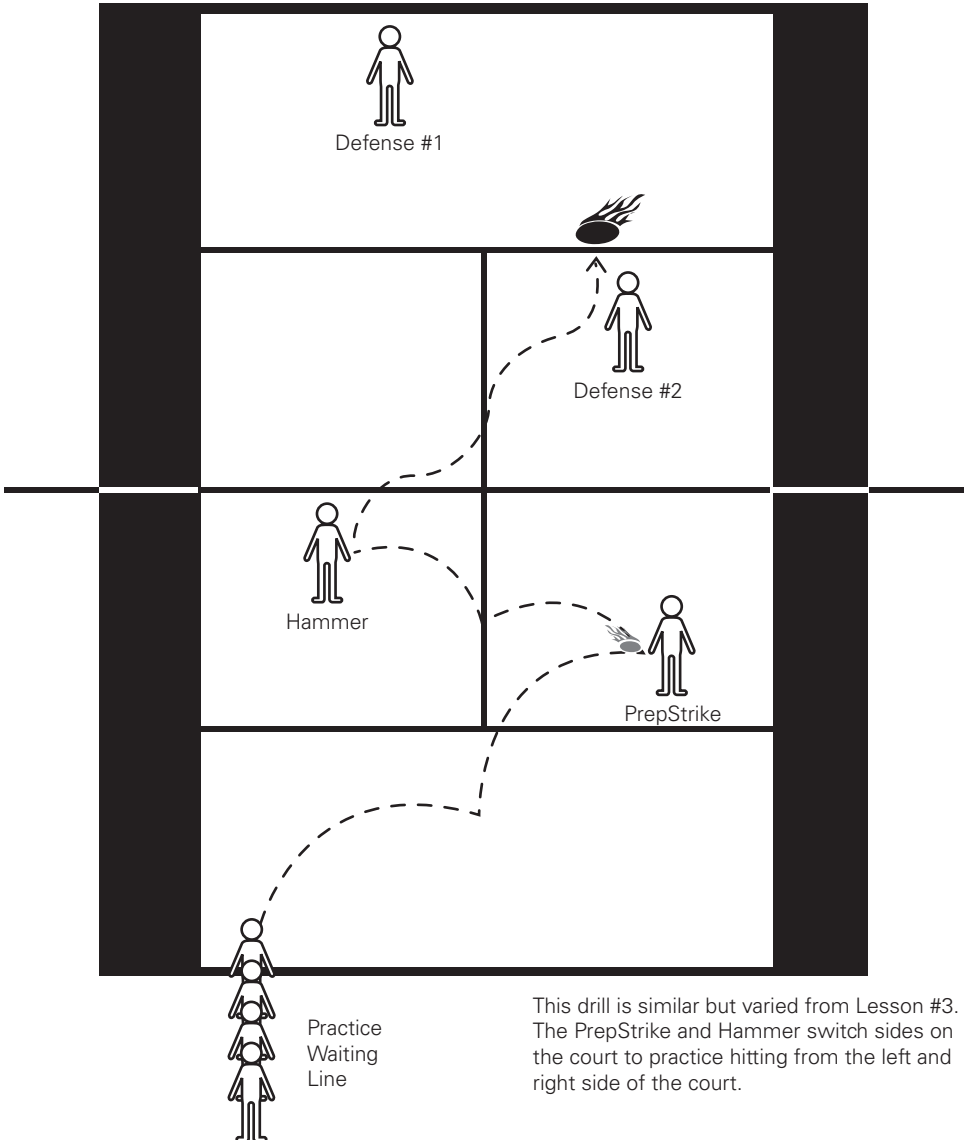
#### Drill: MVP Strike Drill

1. Demonstrate the drill first. Then combine the two teams from the Square Up drill into one large practice team. Each court should have 3-4 NitroBall™s.
2. Send two students to the opposite side of the court as “opposition” or “defense.”
3. Assign a “Hammer” and a “PrepStrike” on the offensive side of the court at the front net, as in a game simulation.
4. The remaining 4+ participants form a line behind one another near the back left of the offensive side of the court, near the service line. Each should have a NitroBall™, if available.
5. The first student in the service line tosses the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike. The PrepStrike waits for it to bounce then bumps or sets the ball to the Hammer. The Hammer strikes the ball towards the two defensive participants. The two defenders can hit the ball *once* and then should catch

the ball (this facilitates gameplay.)

6. The Hammer goes to the back of the line. The PrepStrike passes to each person in the line once and then moves into the striking line.
7. When the PrepStrike moves out of the passing position, move the two defenders into the striking line and send two new participants to the defensive positions.

## MVP Strike Drill



This drill is similar but varied from Lesson #3. The PrepStrike and Hammer switch sides on the court to practice hitting from the left and right side of the court.



### **Drill: Triangle with PrepStrike**

This is the next step in developing successful NitroBall™ skills. Students stay in groups of four but spread out on the court. Three students form a large triangle on the court, with one student moving into the middle. The middle student assumes the “PrepStrike” position. Students attempt to hit the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike who then hits it back. After the PrepStrike successfully passes the ball to each person in the group twice, they may switch places with someone else in the group.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBall™s on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 12+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds. Encourage them to vary their serves: short, long, fast, soft, etc.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

### **Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Be strategic about your offensive strikes, hitting it away from your opponents.
3. If it lands on the line it is fair play.
4. Collaborate and determine what point total you will play to given the amount of time left.
5. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
6. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

### **Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

### **Wrap-Up Questions**

1. Do we always need to use all three strikes during each offensive series? Why or why not? Explain.
2. Should players in the back row learn to spike too? Why or why not?

## Lesson #7

### Purpose

Students will learn the rules of NitroBall™, learn and practice the underhand serve, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay.

### Lesson Sequence

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Demonstration
- Bulldog Serve Drill (Targets on opposite court and corresponding points)
- Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step (4 students on half court practice passing)
- Triangle with PrepStrike (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- 4 vs. 4 Gameplay (Modified game to 7 points; do not allow second serve for this segment)
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES**

### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

### Drill: Bulldog Serving Game

Divide students into two teams per court, preferably four players (age appropriate) per team. Both teams move to the *same* side of the court. Mark off one side of each court into four quadrants or segments of six or eight, depending on age or your preference. Give students one diagram per court with point values written on each quadrant. Each player is allowed to serve five times, tallies his or her score, then adds that score to their team's score. This emphasizes the importance of serving in NitroBall™. To speed up the drill, two players can serve one right after the other with their teammates retrieving the NitroBalls™ for them.

### Drill: Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step

Form teams of four students and position them on each half of the court. Instruct them to hit the ball around in a baseball "pepper" drill, ensuring the ball bounces before every hit. Encourage them to use only the two strikes (bump and set) that you have demonstrated. Teams can strive for a predetermined number of consecutive hits or can compete to see which team can achieve the most hits in a

row. This lesson incorporates the Bulldog 2 Step Rule: Take 2 steps or less to get to every strike of the ball. This rule is designed to develop even more skill and speed.

### **Drill: Triangle with PrepStrike**

This is the next step in developing successful NitroBall™ skills. Students stay in groups of four but spread out on the court. Three students form a large triangle on the court, with one student moving into the middle. The middle student assumes the “PrepStrike” position. Students attempt to hit the NitroBall™ to the PrepStrike who then hits it back. After the PrepStrike successfully passes the ball to each person in the group twice, they may switch places with someone else in the group.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBall™s on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 12+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds. Encourage them to vary their serves: short, long, fast, soft, etc.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out).

### **Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. Control the ball as soon as you can so your team can set up your offense.
3. Move quickly to the ball (Bulldog 2 Steps!)
4. If it lands on the line it is fair play.
5. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
6. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.

### **Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

### **Wrap-Up Questions**

1. Is control or power more important in NitroBall™? Explain.
2. What advice would you offer someone to improve their NitroBall™ game?

## Lessons #8, #9, #10

### Purpose

Students will review the rules of NitroBall™, practice the underhand serve, and experience authentic NitroBall™ gameplay in a tournament.

### Lesson Sequence:

- Warm-ups
- Review/Rules/Tournament Discussion
- Square Up with Bulldog 2 Step (4 students on half court practice passing)
- Triangle with PrepStrike (PrepStrike moves into middle of Triangle to facilitate passing)
- 5-Minute Rapid Fire Serve (Serve and catch rapid drill; no playing the ball!)
- 4 vs. 4 Tournament Gameplay
- Wrap-Up Questions

### Warm-Ups

Light to moderate jogging, then static and dynamic stretching.

### CLASS ACTIVITIES

#### Rules

Refer to pages 9-10.

#### Class Tournaments

We have experienced great success with class NitroBall™ tournaments. Here are a few hints that will help your tournament be a success:

- Keep a chart or clipboard for yourself to monitor teams for each period in which you are running a tournament.
- Allow the teams to “name” themselves. This typically builds excitement and adds energy to the entire situation. Be sure to monitor team names for appropriateness.
- Obtain materials from the Art Department and encourage one of your students to create a large-scale copy of your tournament bracket for each period. Fill in the team names as the games unfold.
- Begin the tournament “Round Robin” style, with each team having an opportunity to play every team. This levels the playing field and creates excitement. The second and ensuing rounds can be single or double elimination (which may change according to each class or period). Double elimination will ensure teams stay in the tournament longer.
- Incorporate a “Non-Winners Bracket” or “B Bracket” so teams who didn’t

win can continue to play each other.

- *Very rarely* do I say this, but I suggest letting the class watch the Final Championship game. I do not like students being out of the action for too long in a PE class, but in this instance it lends to the excitement of the tournament. You could even allow a few trusted students to act as line judges or referees.

### **Drill: Rapid Fire Serve**

1. Students remain in teams of four, with 2-3 more NitroBalls™ on each court.
2. Students practice the underhand serve in rapid function. Serve a ball, step back, and prepare to *catch* a ball served into your court. Serving the ball in bounds is the focus of this skill drill; gameplay is *not* the focus. The served ball should bounce once before being caught by members of the served court. The emphasis of this drill is learning the proper serve.
3. Students serve 6+ NitroBalls™, keeping track of how many they served in bounds. Encourage them to vary their serves: short, long, fast, soft, etc.

### **4 vs. 4 Gameplay**

Using the teams from the above drill, begin a modified NitroBall™ game (playing to 7 points or until time runs out). Students are encouraged to state the score before each serve to better keep track of the score.

### **Teaching Reminders**

1. Let the ball bounce before *every* strike during a NitroBall™ game!
2. If it lands on the line it is fair play.
3. Determine who serves first with a volley (at least 3 times over the net).
4. “Closest to the ball makes the call” during gameplay.
5. Collaborate and determine what point total you will play to given the amount of time left.

### **Safety Reminders**

Remind students *not* to play the ball during the Rapid Fire drill; catch and serve only. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, especially when chasing loose balls.

### **Wrap-Up Questions**

1. What worked well for your team today? What would you practice more if you had the opportunity to do so?
2. What 1-2 skills would help you or your team be more successful?
3. What would make the tournament more fun or enjoyable?

## **Age/Level Modifications**

The majority of the lessons provided here pertain to high school and college-aged students. However, NitroBall™ can be played and enjoyed by those in upper elementary through middle school as well with some slight modifications as mentioned below.

### **Middle School Lesson Modifications**

- Divide teams into 5 or 6 players rather than 4. This increases the success rate and makes it more enjoyable for younger players.
- Move the service line closer to the net using a cone or marker.
- Create a no-spike rule or artificial “spike line” when beginning the unit. Spiking tends to entice students to “whack away” at the ball. A two-handed spike may help since this helps slow the game.
- Add a second serve rule to help increase success and interest.
- Adapt the drills mentioned earlier to better suit your students. For instance, in the MVP drill, you could have the PrepStrike toss the ball to the Hammer rather than pass it to them, then gradually add in the pass as skills improve.

### **Upper Elementary Lesson Modifications**

- Divide teams into 6 to 8 players rather than 4. This increases the success rate and makes it more enjoyable for younger players.
- Lower the net depending on age and skill level.
- Remove the service line or create an artificial line that is closer to the net.
- Adjust the number of strikes per team, increasing to 4 or 5, or even unlimited in certain skill and drill practices.
- Incorporate some of the lead-up drills into more of a gameplay situation.
- Add in a “two-handed” strike rule that will help slow the game down and create more control over the game.
- Add a second or even third serve rule to help increase success and interest.
- Create a no-spike rule until students have adequate passing and two-handed striking skills.
- Adapt the drills mentioned earlier to better suit your students.

## **Part VII: Tournaments and Fundraisers**

There are multiple reasons to enjoy being infected with “NitroFever!” One added benefit is the ability to spread fitness and fun in your district, school, or region by playing NitroBall™ while raising money. We have run multiple NitroBall™ Tournaments in Canton, Massachusetts, and they have all been played and received with major enthusiasm and participation. There are multiple reasons and benefits to using NitroBall™ as a vehicle to raise money. Most tournaments can be run smoothly and effectively in one day; however, we have hosted 2-day tournaments that have been very well received and deemed highly successful. There are a few key components needed to organize and run a successful (fun and financially rewarding) tournament:

1. **Have enough courts or facilities to keep multiple teams moving and playing.** The more teams you allow to enter, the more courts you will need. The less standing around the better, and the more successful your tournament will be.
2. **Determine whether you want the tournament to have a separate boys and girls bracket or co-educational play.** Make sure you are clear about this on your registration form. We have had far more success with co-ed tournaments, but you may find otherwise; go with your instincts.
3. **Generate effective publicity, allowing more students to play.** Announce the tournament on the school loudspeaker, through parent emails, the local/school newspaper, the school website, etc.
4. **Create a flyer and registration sheet that students must hand in to you by a specified time or date.** Make sure your NitroBall™ rules and tournament rules are on the sheet for all to read and learn ahead of time. Have one point of contact accepting registrations; multiple people collecting registrations can muddy the waters and increases the potential for mathematical mistakes.
5. **Make your registration fee an even number.** For example, \$20, \$30, or \$40 per team is easy to track and collect. The team must give the entire fee at once; we do not allow partial payment.
6. **Predetermine your number of entries, “cap” the number of entries, and get the word out!** This helps create the idea that students must rush to sign up or they may not get into the tournament.
7. **Make sure you do your math correctly so your entrance fees cover all your costs and allows for profit.** The first year we put on a tournament we did not buy anything extra like t-shirts or trophies. We now buy t-shirts for our entrants, but we work this into the cost of the entry fee. You do not

need to have shirts, or you could award shirts to semi-finalists or finalists; it's up to you and how much time you want to invest. We also sell water, sports beverages, and food at the tournament to generate more income. You need 1-2 adults or trusted students to make this work. We are contemplating buying plaques or trophies for our next tournament.

8. **Have plenty of adult/teacher help or assistance, especially the first year!**
9. **Communicate with anyone and everyone who might plan to use the indoor or outdoor courts!** We contact all local schools, public and private, along with our elderly center, recreation department, local tennis club (if outdoors), athletic director, etc., anyone you can think of that might use the facility!
10. **Have some sort of bulletin board, easel, or poster readily available at the courts that illustrates what team is playing on which court.** Keep updating this as the tournament unfolds. This will save your voice and major headaches!
11. **Have fun organizing and playing NitroBall™ ... the students will follow your lead!**

***Thank you for purchasing this product from Gopher.***



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