Best in Class Camps – Playbook

Parent Communication Game Plan

A Few Days Before Camp (Prep Email)

Goal: Set expectations + provide planning
Send: 3–5 days before camp
Include:

- Dates & times
- Location & drop-off details
- What to bring
- Theme days (optional)
- Contact info for onsite director and US Sports Camps

Example:
Subject: Get Ready for Volleyball Camp!
We cannot wait to see your athlete on Monday! Camp runs 9 AM–2 PM at [Gym Name].
Please bring a water bottle, court shoes, lunch/snack, and knee pads.
Theme Days: Wed – Tie-Dye, Fri – Jersey Day!
Let us know if you have questions. See you soon!

📩 Daily Messages (Mon–Fri)

Goal: Keep parents informed + involved
Send: Each afternoon (short + sweet)
Include:

- 1–2 highlights from the day
- Quick reminder for tomorrow
- One picture if possible

Example:
Subject: Day 2 Highlights – Setting + Energy!
Campers crushed their setting drills and had a blast with 3v3 games today!
Tomorrow: Serve receive + Crazy Sock Day
[Insert photo if available]

📤 **Post-Camp Follow-Up (1–3 Days After)**

Goal: Show appreciation + invite feedback
Send: After camp ends
Include:

- Thank you.
- Link to photos
- Link to survey, future camp info

Example:
Subject: Thanks for a Great Week!
We loved working with your athlete this week!
Check out camp photos here: [Link]

We would love your feedback: [Survey Link]
Hope to see you again soon!

Check-in/ out process

For parents, the first and last 5–10 minutes of camp—during check-in and check-out—*are* the camp experience. Use this time to create a welcoming, organized, and professional environment that reflects the energy and quality of your program. Here is how:

1. **Warm & Welcoming Atmosphere**
    a. Staff Presence: Position staff to greet families with a smile. Ensure staff has nametags and can be identified.
        i. Highly suggested! Same staff should do check in/check out for parent familiarity
    b. Music: Use a speaker to play upbeat, family-friendly music to set a positive and energetic tone.
2. **Clear Signage & Wayfinding**
    a. Drop-Off & Pick-Up Signs: Use yard signs, banners, and tablecloths provided to help parents quickly locate the camp check-in area.
    b. Plan for Pick-Up: Since different people may oversee drop-off and pick-up, leave signage up to ensure consistent wayfinding throughout the day.
    c. Check out – have an organized check out process (can use director portal or printed rosters to confrim who camper left with)
3. **Professional & Organized Facility**
    a. Tidy Spaces: Maintain clean and clutter-free check-in areas. Clear trash regularly and ensure everything is presentable.
    b. Designated Drop Zones: Set up clear, labeled spaces for backpacks, water bottles, and equipment to keep things orderly and safe.

Parent Communication

1. **Check-In with Parents:** Take a few minutes during morning drop-off to connect with parents. These casual conversations help build trust and give insight into how campers are feeling. Any feedback gathered can be used to improve the experience and boost satisfaction—especially when it comes time for post-camp surveys.
2. **Daily Parent Update:** Send a short email each afternoon with group photos and a quick summary of the day. Share what the campers learned, what activities they participated in, and what to expect tomorrow. Kids are often tired and may give brief answers when asked about their day—this email helps parents stay in the loop and feel more connected to the experience.
3. **Social media:** If your camp uses social media, post photos and short video clips to highlight the energy and fun. It is a fantastic way to engage current families and attract future ones through authentic, real-time content.
4. **Overnight Camps** - Click HERE for Best Practices

Camp Programming

VOLLEYBALL CAMP DAILY SCHEDULE (GENERIC EXAMPLE)		
TIME	**WHAT**	**WHO**
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Check-In & Coach Set-Up	Coaches meet in designated area. Set up nets, balls, and any necessary gear. Greet parents and confirm camper info.
9:00 – 9:10 AM	Camp Welcome & Daily Theme	Introduce staff and cover camp rules. Share the daily theme or core value (e.g., teamwork, effort, communication).
9:10 – 9:40 AM	Warm-Up Game & Stretch	Get everyone moving with a fun game (e.g., Ship to Shore, Pac-Man). Dynamic warm-up and group stretch.
9:40 – 10:40 AM	Technical Skill Stations	Rotate campers through 3-4 skill-based stations (e.g., passing, setting, serving, attacking). Group by skill. Coaches stay at stations.
10:40 – 11:00 AM	Water & Snack Break	Quick snack and hydration break. Add a fun coach challenge or camper trivia.
11:00 – 12:00 PM	Competitive Drills / Mini-Games	Small-sided games (2v2, 3v3, quads) focused on applying skills in game-like situations. Encourage communication and effort.
12:00 – 12:45 PM	Lunch	Designated lunch area. Optional free time or quiet indoor games. Camp store/snack sales optional.
12:45 – 1:00 PM	Core Value Reflection & Re-Warm-Up	Quick game (e.g., Circle the Wagon, Wax Museum). Reflect on how the day's theme showed up in play.
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Position-Specific Training	Campers work on skills relevant to their position: setting, hitting, defense, etc. Coaches group and guide accordingly.
2:00 – 2:20 PM	Snack Break & Camper Choice Games	Break with optional silly games or low-stress competitions (e.g., SPUD, Tug of War).
2:20 – 2:50 PM	Full Court Game Play (6v6)	Coaches organize scrimmages and coach in real time. Reward three contacts, communication, and hustle.
2:50 – 3:00 PM	Cool Down, Camper of the Day, Theme for Tomorrow	Stretch, share highlights, award "Camper of the Day," and announce next day's dress-up theme (e.g., Crazy Hair Day).

US Sports Camps Values

US Sports Camps represents the core values of Respect, Responsibility, Sportsmanship, and Fun. We ask Camp Operators/Directors to communicate and uphold these values at your camps. We want our parents and campers to know and experience that your camp carries out safe, fun and positive camps. We also want to ensure we actively work to prevent destructive behavior like bullying and racism. Thank you for your support.

1. **Camper Pledge:**
    a. I will show respect to my coaches, teammates, and opponents.
    b. I will give my best effort and have a positive attitude.
    c. I will follow all camp rules and be a good teammate.
    d. I will listen to my coaches and work hard to improve.
    e. I will have fun and make the most of my camp experience.

Volleyball Games & Drills Manual

🎲 Downtime Game Ideas

1. Volleyball Trivia (General & Pro-Level): Ask fun questions about volleyball rules, Olympic history, famous players, or camp facts. Offer small prizes for correct answers.
2. Coach or Guest Q&A: Let campers ask coaches about their volleyball journey—favorite moments, toughest matches, or how they got started.
3. Heads Up / Charades – Volleyball Edition: Act out volleyball terms (like "block," "dive," or "overpass") or famous players/coaches.
4. Who Am I? – Volleyball Version: Campers ask yes/no questions to guess the mystery volleyball player or position.
5. Mini Low-Energy Competitions: Rock, Paper, Scissors Championship, or Team Relays.
6. Would You Rather? – Volleyball Edition: Ask things like "Would you rather get a pancake save or a game-winning ace?"
7. Pass the Story: Start a story about a crazy volleyball match and let each camper add a sentence. Can be silly or serious!
8. Design Your Dream Team or Jersey: Create your all-time starting six or draw custom team jerseys—then share with the group.
9. Respect the Ref Role-Play: Campers act out how to manage tough calls with sportsmanship and composure (great teachable moment!).
10. Talent Show: Let campers display their non-volleyball talents—dancing, jokes, singing, magic tricks, etc.

💬 Character-Building Themes of the Day

Incorporating daily values helps develop well-rounded athletes both on and off the court:

1. Monday: Teamwork & Communication: Collaborative drills and team-building activities.
2. Tuesday: Effort & Grit: Recognizing hustle and perseverance in all situations.
3. Wednesday: Leadership & Positivity: Encouraging campers to lead by example.
4. Thursday: Respect & Sportsmanship: Highlight how to treat teammates, opponents & refs.
5. Friday: Confidence & Celebration: Owning your progress and celebrating others.

Taking a break from Volleyball Skills

1. **Low-Energy Volleyball Options**

    a. Volleyball IQ Challenge: Small group stations or worksheets with rules, rotations, hand signals, and volleyball scenarios.
    b. Strategy Sessions: Teach basic formations (6-2, 5-1, etc.), serve receive, or attack strategies with whiteboards or court diagrams.
    c. Video Review: Watch and discuss short volleyball clips (college/pro/Olympics) focusing on teamwork, decision-making, or a specific skill.
    d. Walkthroughs & Chalk Talks: Slow-paced walk-through of rotations, serve receive formations, or movement patterns.

2. **Team building & Fun Competitions**

    a. Trivia (Volleyball + General): Break campers into teams for a fun quiz—include volleyball history, fun facts, coach facts, etc.
    b. Relay Challenges: Use cones, balls, towels, and chairs to make creative off-court relay races or team problem-solving games.
    c. "Build-a-Drill" Game: Groups design their own volleyball drill and present or run it with the team.
    d. Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament or Camp Bingo (with volleyball-themed spaces).
    e. Charades / Heads Up – Volleyball Edition
    f. Head-Shoulders-Knees-Toes-BALL – elimination game – CLICK HERE
    g. Ship to Shore – always a fun one: all players at net, coach says ship, shore, or some other word. This becomes a tag game when ship or shore are said (run to the wall without getting tagged). If other word is said, and campers remove hand from net, they are out or if tagged, they are out.

3. **Creative & Recovery-Based Activities**

    a. Design a Team Jersey or Logo: Campers draw and present their dream team name and design.
    b. Gratitude or Goal Wall: Create a camp-wide wall where campers write what they are thankful for or their volleyball goals.
    c. Camp Journaling: Give each camper a short prompt like "What I learned today" or "My proudest moment so far."

4. **Mentorship & Mindset Time**

    a. Coach Q&A or Story Time: Coaches share their volleyball journey, college experience, or favorite match.

b. Mental Skills Session: Introduce simple concepts like visualization, pre-serve routines, handling nerves, or teamwork mindset.
c. Values Talk: Small group discussions on topics like leadership, effort, or sportsmanship.

🎉 Friday Fun Ideas for Volleyball Camp

🏆 Mini Tournament / Game Day

1. Camp Tournament: Set up mini games (2v2, 3v3, or 6v6) with rotating teams or brackets.
2. Team Theme Challenge: Teams dress in their theme day outfits (jerseys, tie-dye, etc.) and play in a "spirit match."
3. Parents vs. Campers Scrimmage: Invite parents to play a quick, lighthearted game at the end of camp.

🎖️ Awards & Recognition

1. Closing Ceremony: Give out fun and meaningful awards (MVP, Most Improved, Best Teammate, Golden Volleyball, etc.).
2. Coach Shout-Outs: Each coach gives a quick, personalized highlight for a few campers.
3. Camper Superlatives: "Best Dive," "Loudest Cheer," "Future Coach," "Best Socks," etc.
4. Click Here for Printable award certificates

🎲 Fun Games & Competitions

1. Serving Contests: Hit targets on the court, serve into buckets, or "Knock Out" style competitions.
2. Obstacle Course: Volleyball-themed relay—shuffle steps, pass to a target, dive on a mat, etc.
3. King/Queen of the Court: Rotate teams or individual players in a fast-paced, competitive game.
4. "Beat the Coaches" Challenge: Coaches play against the top camper team (everyone loves this!).

Volleyball Camp Theme Day Ideas

1. **Camp Classics (Always a Hit)**
    a. Crazy Hair Day
    b. Tie-Dye Day (could be a camp-wide shirt activity one day, worn the next)
    c. Crazy Socks Day
    d. Spirit Day (wear camp colors or team colors)
    e. Spandex Day (go full volleyball mode!)
    f. Jersey Day (favorite athlete, pro team, or personal jersey)
2. **Volleyball-Specific Themes**
    a. Dig Pink Day – Wear pink in support of breast cancer awareness. Could include a mini fundraiser or "pink out" tournament.
    b. USA Day/Olympic Day – Wear red, white, and blue; hold mini "Olympic" competitions like fastest serve, best dive, etc.
    c. Throwback Thursday – Encourage vintage volleyball looks (think knee pads, retro team shirts, or '80s/ 'nineties athletic gear).
    d. Volleyball Twins Day – Campers partner up and match outfits or accessories.
    e. Team Pride Day – Rep club, school, or local teams (great for bonding and friendly rivalry).
3. **Just for Fun**
    a. Wacky Wednesday – Mix and match everything: socks, shorts, headbands, colors.
    b. Superhero Day – Camper's dress as their favorite hero (volleyball version of one).
    c. Pajama Day – Always a hit: play comfortable for part of the day, later in week.
    d. Disney Day/Character Day – Dress up as a favorite character or Disney athlete.
    e. Neon Day/Glow Day – Bright colors for the win!
    f. Hawaiian Day/Beach Day – Bring beach vibes via leis, sunglasses, & tropic gear.
    g. Coach Look-Alike Day: Camper's dress like their favorite coach.
    h.

🏁 Opening Ceremony Ideas (Day 1)

The purpose of the opening ceremony is to set the tone for the week, build excitement, and create a welcoming environment for all campers. It is a chance to establish expectations, introduce the staff, and begin building a sense of community from day one.

Key Elements:

1. Hype Entrance: Play upbeat music, introduce the coaching staff with energy (even high-fives or a tunnel entrance).

2. Camper Welcome: Address campers and parents briefly. Share the camp's mission, what to expect, and how you will support athlete growth (skills + character).
3. Camp Rules + Expectations: Quick rundown of how to stay safe, be respectful, and have fun.
4. Core Values Spotlight: Highlight 2–3 key values (e.g., hustle, sportsmanship, positivity) that you will reinforce during the week.
5. Icebreaker or Warm-Up Game: Kick off with a fun, interactive game to ease nerves and start building relationships.
6. Team Reveal (if applicable): If you are dividing campers into teams, reveal them here—consider a draft or random "sorting" method to make it feel exciting.

🏆 Closing Ceremony Ideas (Final Day)

The purpose of the closing ceremony is to celebrate each camper's growth, highlight individual and team achievements, and recognize the energy and effort they brought throughout the week. It is also a special opportunity to involve parents and give them a window into the experience their child had. The goal is to leave everyone feeling proud, appreciated, and excited to return.

Key Elements:

1. Parent Invite: Host the last 30–45 minutes of camp for parents to watch.
2. Final Tournament/Game: Let parents see campers in action with short games or a mini tournament.
3. Camper Awards: Hand out fun and meaningful awards—can be serious (MVP, Most Improved) or fun (Best Teammate, Best Dive, Positive Energy Award).
4. Camper Shout-Outs: Coaches give 1-2 sentence shout-outs for each camper—something personal and affirming.
5. Photo Slideshow or Video (if possible): Show photos or clips from the week to music. Great for parents and marketing!
6. Camp Chant or Send-Off: End with a team chant, group photo, or “camp clap” tradition to tie things together.

Coaching Cues and Ideas

Serve Receive Technique

1. SR shuffles (1. Right foot slightly in front, 2. Hook right foot and stay level as you shuffle, 3. Aiming to pass mid/left side of body)
    a. Round 1: eval shuffles
    b. Round 2: bowl underhand
    c. Round 3: overhand "serve."
    d. Round 4: stretch range.
2. Butterfly with one passer
3. Butterfly with two passers to work on seam work.
4. Seam work with bowled in balls, slow and precise.

Serve Receive Games

1. Moneyball (5 free balls, majority winner decides who serves, must win to bank points, switches every round)
2. Normal Game
3. Tug of War (0-10)
4. Eighteen before 25

Serving Technique

1. Talking about the technique of serving à good toss in front of hitting shoulder, weight transfer, good contact
2. Tossing to a dot
3. Serving to a wall
4. Hitting Zones (1-6)
5. Add jump float/jump top for those that are able.
6. Serve to hit noodle, bounce box, etc.

Serving Games

1. Around the World
2. Dead Fish
3. Caterpillar
4. Breakout
5. Blob/Cheerio

Setting Technique (last two steps L, R)

1. Footwork first (forward, backward, off the net, left of the net, right off the net)
    a. With just feet, with holding ball and pushing out, self-toss, catch from coach's toss, set.
2. Set against the wall.

   a. Normal, Left, Right, Higher, High-Low, Rainbow, Square, Squat, Down to Floor

Hitting

1. Teaching footwork (LRL/RLR)
2. Self-toss approaches Attacking one direction.
3. Knee up/swing under net à Focusing on Finish, Wrist Snap (Hand in the Cookie Jar)
4. From coach's toss
5. Beach warmup: attack at defender, set, attack over the net.
6. Hand Contact: Wrist Snap, Thumb Up, Thumb Down
   a. Add to self-toss on court à Up and Down attacking different direction.
   b. Add player toss/set à Up and Down attacking same direction.
7. Survivor à Off of coach toss or player set, if you miss you go to other side, a little fun less volleyball.

Setting IQ/Attacking Games

1. Distribution (A kill from each attacker) Make it Take it.
2. Power Attacker (Only one person can score) Make it Take it.

Defense

1. Ball and a Partner (Focus: Taking correct step, Hooking foot)
   a. Round 1: Throw five to left/5 to right.
   b. Round 2: 7 total balls, either direction
   c. Round 3: Tip ball to partner, five times (Start in running stance, run with hands apart)
   d. Round 4: Tip or Throw Combo, five times total (Start in running position, or do good steps)
2. Teaching how to dive
3. Teach a defense – Talk about positioning, coach on box.

Defense Games

1. Dig or Die (games to 5)
2. 321 (Toss = freeball sent over, 2 = bounce, down ball = 3)
3. Speed ball/Tennis.
4. Pit Drill
5. Run Through variations.

Games

1. Normal Game (Make games to 7, 15, 21) depending upon group sizes and attention span.
2. Biggie Smalls: Coach initiated game where team must score a small number 2-4 little points, to score a big point. Team that scores a big point could a. rotate (play to 6), b. play to a certain score, c. earns the serve to score a big point, etc.

3. Tug of War: Coach initiated game where the score starts at a midway point – say 10. One side play to score down to zero, the other team plays to score up to twenty. Rotate players in a time intervals (90 seconds).
4. Dig or Die: Play mini games to seven. If a ball hits the floor without a touch (block or otherwise), that teams points go back to zero. This game encourages effort and honesty.

Prizes, Categories & Giveaways – Volleyball Camp Edition

Recognizing effort, improvement, and positive attitudes is a key part of building a motivating and memorable camp experience. Prizes and giveaways not only celebrate individual and team success but also reinforce core values like teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship. Below are suggested prize categories and creative ways to distribute them throughout the week.

🏅 Award Categories

1. Ace of the Day – Given to a camper with outstanding serving or consistent performance in drills and games.
2. Team Player Award – Recognizes a camper who supports teammates, communicates well, and plays unselfishly.
3. Leader of the Day – Awarded to someone who sets the tone with hustle, focus, and encouragement.
4. Most Improved – Celebrates campers who have made noticeable growth in skills, confidence, or mindset during the week.
5. Best Attitude/ (Your Mascot Pride Award) – Positive energy, cheering on others, and bringing great vibes—on and off the court.
6. Hardest Worker/Hard Hat – Awarded to campers who give full effort during drills, scrimmages, and conditioning.
7. Respect & Sportsmanship – Recognizes campers who treat coaches, refs, and teammates with respect.
8. Dig of the Day / Rally Queen/King – For a standout defensive play or clutch moment during a rally.
9. Volleyball IQ Award – Given to a camper who shows smart decision-making or creative problem-solving during play.
10. Camper's Choice – Let campers vote for someone they admire or appreciate on the court.

🎁 Fun Prize Distribution Ideas

1. Raffle Ticket System: Campers earn tickets throughout the week for effort, attitude, or leadership. Hold a prize drawing on the final day.
2. Spin the Prize Wheel: Winners get to spin for a random reward (snacks, gear, bonus serve, etc.).
3. “Pick Your Prize” Draft: Top campers choose from a prize table in order of rank.
4. Mystery Prize Draw: Campers blindly pull a prize from a mystery box.
5. Sticker or Wristband Challenge: Earn stickers or wristbands that represent core values (e.g., hustle, positivity, focus).
6. Serve for Shirts/Prizes: Campers serve and hit the shirt/prize they win. Be sure to have enough for all campers.
7. Coach’s Choice: Coaches surprise a camper with a daily prize based on overall impact.
8. Final Day MVP Vote: Coaches and/or campers vote on an overall MVP or “Heart of the Camp” winner.