Much has been written about setting footwork. Which step is correct? Which is incorrect? Stating simply, “Your left foot goes here” and “Your right foot goes there” isn’t very practical in teaching the setters of today. The setter position requires athleticism and the ability to adapt to a variety of pass attempts. Training and development should mirror the skill itself. Footwork can be broken down into four simple phases. Regardless of their skill level in other components involved in setting, players can enjoy early success by executing proper footwork. Let’s look at each of the four phases in detail.

Phase 1: Get To a Target
Get to a target – any target (predetermined by the coach and team, of course) – but make sure you get there. The setter releases from his or her court position at the moment of contact by the server. The ball travelling from server to passer and passer to target should allow the setter enough time to get from any court position to the target. A common mistake for setters in this phase is to sprint to the attack line and then drift towards the net. Remind your setters that the attack line (three meter line) is not the penultimate destination.
The target can be the center of the net or just right to the center or near the right sideline. Regardless of where the ball is after the first pass at contact (after a serve attack not directed at the setter), the setter needs to sprint to the target as quickly as possible. Getting the right foot (the one closest to the net) to touch the center line is also important for the next phase. Often overlooked in training and game play, the initial phase of getting to the target will help setters tremendously because the act itself creates space between the setter and the passer, allowing the setter more time to judge and adapt to the pass. It will also provide natural, dynamic balance after a few short practice sessions. Dynamic balance is the ability to remain balanced while moving. A sprinter with a moving start will always beat a sprinter of equal speed that starts from a static position. Larger steps yield to smaller steps as the setter approaches the target (most athletes will do this naturally), and as steps become smaller, they should become quicker to allow the setter to slow down at a faster rate.

Phase 2: Be Ready to Move from the Target
Movement from the target should occur on every pass. The movement should become automatic and should occur whether a ball is passed 20 feet away from or directly to the target area. When dealing with the errant pass, the first thing the setter should do is step away from the target area to the area where the pass is headed. For some players, this isn’t as easy or natural as it sounds. Often, a player will take a false step to get into a dynamic balance position and waste valuable seconds distributing his or her weight to an appropriate moving position. If you watch videotape of setters in phase 1 through phase 2, you should be able to pause the tape and watch frame-by-frame continuity in movement. A setter should adjust his or her feet even when the ball is passed directly to the target because that dynamic balance scenario will, in fact, remain constant. Without these adjustment steps, players often try to adjust the hips or shoulders and become off-balance in delivery. The setter’s proficiency in phase 2 will develop in relation to his or her ability to judge passes, as well as his or her overall agility and movement skills.
Phase 3: Beat the Ball to the Spot
In phase 3, the goal is to anticipate where the ball is going to land and get there before it does. Setters can get a head start on where the pass is going to go based somewhat on watching the passers prior to contact with the ball. If the passer has established a good passing platform prior to contacting the ball, and if he or she is still and calm, the setter can assume the pass will be of higher quality than if the passer has made a bad read and is scrambling to get his or her forearms on the ball. The setter will have a much easier time adjusting if he or she can get a look at the passer before he or she passes the ball.

Many advanced setters can arrive at the ball’s intended location at the same time as the ball or a fraction of a second beforehand. An offense has no chance to deceive the defensive blockers when the setter arrives too late to the ball location. If setters get to the intended ball location before the ball does, hitters can focus on the setter rather than the ball. How many times have hitters said, “I just didn’t think the setter was going to get there and get me the ball.” Beating the ball to the spot also allows the setter to adjust and prepare for the act of getting the ball to the hitter.

Phase 4: Stop and Set
Stop and set is the final and most critical of the four phases of setting footwork; the fewer extraneous movements that the setter must adjust for, the easier the delivery will be. Setting a ball from the same body position requires the setter to execute phases 1 through 4 before ever touching the ball. Coaches use the term “float” to identify when the setter jumped from one spot, set the ball, and landed in another spot. Floating can be eliminated by stopping and setting.
**Location Repetitions**
Sean Byron
Rutgers-Newark

**Number of Players:** 2  
**Number of Balls:** 2  

**Objective:** To engage in a good number of solid repetitions within a short time.

**Directions:**
1. The setter stands at the target and the coach tosses a ball to the setter.
2. The setter sets the ball to location A, at which point the second setter catches it.
3. When the coach tosses the ball to be set, the second setter bounces another ball to the coach. The bounce is important so that the coach can watch the setter contact the ball and give instant feedback.
4. The catcher (second setter) can count the number of successful repetitions before he or she switches positions and gives location feedback to the setter. Examples of feedback on location are “tight”, “off”, “inside”, and “outside” and should be given after every set by the catcher.
5. The catcher should stand on a chair or a box so he or she can catch the ball at the point a hitter would contact it if he or she were to spike. If no box or chair is available, have the catcher move back 7 to 8 feet to a location at which the ball would land if it were set from the target and passed through the hitting zone untouched.

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**Bread and Butter**
Joel Dearing
Springfield College
*From: Volleyball Fundamentals*

**Number of Players:** 12  
**Number of Balls:** Steady Supply  

**Objective:** This drill is fundamental in developing consistent setting skills. It allows a setter who calls for help on a service reception that is far away from the target to practice this skill.

**Directions:**
1. Twelve players form two lines - a line of setters (S) and attackers (A).
2. The coach (C) stands near the net with a basket of volleyballs.
3. C tosses a high ball in the air near the middle of the court to simulate a poor service reception that would result in the designated setter having to call for help.
4. The first player in the setting line calls “mine”, while the first player in the attacking zone calls for a 14.
5. The ball is set toward the antenna and the attacker jumps and catches the ball with two hands high and in front. That player drops the ball in the basket and moves to the end of the setting line, while the setter executes the set and moves to the end of the attacking line.
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