CANADA BASKETBALL

COACH EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

NCCP – COMPETITION INTRODUCTION
LEARN TO TRAIN: COACH TOOLBOX

CANADA BASKETBALL

MODIFIED GAMES MODULE

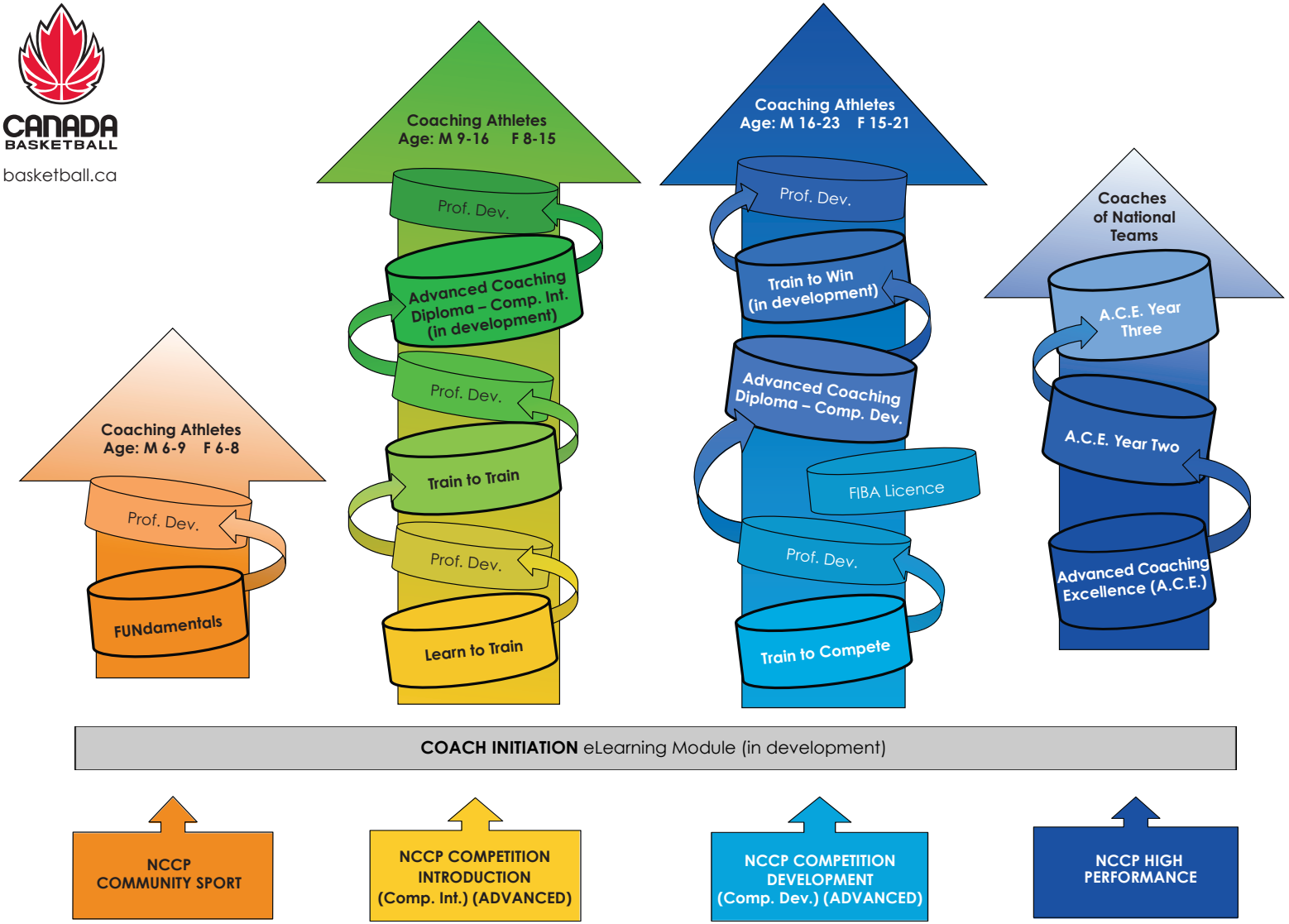
National Coaching Certification Program

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CANADA BASKETBALL

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Canada Basketball NCCP Coach Education Model

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MODIFIED GAMES MODULE **1**

Using The Toolbox **4**

Session 1: Fundamental Movements **5**

Session 2: Fundamental Basketball Skills **9**

Session 3: Technical Basketball Skills **16**

Appendix **19**
- **Fundamental Movements** 19
- **Basketball Movement Skills** 25
- **Acceleration Drills** 40
- **Warm-Up Games** 44
- **Balance** 47
- **Pivoting** 55
- **Dribbling** 61
- **Fundamental Basketball Skills** 73
- **Passing** 73
- **Shooting** 82
- **2 on 1** 86
- **Attacking the Rim** 90
- **Using the Grid** 114
- **Beginner's Offense** 118
- **Break Down Drills for Beginning Offense** 126
- **Progressive Transition Drills for Young Players** 134
- **Toss Drills** 142

Using The Toolbox

TOOLBOX DESIGN

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

The skills and tactics that are described in the toolbox are based on a *conceptual approach to teaching*. Quite understandably, each and every coach has his/her own particular ideas of how to instruct a skill or how a skill should be performed. Therefore, you will notice that the plans inform about only the basic concepts that are important for all coaches to understand for the athlete to perform the skill correctly.

GLOBAL PLAYERS

Elite basketball players at every level have a wide variety of skills that allows them to play many different positions on the floor. Therefore, it is felt that when coaching athletes in the Learn to Train and Train to Train stages of development, we need to develop "global basketball players". What this translates to in terms of involving players in drills is that ALL players should be asked to be active in all activities so that they develop skills that are useful for all positions and all areas of the floor.



***TECHNICAL TEACHING TIPS* (TTT)**

In every skill there are key performance tips that coaches need to ensure are reinforced in order for their athletes to focus on the correct parts of performing that skills. This area will point out those key tips.



***LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT TACTICS* (LTAD)**

When referring to our LTAD model, it is suggested that there are certain training periods in a young athlete's life known as "*windows of trainability*". By focusing on certain aspects of sport development during these windows, we will be assisting the athletes to reach their genetic potential. Therefore, the plans may suggest what to keep in mind or how to challenge our athletes in this area relative to the age of athletes we are dealing with.



***FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT CONSIDERATIONS* (FMC)**

For every movement in sport, coaches have to consider the athlete's body position in order to create a more efficient mover. In this area, tips may be given to alert the coach as to what to look for to ensure efficiency. The toolbox may also mention some common errors that can be noticed when athletes are attempting to perform the movement.

If you wish to learn in detail more about planning a practice, there is a module offered by Canada Basketball specific to this area of coaching.

Good luck and enjoy your experience. You are about to embark on an adventure that will positively impact the lives of those you coach. In return, they will teach you something about yourself each and every day.

Session 1: Fundamental Movements

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will experience various movements that are basic to basketball and sport in general. *Drill loading* will be implemented to show how a logical progression can be used from their introduction to skill efficiency.

The basic approach to teaching your players to become better athletes is to teach them the cornerstones of movements which involve the ABCs of athleticism.

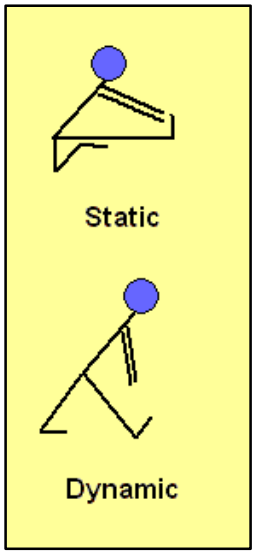
Agility
Balance
Coordination
Speed

The primary focus of our stages of long-term athlete development is to improve physical literacy, which includes ABCs. It is important to perform movements in various planes – forward, sideways, diagonally, and backwards. Within our warm-ups and drills, coaches need to include movement education training so that we can develop better movers in the sport.

WARM-UP

A. DYNAMIC STRETCHING

Science has shown us that, in warm-up activities, our athletes should include a dynamic stretching routine as opposed to statically stretching our muscles. The simplest way to explain the difference is to look at the diagram of the two stretches.



In the static stretch, the athlete is supporting his/her body weight with the floor. The muscle being stretched is not engaged in supporting the body. In the second diagram, the hamstring muscle is again being stretched, but is also stilled needed to support the body. The athlete must maintain balance while stretching. Another property of dynamic stretching is that it may involve controlled swings or twisting of a body part. Simple leg swings or arm circles is an example.

The basic purpose of a warm-up is to increase the core temperature of our body in order to:

1. Ready the body for activity
2. Help reduce the chances of injury

AGILITY

Agility refers to the ability to change direction efficiently which will ultimately allow one to do it with speed. There are certain factors that will affect someone's agility. Those factors include:

- Strength
- Power
- Stance
- Coordination

To have more agile athletes, we need to teach them to be better at the following:

- Changing direction
- Changing speeds
- Faking

If we can improve these three areas of how they move on the court, then we will dramatically improve their agility and ultimately speed of movement.

DRILLS & GAMES TO IMPROVE AGILITY & SPEED

Drill or Activity	Loading Component		
	Beginner Athlete	Intermediate Athlete	Advanced Athlete
Ladder Work (using floor lines)	**Forward Stepping** • single foot in one square	**Forward Stepping** (each foot in each square)	**Forward Stepping** • two squares ahead, one square back
Tag	**Game Area** • large – entire gym	**Game area** • medium – half the gym	**Running only on the lines on the gym floor**
Carioca Step	**Side Steps** • slow movements	**Side Steps** • quick feet	**Side Steps** • dribbling a ball or while receiving and passing a ball
Cone Shuffling	**Shuffle Steps**	**Crossover Steps**	**Alternating Shuffle and Crossover Steps**
Drop a Ball	**Catch after one bounce**	**Catch after one bounce** • immediate stop	**Catch the ball after landing on the floor from a bench**
Mirror a Partner	**Move in the direction the leader moves**	**Stay within two arm lengths of the leader**	**Leader tries to make partner bump into them** • i.e., Stops, starts, etc.

AGILITY

Being in a balanced position allows the athlete to move with quickness and power. Having good balance involves maintaining the correct universal stance so that efficient, explosive movements can occur at any time. Balance also involves controlling the body's center of gravity while in motion.

DRILLS & GAMES TO IMPROVE AGILITY & SPEED

Drill or Activity	Loading Component		
	Beginner Athlete	Intermediate Athlete	Advanced Athlete
Line / Square Hopping	On both feet, hop on each side of a line	On both feet, hop in four squares that are adjacent to each other	While hopping, pass a basketball to a partner
Bean Bag Kick	Hopping on one foot, kick a beanbag up and down the floor	Hopping on one foot, kick a bean bag into a particular area of the floor	Play keep away with a partner
Hopping Tag	Same as tag games from "Agility Games", but while hopping	→	→
Pylon Pick Up	Balancing on one foot, bend over and pick up pylons	Place the balancing foot on top of one or two bean bags, a towel, or any unstable surface and pick up pylons	While dribbling a ball and balancing on one foot, hop over to pylons and pick them up

COORDINATION

Elements that affect coordination are:

- Balance
- Rhythm
- Spatial orientation

Our athletes must be exposed to these elements on a consistent basis if they wish to improve their coordination. Good coordination involves a progression that starts with general, non-specific sport skills being performed at slow speeds to those activities that eventually involve an ever-changing situation where the athlete must think and react quickly within the context of sport.

It can take years to develop highly coordinated athletes. Therefore, during training, it is critical to have a diverse amount of exercises in order to continually challenge the athletes.

One of the other principles to keep in mind when developing coordination in your athletes is to challenge them individually. Everyone has a certain level of ability and therefore we must be certain that they are placed into exercises that are appropriate for them so that their weaknesses can be better targeted.

DRILLS & GAMES TO IMPROVE COORDINATION

Drill or Activity	Loading Component		
	Beginner Athlete	Intermediate Athlete	Advanced Athlete
Skipping	Forward	Sideways and backwards	Skipping while dribbling or passing and receiving a ball
Single Leg Balancing Games	Dribbling a basketball	Passing and receiving a ball with a partner	Knee and elbow tag
Crossover Steps or Carioca Steps	Side steps (slow movements)	Side steps (quick feet and running)	Side steps (over short objects such as benches)
Obstacle Running	Athletes jump over hurdles (forward direction)	Athletes jump over hurdles (sideways and backwards direction)	Athletes jump over hurdles while dribbling

Session 2: Fundamental Basketball Skills

STANCE

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Balance will be examined to give the coaches a better understanding of how a proper stance can assist the athletes. Error detection will be a focus.

TTT

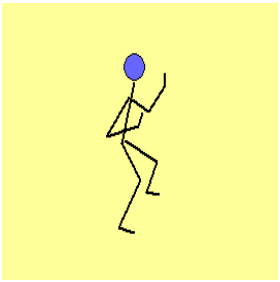
Universal Stance

The body has to perform the same whether the athlete is on offense or defence. The body must be in a strong position in order to move explosively at any time.

Shoulders, knees, and toes must be in a vertical line.

Knees are slightly flexed.

Arm position will vary depending on the offensive or defensive situation.

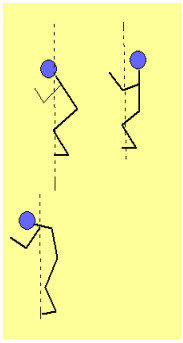


FMC

In preparation for the body to move quickly, its center of gravity must be lowered.

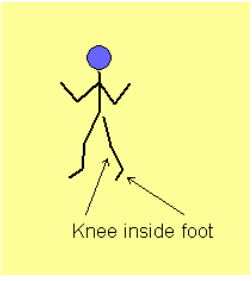
Athletes will have a tendency to be in an unbalanced position by not having their shoulders in line with their knees and toes (i.e., their head moves past their toes).

For the most efficient push, be sure the knee is inside the ankle.



LTAD

The ability of an athlete to maintain a good stance for an extended period of time is usually the result of a lack of strength in the lower body.

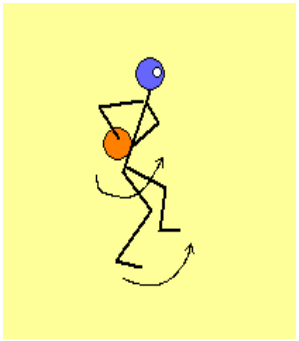


PIVOTING & SQUARING-UP

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will focus on the importance of using the body and where or how to move the ball.

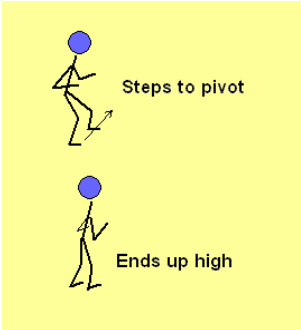
TTT

Stay in good *universal stance*.
When the athlete has the ball, be sure he/she turns aggressively and "*sweeps the ball*" across his/her body as he/she squares-up to the basket.
Keep the ball out of the **"forbidden zone,"** which is by the belly button.
Ensure that the eyes are always up and looking through or beyond their defender to fins open teammates or chances to attack.
Tell players that the pivot is used to gain a better position on the opposition or it can be used to protect the ball from the defence.
Elbows must be kept away from the body to give added protection for the ball.



FMC

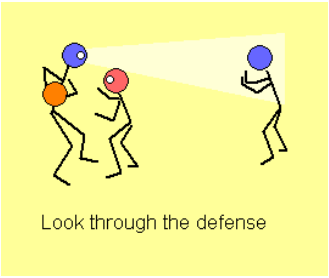
Low pivoters will be able to have better balance as they turn and move.
Tall pivoters will have a tendency to come out of their correct universal stance when pivoting. This is because they will step instead of turning the hips. Athletes after squaring-up will tend to not move the ball, which puts it in a position for the defence to take it.
Off balance pivoters are common in younger athletes. This means they do not keep their balance point between their feet. Rather, their body weight will mostly be placed on their non-pivoting foot.



LTAD

Ask younger athletes to continually se the entire floor in front of them (if on offense) so that they can take advantage of situations as soon as they appear.

Using one's body to an advantage becomes a big part of the game as athletes mature. Picoting correctly gives them an extra tool to use.



PASSING

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Through *guided defence*, the coaches will discover *when*, *where*, and *how* they should be using particular passes.

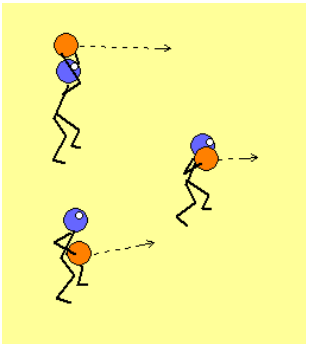


TTT

The ball is passed at three levels: above the head, at the shoulders, by the hip.

There are three release points: right side, left side, from the middle of the body.

Two target circles to pass to: *inside circle* and *outside circle*.



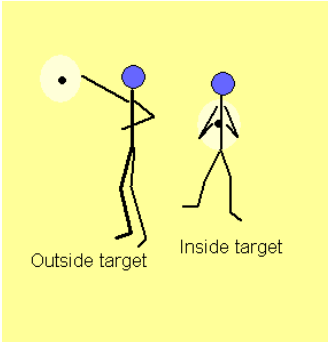


FMC

The pivot needs to be used at certain times to gain a better passing angle.

Use of a dribble is also an effective way to move the ball into a better position on the floor to make a pass.

When pressured, many athletes attempt to make a pass from above their head with their legs straight, which compromises a strong passing position.



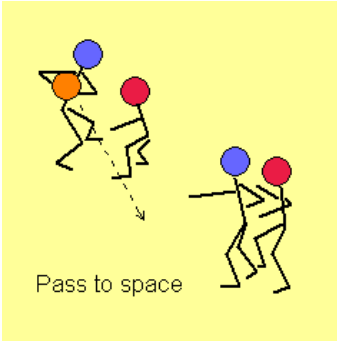


LTAD

Teach the concept of *passing to space* (i.e., pass where your teammate is going; pass away from the side where the defender is guarding).

In order to make the right pass, various levels of defenders need to be recognized first: on-ball defender, help defender, rotating defender.

Loading the same drill or activity with complexities will help teach athletes to use the correct pass and to make the right decision (i.e., start with no defender; move to a guided defender; go live).



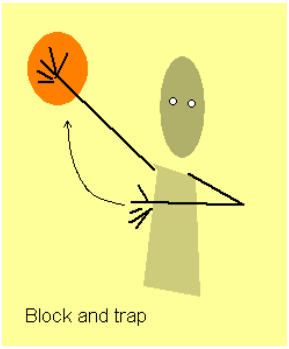
RECEIVING

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: *Drill loading* will be used to show how a logical progression can be used to instruct.

TTT

Outside reception (block and trap) techniques are passes that are received outside the middle of the body.

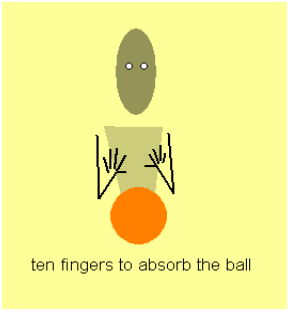
Inside reception (funnel) techniques are when passes are caught with both hands simultaneously and near the center of the body.


Block and trap

FMC

An important skill to remember is to show 10 fingers and 10 toes to the passer so he/she is aware that a pass can be made (i.e., face the passer and provide him/her with a target).

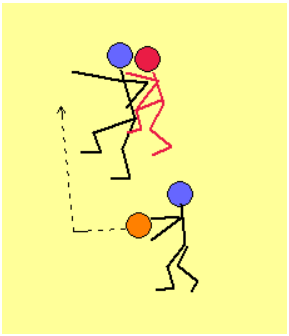
In some instances, when receiving outside passes, athletes will not move their body to get behind the ball. This results in them over-extending for a pass.


ten fingers to absorb the ball

LTAD

Against aggressive defenders, the receiver must learn to use his/her body by "holding the defender off" with his/her non-receiving hand while catching the ball.

Young players in lots of cases do not have enough discipline to square-up after receiving a pass. Their tendency is to dribble first.



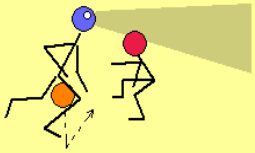
DRIBBLING

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will learn the *why*, *when*, and *where* of using particular dribbles by *teaching to each other*.

TTT

The position of the ball is critical to protect the ball better. Having the ball in the right spot also allows particular moves to be executed with more speed.

The eyes must be up in order to see the defender, teammates, and the entire floor.



Eyes up
Ball protected

FMC

Questions can be asked of the athletes as to where the body should be in relation to the ball in order to protect it.
When first learning particular moves, it is important to start from a static position. Later on, as the athletes gain more skill, movement can be loaded into the drill.
Change of direction movements with the body or pivoting movements are important to have control over prior to adding in the basketball.
A common error is the athlete will expose the ball to the defender by not using his/her body properly to protect it.



Eyes down
Ball unprotected

LTAD

Decision making as to *what type of dribble* to use in which situation needs to be taught.

Athletes must understand *why* dribbling should be used. Attacking with a dribble creates pressure on the defence, while retreat dribbles create space and time to make a decision. Dribbling can also be used to create a better angle to pass to a teammate.



Right Hand dribble
Since defense
is on the left

NOTE: Types of specific dribbles to teach to this age group may include: crab dribble, cross over, spin dribble, fake spin (older athletes in age group), behind the back, between the legs, retreat. Types of skills players should be taught might be: push/pull inside/out, change of pace, hesitation, dribble jabs.

SHOOTING

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will learn the techniques of good shot form. Detect and correct shot form. Pick out what is the most important part of the athlete's shot to focus on. Keep the message simple and use a slow progression.

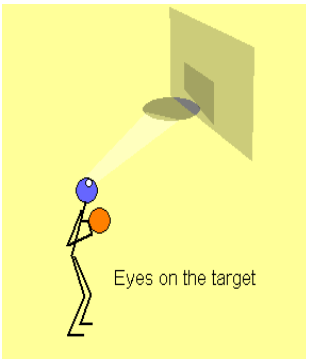
TTT

Good shot form involves the following pieces:

- Start position (grip on the ball)
- Power comes from the legs
- Eyes being still on the target
- Consistent release
- Ball coming off the fingers on the follow through

One-piece movement: nice flow, rhythm of the shot (timing and spacing).

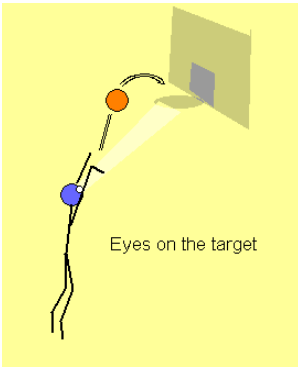
Footwork: inside pivot, permanent pivot, hop



FMC

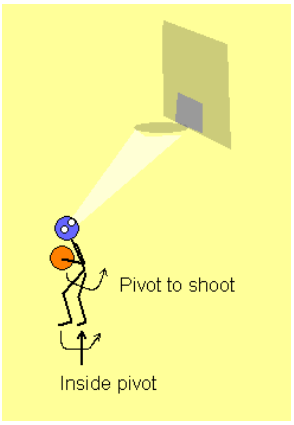
In younger athletes, the use of the legs is critical in order to maintain some resemblance of a proper shot.

A common error is for players to use incorrect footwork in setting up for a shot. This results in their body either not being ready to shoot quickly or it not being square to the basket when the ball is being released.



LTAD

Athletes of all sizes need to develop their shooting skills facing the basket and the basic concepts of starting with their back to the basket.

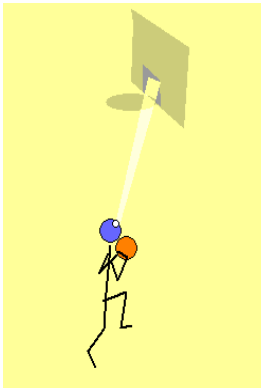


LAY-UPS

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will experience what younger athletes go through as they learn the complexities of a lay-up. Again, it is important to pick out what is the most important part of the athlete's shot to focus on. Keep the message simple and use a slow progression.

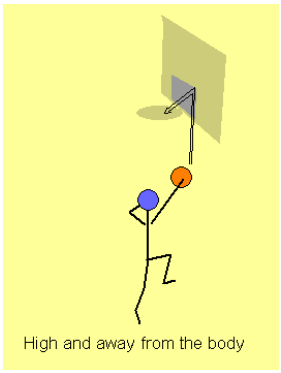
TTT

Start shooting with the *dominant hand side* of the floor to reduce frustration.
Initially, get them to shoot with the same form as a jump shot. Afterwards, various release angles can be introduced (See LTAD).
Correct attack angles are important in relation to the backboard.
NOTE: A whole-part-whole teaching method would be effective. A logical teaching progression may be: 2-step lay-up, right and left sides of the basket, from various angles, "Mikan" drill for footwork.



FMC

This is a difficult skill for young athletes because it involves both skill and movement. The lay-up cannot be performed without both being in place simultaneously.
Begin with slow walking movements, slowly building into a run.
Athletes will have a difficult time moving, dribbling, and using the correct footwork.
Beginners will use the non-jumping leg incorrectly. It needs to be lifted sharply upwards in order to transfer horizontal momentum into vertical lift.



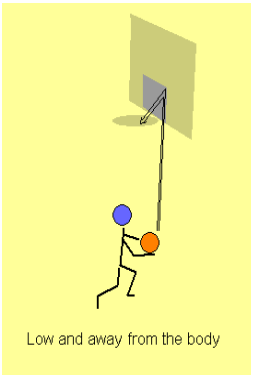
LTAD

There are various release angles.

- Tight or away from the body
- High or low release point

Athletes can be taught the skills by using different formats such as:

- Drills with no speed component
- A games approach where the athletes must focus on a particular aspect of the shot or footwork or they must shoot from bad angles
- Guided defence is added to challenge the offensive player



NOTE: A power lay-up is also another type of lay-up that should be taught at the appropriate time in their skill development.

Session 3: Technical Basketball Skills

BASE GAMES

1 ON 1 OFFENSE

COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches will be asked various types of questions to develop a thorough understanding of the skills needed in this part of the game.



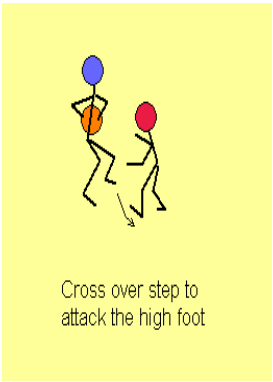
TTT

Movements to receive the pass:

- Getting the defender out of the passing lane
- Finding contact with the defender (K.O.B. Keep On Body)
- High or low hand targets

After receiving the pass:

- Square-up in an aggressive stance
- *Read* and *react* to the defense
    - Positioning of the defender (i.e., attack the high foot)
    - Hands up or down on defence
    - Getting the defender to react
        - Jab series
    - K.O.B with the ball
        - See shoulder – attack
        - See chest – change direction





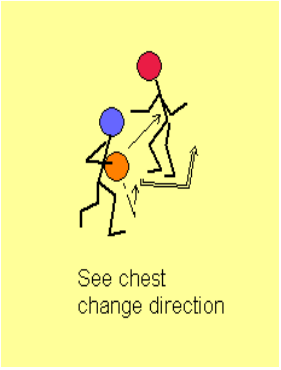
FMC

Types of movement to receive a pass (i.e., change of direction)

- V-cut
- L-cut
- Blast cut
- Back door cut

An aggressive stance must be maintained throughout the movements in order to be an affective player.

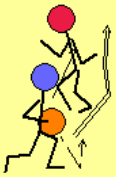
The fundamental skill of "*pushing*" is one young athletes do not have. They don't understand what is acceptable in the rules and what is not.



LTAD

Through healthy competition, we will encourage our athletes to play more, which will in turn develop 1 on 1 skills. One way to encourage play is through ladder competitions during practice.

Attacking mentality with and without the ball (i.e., rebounding)



See shoulder attack and K.O.B.

1 ON 1 DEFENCE

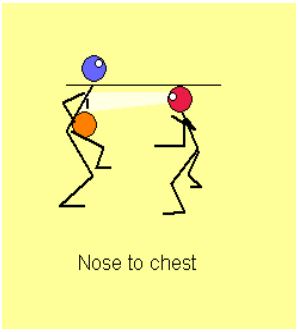
COACH'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Coaches need to understand fundamental movement detection and how to make biomechanical corrections. Ultimately, the goal is to turn players into better athletes.

TTT

Denying the offense the ball
- "*ball/you/player*" principle (spacing)
- maintain constant vision of the ball handler and check

The defensive player must be lower than the offensive player and in balanced stance (i.e., nose to chest level as a guideline).

One the ball defence
- arms and hands must be in a position to challenge a pass, shot, or dribble
- correct spacing from the offensive player is critical

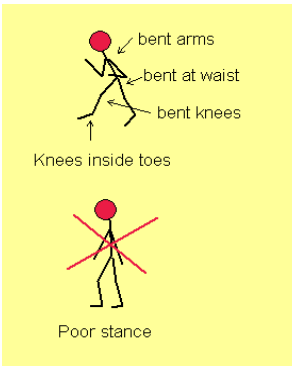


FMC

Stance is important to prepare for movement.
- Proper angles of 3 leg joints (ankles, knees, and hips) to generate force – i.e., knee inside ankle

During movement, pushing and not pulling movements should be taught.

Some athletes are too upright in their stance resulting in poor agility and quickness.

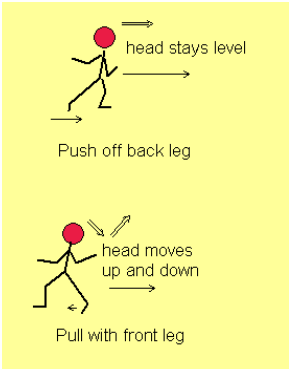


LTAD

Read and *anticipate* the movements of the offensive player.

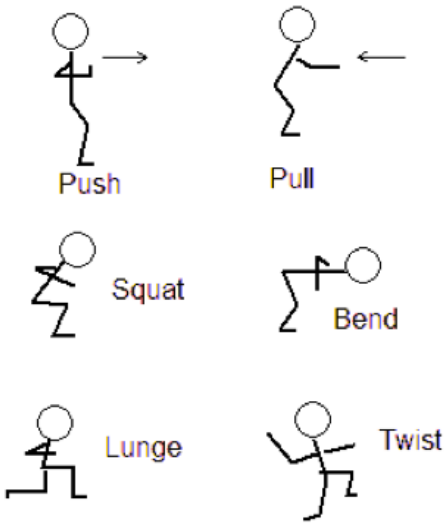
Understand the strengths and possible weaknesses of the opposition.

Defenders must be alert to helping out other teammates.



Appendix

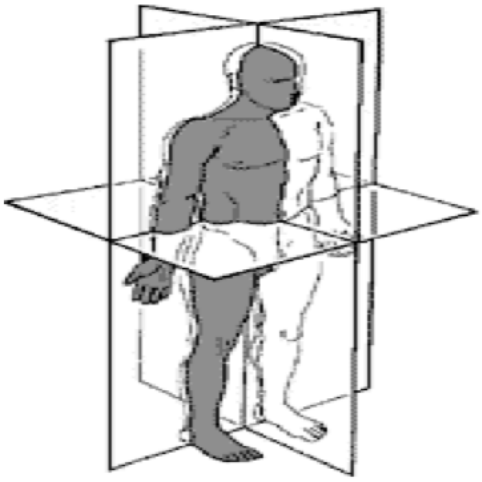
Fundamental Movements



Paul Chek has identified the following primitive movement patterns that he believes are crucial to successful athletes:

1. Pushing
2. Pulling
3. Squatting
4. Bending
5. Lunging
6. Twisting
7. Upward Gait – walk, job, run

The best way to warm-up is to implement these into dynamic movement activities similar to track and field. Provided are some ideas for more basketball-specific movements that could be done quickly in a circuit that would make use of these movement patterns.



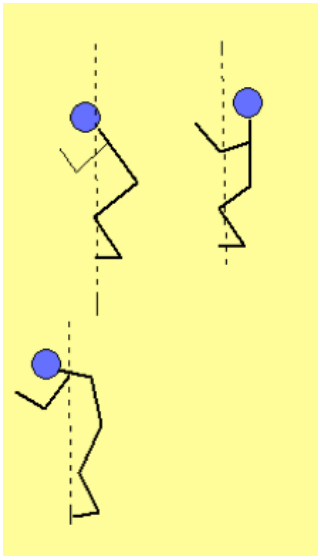
Move in Different Plans of the Body

These fundamental movements need to be performed in the various plans of the body.

Frontal – This divided the body into the front and back. In basketball, we have a tendency to do too many skills in the frontal plane only. I.e., the passing. We always face the direction we pass and pass with a pushing motion in the frontal plane.

Transverse – This divides the body into the top and bottom. Athletes need to have a strong core to connect these two parts, but also need to incorporate twist actions where one part is moving in a direction away from the other.

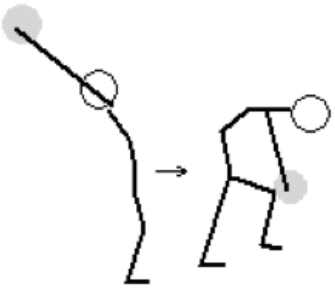
Sagittal – This divides the body into the right and left sides of the body. Athletes should be able to perform these skills to their right and left.



Athletic Stance

Players need to be in a position in which they can move in all directions. The joints of the body need to be flexed. Coaches should look to see the shoulders, knees, and toes line up. When we tell players to play with a straight back, they often push the shoulders back behind the knees and toes. A straight back means there is no arch in the upper back. The player needs to pull the scapula together. Activate the core by pretending you're going to give someone a double high-five.

Before performing any movement, the athletes begin in an athletic stance. Just as important is to return to this stance after completing the movement. In all of the drills, the coach should constantly remind the athletes to start and finish on balance in their stance.



Poor start leads to a poor finish

Poor Start, Poor Finish

If the athletes are allowed to start in a poor stance, they will activate the wrong muscles when performing the movements. This can lead to poor movement patterns and injury.

In the example shown, the player starts pulling the ball with an arched back. The result is when the pull is complete, the player has a tendency to buckle to an off-balance position.

NOTE: For advanced players who have mastered the movements, you can start in awkward positions similar to what will happen in games. Don't start beginning athletes in this position as injuries will occur.

Fatigue

If done properly, many athletes will become very fatigued when performing these activities. They will be activating muscles that are seldom used. When the athletes' form breaks, it is time to stop. This is when injuries may occur.

As the athletes become more competent at the skill, the intensity can be increased. This can be done by adding:

1. Weights (medicine ball)
2. Instability (wobble board)
3. Increased speed of movement
4. Increased number of reps
5. Increased length of time
6. Combining the movement patterns



Pushing side to side



Pushing back to back

Pushing

The athlete should be able to legally push using different parts of the body:

a. With their side – when dribbling, defending, cutting
b. With their front – setting screens, fronting on defence
c. Back – sealing, boxing out
d. Hands – many different situations
e. Forearm

a. Back to back
b. Side to side
c. Front to front



protected dribble
static



protected dribble
move in circle /side ways



Side Pushing

Side to Side – push against your partner. Feel the shoulder being used and the low position with the body.

Partner Dribble – both players dribble while pushing with shoulder

a. Static
b. Moving
c. Change of direction



jab and go



jab and spin



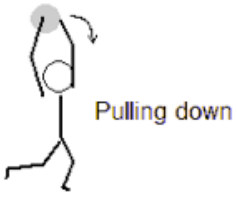
jab and square

Protected Dribble vs. Guided Defence

One player dribbles, the other gives guided defence. The dribbler pushes with his/her shoulder; the defense pushes with his/her chest and legs.

Work on Reads – jab with your inside foot and the defence:

a. Does not move front pivot and loop around the defender
b. If the defence mirrors your steps and you see a chest, spin
c. If the defender drops back, square and face



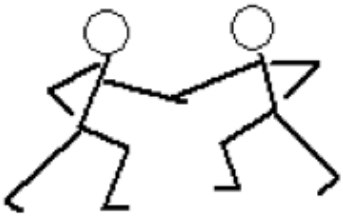




Pulling

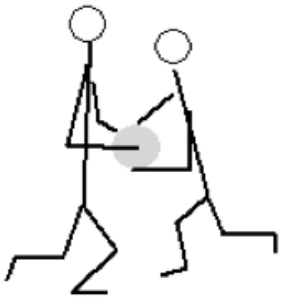
Players need to be able to pull the ball away from their opponent.

a. High overhead position (high to low)
b. mid-body position (twist, to high, to low)
c. low position – could be on the floor (to high)



Push Pull

Players grasp each other's forearms. On a signal, they try to push and pull their partner to lose balance (move his/her feet).



Partner Ball Tussle

Work the core – both players grab the ball and work to twist, pull, and push the ball.

They give resistance to each other. After going for a designated length of time, switch hand position on the ball.



Good squat position

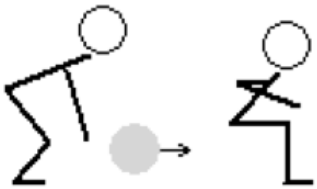
Squatting

Proper bending of the joints. Activate the core. Start in a good athletic stance (squat position).

Ball Shooting Off the Floor

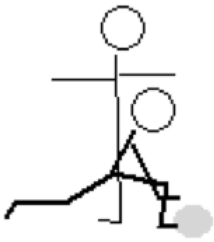
Start with a squat. Do not lose sight of your toes when bending. The knees should be straight in line with toes. Raise the ball to the head and push.

Any drill where stance is used to start
Observe good posture to begin.



Roll the Ball Between the Legs

This forces the player to bend (the roller) and to squat (the receiver). A great way to start moves in the post. Can also use medicine ball.



Lunging past the defense

Lunging

Explosive first step on offense and defence.

a. With partner, lunge past the defender – leading with your shoulder, not your chest.

a. Straight drive
b. Crossover step

Bending



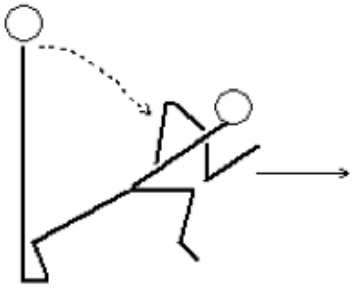
No Yes

Athletes have to know how to bend and pick the ball up properly. Diving on the floor is a type of bending. Taking a charge is bending.

Combine bending with squatting exercises is a good idea.

Take the ball and use it like a medicine ball. Bend in all different directions. The good morning exercise is a good drill to do. Take the ball from the floor and straighten up to have the ball directly over the head.

Gait



Lean - sprint

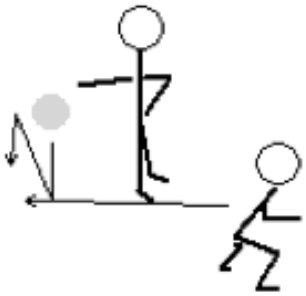
Make sure the athletes use the full foot. Many do not push off their toes. Standing still, the athlete rocks from heel to toe. This also helps with balance.

Athletes need to know the difference between jogging and sprinting. You will need to work on arm action and getting up on toes.

Forward Lean into Sprint

This is a good drill to teach acceleration. The athlete stands straight, leans forward, and then sprints out as the toe hits the floor.

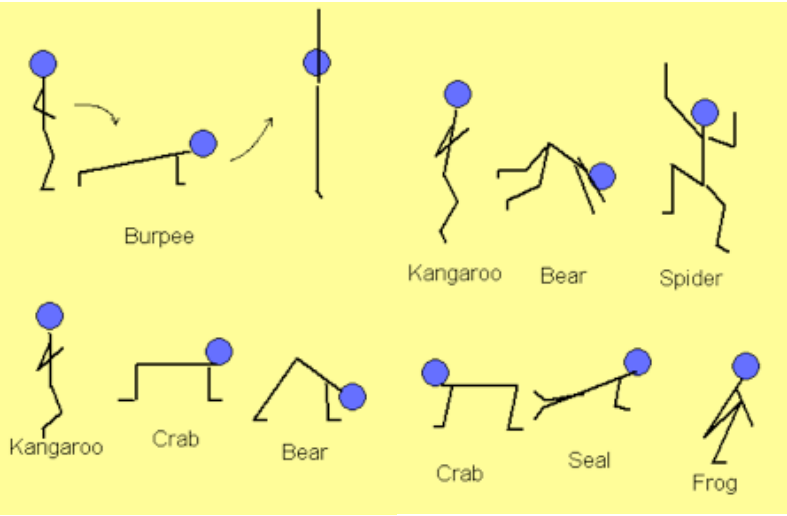
Ball Drop



A player starts in good athletic stance. A second player drops the ball from shoulder height. Player one must sprint quickly to catch the ball before it hits the floor the second time. Use different distances and angles. This is another way to start drills.

Animal Walks

One of the best ways to work on dynamic stretching is to have the children do animal walks. By simulating the different actions of animals, the players work on various muscle groups. Be sure to have some animals move sideways and backwards. These should not be races. Another way is to have the athletes transform from one animal to another as they proceed across the floor. The distance they travel should be based on their stage of development.



Basketball Movement Skills

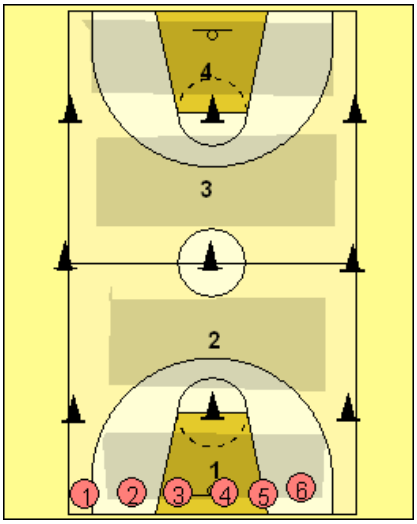
Movement Skills

Movement skills are the foundation of both offensive and defensive basketball. As coaches, we must ensure that players move efficiently and safely on the court. Since there are other players on the court, players must learn to move in space. Sports talk about open and closed space. Open space is clear of any defenders, while closed space has other players in the space. Players need to develop many skills around the use of space:

- Scanning for Awareness - seeing and comprehending what is happening around them, find open space, recognizing closed or crowded space
- Moving in different planes - forward, backward, right, left
- Moving at different levels - high, low
- Avoidance actions - change of pace, change of direction, and fakes

In all of the following drills, it is crucial to debrief with the children to draw out the learning from the activity. This will not happen unless you bring it to their attention. Asking simple questions works better than telling the children.

This is also a great time to work on leadership skills by allowing the children to take turns being the leader. They have a chance to say, "Ready? Go!" in a nice, loud leadership voice.



Avoidance action

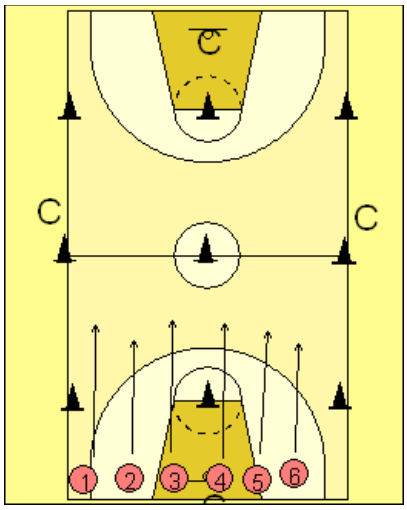
In order to play many team spots it is important that the players learn to avoid another player. We have developed this progression to help children learn the basic concepts of avoidance.

There are 4 concepts we want the players to learn:

1. Change of pace
2. Change of direction
3. Faking
4. Combinations

This is one basic warm up drill that can be used over an extended period of time to teach these concepts.

Divide the court into four zones: baseline to foul line, foul line to center, center to foul line, foul line to baseline.



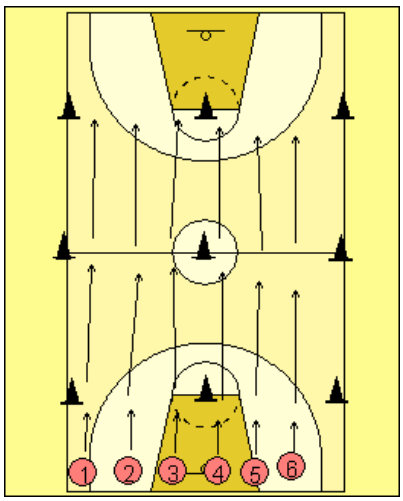
Scanning

An area of weakness for many players is the ability to scan the floor for meaningful information as they move. Too often, players "zone out" as they run from one end of the floor to the other. When they arrive, they then try to analyze the situation.

Position four people around the court. They can have different color pinnies. Use a number of fingers or touch a part of the body to give signals to the players. As the players run the floor, they are constantly scanning. In fact, with young children, have them repeat the phrase **rim, right, and left**. As the children look at the rim, they must call out the signal they see. They then look to their right and call out that signal and finally look to the left.

Please note: This can be added to any of the drills. You can also add a ball to the drill as a way of loading the drill. When the ball is added, you can also add "10 fingers". Any time one of the coaches shows "10 fingers," the player must pass the ball to the coach who immediately passes the ball back.

Questions: Why is it important to be able to scan when we move? What is important to remember to do when you scan?



Gaits (Walk, Jog, and Sprint)

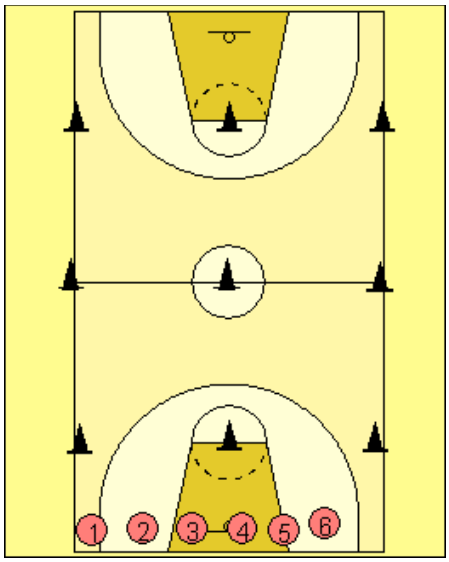
In the first activity, we are teaching the children the 3 basic gaits for human locomotion. Have the children **walk** through zone 1. They should swing the arms and walk heel to toe with the head held high. **Stop** at the end of the zone.

In zone 2, we want to **jog** in a heel toe manner. Have the players stop at the end of this zone.

In zone 3, we want to **sprint** getting up on the toes and pumping the arms. The players should fall into the sprint action. Allow them to use zone 4 to decelerate.

Note: You can add a ball after the players have learned these actions. You can also do the drill where there is no stopping between the zones.

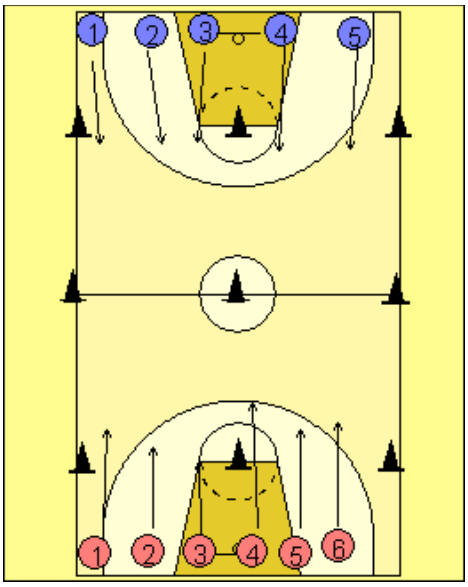
Questions: What do you do differently with your arms in each zone? What do you do differently with your feet?



Change the Zones

You can mix up the different zones to have the players be able to move at different speeds:

- sprint - walk - jog
- sprint - jog - walk
- jog - sprint - walk
- jog - walk- sprint
- walk - jog - sprint
- walk - sprint - jog
- Have the players create their own combination

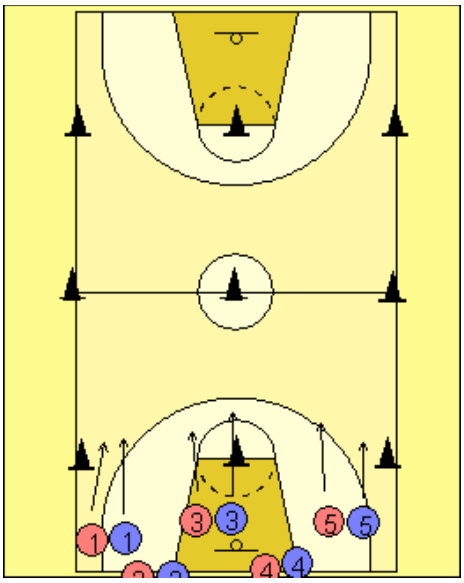


Moving in Congested Space

Players also have to be able to move in space, being aware of other people. The group is split up coming from each end. Players must keep their heads up.

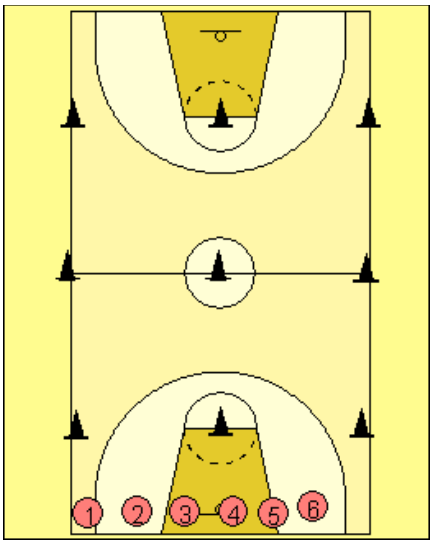
Load the drill by adding the scans after the players have learned to move in space safely.

Questions: How do we move differently when the space is congested or crowed? What things are important when moving in crowded space?



Using Change of Pace to Avoid Others

The players must now learn to use a change of pace to lose their defender. The players partner up one beside the other. You may have to send them in two groups to avoid congestion. One player is the leader who is using different paces of forward movement to lose their partner or shadow. The leader attempts to see how many times he/she can make the follower move in front. Keep score.



Changing Pace in Different Planes

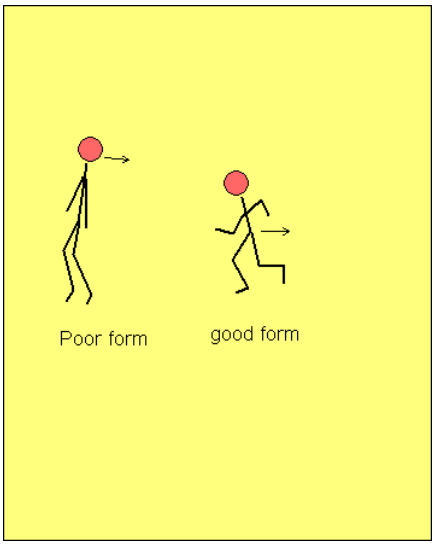
This drill is also excellent for teaching players how to move in different planes.

Walking, Jogging, and Sprinting Backwards

Very few players will know how to do this skill. Most will stand very erect with the head leading the body. Most will look over the shoulder, not trusting where they are going.

Have the players walk, jog, and then sprint backwards. Keep the nose over the toes. Be in an athletic stance.

Now, have the players change the type of running as well as the speed within the different zones.



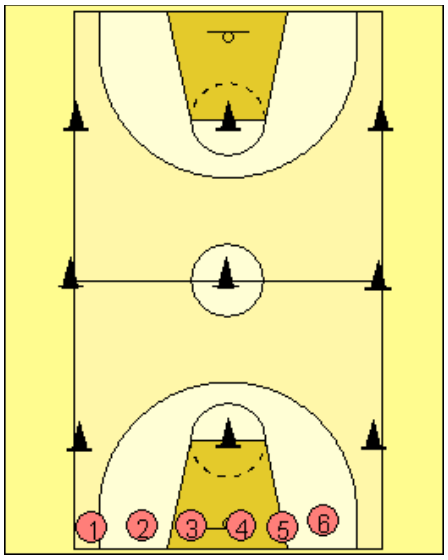
Backward Running

Too many players will stand very erect and lean backward to run. They will end up taking very tiny steps.

The nose should be over the toes and the player should be in an athletic stance and reach backward with the leg and foot.

You do not have to take a lot of strides in this position, but you may need to take two or three before changing direction. Very often, as you run backward, you take two strides then open the hips in one direction and then in the other.

Question: Why do we want to stay low with our noses over our toes?



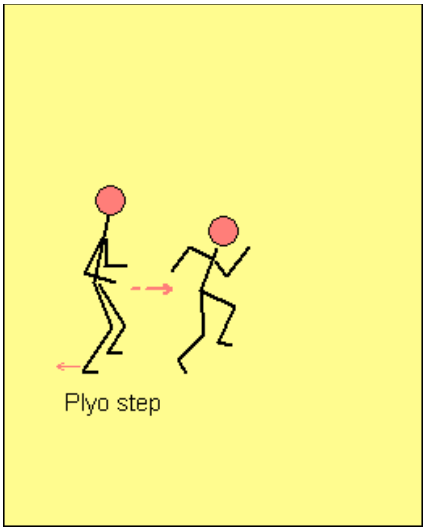
Running Forward Looking Over the Shoulder

Players need to be able to run the floor while looking backward over their shoulder for the ball. Most players will have to run looking at the end wall. If they turn their shoulder, they have a tendency to drift to the middle as they run.

We do the same drill as before, working on the different paces while looking over the shoulder.

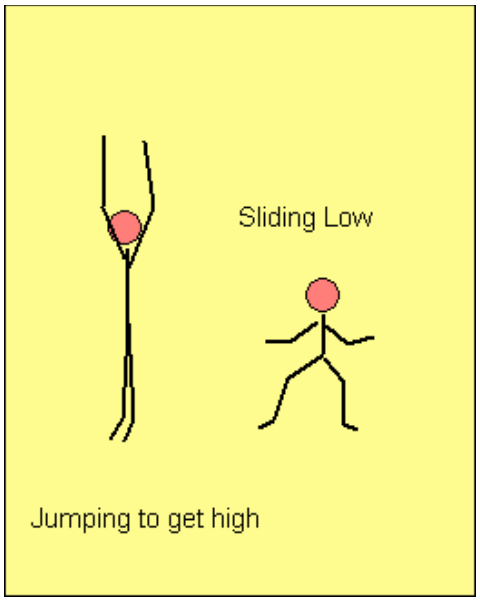
Also practice:

- slides
- carioca
- sideways running



Plyo Step into Sprint

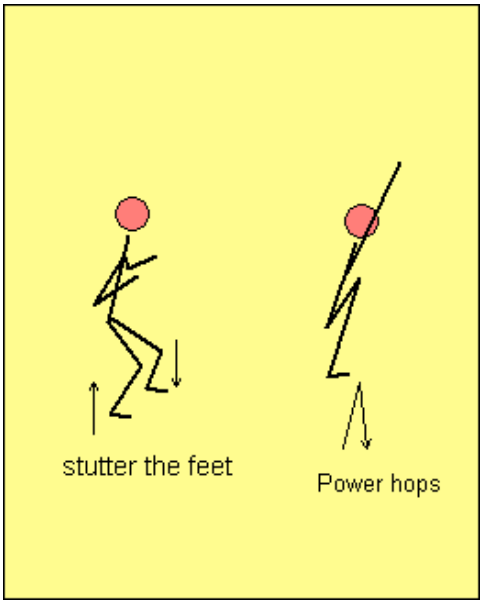
Lee Taft, in his **Basketball Speed Video**, advocates a slight backward step (plyo step) to load the back foot so that it can push off explosively in the opposite direction. He claims that without this push, our first step is a pulling action that is very slow and not very powerful. The slight loss in time is made up by the distance that can be covered in the same amount of time. Players naturally make this step. You do have to be careful if it involves the pivot foot.



Changing Levels of Movement

We also can have the players move at different levels.

- Low - have the players slide getting very low
- Running low
- Skip, getting their head very high
- Jump off two feet
- Jump off the right foot
- Jump off the left foot
- Dive on the floor to get low
- Take a charge to get low
- Be able to do these actions while moving in different directions i.e., moving sideways
- Jump



Actions Between the Zones

It is important that the players learn to use the different gaits coming out of different action.

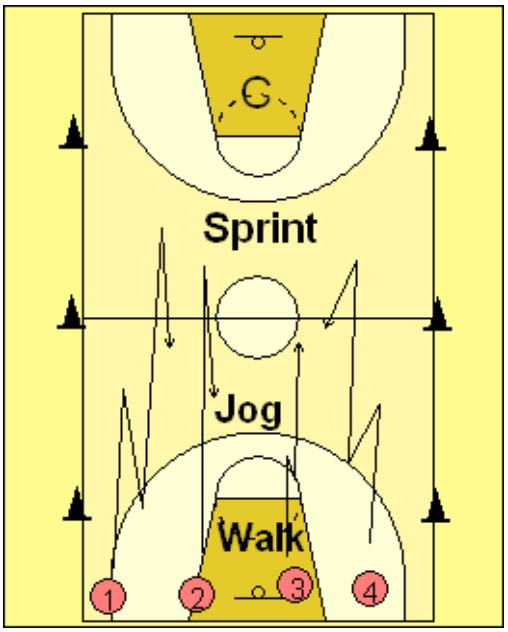
Deceleration is one of the most important skills players learn. They need to be able to stop with a 1-2 stop (right lead foot, left lead foot), 2 foot stop and stutters.

For example: The players can walk in zone 1 and stop. Stutter the feet until "go" is called, then jog to the next zone.

Stop and do power hops (bring the knees to chest). On “go”, sprint.

Other Actions

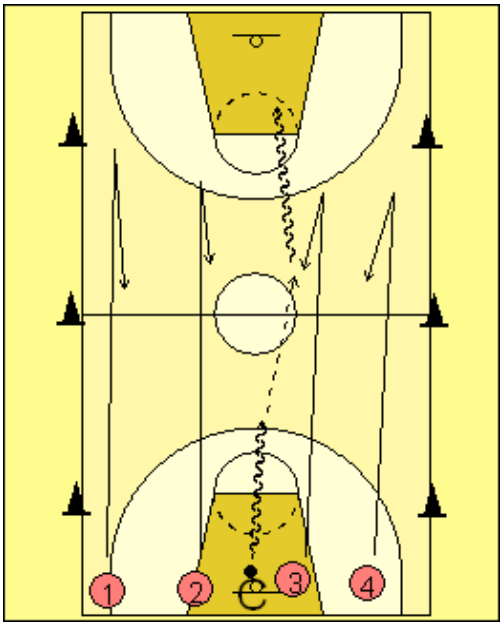
- Burpee or push ups
- Face back to the direction you came, start by turning
- Do a 360 degree turn (turn both left and right)
- Move laterally before moving forward
- Hip turns (this is a quick jumping of both feet together, sometimes called a jump switch)
- Do an action and go in another direction
- 4 pivots – front right, front left, back right, back left



Wave Running

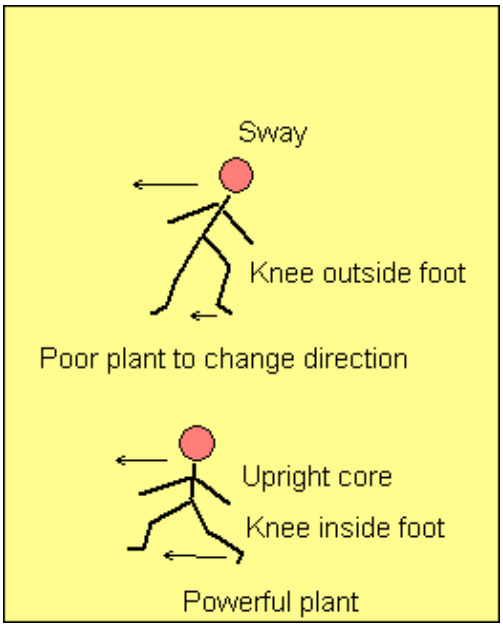
The coach is at the far end of the floor. The coach points to have the players move forward and backward. The players must remember what pace they are moving when in that zone.

Add a ball
Remember to add the 10 fingers or scans to the right and left.



Wave Running with a Ball

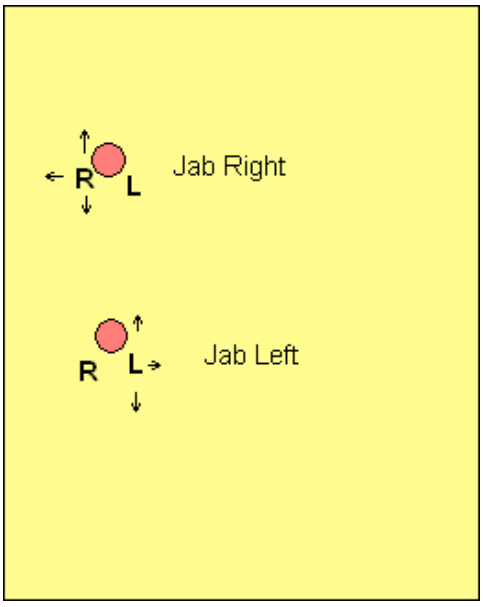
In this example, the coach has a ball. He/she tosses it off the backboard and rebounds the ball. The players take off running down the court looking over their shoulder. If the coach pivots like he/she is trouble, the players come back to the ball. If the coach dribbles, the players go long again looking for a pass. The coach can pass to one player who scores or have the group execute an offensive play.



Proper Form

You will have to spend time with the players on the proper footwork for changing direction. It is important that the push foot gets outside the line of the knee. Also, the trunk should not sway.

Use the "clock drills" or "dancing" (push right - go left, push left - go right, jabs, step drop and pop) to teach these to the players.

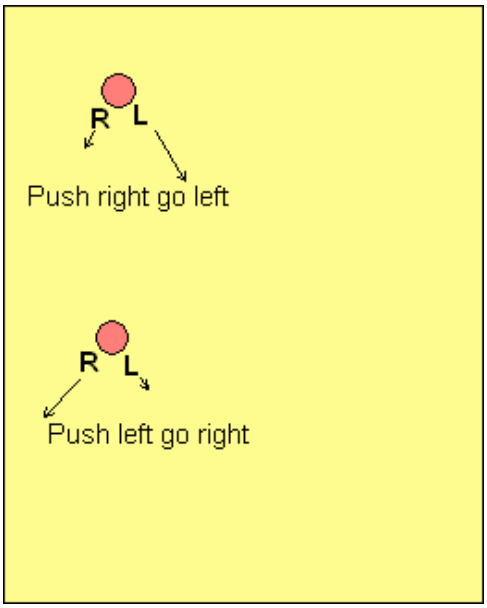


Jabs

Players need to be able to take quick, short steps with each foot. This jab step is called a plyo step by Lee Taft in his **Basketball Speed** video. Have the players practice this near a line on the floor. The jab should not be a big step, but a quick plant to enable the player to push in the opposite direction of the desired movement. The players need to be able to maintain a good athletic stance throughout the entire drill.

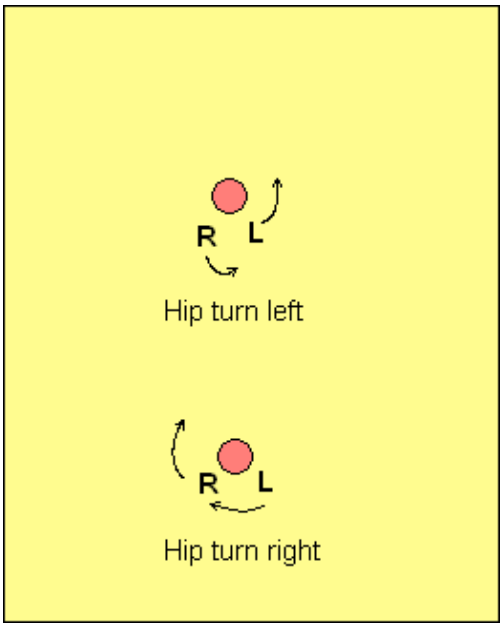
The coach calls out the direction of the foot:

- front
- side
- back



Push and Go

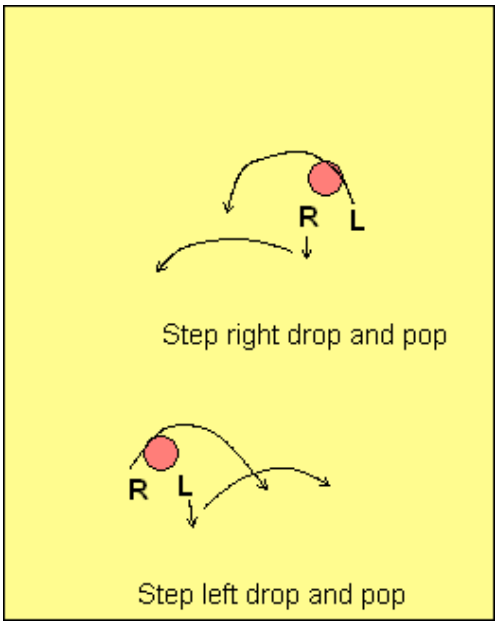
In push and go's, the player takes a short jab and then an explosive step with the other foot.



Hip Turn (Jump Switch)

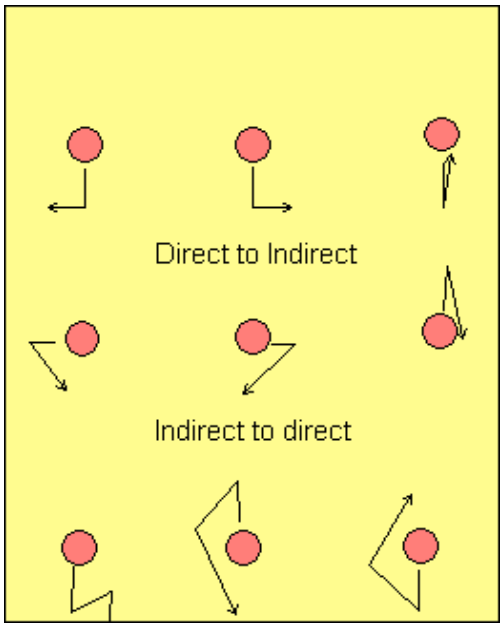
Both feet twist to a new position at the same time so the athlete can push and go backwards. The trunk is always facing forward. This is much quicker and powerful than a drop pivot.

Do this at first with just the turns. Then, add the turn and go (with the turn and run).



Step Drop and Pop

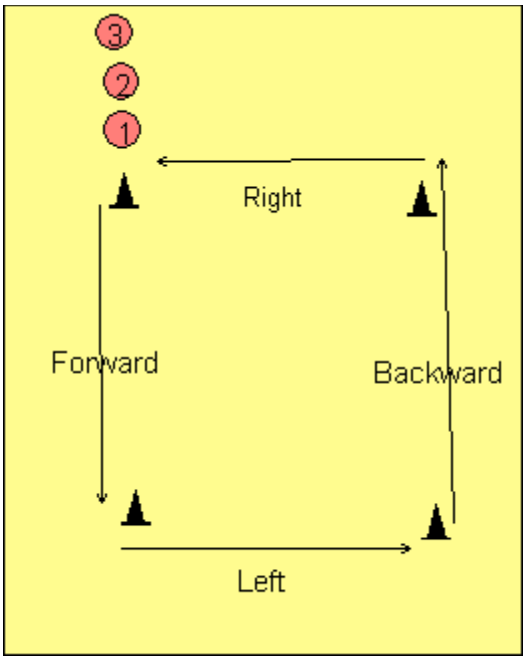
The player takes a step with the right foot and then does a back pivot. (I find that if the player learns to sit and spin on the heel. it is quicker and safer). This is immediately followed by a front pivot on the left foot. The player can then do a two-foot hop to a jump stop. This is used in spin dribbles and moves to get open.



Indirect and Direct

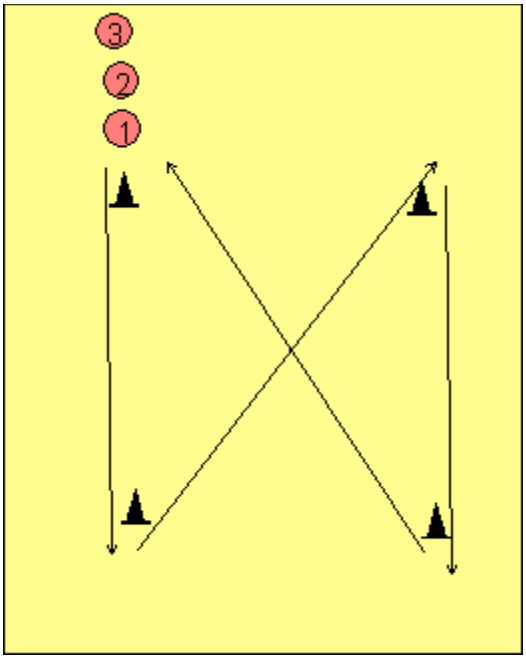
Players now need to learn the idea of direct and indirect cuts. A direct cuts starts by going straight at the ball. The indirect action is when the player moves at an angle away from the ball. These are used as fakes and ways to create space for the player.

Practice these on air and then add a guided defender. As you go by the defender, you should have your shoulder to the hip of the defender.



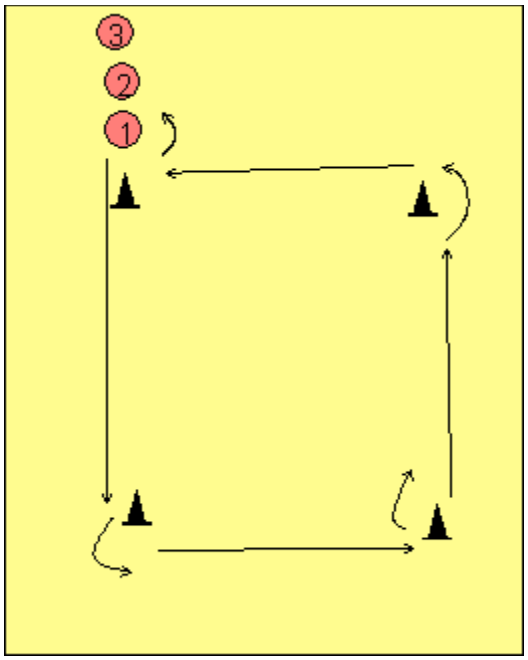
Four Corners Drill

Set up little grids for the players with four pylons. You can also use the key or badminton courts. The players run forward, left, back, then right. You can tell them the pace you want. In this example, the players are working on always facing forward. You can also do the drill where they are working on different kinds of cuts.



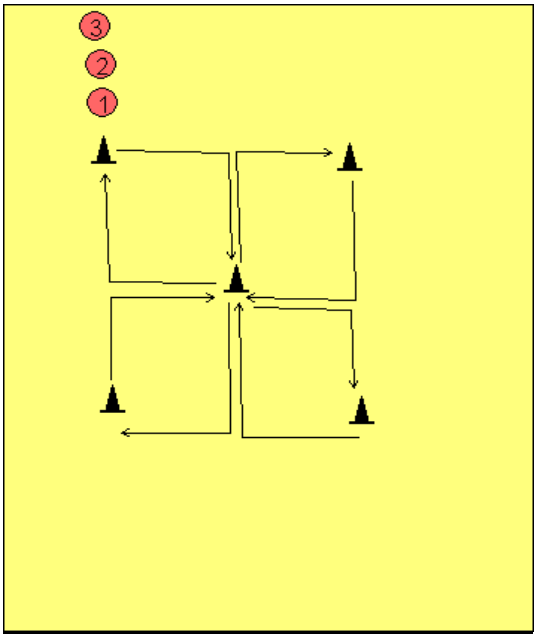
Diagonal Movement

Here, the players move and make diagonal cuts. Again, you as the coach, decide if you want them sliding, running, or lateral running - always facing forward. Remember, you can always add the ball.



Pivots

In this example, the players make a stop and execute one of the four pivots at each pylon. You should probably change the direction the players run for the second trip so they can do the different pivots.

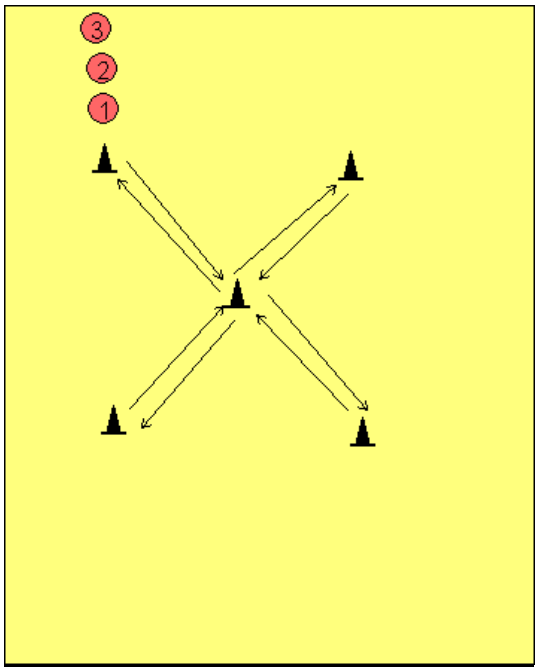


Slide Forward Back

In this drill, the players slide sideways. When he/she is directly in front of the center pylon, he/she sprints forward and touches the pylon. Then, back pedal and slide to the other corner pylon. This is repeated three more times. The second person goes when the first does his/her first backpedal.

Load

- Go in the opposite direction
- Eyes up for passes
- Dribble a ball
- Start players at different pylons to add more distractions

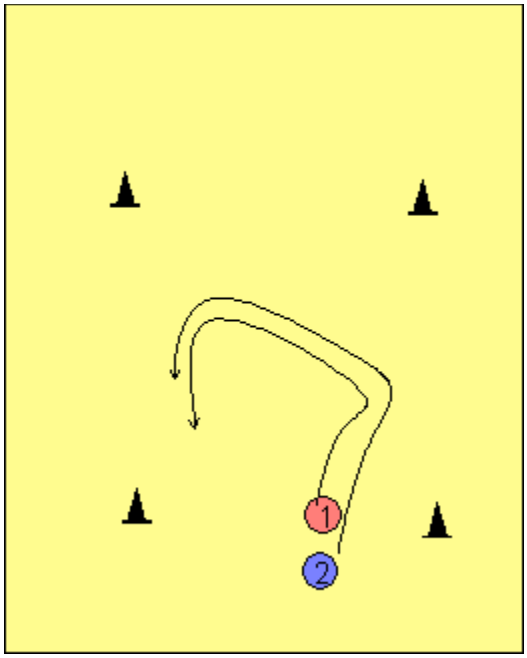


Star

In this example, the players move forward and backward. The chest is always facing out.

Load

- Add a pass
- Add a ball

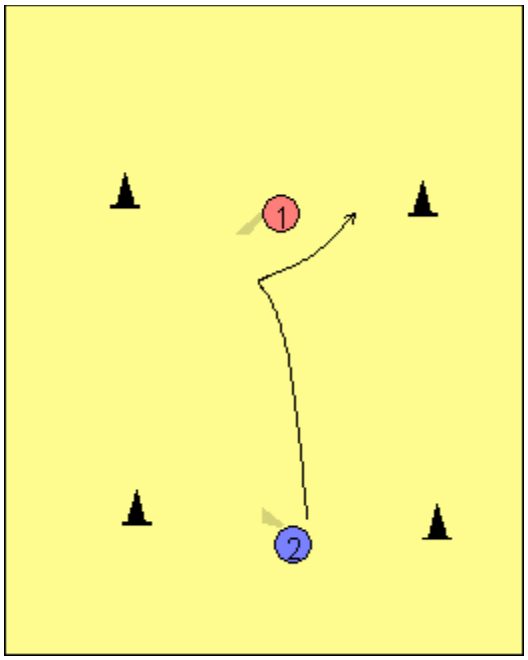


Random Movement

Two players partner up. The lead player uses change of direction to try and lose the player behind. You can call the pace that the players move. With little kids, you can call it cops and robbers. The lead person is trying to avoid the cop car following.

You can always add the ball. At first, just have the back person with a ball following the front person. Then, both players. Both players could have two balls.

Load the drill by having a number of pairs perform the drill in a bigger space.

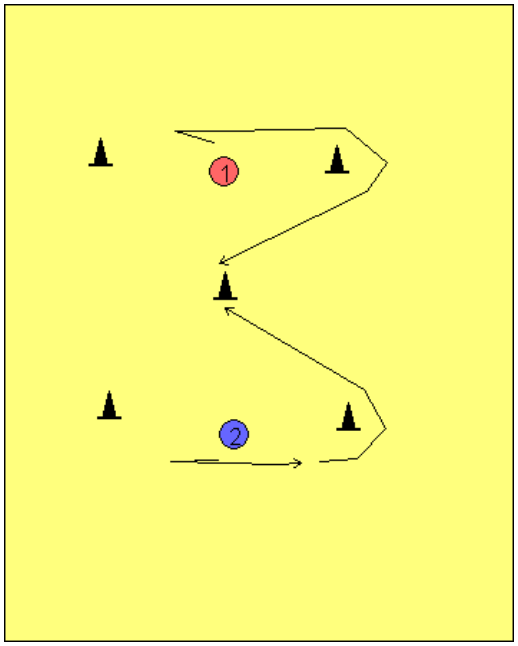


Steal the Flag

Player #2 tries to run between the two pylons at the far end without #1 stealing his/her flag. (Use a pinnie tucked in the shorts that hangs down to the knee).

This is a great lead up to teaching defensive position.

At first, the defensive players will stay and wait at the line. Ask them if it would be easier if they started closer to the offensive player. Let them try different starting points.



Mirror Shuffle

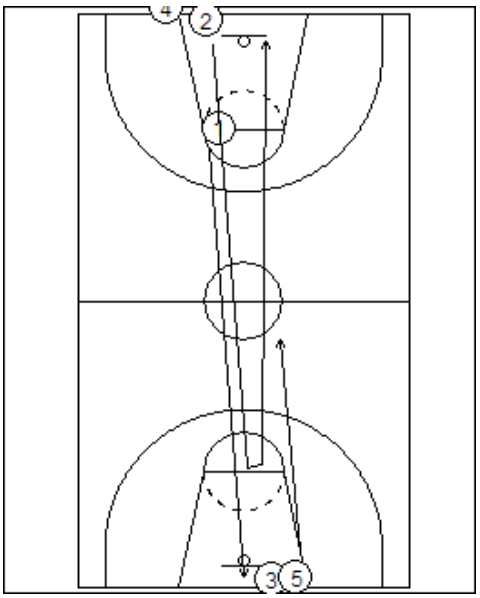
One player is the leader. This player uses movement skills to try and shake the other player. The second player must mirror the first. When the first feels the time is right, he/she sprints around a cone and tries to touch the middle pylon before the mirror player can tag him/her. Put a time limit on the amount of time faking.

Load:

1. Put a ball in the middle. The first player goes and scores a lay-up, the second must play defence
2. Both players start with basketballs

Acceleration Drills

In the FIBA game, it is imperative that all players learn to be able to attack the basket in a vertical fashion. Also, players must learn to accelerate to their goal. It has been found that many players decelerate just before reaching their target. Here are a number of chasing drills that teach players to accelerate quickly and to handle the ball at speed.



Run Rabbit, Run

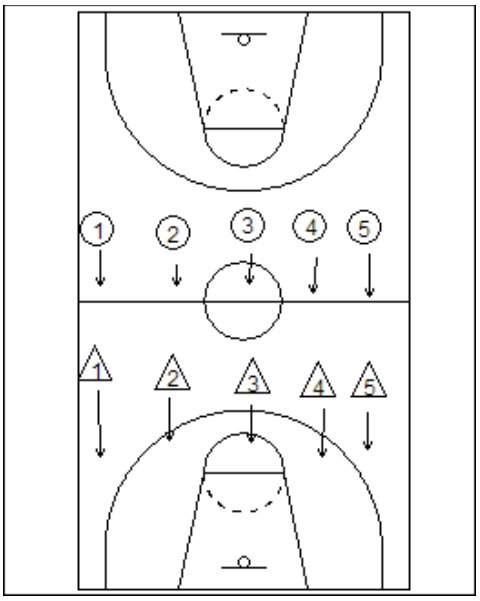
Player #1 starts at the foul line. On a signal, he/she takes off running to the far end. #2 is trying to tag the back of #1. Once #2 hits the foul line, he/she changes direction and heads back to the other basket. #5 now enters the contest try to tag #2.

You may have to change the distances for the age of your players.

Great, fun conditioner and speed drill.

Add a ball so they are working on dribbling

Have more than one group going at once. The players must stay in their lanes.

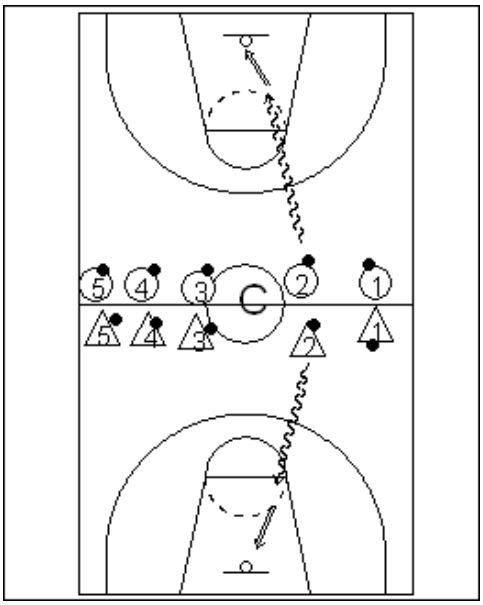


Crows and Cranes

The players partner up with someone of similar speed. Find a suitable distance between the two players. One group is called crows, the other cranes. When "crows" is called, the "crane" chases the "crow" attempting to tag him/her. Have a safety line. Do not use a wall. Keep score.

Load the Drill

- When the coach calls "change", the players change direction and the chaser is now trying to avoid being tagged
- You can have the players run backwards and forwards. Be careful with young players running backwards.
- Also make it so the players are moving laterally by having them face the sideline. They could slide or run.
- You can then add a ball to be dribbled
- Now add two balls

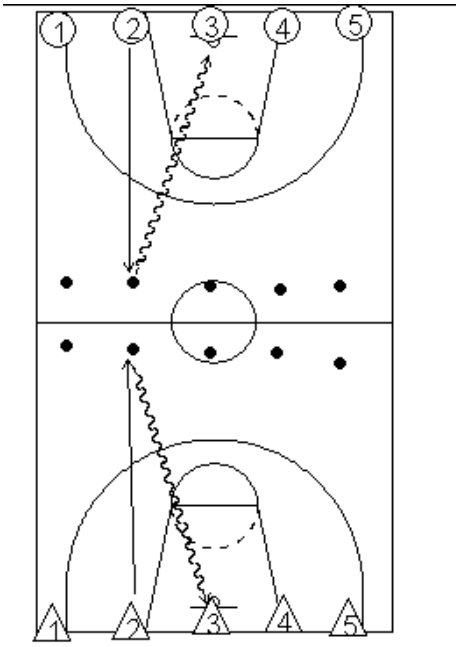


Dribble Score Race

The players are divided into two teams. Each player has a ball and lines up on opposite sides of the center line. The players are given numbers. When the coach calls the number (in this example, "2"), both number two's dribble in to score a shot. The player stays until scoring and then returns. You can have more than one pair go at a time. Keep the kids active.

Load the drill:

- Combine this drill with crows and cranes – the players must concentrate on a number being called or crows and cranes

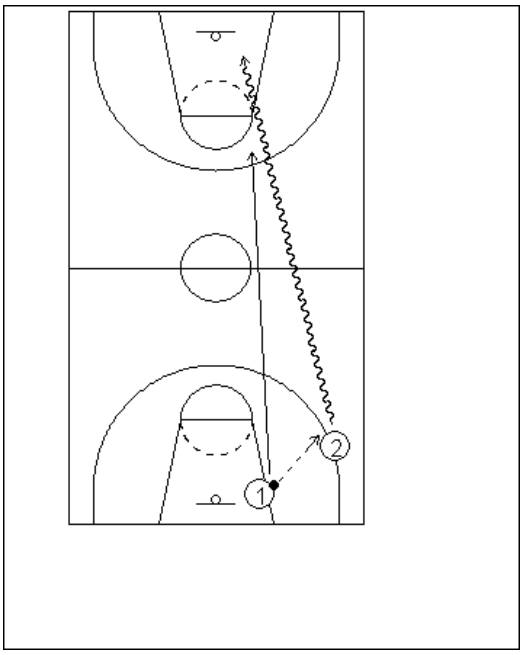


Steal the Pig

The two teams line up on the opposite baselines. Each player has a ball at half court (have a safety zone between the two balls). When the coach calls a number, the players must sprint forward, grab their ball, and then dribble back for a lay-up.

Load the drill:

- Change the distance
- Mix up the type of shot
- Have more than one group going at a time.
- You can have one ball, but call that will be on offense. The other player plays defence. This prevents collisions.
- Call change – the player with the ball sets it down and now the players head in the opposite direction

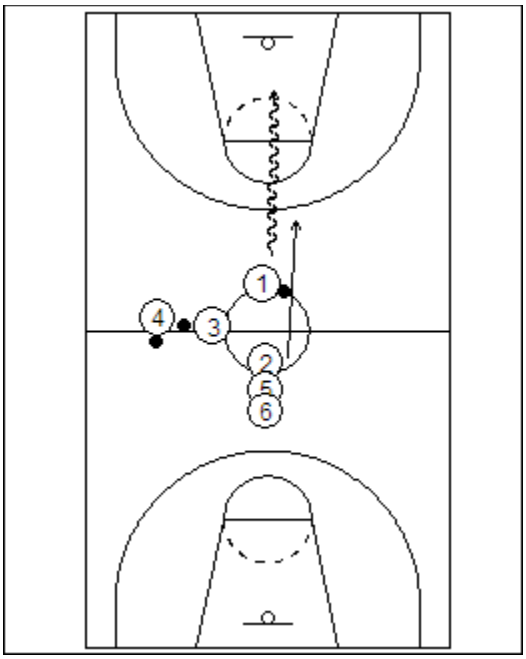


Pass and Chase

Player #1 passes the ball to #2 who immediately dribbles for a lay-up at the other end of the floor. #1 chases the player down to lightly tag his/her back (no pushing).

Load the Drill

- Chaser sprints to get in front to play defence
- Change up the distances between the players
- Change up the locations on the floor.
- Immediately play 1 on 1 full court back in the other direction, have another player inbound.

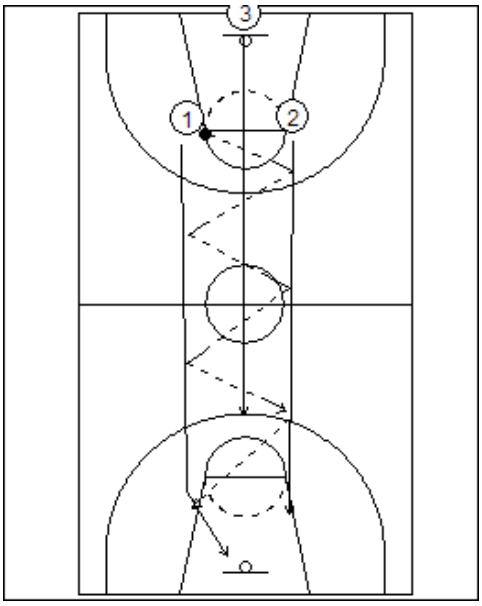


Chasing Lay-Ups

The second player races to touch the back of the dribbler.

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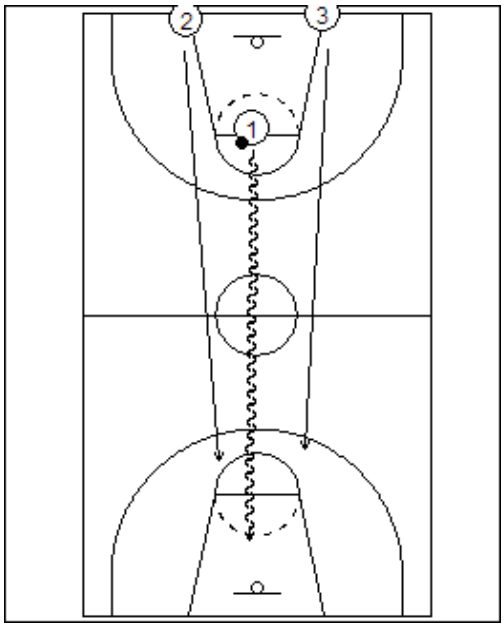
- You can change up the distance
- Start them back to back
- Start with a pass
- Start with a rip
- Work to knock the ball forward
- Sprint to get in front



1 on 2 Chase

Players #1 and #2 pass the ball back and forth as they move down the floor. #3 is chasing hard to play defence. After the ball is scored, it is 2 on 1 coming back at the other basket. The person who shot the ball goes back on defence.

Chasing drills are good to force the players passing to move at speed and to take care of the ball.



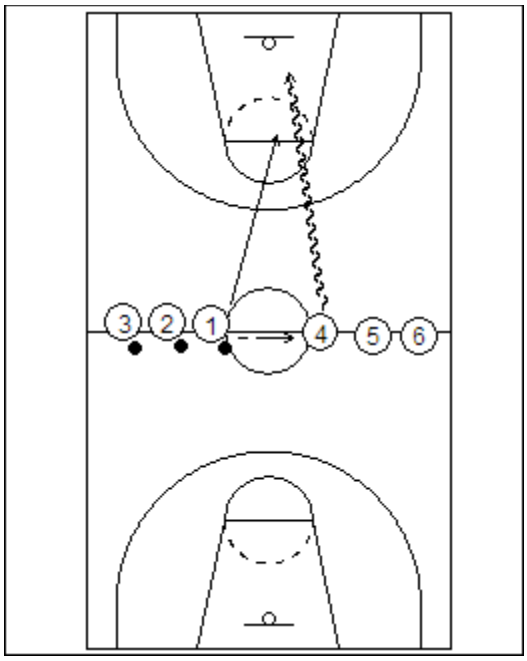
2 Chase 1

#1 dribbles to the far end to score. Players #2 and #3 chase the dribbler #1. After the score, it is 2 on 1 coming back.

Loading:
Find creative ways to start the drill.

- A pass to #1
- A rebound and outlet
- A rip
- Back to back
- Players do a rebound weave. On the whistle, whoever has the ball takes off.

  Note: You want the defence to get back some times to make the offensive player attack different situations



1/2 Court Roll Reaction Drill

The ball is rolled to the player on the opposite side of the circle. That player can choose to go at either basket. Stutter the feet to be quick. Fakes are allowed.

This is another good way to start a drill. It teaches players to fake. It forces them not to waste movement.

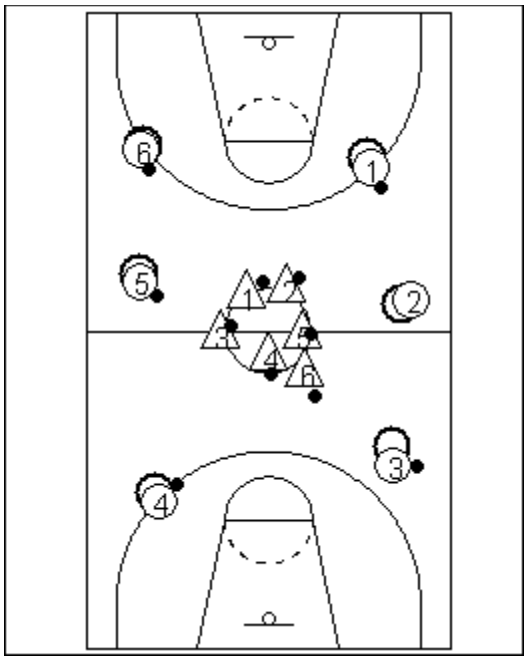
Loading:

- Add some action for the players to come back to the end of the lines
- Play it 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 with a transition back the other way

  Forget patterns! Let the players be creative and use their imagination.

Warm-Up Games

Castles



Player's partner up.
Each pair has two balls, a hoop, and some bean bags.

The player inside the hoop protects the bean bags. The player outside the hoop visits the other hoops and attempts to steal bean bags.

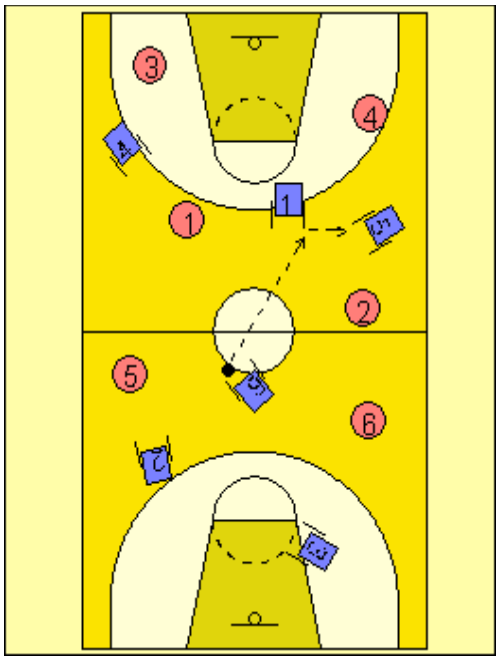
If a player is tagged by the defender, he/ she must visit another hoop. If a bean bag is stolen, she returns to his/ her home and switches.

The coach can also call switch, forcing the players to switch positions.

Note: To add more basketball skills, make the players score a lay-up when tagged before they can return to attempt a steal. Another addition is to add

pinnies to the players as flags that they tuck into their shorts. The players can steal the flags and set them in their castle instead of bean bags.

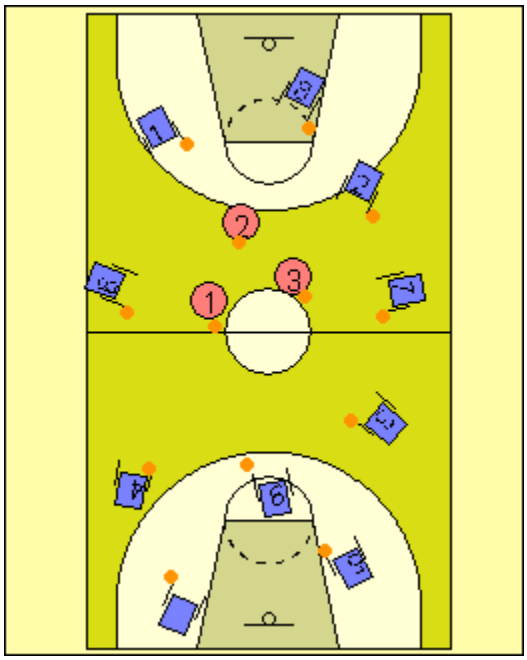
20 Passes



There are two equal teams with one ball. The object is to pass the ball between your teammates 20 times without dribbling, traveling, or fumbling the ball.

The players without the ball can move to get open. If any of the above three things happens, the other team immediately grabs the ball and starts to pass

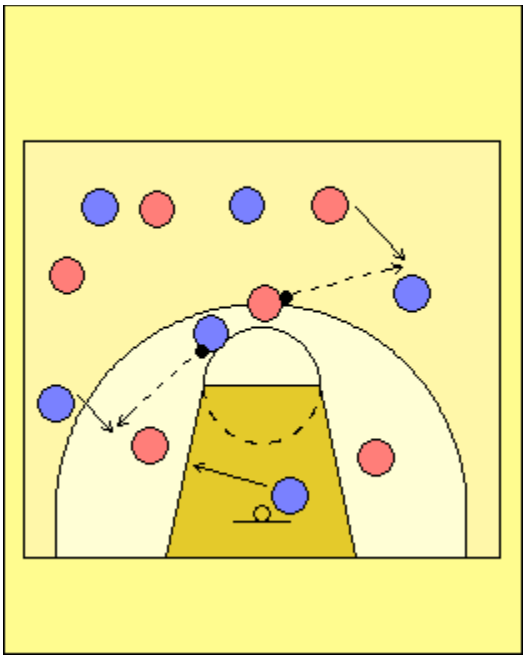
Dribble Tag



All of the players have a ball and spread out around the court. In this example, three players are chosen as "it". When the coach says "go", the players who are it try to tag the others players while dribbling the ball. When tagged, you have a number of options:

- Eliminate - not a good option
- Have them perform a task and then return
- Become "it" (two options here - keep going until only one remains or the old "it" is now being chased.
- Frozen and wait for a teammate to unfreeze him/her (a good way is to do a ball tip with legs spread so a teammate can dribble a ball between the legs to unfreeze.

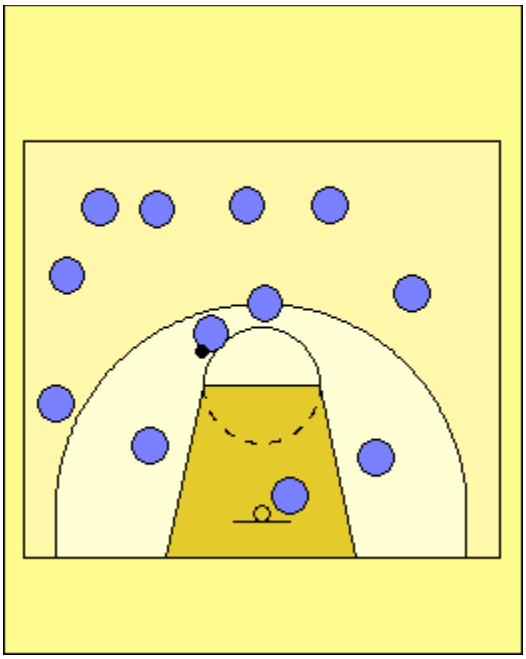
Ball Tag



In the first version of the game, there are two teams. The player with the ball is only allowed to pivot. Players without the ball are allowed to move within the boundary. For this example, the space is half of the basketball court.

By passing and moving, one team attempts to tag the other team with the ball. The ball cannot be thrown. Once tagged, the player is eliminated (you can have the player do an exercises or a skill before he or she can re-enter the game).
You can start with one ball, but slowly add more. The team without the ball is allowed to try and steal the ball.

Alliance Ball Tag



In the second version, there are no teams. The players form temporary "alliances" to tag a player with the ball. Once tagged, the player must perform an activity before being able to return. Again, multiple balls can be added.

Balance

Balance is one of the most important fitness terms that support all fundamental movements. Without proper balance, athletes will struggle to perform skills efficiently and risk injury.

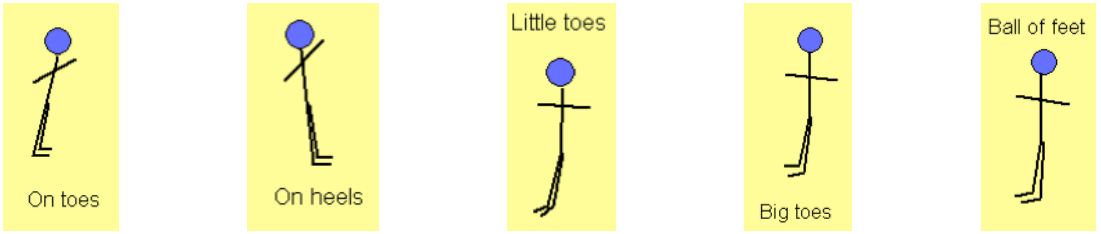
Balance involves three areas of the body:
- Sensory receptors in the muscles and tendons
- Eye sight
- Inner ear

When training balance, it is important to make use of all three areas so when one area is challenged the other two can compensate. Too many people rely on one area for balance.

There are two types of balance:
- Static or stationary
- Dynamic - movement balance

Where is your weight?

It is important that athletes know where they distribute weight on their feet. This little progression is to help athletes become aware of weight distribution. Standing straight with the core activated, do the following activities, but try to keep the entire foot on the floor.



- Lean forward to feel the weight on your toes. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?

- Lean backward until the weight is on your heels. Remember to keep your feet on the floor. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?

- Put the weight on your little toes. What do you feel at your knees? What is happening to your ankles?

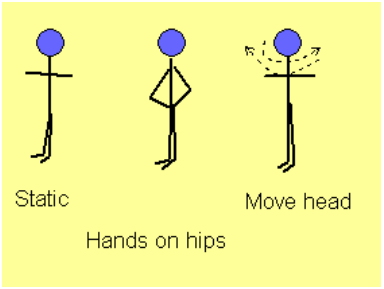
- Put your weight on your big toes. What do you feel at your knees? At your ankles?

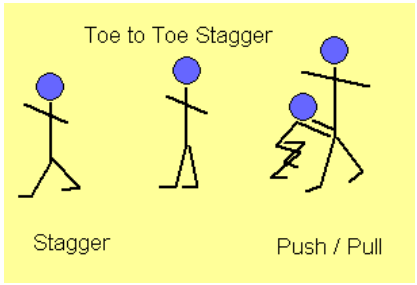
- Put your weight on the balls of your feet. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?

Static Balance

It is important to test the athlete's static balance first. Here is a simple progression:

- Do these early in practice before fatigue sets in
- Maximum time necessary is about 2 to 3 minutes
- The athlete should be able to hold the balance for 20 to 30 seconds
- If the athletes do not pass, have them work on the skill daily for about 2 minutes a day until they can progress to the next level.





These activities may appear simple to the casual observer. We often take balance for granted. You will find these more difficult when you actually do the activity, especially athletes who have had injuries in the past.

Two Feet

Activity 1: Stand straight with feet side by side in a narrow stance, arm outstretched at shoulder height.

Activity 2: Hands on hips. This restricts the use of arms to balance.

Activity 3: Move the head from side to side and up and down. This challenges the vision and starts to use the inner ear. The arms can be outstretched or on the hips.

Activity 4: Close one eye. Try with the other eye closed. Both eyes closed.

Activity 5: Move the body by leaning and moving the upper body. You can add a light weight such as a ball or a medicine ball.

Activity 6: Toss a ball to the person. Have them bounce the ball. This challenges the vision.

Activity 7: Have someone apply light pushes and pulls to disrupt the balance. Also have the athlete attached to a bungee cord. Close the eyes and do this activity.

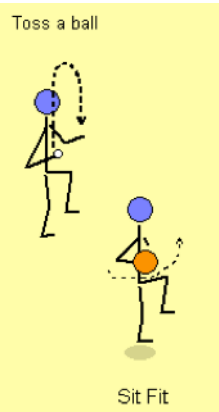
Activity 8: Add an unstable surface. This could be on an exercise mat, sit fit, or wobble board. Safety is important.

One Foot

Many of the actions that occur in a sport like basketball require the athlete to balance on one foot for a brief moment in time. These exercises can help the athlete move efficiently and prevent serious injuries that could occur.

The athlete can be taken through the same progressions as was done for two feet:

- Arms outstretched at shoulder height
- Hands on hips
- Move the head from side to side and up and down
- Close one eye
- Both eyes closed.
- Move the body by leaning and moving the upper body
- Swing or chop a ball
- Toss a ball
- Bounce a ball
- Apply light pushes and pulls to disrupt the balance
- Add an unstable surface





March Progression

A good way to practice the one foot balance is to march and hold the balance phase on one foot. Hold and then march to the other foot. Each player can work at his/her own level of difficulty.

Hold the lead leg for 2-3 seconds. Tossing a ball is a good way to warm up the nervous system.

March in different directions;

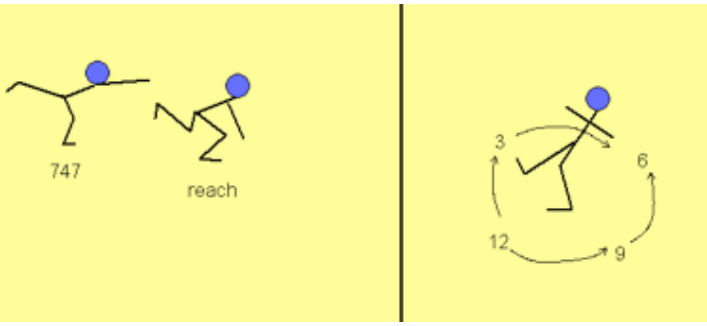
- Forward
- Backward
- Sideways

Advanced One-Leg Balances

747's: Balance on one foot and slowly extend the back leg behind you and both arms in front. Your body should be parallel to the floor.

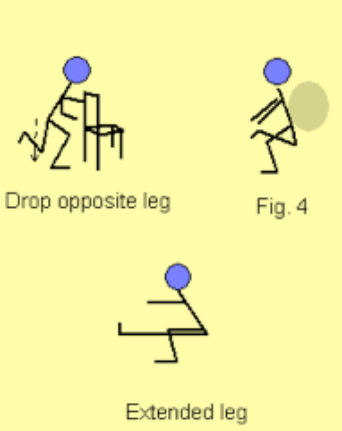
Reach: Begin the same as the 747, but only reach and touch the floor in front of your toe. Raise up and now touch a spot to the inside of your toe. Now touch a spot to the outside.

Opposite Leg: Take the right leg and move it to the #12 on a clock (in front of you). Bring the leg in and now move it to 1 o'clock. Return to the middle and go to 2 o'clock. Continue to the #6. Use the left leg for the numbers on the other side of the clock. You can also use a sweep action without returning to the middle each time.



You can use the same loading as before. Adding a ball is excellent!

One Leg Squat Progression



Moving on a basketball court has been described as a series of one legged squats interspersed with the occasional two legged squat. It is very important that players have the strength, balance, and flexibility to perform these correctly. To begin with, you can use a chair at your side or stability ball on your back or side to support the movement.

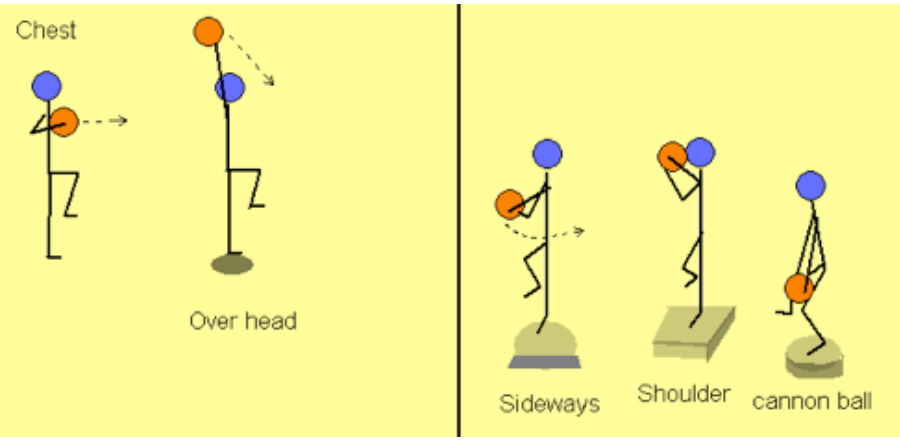
Opposite Leg Drop: The object here is to drop the opposite knee as close to the floor as possible. Try to make this a hip squat action and not a knee squat.

Fig. 4: Cross the opposite leg over top of the supporting leg. Sit, trying to get the supporting thigh parallel to the floor.

Extended Leg: Keep the non-supported leg straight. Start with the hips bending first. Go until both thighs are parallel to the floor.

Passing on one Foot

Passing a ball while balancing on one foot is a great way to challenge the nervous system while working on balance at the same time.



- Start by passing to yourself
- Add a partner
- Add an unstable surface like a Bosu ball, sit fits, or wobble boards
- Medicine ball
- Add reload action first – fake a hard pass, then make the pass. This makes you regain your balance before making the pass.

Types of Passes

- Chest – re load chest
- Overhead – reload overhead (bounce it hard off the floor)
- Cannon Ball – with two hands between the legs in an upward motion – reload cannon ball
- Side toss – reload side toss
- Shoulder pass – reload shoulder pass
- One arm flicks – reload flicks

Heel to Toe Rocking



Have the players rock from heel to toe to help them understand weight shift.

a. Flat surface
b. Unstable surface (mat)
c. Wobble board

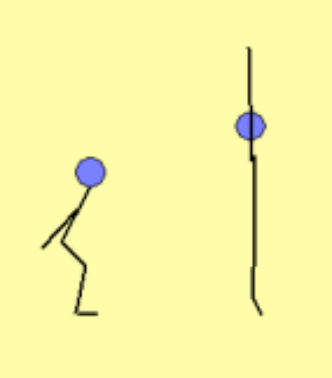
Then, add to shooting.

Raise Up On Both Feet

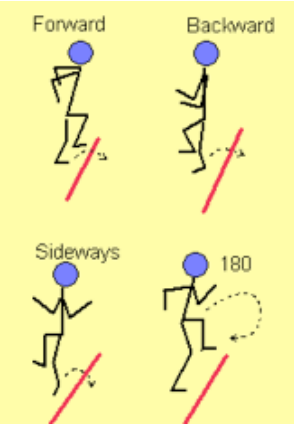
Start in a half-squat position. Swing the arms and raise up into full extension, balancing on the toes with the arms over the head.

Do this standing first, then add a jump.

Emphasize proper knee bend and core position at the start and balance on takeoff and landing.



Start on one foot and hop to land on balance. Only a couple of reps ae required. You do not need a high jump. Hold the landing.

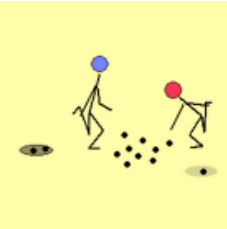


- Forward
- Backward
- Sideways right
- Sideways left
- 180°
- Close your eyes
- On an exercise mat

Games Approach for Improving Balance

Feeding Chickens

Each player has a home base, a spot on the floor, a hoop. A number of objects are placed in a defined area. The players bend on leg up and grasp it at the ankle. By hopping and bending over, the players must collect the chicken feed and place it in their home. Go a second time and use the other foot. This could be done individually or in a team. Be careful not to make the distance too big with younger players. You could add penalties for touching the ground with the raised foot.



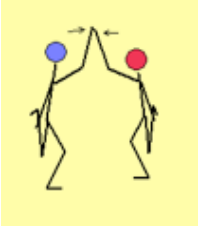
Tug of War

Balancing on one foot, the two players attempt to get the other player to touch the other foot to the floor by pulling and pushing on the rope. You could also use a strong towel.



Push of War

Balancing on one foot, the players place the palms of one hand together. By pushing, they try to dislodge the balance of the other person. They must keep in contact with the hands.



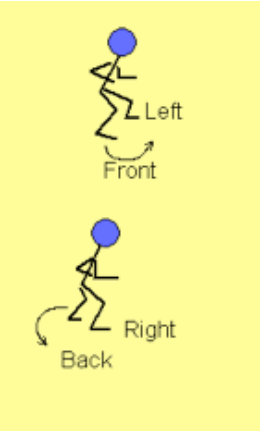
Pivoting

This is a skill that is unique to basketball. Players need to learn to execute the four basic pivots properly. Some coaches advocate that players use a permanent pivot foot. This is usually mean in conjunction with holding the ball. **ALL** players need to learn the four basic pivots because they are used in combination with many other footwork skills, such as cutting to get open. At developmental levels, players need to practice using all four pivots with the ball.

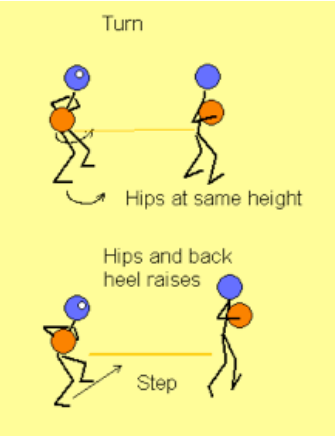
Players can execute:

1. **Front**: The player turns in a forward direction
2. **Back (drop)**: The player turns in a backward direction
3. **Left**: The left foot remains on the floor
4. **Right**: The right foot remains in contact with the floor

When combined, we have: front right, front left, back right, back left.



Turning vs. Stepping



A properly executed pivot is a turning of the hips at the same time as the feet. When completed properly, the player should be balanced on both feet with the hips at the same height at which they started.

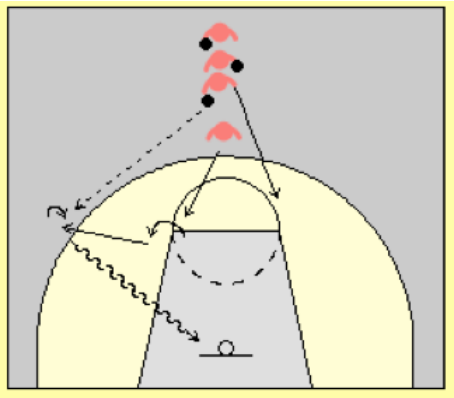
If a player steps, they will push the hips forward. This raises the back heel and moves the hips forward and up as the knee straightens. The athlete will most likely be in an unbalanced position. In order to move effectively in any direction except straight ahead, they will have to regain their balanced stance first.

Pivot Drill

The four players start in a straight line at the top of the three-point line. Each player has a ball except the first player. The first player runs to the right elbow and completes a jump stop. He/she then executes a right back pivot, pops out to the wing area, and receives the pass from player 2. The player then executes a right front pivot and dribbles in to score a lay-up.

After passing, player 2 goes to the left elbow executing a left back pivot and a left front pivot on the catch.

As you can see, the players will perform all four pivots. Add a guided defender to make it more realistic.



Ball Handling

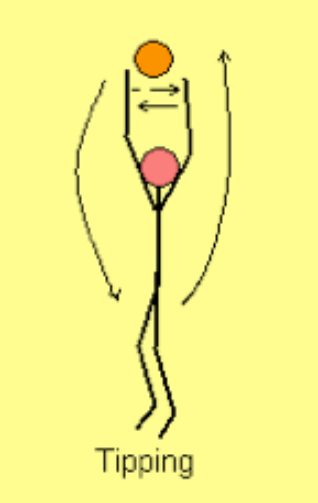
Maravich Drills

Maravich drills are excellent for teaching ball handling and many fundamental movement skills. What I want to present here is a progression that coaches can take players through to constantly load the drill.

Maravich drills are all of the ball handling and dribbling drills used to improve ball handling skills and hand quickness. They are named in honour of Press Maravich who invented most of these drills for his son Pete.

It is not my intention to show all of the possible drills. Dominic Soucy, from Laval University, has an excellent DVD out with over 201 Maravich drills.

Below are just a few examples.



Tipping

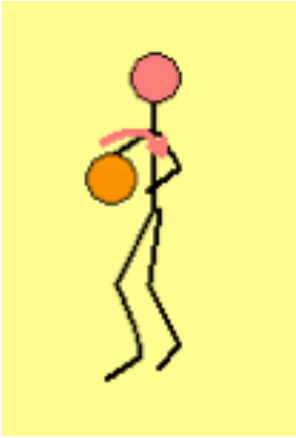
Tipping the ball quickly between the finger pads on the hands.

Loading:

- Tip it faster
- Eyes closed
- Different positions (above the head, in front of chest, by hips)
- Move the ball up and down as you tip it behind the back (down by the hips)
- Between the legs (one hand in front, one behind)

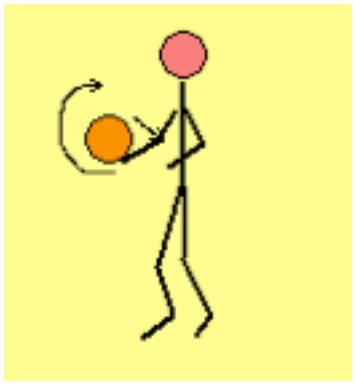
Variation: Squeeze the Banana

Same as tipping, only you pinch the ball. This is good to strengthen the fingers.



Ball Slaps

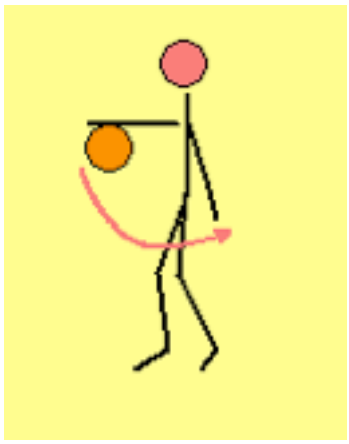
The ball is slapped alternating hands. This warms the hands and strengthens the fingers.



Ball Rolls

The ball starts on the back of the right hand. The hand is rolled over the ball in a counter clockwise direction. This spins the ball onto the left hand. The ball is spun in a clockwise direction on the left hand causing it to go back to the right hand.

Start by just practicing on one hand.



Pendulum

Swing the ball from one arm to the other like a pendulum.



Front to Back – Between the Legs

Bounce the ball between your legs, reach your arms quickly behind to catch the ball. Bounce it back from back to front.

Load:
Butterfly – right, left, in front – followed by right, left behind

Load:
Do the same drill, only without bouncing the ball.
Change hands: one in front, one in back - switch hands
Change hands: change legs - same drill, only split the legs alternating front to back.

Loading the Drills: This is a progression that I used in a recent camp with great success with younger players.



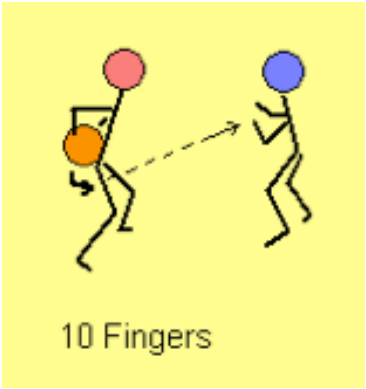
1. Learn the Skill

The player does the basic skill at his/her own page. For the purpose of this article, I will use the ball around the waist drill. The player takes the ball around the waist changing hands.



2. Add a Target

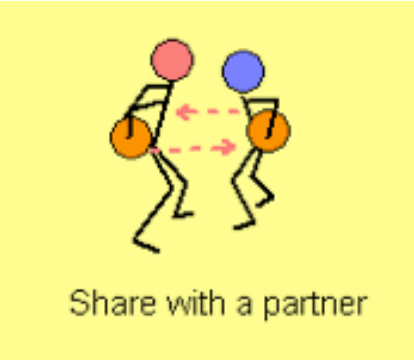
In the second progression, change the player by adding a target. It may be a number of repetitions in a certain length of time (30 reps in 20 seconds). It might be how much time to complete a certain number of reps (how fast can you do 30 reps). How many in a row can you do without a fumble? (This does not apply well to this particular Maravich drill). With little children, make these personal challenges. That way they compete against themselves. With older players, establish team or camp records where players can try to beat the record.



3. 10 Fingers

A partner, or a random person moving around the group, shows the players 10 fingers, the universal sign for mass me the ball. This forces the player to perform the drill while being aware for the open player.

4. In Combination with a Partner

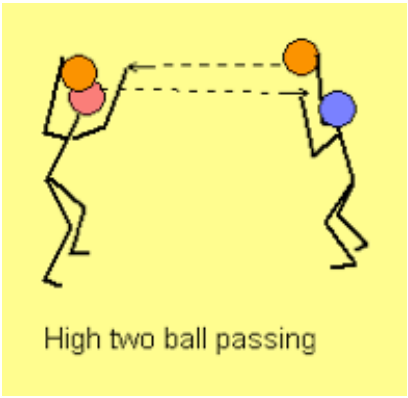


Now the drill is done in combination with a partner. The player goes behind the waist and then changes the ball with their partner. This forces the players to work together to solve a problem. The focus has to be on others, not totally on him/herself.

Again, you can add targets to this drill.

I have found it very successful with young players to allow them to develop a routine with a partner. They work together to come up with a creative ball-handling routine where they must work together. They can become very creative and thing of things you would never have thought of doing.

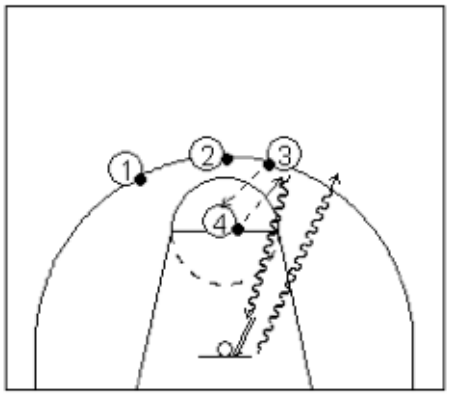
Maravich Drills in Combination with Ball Handling/Passing Drills



Another thing that I have found very successful in camps to keep the players alert is to combine some of the two players passing and dribbling drills with the Maravich drills. In this example, the coach has the players doing a two-ball passing drill. The coach can immediately call a Maravich drill such as around the waist. Then, call another passing drill. The players have to be very alert and work together.

These do not have to be long drills, but they really force concentration and teamwork.

Mirror Maravich into Lay Ups/Shots



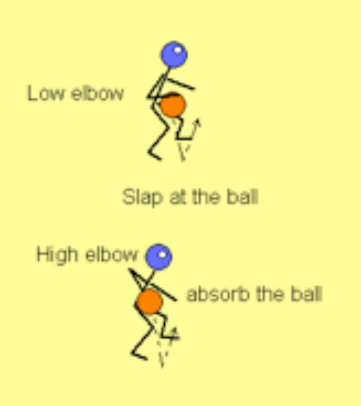
This is again a great drill to use in camp when you have lots of numbers. Instead of players standing in line, they must mirror the Maravich drill being performed by #4. When #4 calls #3's name, the balls are exchanged and #3 goes to score the lay-up or shot.

If you wanted to add more conditioning, make the players go further or dribble the length of the floor to score.

This is also a good drill to combine with mirror dribbling. You call out two drills at once.

Dribbling

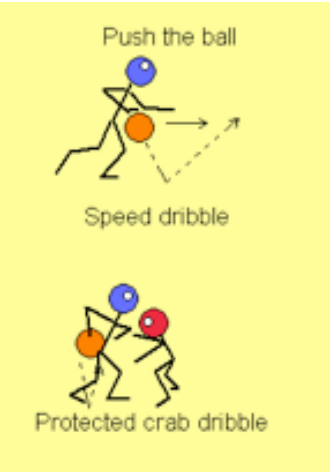
Too many players have learned to dribble the ball by slapping it with their hand. The ball spends too much time in the air and therefore the player does not have optimum control of the ball. Players need to work on getting their shoulder into the dribble. Watch for a high elbow and a pushing of the ball down into the floor. The player should absorb the ball into the hand as it comes back up. They are actually catching the ball. If the player reaches down to receive the ball, this means their hand is in contact with the ball for the majority of the time. Have players work on pushing the ball hard into the floor with the eyes up. They must get use to feeling the ball, not looking for the ball. If they lose control of the ball, quickly find it with the eyes and then bring the vision up as soon as possible.



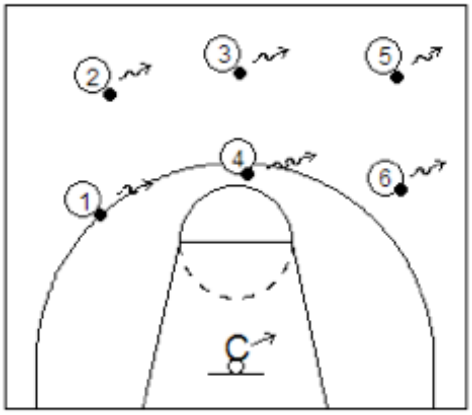
Players also need to distinguish between:

- Static dribbling: they are not moving, but dribbling on the spot
- Speed dribbling: running as they dribble the ball. This is generally done when there is little or no "traffic" (defenders) in the area.
- Control (crab) dribble: this is done when their area aggressive defenders present and the ball must be protected.

It is paramount that ALL players learn to dribble with both hands and with the eyes up.



Fundamental Skill of Dribbling with Your Eyes Up

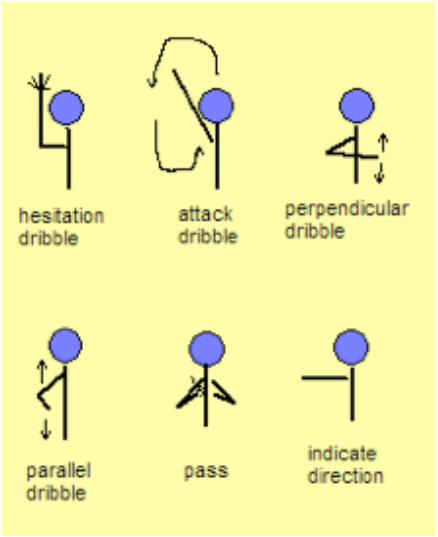


Wave Dribble

This is a basic drill, but still very effective for all ages. The players must react to the directions the coach points.

Keys:

- Do not change too quickly at first, you want the players to move in the desired direction with some speed. If you change too fast, they end up standing.
- Use crab dribbles (perpendicular to the coach) and parallel (where the feed face the coach).
- The ball should be positioned behind the foot in a crab dribble and outside the foot in a parallel dribble.
- The body should be low with the back straight.



Coach's Signals

Here are some suggested signals to help the athletes learn to keep their eyes up. Reading clockwise from the top left.

Hesitation Dribble: One hand up above the head with an open palm. (Two hands may signal stop pivot and protect the ball)

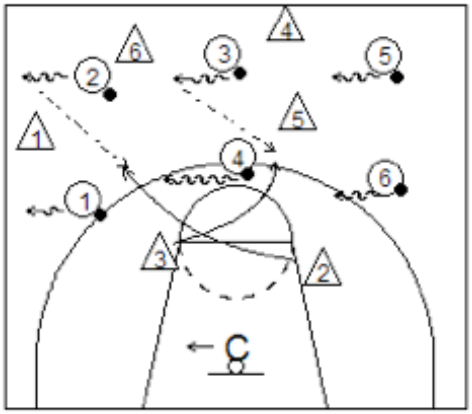
Attach Dribble: Circle the arm like the third base coach in baseball.

Perpendicular Dribble: Dribble action with the arm across the chest.

Direction: Point in the direction you want the dribble

Pass: Both hands up in front of chest

Parallel Dribble: Dribble action beside body

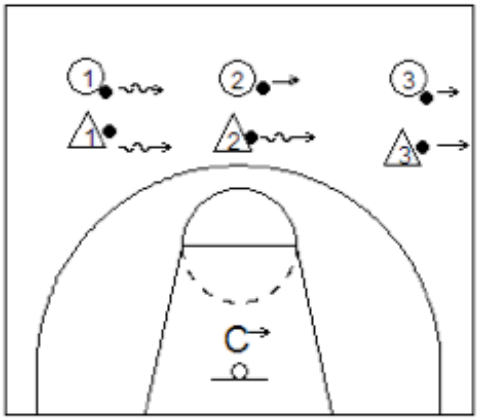


Random Passers

To increase the psychological load on the players, have a partner call for a random pass. Once the ball is passed, the ball could be passed back or the player with the ball must now join the wave dribble drill.

In this diagram, I have shown six random pass receivers. This may be because the coach only has six balls. You could only have one person. You could also use assistant coaches.

Note: It is crucial that players are able to do this drill in both the crab and parallel position.

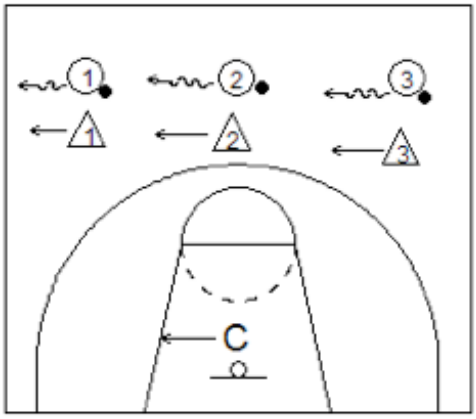


Mirror, Mirror

In this drill, everyone has a ball. The players facing the coach react to his/her wave. The other player is facing the ball handler and reacts to his/her movement.

Loading:

- Add the random pass – the player would pass the ball and immediately get a return pass
- Be sure to use both the crab and the parallel

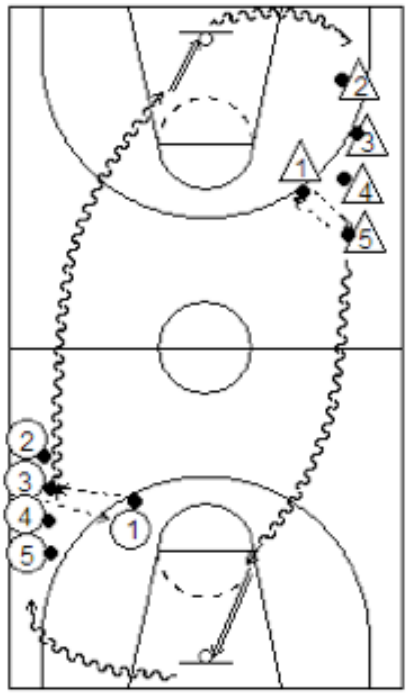


Mirror with Guided Defense

Now we add a guided defender who is moving to the dribble.

Loading:

- The random pass rule can still be used
- Have players attempt to beat the defender with a dribble move (You may have to designate a confined space. I like using badminton courts. Too many players will just put his/her head down and dribble hard with the right hand.)



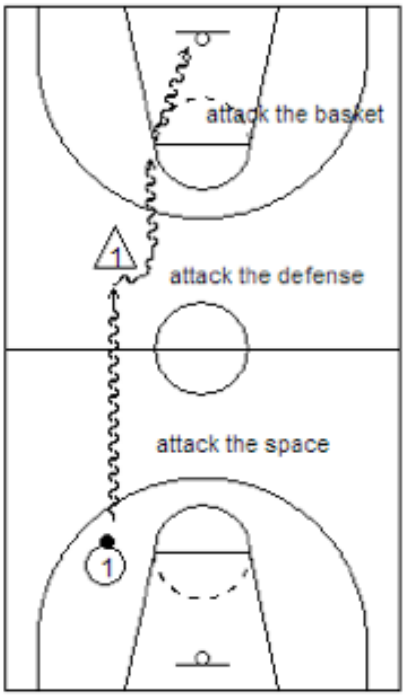
Peripheral Vision Dribbling

Every player has a ball and is dribbling with their left hands to begin. The passer makes a one-handed flick pass to the receiver who flicks his/her ball back to the passer. Upon receiving the new ball, the receiver goes for a left hand lay-up. After completing the lay-up, the receiver goes to the next line. The passer can pass to a second receiver once the group is ready. The key is to make the passes randomly. After a certain number of passes or a time limit, have a new passer.

Work both hands in this drill. You can also start from different positions on the floor. It can be full court, baseline, and half court. Mix it up. Also, make different types of passes. The players could also start moving in a circle or up and back in a wave dribble format.

You could also add a guided defender.

The technical skill of dribbling. Knowing when to use what type of dribble.



Attacking Dribble

Players need to understand the importance of attacking. With the 24-second shot clock and 8-second backcourt wasting time is not a wise strategy.

Attacking Space

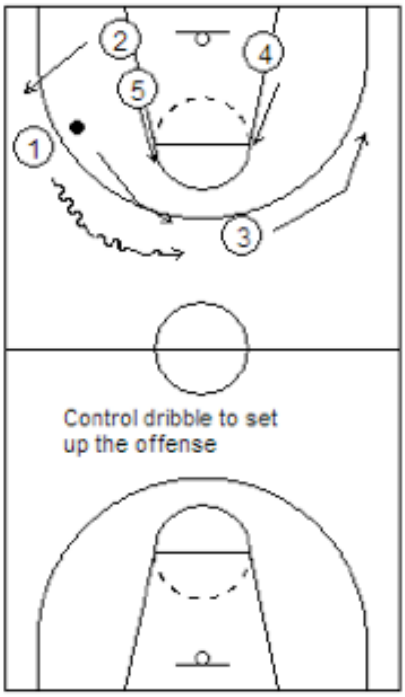
When a player with the ball has open space and no shot or pass opportunity, he/she needs to close that space quickly and under control.

Attacking the Defense

Once the defense is engaged and no pass is open and the clock is winding down, the player may need to attack the defender. This would require a different form of dribbling than attacking space.

Attacking the Basket

Once an open drive line to the basket has been established, the ball handler must quickly go to score before a defender can take away the drive line.



Control Dribble

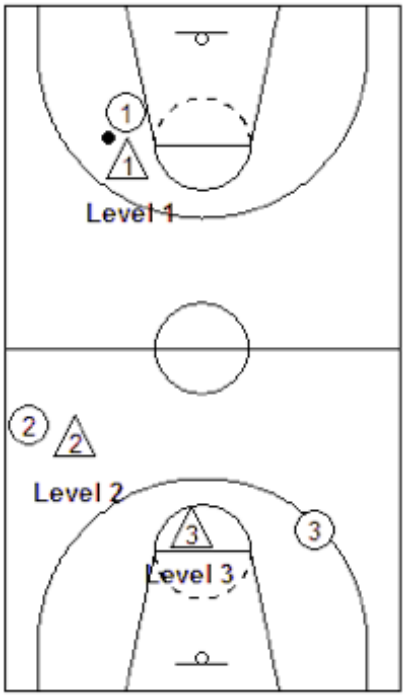
This form of dribble is when a player is using the dribble to improve a passing angle, to relieve pressure, or to advance the ball vs. defence. It is crucial that the head is up and the ball is protected.

Control in Space

This is used to set up the offense to work time off the clock.

Control vs. a Defender

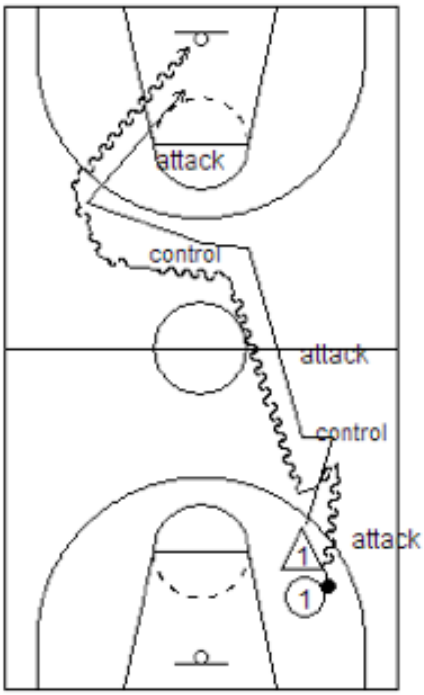
This is a protection dribble. The player must look through the defender to see options that may appear.



Vision of the Dribbler

Three Levels of Vision

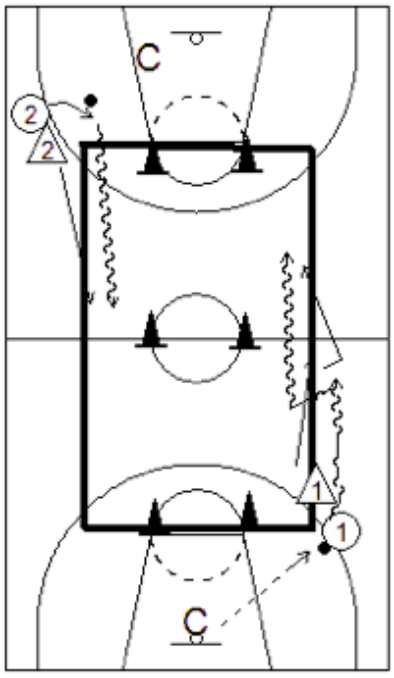
- **Level 1**: Read your defender - Be able to sense how closer the defender is to your body. Do you need to crab dribble or can you stay parallel? Do you see a chest or a shoulder?
- **Level 2**: Read the ball side defense, which might become help or a trapper on an attack dribble.
- **Level 3**: Read the help defense, which will be helping the helper. Is this defender going to be able to rotate quickly enough to affect the pass?



Changing from one Type of Dribble to the Next

Players must constantly be changing from attack to control and vice versa. The ball handler must also be ready to pass at any time. **When** to use each type of dribble is key.

The drills that follow will attempt to help the player understand the **when**.



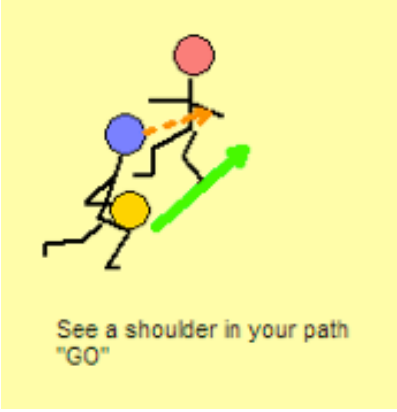
Crossing Half in the Middle Third of the Floor

In all full court dribbling drills, we want the offensive player working to take the ball across half with his/her inside hand.

The volleyball court that is in the middle of many basketball courts is a good reference point. We want the ball dribbled between the volleyball line and the pylons placed at the center circle.

In the example, you can see that #1 does a pull back crossover at half when he/she realizes that X1 is forcing him/her to cross half near the sideline.

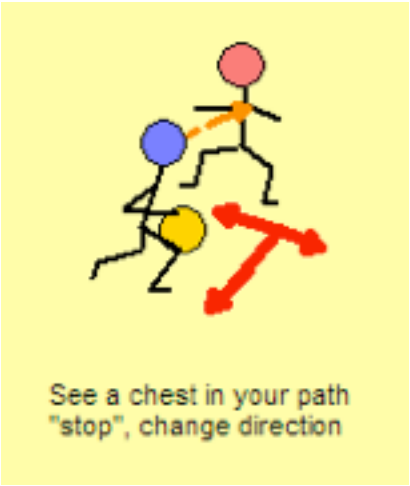
#2 uses a hard dribble with the inside hand after receiving the outlet pass.



Shoulder and Chest

When attacking the defender, the ball handler must learn to read how the defense is guarding him/her and when should he/she change direction and when to continue going in the same direction.

When a shoulder (hands, arms, and elbows) presents itself, "go". The player needs to K.O.B. (keep on the body) the defender to prevent recovery.



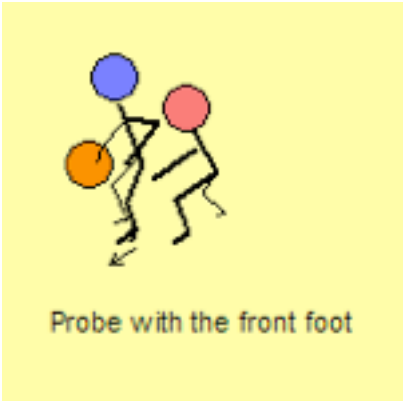
Chest

If your path is impeded be a chest, the ball handler must stop moving in that direction and change direction. This could be a backward dribble, or to either side.

The ability to know where the help defenders are may predicate what type of dribble can be sued.

A spin dribble is not wise if you know help could quickly appear from the blind side.

Many top players will use a step back dribble. This allows them to move backward and to the side at the same time, creating space from the defender.



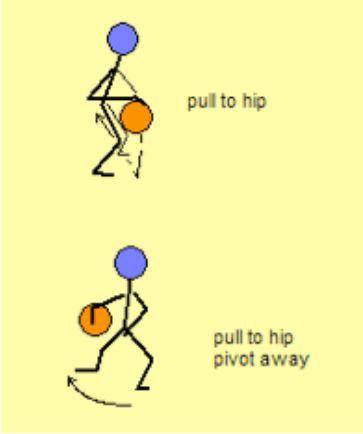
Perpendicular Dribble

This is often called a crab dribble. It is used when the defense closes the gap and the dribbler must now use his/her body to protect the ball. The eyes must be up and still looking through the defender to the next levels.

To go to an attack dribble, the player must use the crab dribble series. If the defense shows a gap, immediately go to a parallel stance.

Probe with lead foot, eyes up, and read the shoulder and chest

1. if you read a shoulder, loop dribble (push the ball and go tight by the defender on the same side)
2. spin if you read a chest (if you suspect a trap, pull back)
3. if the defender drops, back, square, and face

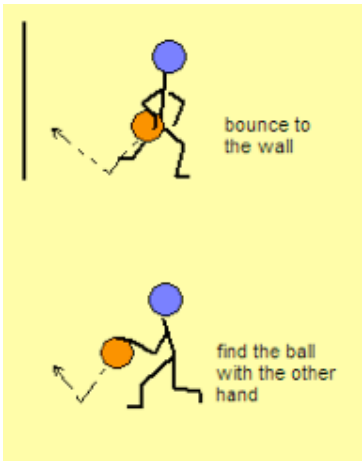


Spin Dribble Progression
Step 1

Starting with a parallel dribble, the player pulls the ball to the hip. The key is to reach the floor and grab all of the energy of the ball as it comes off the floor.

Step 2

Now as the dribble is coming up off the floor, the player pivots the hip away from the ball. The key is to keep chasing the hop with the ball. You want a tight radius.



Step 3

As the player is reverse pivoting, the ball is bounced to the wall. This helps the players learn when to switch hands. The ball should hit the wall straight on and bounce directly back to the player.

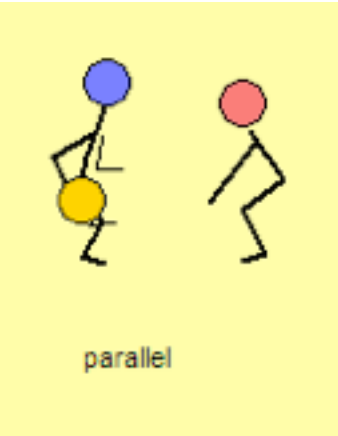
Step 4

Put it all together! The player must now kind the ball with the opposite hand. It is best to practice this on a line to see if the player is going straight at the basket.



Step 5

Now, use the dribble vs. a guided defender. It is important that the player K.O.B (keep on the body) of the defender. This prevents the defence from recovering.

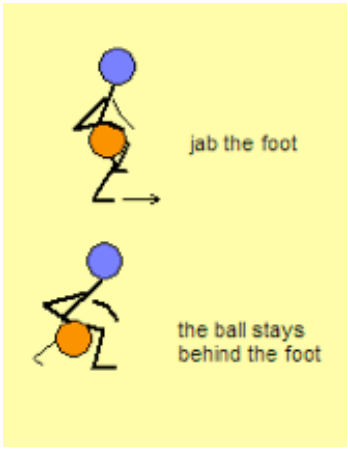


Parallel Dribble

If the defense presents a safe gap to the dribbler, he/she should remain parallel. The head should be up, looking through the defender to the next levels.

To go from a controlled parallel dribble to an attacking dribble, the player will need to work on fakes. Dribble jabs and step backs are two types of foot dribble fakes from a parallel stance. Other players will use ball movement fakes such as crosses and fake crosses to fake out the defence.

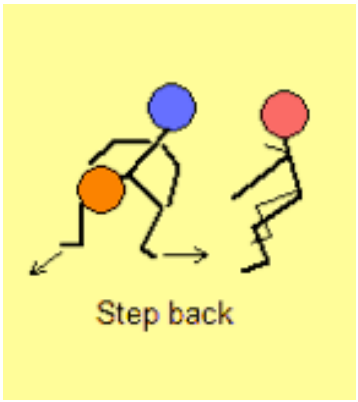
Adding in head and shoulder fakes also help.



Dribble Jab

Starting in a parallel dribble, the player takes a short jab with the same foot as the dribble.

It is very important that the ball stays behind the jabbing foot. Also, a slight "crow hop" is taken with the back foot. We do not want this to be a big lunge. The player has no power for the next movement. Keep the back foot under the body.

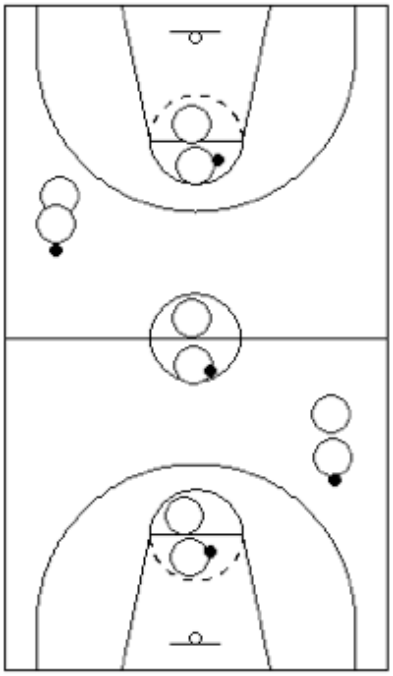


Step Back Dribble

The other type of dribble jab is to use the opposite foot from the ball. The player drives the foot at the basket, learning forward to indicate a drive to the basket. It is crucial that the ball stays back near the back foot.

When stepping back, the back foot moves sideways, not forward. This keeps the space when the front foot retreats.

The dribble now reads the same chest and shoulder. This is an excellent dribble to create space to pass, shoot, or free up a parallel dribble.



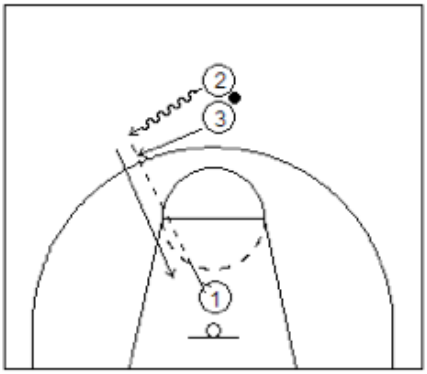
Working on Crab and Dribble Jabs with Guided Defense

The players spread themselves out and work on the movements of a crab dribble and parallel dribble to beat the defender. The defense gives different reads to help the dribble. This works best in a confined space.

Loading:

1. Decrease the size of the space
2. Add random passes

This is basically the same drill that was used, only we have added a ball.



3-Player Wave - Pass and Replace

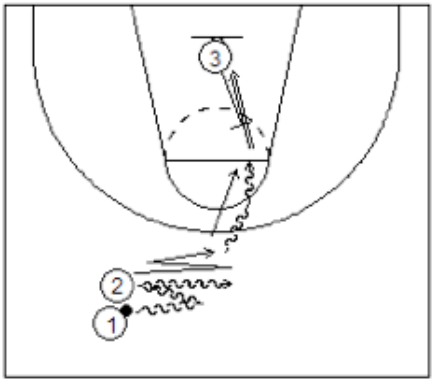
This is just a variation on the old pass and replace drill (keep away).

#1 gives #2 wave dribble signals. When the pass signal is made, the ball is passed and #2 becomes the new defender. #3 now gives the directions to #1.

With younger players, it may be best to start with a coach in #1's position.

It is important to keep good spacing. It is suggested to stay well outside the 3-point line. On the move to attack, #1 can move to make better spacing to receive the pass.

1/2 Court Wave Attack and Control

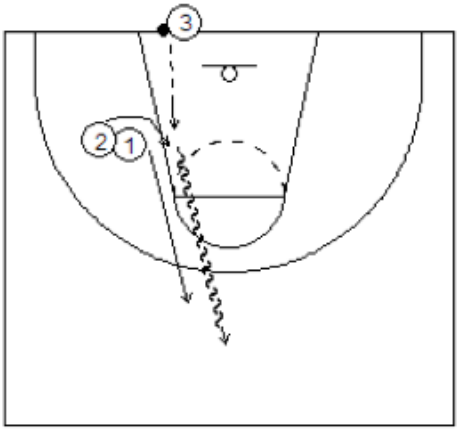


#1 starts by ripping the ball from #2. #3 gives the players wave signals. The defense, #2, works to stay on the ball.

Note: At first, you may use a coach in the #3 position.

After about 6 seconds, #3 signals an attack dribble. #2 must go to score. (#3 could signal another hesitation dribble). #3 can also be a help defender or call for a pass at any time. Keep it simple at first, but build as the player's ability to read improves.

When the ball is shot, both #3 and #2 are on defence. Whoever gets the rebound must break out dribble to 1/2 court. #1 defends whichever player has the ball.

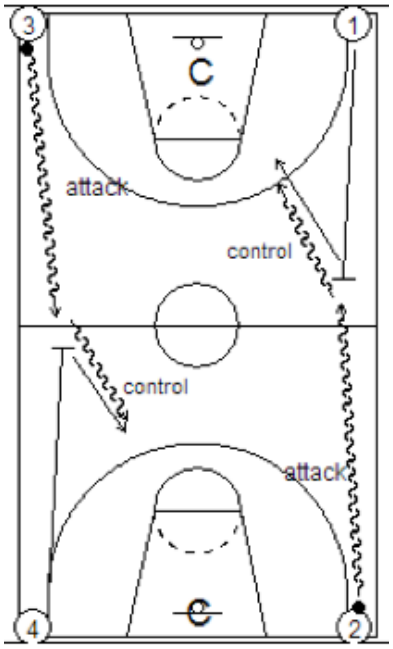


If the ball is scored, #3 inbounds and #1 denies #2 and plays defence to half court.

Once the ball gets to half court, the ball is set down and #1 picks up the ball and the drill begins again.

The coach must decide how many repetitions the player should go. One the last rep, the drill should be live.

Note: This is a very demanding drill. The psychological load is very high. Players will not be able to perform this drill with intensity at first. It takes time.



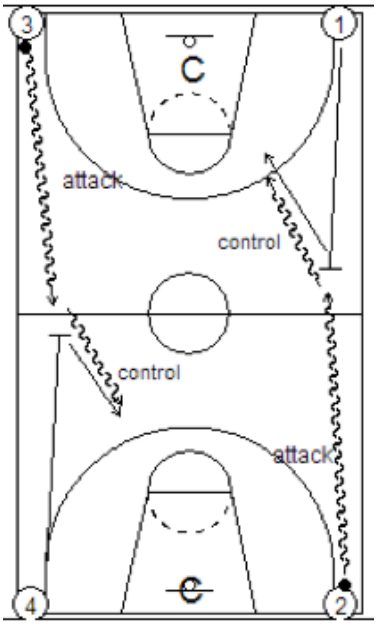
Full Court Attack and Control

#1 sees open space and speed attack dribbles to half court. #2 is running from the opposite baseline to contain the dribbler. The same action is happening on the other side.

#1 must change into a control dribble. Read the coach under the basket. He/she will give the same signals as the previous drill.

Loading:

- Players can return in the other direction after scoring or a rebound
- The players could only go to half court and set the ball down and return to the same basket.
- Add a random pass, then receive the ball back before scoring

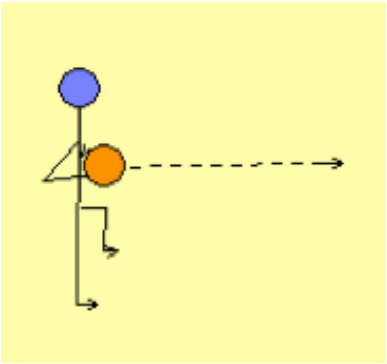


Variation

When #1 dribbles to half court, the ball is set down (or passes to #2) and #2 picks it up and attacks the basket. The defence gives different looks:

- Aggressive with no gap – use a protected crab dribble to start
- Back pedal – use a speed attacking dribble with inside out moves and roll crossover
- Gap – the defense retreats back to the 3-point line – use an attack speed dribble to close space and then go to a control dribble when approaching the defence.

Passing

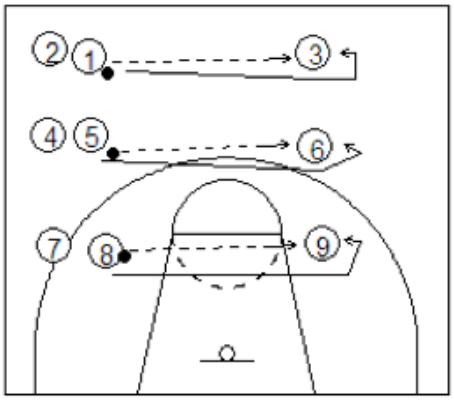


Passing

Add a ball to one-foot balance. Repeat the same exercises.

a. Wall passing
b. Partner passing
c. Start with back to partner – call name, turn, and catch and pass
d. Two balls

Note: Mix up the release point of the pass. Too many passes come from the middle of the chest. Also, it is better when the passer passes when he/she sees a target, not when he/she wants to.



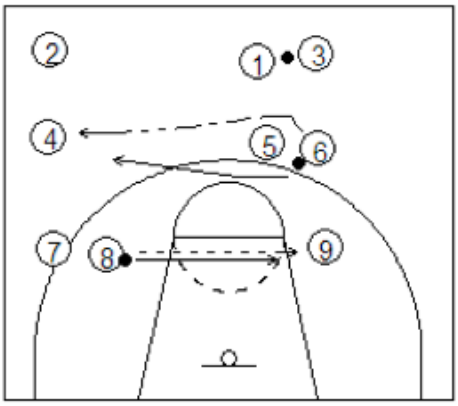
Pass and Replace

The players spread out in groups of three with one ball. The first player passes the ball using the designated pass. He/she then follows the pass to end up behind the receiver.

a. Chest pass
b. Bounce pass
c. Overhead
d. One hand flick
e. Overhead flick
f. Football
g. Off the dribble

Teaching Points:

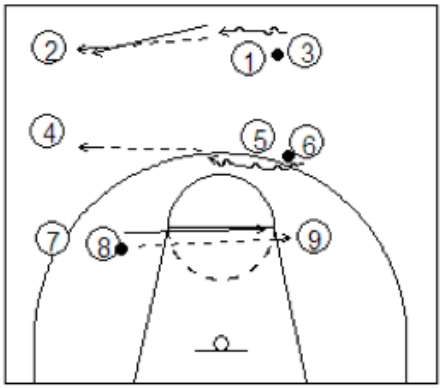
- Call names
- Give a target
- Move to receive the pass
- Run to the right, jump stop, and pivot to get back in line



Pass and Replace with Pressure

The drill works the same as before, only now the passer becomes a defender on the receiver. The passer is not allowed to dribble. He/she must work on fakes and pivots to create a passing lane.

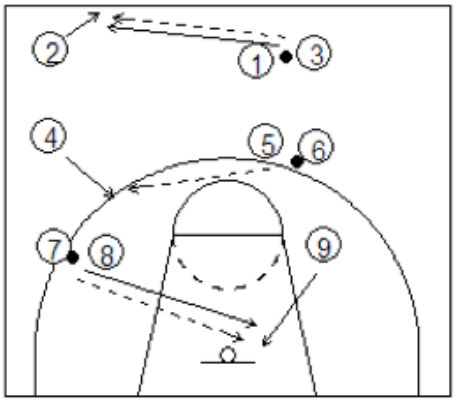
Teaching Points:
- Beat the feet of the defender
- Crisp fakes
- Receiver - have a target



Pass and Replace with Pressure and a Dribble

Same as before, only now the player is allowed to take a strong dribble to beat the defender.

Teaching Points:
- Pivot first before dribbling
- Strong protected dribble using both hands
- Pass off the dribble or off a stop

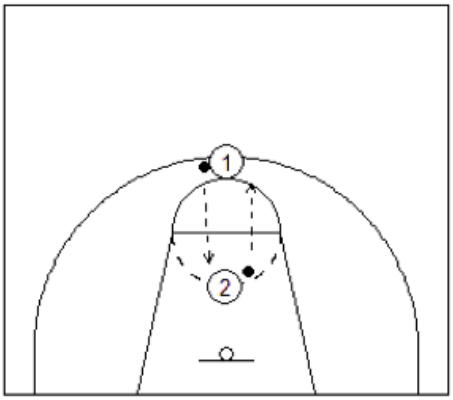


Break the Three in a Row

Same as before, only the receiver must break the straight line of the ball, the defence, and receiver. The passer wants to fake away from the direct receiver cuts.

You will need bigger space to do this drill.

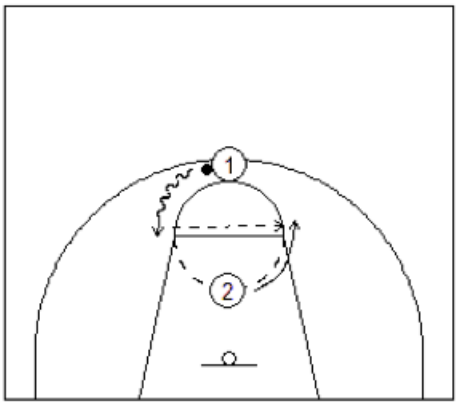
Teaching Points:
- Fakes
- Cut to a space where the defence cannot the ball



Circle Passing

a. Stationary Bounce
   Bounce ball in right hands. On an agreed signal, pass to left hands. Now, when bouncing with left hands, the players must turn their body.

b. Add movement
c. Add third player

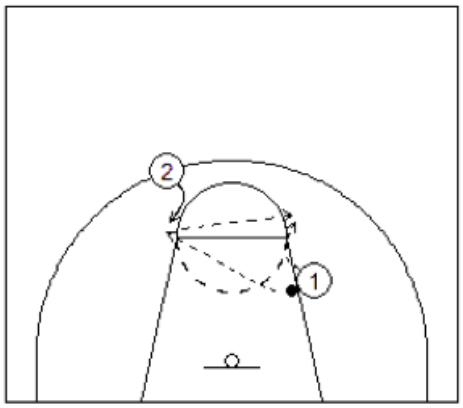


Mirror Dribble

The opposite player must over in a mirror-like fashion to the dribbler. When the "mirror" puts up is/her hands, the pass is thrown.

This is teaching the passer to react to a stimulus. This is now starting to add the **when** to the skill.

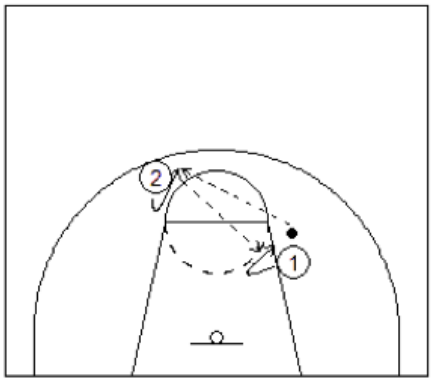
Loading:
- Add a defender who randomly goes to trap the ball handler
- Add a pass-pass. The pass receiver must immediately pass back to the passer.



Direct Cuts

Both players start well off the circle. #2 makes a direct cut at #1. When reaching the circle, he/she cuts at 90 degrees to the circle and presents a target. The pass is made.

After #2 now makes a direct cut to the circle and cuts in either direction to receive the pass.

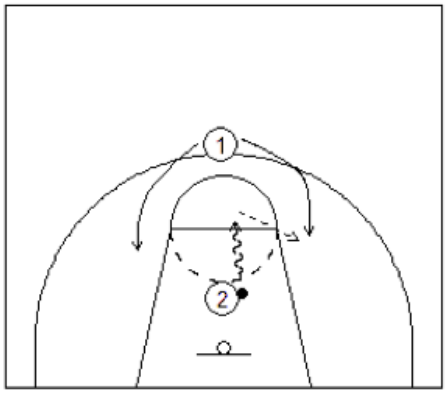


Indirect Cuts

The players now move to indirect cuts by moving in one direction and then cutting back to receive the pass.

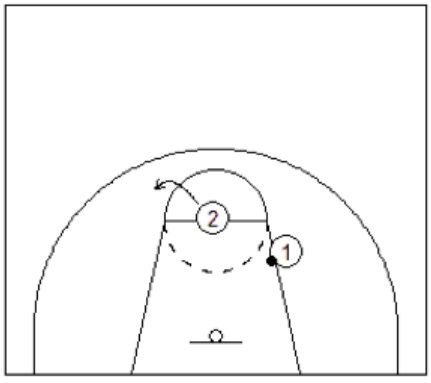
Loading:
- Add one guided defender
- Add two defenders and play keep away

It is important that the players maintain rhythm, which is proper timing and spacing.



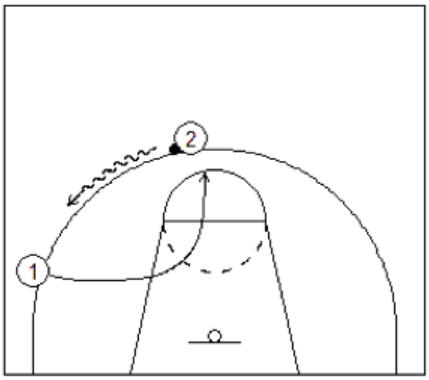
Dribble Penetration

If the ball handler dribbles at the mirror, he/she must move to get behind the ball. This is teaching the idea of no three in a row on penetration (ball, defender, and receiver). We can now work on our creative passes such as the rugby passes.



After passing, #2 must find space. #1 can now initiate the action. It is good to practice a pass-pass sometimes.

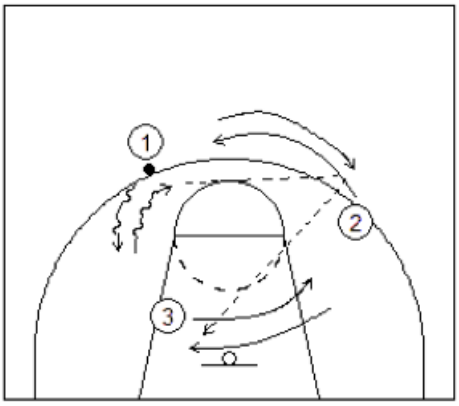
Realistic



Now move the drill to the wing area. The concepts are the same. The players must react to the movement of the other player. You can have the drill start with a dribble, a direct cut, or an indirect cut. Have the player execute so many concepts before scoring.

Loading:
- Add guided defence
- Have two defenders and play 2 on 2

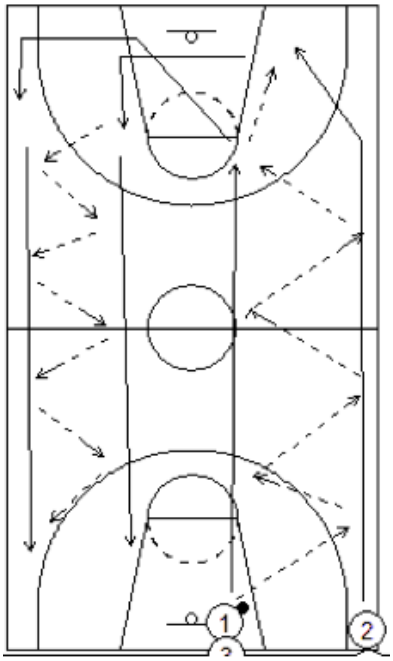
3-Player Circle Passing



Add a third player (increase the size of the circle if required) – now, working on rhythm of the movement and the pass-pass concept.

Loading:
- Add a defender(s)
- Have 4 players involved – make a pass, pass, pass

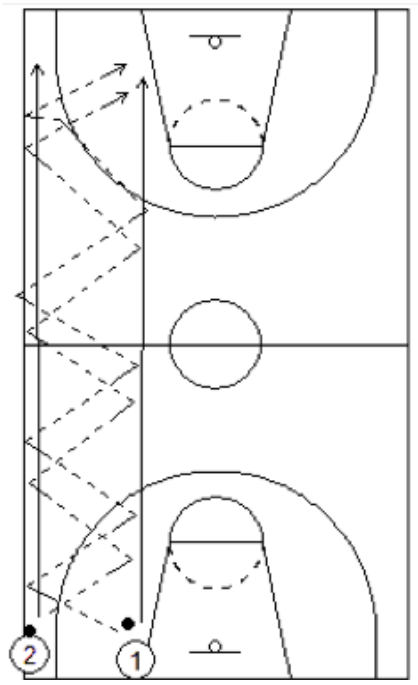
Duke



Partner and a ball

1. Chest – air
2. Chest – bounce
3. Flicks - air – bounce
4. High flick – shoulder pass
5. Behind the neck
6. Behind the back
7. Tennis pass
8. Rugby pass
9. Football pass
10. Pronation pass
11. Back flick
12. Do the above off a catch or off a specified number of dribbles
13. Behind the back flick
14. Dribble hand off
15. Penetrate, rotate behind, rotate behind
16. Step back dribble – L-cut

Be sure to work both sides of the floor. The receiver needs to present a target. Make it wide and tight.

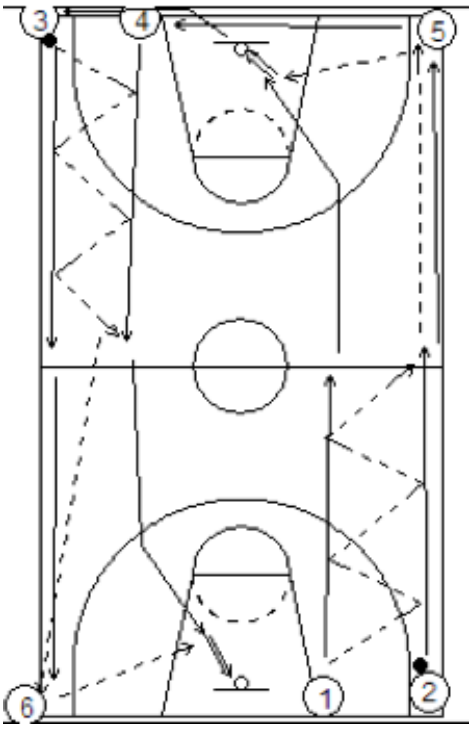


Yugo/Serbian

The drill is similar to Duke, except that two balls are being used. It requires two balls and two players.

1. Flicks
2. Bounce air chest
3. Behind back flick
4. High elbow flicks
5. Behind neck

Also add a specified number of dribbles.

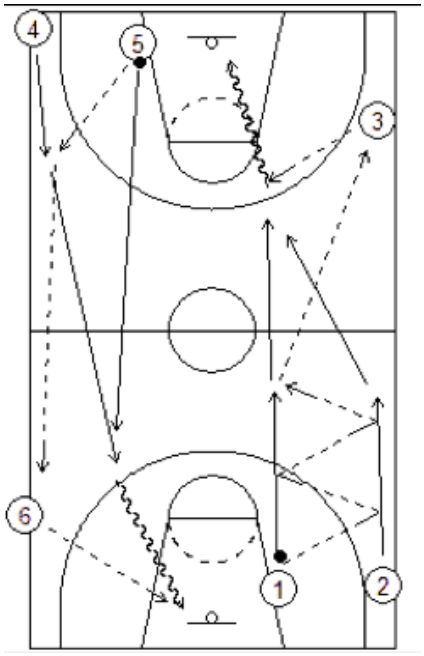


Duke Passing with a Corner Player

Start with a ball in each corner. The two players pass the ball back and forth to the half court line. The ball is passed to the next player in the corner when he/she shows a target. The inside player goes to the basket to receive a return pass for a lay-up. The outside player takes the corner player's position.

Loading:

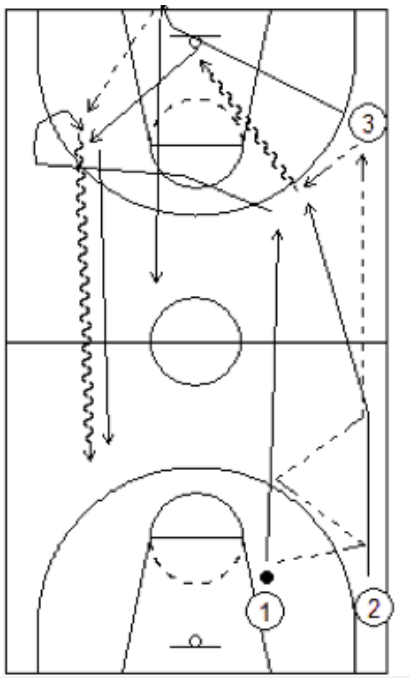
- Alternate the types of passes
- Change the location of the pass receiver, wing, center of the floor, post



Duke Pass to Wing Push 1 on 1

The drill is set up the same as before. The players pass the ball back and forth. When the wing player calls for the ball, the pass is made. The player immediately sprints to receive the return pass. The other player must play defence.

The next group cannot go until the players are in position for the next rotation.

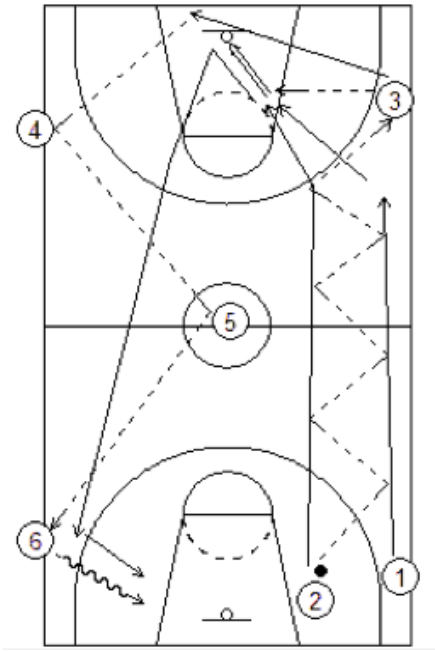


Duke Pass to Wing Push 1 on 1 to FC 1 on 1

The drill is set up the same as before. Once the ball is scored, #3 takes the ball out of bounds to inbound. #2 must find #1 and deny the inbounds pass. #1 and #2 play 1 on 1 full court. The restriction is that the ball must be passed to #3 in the front court and return pas given before #2 can score.

You can see how the psychological load has been increased.

Note: You could eliminate the 1 on 1 on the first side and just have the corner pass.



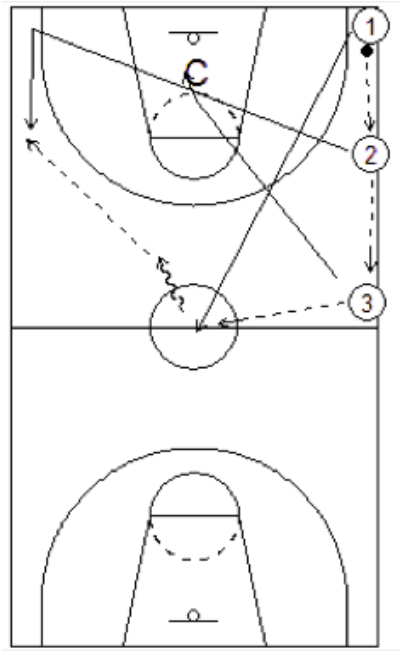
Duke Pass to Wing Push 1 on 1 to Sprint to FC 1 on 1

The drill is set up the same as before. Once the ball is scored, #3 takes the ball out of bounds to inbound to #4 who passes to #5, who passes to #6. #2 must sprint to defend #6. The others rotate one position after passing (#1 becomes the wing player).

This works on sprinting to play defence. It also forces the passers to pass quickly and accurately.

You should see a trend. Start with a similar drill and keep adding concepts that psychologically load the athlete instead of having 3 or 4 different drills where they have to learn the drill.

Note: You could eliminate the 1 on 1 on the first side and just have the corner pass.



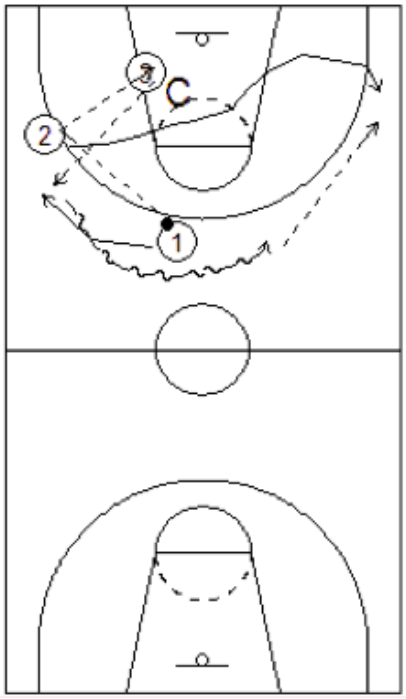
Strategy

Korean Passing into Passing to the Post
Working on rhythm (timing and spacing)

Use a passing drill to get into a concept of how we want to play on offense.

Rules:

- #2 must catch the ball below the foul line extended, outside the three-point line on a 45° angle (attack spot) and make an attack pass (one where the post goes immediately to score) to #3. He/she can only hold the ball for 1 second.
- #3 must arrive at the front of the rim and keep on the back (KOB) the guided defender (coach). This must occur when # 2 is ready to pass. You only have 3 seconds in the key.
- #1 must deliver the ball to #2 when he/she arrives at the attack spot.



Another concept is having the players recreate the concept again. This can happen in two ways:

1. #3 passes the ball back out to #1 and #2 sprints through to the other side. The players now work to recreate the situation.
2. #1, #2, and #3 transition on offense to the other end of the floor and recreate the situation.

Note: The coach can change up the rules. For example, this time the ball must be passed to #3 in a control situation (no immediate chance to score). #2 must work on a fake to deliver the ball.

By having the players recreate the situation, the coach gets to observe if the concept is understood.

The final phase is to add guided defense. This works on the tactics.

Shooting



Shooting Grip

Hold the ball in the hand with the palm up. Quickly move the ball back and forth from side to side. If the ball is not held on the finger pads, the player will lose control. This is excellent for younger players who often grip the ball incorrectly. Pete Maravich was a strong proponent of this little technique. It cannot be emphasized enough the number of players who start with a poor grip. So many other problems are magnified by this basic mistake.



Release

This is still one of the best drills to have children work on to develop a consistent release. The shooter lies on his/her back and shoots the ball up in the air with one hand. The players need to lock the elbow and wave goodbye (break the wrist) to the ball. The ball should return to the same hand.

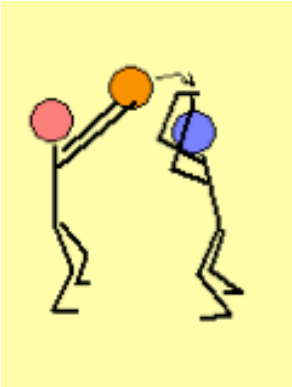
In this example, a partner stands over the shooter and forms a window for the ball to be shot through. If it does not return through the window, there is no consistency in the player's release.

Give the players a specific target of how many in a row they can make. Too many players judge the power or distance on their shot by varying how hard or far they straighten the elbow. This leads to a very inconsistent release. This drill also checks how the ball is coming off the hand.

Load

Do this drill while shooting with two hands (a guide hand). It will point out if players are having the guide hand interfere.

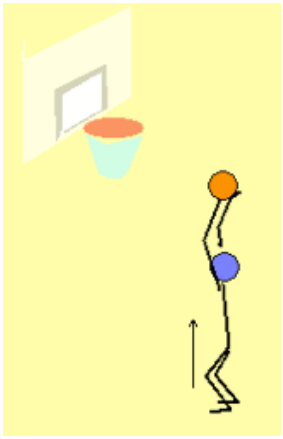
Release Position



The shooter starts in a loaded position with the hands ready to receive the ball. It is crucial that the player be looking under the ball and have two eyes on the target. Once the ball is in place, the player pushes up through the body, locking the elbow and holding a good follow through position. The other player can check the follow through by placing the ball back in the hands at the completion of the shot.

Note: When players are shooting a shot in the game, the majority of players will not start their shot in this position. This drill is to emphasize the final push on release. Too many players step forward and shoot with a shot put action. Start in close to the basket.

Many players will not use the toes in their shot. Heels will not leave the ground. This usually means that there was a deceleration somewhere in the shot.

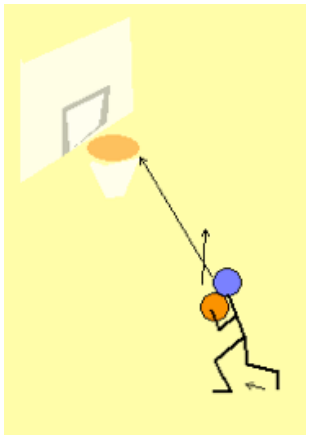


Progression #2

In this progression. the athlete starts with the knees bent and the ball in the release point. Remember, when they shoot the complete shot, the ball will not start in this position. This is not a fully extended position. It is just above the temple and over the dominate eye. The emphasis is on pushing with the legs. We want the players to come off the ground. Jump!

Hold the high follow through.

Progression #3



In this progression, the ball is started in the triple threat position. The athlete is looking over the ball with one foot back. The front leg is loaded (bent). As the athlete steps forward, at the same time the ball is raised to the release point in one continuous action.

Keys:

- As the foot hits the ground, the ball should be moving up to the release position pushing with the legs.
- Be looking under the ball at the release point.
- It should be one continuous motion
- Jump!
- Hold a high follow through
- Be sure to use both feet.



Triple Threat to the Release Point

The player must now learn to take the ball from the triple threat position to the high release point in a one-piece action. This movement should be smooth and involves the coordination of the entire body. Many younger players will start to straighten their lower body before the ball is raised to the high release point. This means they have no power left for the shot. They will have to go back down or take a big step forward to generate power.

Load

- Toss the ball and catch it with a jump stop. Pivot to shoot. The players should be able to execute the four pivots; front pivot right, front pivot left, back pivot right, back pivot left.
- Add a passer who passes the ball from different angles. It is key that the player prepares for the shot before receiving the pass.
- Be low and loaded, presenting ten fingers as a target.
- Add a guide who stands in front of the player. The guide places a friendly forearm on or near the belly of the shooter. The other arm is up as if to give a high five. Do not block the shot. This forces the player not to dip the ball and release with a high pocket.

Advanced

Great players need to be able to get their shot off when closely guarded, especially with the 24-second shot clock. Players need to take the ball on diagonals and not "L's" when lifting the ball to the shot pocket.

Against a close defender you, cannot pick the ball up by bringing it into the middle of your body, especially on the dribble.



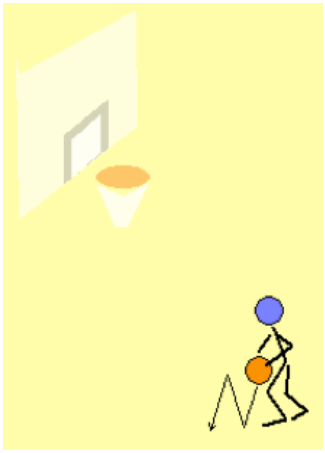
Progression #4

In this progression, we add the dribble. As the ball is dribbled, the player does a quick 1-2 step with his/her feet. We are working towards a jump shot that can be used when the player is closely guarded. It is quicker to use the 1-2 rather than the hop. We are attempting to develop players who can execute the jump shot late in the shot clock when they are closely guarded. The hop is still useful in situations when the player is escaping the defender and time is not as important.

Keys:

- hard dribble so you don't have to reach

- quick 1-2 with feet
- Take the ball on the diagonal to the release point in one motion.
- Jump!
- Hold the high follow through
- Be sure to use both hands and both feet



Progression #5

Now the player takes a couple of dribbles and goes into the jump shot off the dribble. The key is the quick 1-2 with the hard dribble to pick the ball up.

Add a guided defender who keeps his/her arm out to make the player works on a clean pick up.

Play 3-2-1. Have the player toss the ball. He/she must get the shot off before the shot clock goes off. The defender counts down "3 – 2 – 1". All jump shots off the dribble.

Play a small sided game (3 on 3 or 4 on 4) where the only score is from jump shots.

2 on 1

Speed Lay-Ups

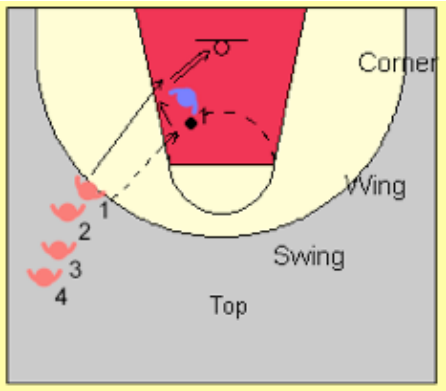
In finishing a 2 on 1, players needs to be able to complete a lay-up while handling the ball at speed. We use the following drills to work on scoring lay-ups while dribbling or receiving a pass at speed.

The players line up in a designated spot. Each player has a ball. There are two types of lay ups:

1. The players pass the ball to the coach and run full speed to receive a return pass. Score the lay-up.
2. The player dribbles hard at the coach and scores going by the shoulders of the coach. Add a little inside out move or a fake pass.

Load the Drill:

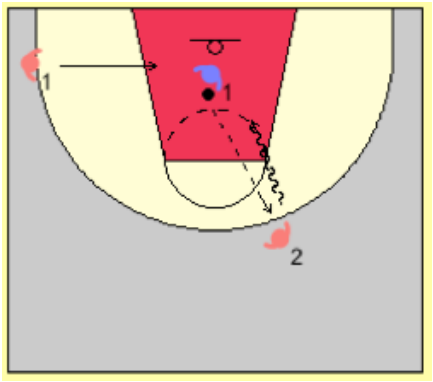
- If the coach shows "ten fingers," the player drives. If not, dribble the ball hard to score.
- Have someone disrupt the lay-ups with a shield or disruptor (pool noodle to hit the arms)
- Go from different spots on the floor. Vary the pass and dribble angles.

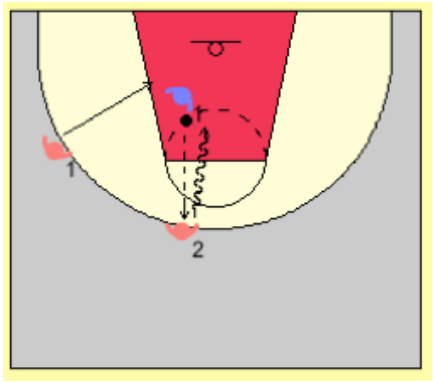


2 on 1 in Tight Spaces

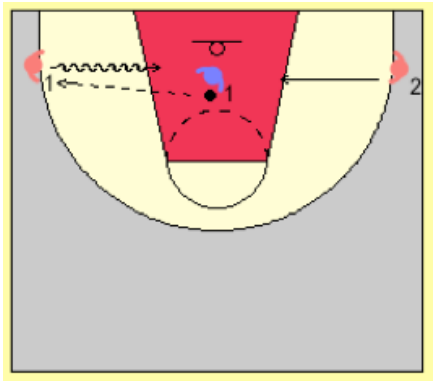
The defender starts with the ball. He/she may pass to either player. Both players attack the basket looking to create a 2 on 1. Allow only one pass. We are looking for a lay-up or a foul. No jump shots at first. The defender works on faking into the passing lane. Block out one player on the shot. Play to a defensive rebound or a score.

In these examples, we are playing from the swing and the wing and the corner and swing.





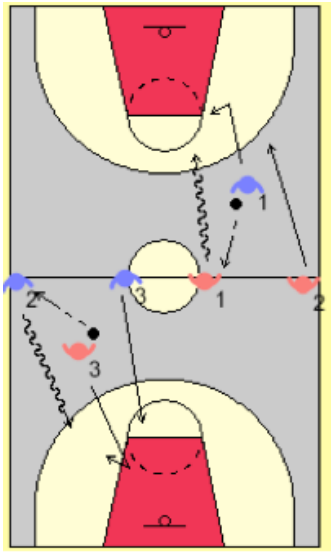
Corner and Corner



2 on 1 from Half Court

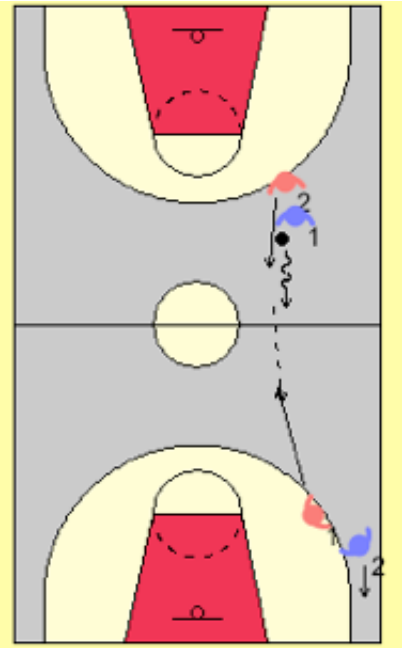
We now progress the drill from half court. The defender passes the ball to either player. The key is to attack the open basket. Both players must attack. If the rim is open, sprint to it. Again, only one pass inside the three-point line for teaching purposes. Whoever shoots the ball comes back as the next defender. The other two rotate to the opposite side.

Note: Play from different spaces on the floor.



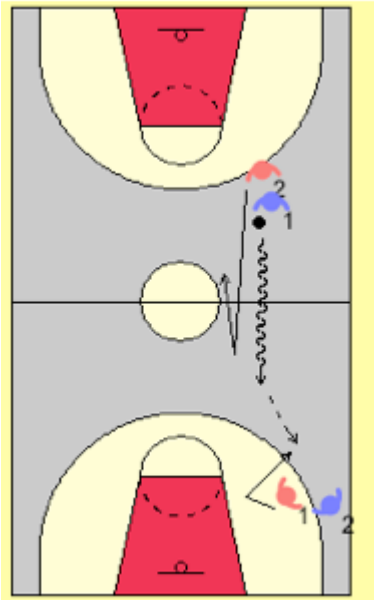
Creative Start 2 on 1

In this situation, Blue #1 is dribbling the ball. Red #2 "buzzes" the ball (runs behind and tips it forward). Red #1 is playing defence on the wing player. Blue #2 grabs the ball and quickly creates a 2 on 1 with Red #2 against Blue #1. Blue #2 trails the play as the second defender.



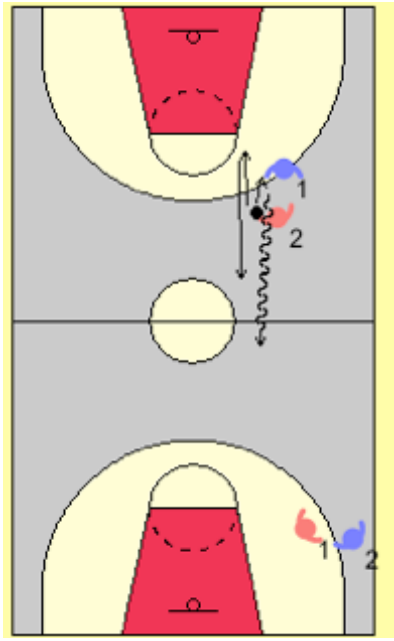
Creative 2 on 1 - Stunt and Shoot the Passing Lane

In this situation Blue #2 and Blue #1 have a 2 on 1 against Red #1. Red #2 is trailing the play. As Blue #1 drives, Red #1 stunts (fakes a help into the drive line). Blue #1 throws a soft bounce pass to Blue #2. Red #1 shoots the gap and creates a 2 on1 going the other way with Red #2. Blue #2 trails the play.



Live 2 on 1 - Up and Back

We can now play it live. #2 Red passes the ball to #1 Blue and takes one step beside him/her. #1 Blue starts to drive the ball creating a 2 on 1 with #2 Blue. Red tries to stunt and buzz the ball. If a turnover is created. red goes 2 on 1 in the opposite direction. If the ball is scored, play 2 on 2.



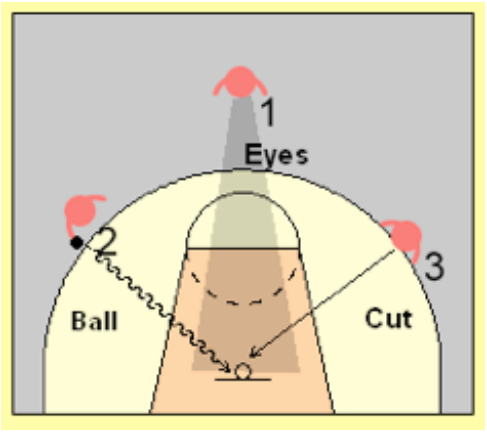
Attacking the Rim

Watching teams play with the short shot clock has produced the following observation.

Teams often get lulled into playing on the perimeter and do not attack the rim. They play punch and pass or pick and pop and settle for outside shots.

You can attack the rim in three ways;

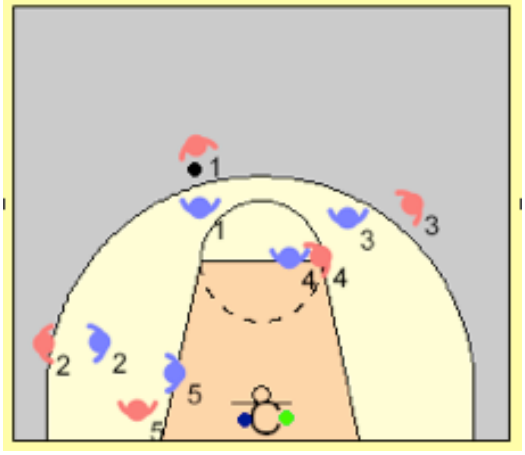
- with your eyes
- with the ball (dribble, drive, pass)
- with a body or a cut



With your Eyes

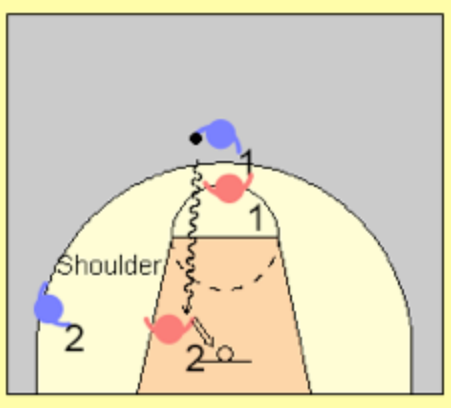
It is amazing the number of players who never look at the basket. The great players freeze the defence by looking at area under the rim. This allows them to see all the players on the floor. The help defense cannot cheat.

One drill that I have used with younger players is to stand under the basket and hold up makers or pinnies of different colors. The players must call out the color every time they receive the ball.



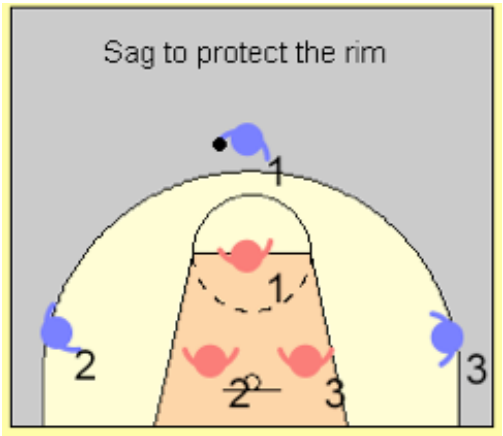
With the Ball

Many players, when penetrating, are only thinking about passing. The penetration is not to score but on an angle away from the basket. They pass the ball at the first sign of help. Players need to read the defence. If a chest appears in the line to the basket, pass or change direction. If a shoulder or hand appears, keep going. This is how fouls get created. Many players will only drive in one direction.



Shooting

You can attack the basket by shooting the perimeter shot, but many teams settle for too many jump shots. You do not create fouls and if you shoot quickly without moving the defence, you do not create rebounds. Having said that, you do need to hit outside shots to stretch the defence so they will not continue to sag and guard the basket in close.



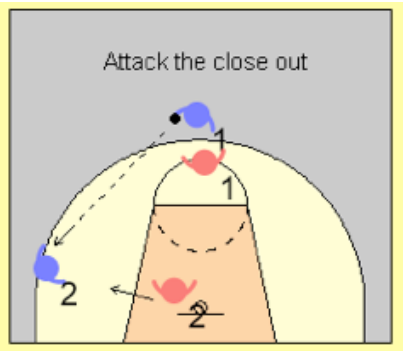
With the Cut

This is an area that many players do not understand. I contend because most players have been taught to run patterns on offense and not learn concepts. I remember asking Don McRae, a former National team coach and long-time CIS coach, when players should break off a pattern of the offense and look to go 1 on 1. His answer was:

- For a perimeter player, when you see a bad close out
- For an interior player, when you have a great seal.

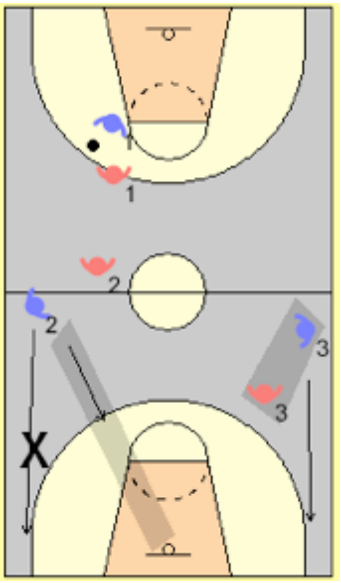
I now believe that another time occurs when you break off patterns:

- The player without the ball needs to attack the basket when he/she see an open rim. Be a cutter first!

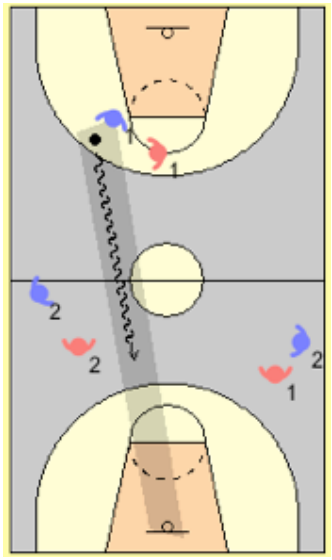


Attack the Basket in Transition

In this situation, O2 sees an open basket. Instead of continuing to run wide, he/she attacks the basket with a cut. On the other side, O3 sees a defender between him/her and the basket. O3 continues to run wide to prevent X3 the opportunity to guard two people at once. If O2 does not receive the ball, he/she must then spread the floor. He/she could cross with O3 or move back out to balance the floor on the same side.

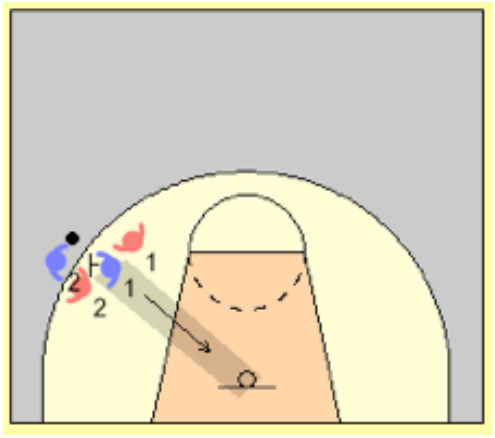


In this case, it is O1, the ball handler, who sees an open rim. Attack the basket! There is no sense in passing to either O2 or O3 who are guarded. When either X2 or X3 moves in to the drive line, then the wing push will be an option.



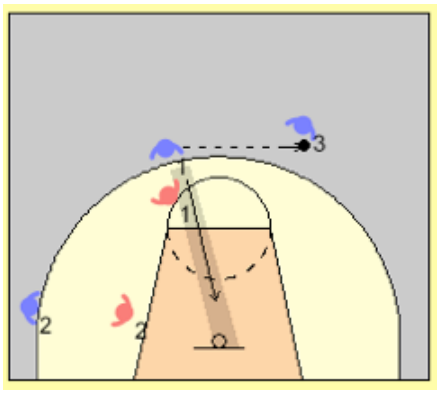
Pick

When O1 sets the wing pick for O2, he/she looks to the rim and sees an open basket because X1 is playing for the hedge. Slip the pick and go to the rim.



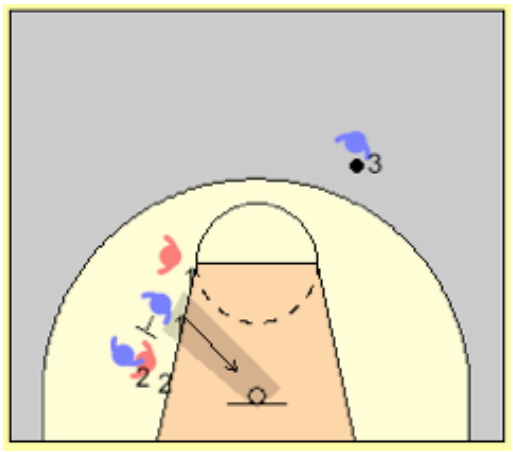
Pass

When passing the ball from O1 to O2, X1 does not jump to the ball. O1 sess an open rim and attacks the basket.



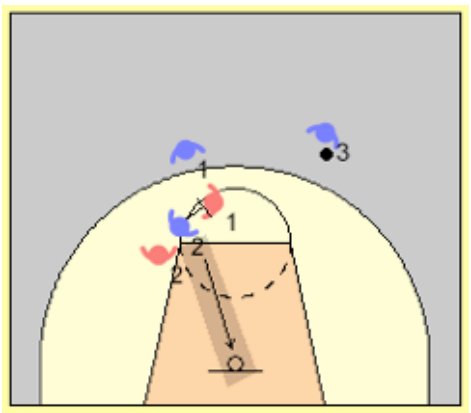
Screen

O1 sets the down screen for O2. When the screen is set, he/she looks to the rim and sees the open basket because X1 is switching. Slip the screen and go to the basket.



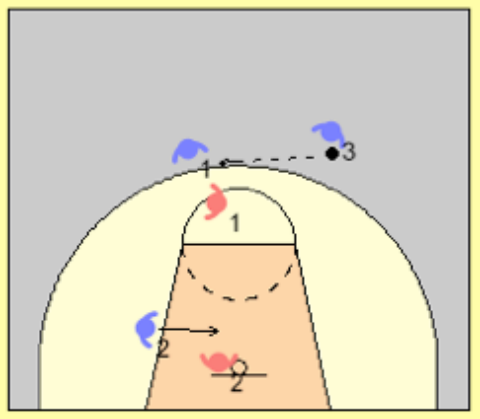
Flare Screen

The same concept holds true. O2 sets the flare and slips because the rim is not defended.



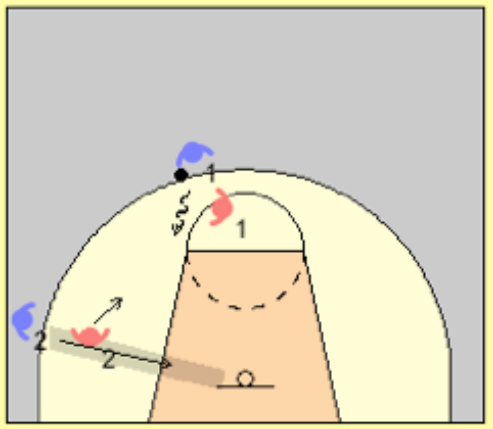
Flash Cut

O2 sees X2 playing too low under the basket. On the pass to O1, he/she flash cuts to the front of the rim.



Back Cut

O2 sees X2 moving to high and leaves the rim open. Cut to the basket.



Things That Prevent Teams from Attacking the Rim

- Eyes down - do not see the rim or see the person who is open
- Poor skills - cannot handle the ball well enough to drive with either hand, nor strong enough to make the pass
- Poor decisions or do not understand what to read - thinking about running a play instead of playing
- Fatigue - when tired, players will not work hard enough to take advantage of the defence. They rather stand than cut.
- Players not sprinting or exploding to the basket make soft cuts – this is sometimes fatigue or not understanding how to use their body.
- Post players who cannot score, clogging the line to the basket. This is often the design of the offense.

- Weak side offensive players not playing high and wide enough to prevent help from clogging the basket
- Lack of weak side action (movement) that makes the help side defenders move or be distracted
- Ball watching by the offensive players – when you don't have the ball, read the defence. The ball will find you if you are open.

Re-thinking the Game

Many of the concepts that we grew up with as players and coaches need to be reconsidered with the evolution of the game. It is not to say that these concepts are wrong, but are they still the most effective way to teach our players.

The two big areas to consider are:
- Effective use of the shot clock
- The "global" player

The use of the shot clock is the greatest change to the game. Very little discussion of the shot clock has taken place in our coaching education. Nowhere is it to be found in our current NCCP. The development of the "global player" has evolved as a result of the shot clock. Today's player must be able to dribble, pass, and shoot the ball. More importantly, the global player needs to be able to make the decision late in the clock of when to use these skills.

Attack vs. Control

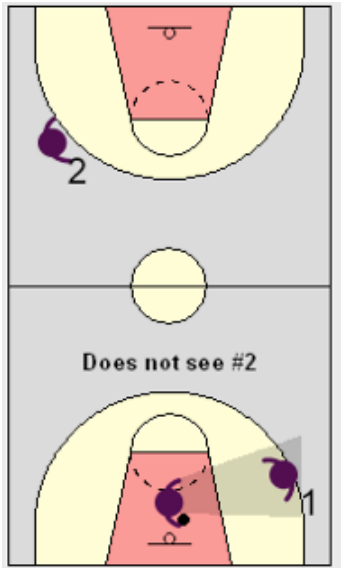
One of the biggest concepts that coaches moving to FIBA rules will have to face is the realization that all players need to develop attacking skills. For years we have taught players to catch the ball square to the basket and then read the defence. This is playing with control. It is still an integral part of the game and must be taught to all players. With the advent of the shot clock, players also need to be able to attack. The player reads the situation before catching the ball and instantly acts upon catching the ball.

What are Attacking Skills?

In the backcourt, these skills include the ability to:
- scan the rim
- stretch the floor vertically
- break out dribble or push the ball vertically
- pass the ball vertical
- deal with ball pressure
- make the right decision on when to use these various skills
- analyze advantage/disadvantage situations
- perform all of these skills at an ever increasing rate of speed

In the front court, the player must be able to:

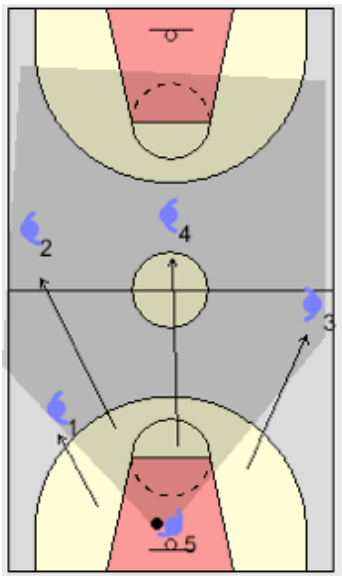
- scan the rim
- create a shot for him/herself or a team mate
- finish creatively against contesting defence
- pass creatively and effectively leading to an assist
- deal with ball pressure
- analyze advantage/disadvantage situations
- perform all of these skills at an ever increasing rate of speed, with a limited time clock and against all types of defenses



Back Court - Scan the Rim

Teams that only look for the point guard become easy for good teams to defend as the game progresses. It is very difficult to have one point guard be the sole ball handler for every possession of every game. Playing 40 minutes of every game is difficult enough, let alone being effective late in the game.

By teaching players to scan the rim, they will see advantage situations immediately that they can exploit. If they are looking only for the guard first, these may not appear.

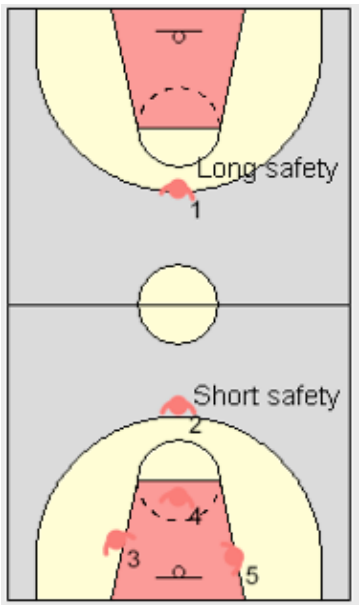


Stretch the Floor Vertically

When a rebound is secured and the rim is sighted, the other players put immediate vertical pressure on the defense by sprinting vertically. They fan out to spread the floor. It is important that these players have been taught to run forward while still looking back over their inside shoulder.

Decision making now comes into play. The player with the ball must decide to:
- throw long
- break out dribble
- pivot and look for a teammate to cut back to the ball

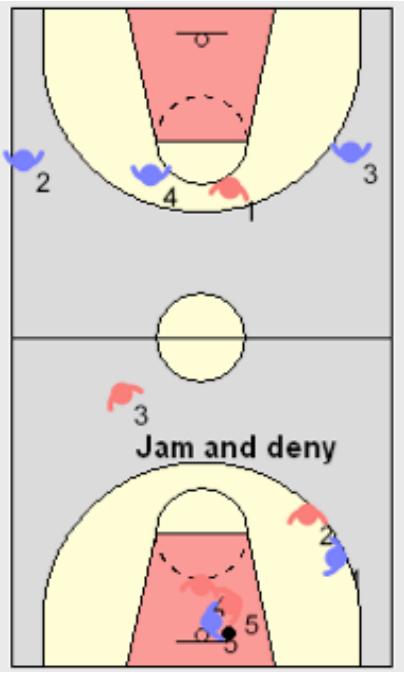
The other players must evaluate the situation also. You can still have the point guard cut back to receive the outlet.



Taking Advantage of Transition Defence

Transition defence has been taught in a number of different ways:

- "Get back" - everyone sprints back to the defensive half court and then matches the ball. This type of transition does not challenge the attacking team until the half court. If you push the ball, you will find advantage since not all players will arrive at exactly the same time.
- Fan - in this transition, the defence spreads out to meet the offense. It becomes like a zone press. The slower you attack, the easier for the defence to set.
- Funnel - the concept here is to immediately find the ball and put pressure on it to direct it to spots advantageous to the defence
- Combination - these more complex transition defences rely on a combination of fanning and funneling. The most common taught today involves long and short safeties.

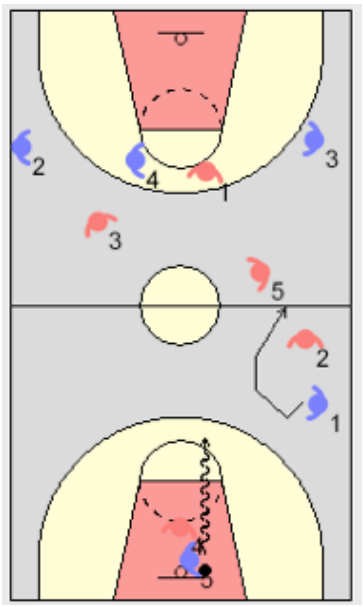


One of the major weaknesses of all transition defences is the mismatches in numbers and in abilities that can occur when teams run. Failure to run allows teams to begin to exert pressure on the ball immediately. In fact, teams will even be able to deny outlet passes and set up 1/2 court and 3/4 pressure.

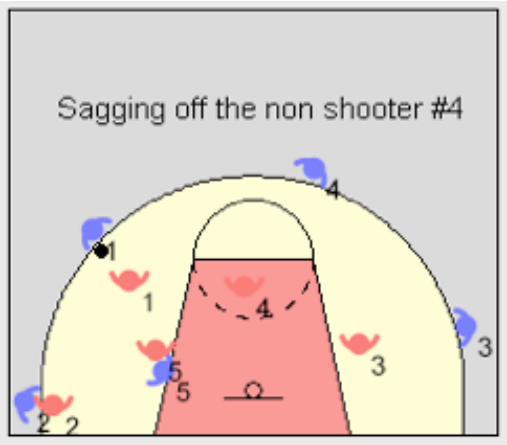
A vulnerable time for the transition defence is the time when the safeties, usually smaller perimeter players, are released by the retreating bigger players to apply ball pressure. It requires communication and coordination to for this to happen seamlessly.

Teams that fail to run, or always use one player to advance the ball, allow this to happen almost instantaneously. A team can leave their "bigs" to jam the rebounders and send a player to deny the outlet because they know there is no deep threat.

This puts instance pressure on the defence and forces the back line players to move backward. If you do not do this and allow these players to move forward, teams get very good at building pressure. There is always that point when the defensive safeties must be released by the retreating interior players. The further down the floor this occurs, the more space and less pressure the offense will face. If no release occurs, you create mismatches that the offense wants to quickly exploit before the defense can recover.



Teams that stretch vertically, throw long, or use break out dribbles, move the release point further down the floor later in the transition. The safeties must move back first before moving forward. Teams may also have to designate fewer players to the offensive boards. The advancing defenders now have to face an offensive player coming at speed.



Front Court Attack

When the shot clock winds down, another universal attack situation occurs. If teams begin to realize that players cannot attack late in the clock, they become very good at disrupting the offense when these players have the ball. If coaches try to hide these players, it can really disrupt your court spacing and the ability for others to create.

Teams will not guard a non-shooter late in the clock who stands on the perimeter. Also, a non-ball handler who catches the ball will face extreme ball pressure.

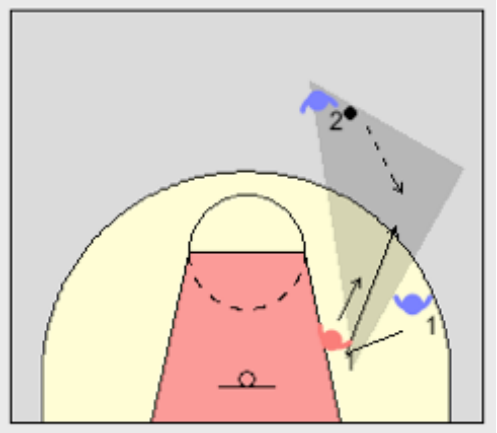
The more players who can create shots and assists, the harder the team is to defend. One trend that we have started to notice internationally is that it is rare to have one player dominating the scoring. These players are two easy to stop over the long haul. It is the team that has a number of players averaging double figures that are tough to defend.

Analyze the Situation

Players need to be able to analyze the situation:

- What are my strengths?
- How am I being defended?
- Who are my teammates (strengths)?
- How are they being defended

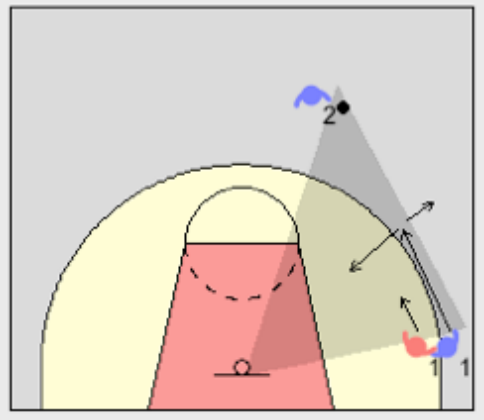
The player with the ball must know where the greatest advantage lies for the team. Ideally, we want the player with the greatest advantage to have the ball to score. The key is having all players know what this is and how to get the ball to that player. When it is a late clock situation, the urgency is magnified. Great teams seem to have the knack of not panicking in these situations and still getting off quality shots.



V-Cut

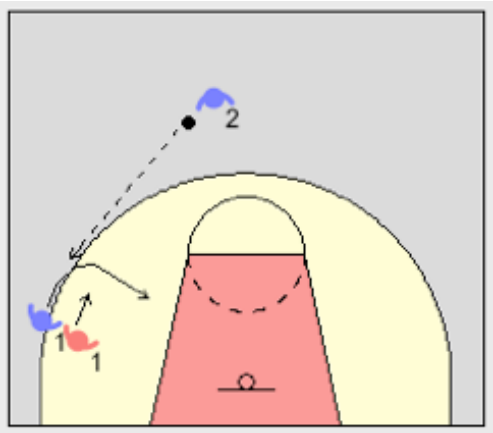
The v-cut has been taught for many years in the game of basketball and is still a very important skill for all players to learn. It is important that players understand the strengths and weaknesses of this cut. It is often over used at the wrong times and therefore limits the options of the offense.

When the offensive player breaks to the sideline, it is very difficult to read the defence since the vision of the offensive player is away from the middle of the court. The player must play control. If the player does decide to back cut, he/she requires a 180° change of direction. Also, when the player is setting up the cut to the sideline. he/she restricts the ability of other player to attack the rim.



Blast Cut

This is an attacking cut since the offensive player can make a read on the defence before the ball is caught. If the player does back cut, it is only a 90° cut opposed to the 180° cut of the V-cut. Also the passer has room to penetrate to the basket. It also keeps the basket open for other cutters to attack the rim.

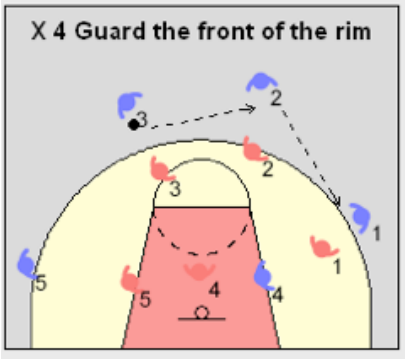


Pivot Foot

When playing attack, the offensive player needs to be able to pivot off either foot. It is a natural movement that the players will make when receiving the ball. Usually, there is little hesitation in the movement upon receiving the ball.

When playing control basketball, there are many different theories as to which foot should be the pivot foot. It has been my observation that the great stationary one-on-one players usually have a dominate foot that is opposite their shooting hand.

No matter what the theory, players need to be able to play off of both feet when playing attack basketball.



Post Players

Many offenses have an interior player playing in on the blocks. Every time the perimeter player catches the ball there is an interior player between him/her and the basket. There is an advantage to this positioning if the interior player can score from this position and the perimeter player is nifty at passing to the post. The problem occurs when the player is not a serious scoring threat or constantly follows the ball. The post defender can guard the front of the rim. The ball often gets frozen and allows the help defence to build. This limits the ability of the perimeter players to attack the basket:

- no space to penetrate
- no space to back cut if over played
- no space to attack the basket with a cut; whether it be from a screen or a straight cut when the defence is out of position

The ability of the interior player to move and exit the key is a vital part of attack offense. If this player can also play more "globally" i.e., score form the perimeter, the offense has more flexibility.

Some people feel you lose the advantage of rebounding when you spread the floor. This is a matter of teaching players when to attack the basket to rebound instead of standing on the perimeter.

Discovery Approaches to Teaching on the Ball Defence

Players are often over taught the details of defence to the point that they forget the basic concepts. Some of the basic concepts that we want to teach the players in on the ball defence include:

- to mirror the offensive players' movements
- to turn the ball handler in a new direction
- to channel the ball hander in one direction

This discovery approach method is to help the players discover the proper way to accomplish the two concepts mentioned above.



1. **Grizzly Bear Stance**

   With young children, allowing them to use their imagination encourages them to be more creative and have fun. By asking the children to assume a grizzly bear stance, you are putting them in the universal athletic stance:

   - feet shoulder width apart
   - knees bent
   - elbows bent
   - hand up with the palms facing forward (show your claws)

Too many players will bend at the waist and therefore have a rounded upper back. They must pull the shoulder blades together. The waist is not a joint and should not bend. They must learn to activate their core muscles, which lie under the abdominal muscles.

A good activity is to have the children move around in random movement. I call this making scrambled eggs. When you call stop, they assume the grizzly bear stance. Growls add to the fun.

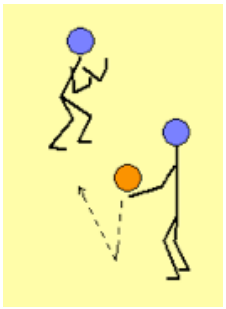
Moving from Stance

It is important that the children learn to move quickly from their stance in all directions. The ball drop drills is a fun way to challenge the players. It is a discovery learning approach. Let them try it for a while. It is important that you observe their actions:

- Do they get low?
- Do they always start moving one foot first?
- Do they use a "plyo" step

Bring them in and ask probing questions:

- How can we be quicker to the ball?
- How can we get lower to start?
- What can you do to push first in the direction you want to go?
- How can I move faster, by sliding or running?

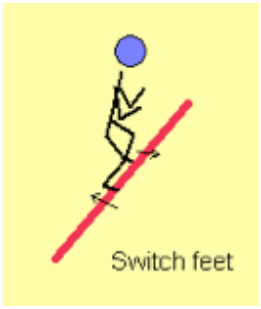


2. **Ball Drop Drill**

The player without the ball starts in the universal stance. This player must let the ball bounce once, but not let it hit the floor a second time. The ball can be bounced

- in front
- tossed to the side
- thrown over the head of the player

This causes the player to move in all directions.

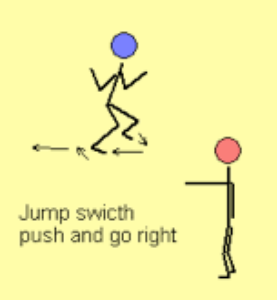


3. **Plyo Step**

Players need to work on creating a push foot by taking a quick "plyo" step with the foot opposite the direction he/she wishes to move. Here are some break down drills to work on this skill.

Hip Turns

Line up with the toes of one foot touching the far edge of the line and the other toes touching the edge closet to the player's body. When the coach says, "switch", the players switch the position of the feet. They should keep the slight stagger. The coach now asks the players to go as fast as they can. When he/she says, "stop", the players stop. Do they still have the slight stagger?

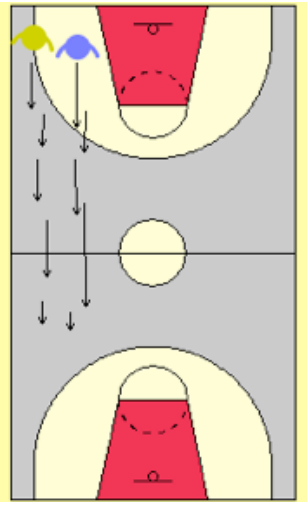


4. **Hip Turn and Go**

   In this drill, the coach points in a given direction. When he/she says, "go", the player does the quick jump switch to push off with the foot in the opposite direction. Note the players can:
   - slide
   - run with a crossover step
   - run leading with the same foot

Mirror the Pace of the Defender

Defenders must learn how to mirror the actions of the offensive player. This simple drill helps the player's discovery of what is important. It is crucial in all of these drills that the coach takes the time to debrief the athletes to help them remember the key lessons learned.



5. **Cops and Robbers**

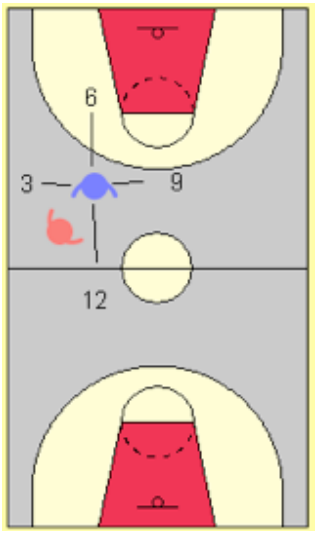
   This is a great little game to teach players how to mirror the pace of the offensive player. It also works the offensive player on how changing pace can shake a defender.

   The player chosen as leader moves forward in a straight line by using the three paces (walk, jog run) and stopping. He/she attempts to get the defender to pass in front. Every

time this happens, a point is scored. When the players get to the other, end they switch roles.

Load:

- run on the other side
- add the basketball
- monitor the speeds. Be sure the offense works on adding a variety of speeds.
- allow fakes
- allow changes of direction - you need lots of room, be aware of others.

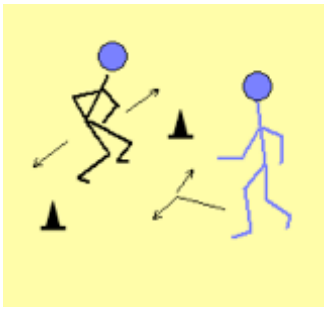


6. **Stay in the Clock**

Visualize the offensive player standing on a clock. The defender wants to be in a good, low stance and close enough to touch the lead hip of the offensive player. As the offensive player moves forward, the defender must attempt to stay in the 1/4 of the clock from 12 to 3. It is ideal to remain on numbers 1 and 2. This is teaching the player to channel or force an offensive player to move in a certain direction. The drill is the same as cops and robbers. A point is given for every time the player leaves the quadrant.

Load:

- Work in the other front quadrant
- Add the ball
- Allow changes of direction



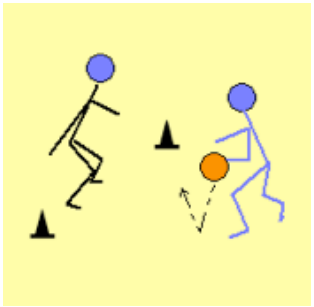
7. **Turning**

The players partner up with two pylons (if you don't have pylons, use a line on the floor. Badminton court lines work very well). The offensive player is working on change of speed, change of direction, and fakes to get between the two pylons. The defence is working on keeping his/her chest in front of the offensive player. Make them change direction.

You can go for a length of time or a certain number of times. Score a point for the offense every time he/she gets two feet passed the pylon. Put a time limit on the offense to allow the defence to have another way to score.

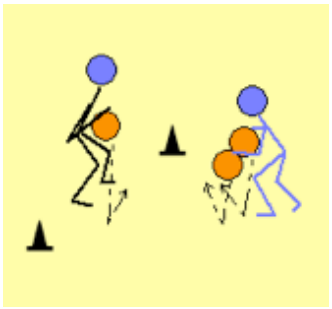
In this example, we have made it even more difficult on the defence by having him/her grab onto their shorts.

It is important to use questions to guide the defender and the offensive player into discovering what works best.



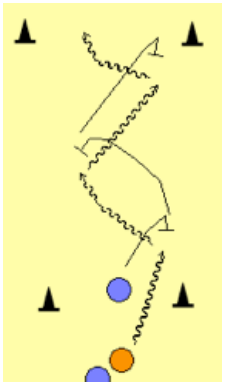
8. **Loading the Drill**

The second progression is to add a ball to the offensive player. In this case, the defender is not grabbing onto his/her shorts. Make the offensive player turn and change direction.



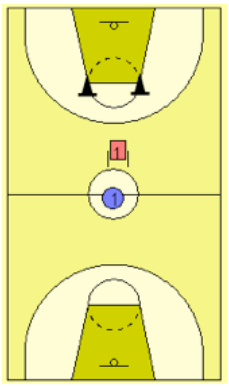
9. **Improve Ball Handling**

   A great way to work on ball handling is to have the offensive player dribble two balls and the defender one ball.



10. **Turn Three Times**

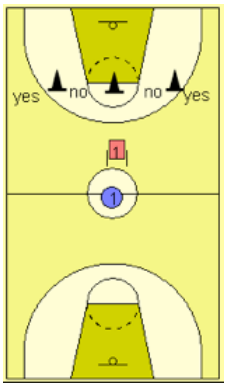
    We now give the players a rectangle to dribble in. badminton courts work for this or the key. The defender is trying to turn the offensive player three times before he/she reaches the end of the rectangle. You can vary the number of turns required.



11. **Channeling**

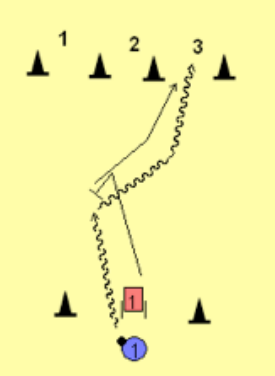
We now take the drill full court. Player #1 starts in the center circle. X1 starts on the perimeter of the jump circle. With no ball involved, X1 must keep #1 from running between the pylons at the foul line (you can narrow the pylons if you wish). To make it harder on the defence, make the players grab their shorts. The next progression is to add the ball.

Ask questions to guide the players. They will eventually learn it is easier to start on an angle and allow the offensive player to start running in one direction. The defence needs to stay in front of the hip. The offense will also discover that changing speeds, changing direction, and faking makes them tougher to guard. In fact, you can restrict the offense by only allowing change of direction or change of speed.



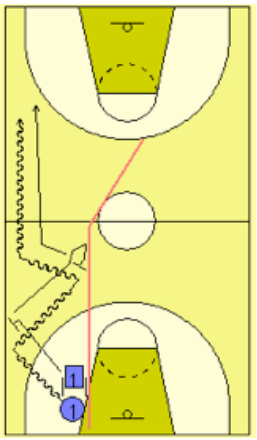
12. **Channel**

We now give the defence a reward for channeling the defence to the outside. Start with no ball. Please note that this is a very difficult drill without the ball, but players will gain confidence once the ball is added.



13. **Channel Plus Turn**

We now combine the two concepts. The coach tells the defence which hole he/she is to make the defence to go through. The offense does not know. Like a sheep dog, the defender works to maneuver the sheep into the corral.

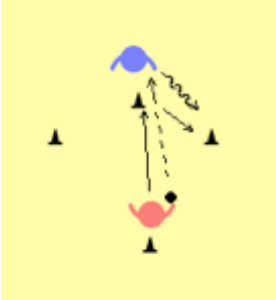


14. **Turn Two Times, Channel to the Side**

The final piece is to move the drill to the full court. The goals are:

- to force the player to dribble to the sideline first
- to turn the dribble twice in the back court
- to make the dribbler cross half at the side line
- to make the offense attack the basket from the wing position, not the middle of the floor.

The defense can score a total of four points each possession - one point for each of the goals.



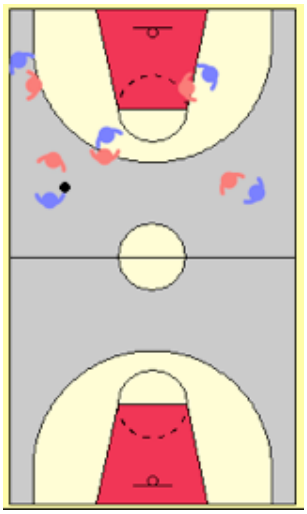
15. **Close Out**

This drill is used to help the defender learn to close out and turn the offensive player from moving forward. Force the offensive to move in circles, not straight lines.

The defender passes the ball to the offense and sprints under control. Use a stutter to decelerate. The offense then dribbles at one of the pylons. The defender mirrors this action.

Load:

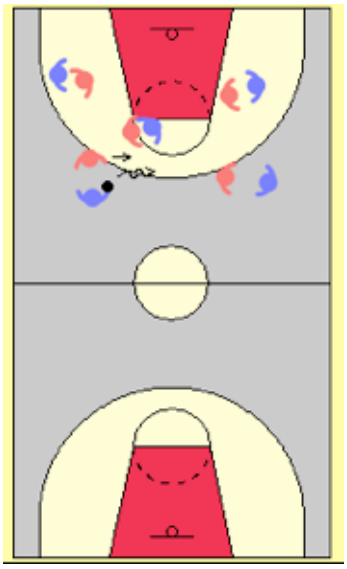
- make it a game - the offense scores by getting between the pylons
- allow fakes
- have the defence channel the player toward one of the pylons



16. **Games Approach (v. I)**

One of the best ways to tech both offensive and defensive concepts is by playing the game of basketball with restrictions. Here, we are playing 5 on 5. The rule is no dribbling. The offense can score a point every time they complete a pass and there is no immediate ball pressure within one second. If the offense is weak, give them an advantage of an extra player. This forces the defence to rotate and communicate. Also, the offense is working on finding the open player.

This is also excellent to teach control offense where players must work to get open and pass vs. pressure.

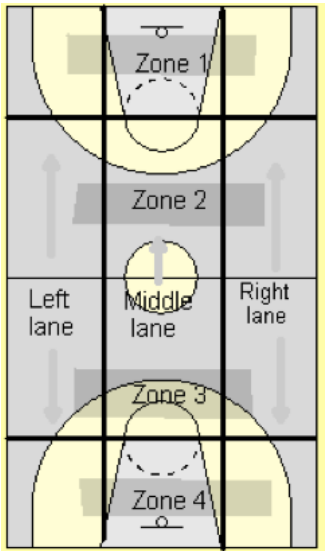


17. **Games Approach (v. II)**

In the second version, the offensive player must make a decision within one second of catching the ball. The defence must still apply ball pressure immediately. This forces the defender to be able to react to the dribble from the close out. You may have to give the offense an extra player with younger kids until their passing and scanning skills improve.

Using the Grid

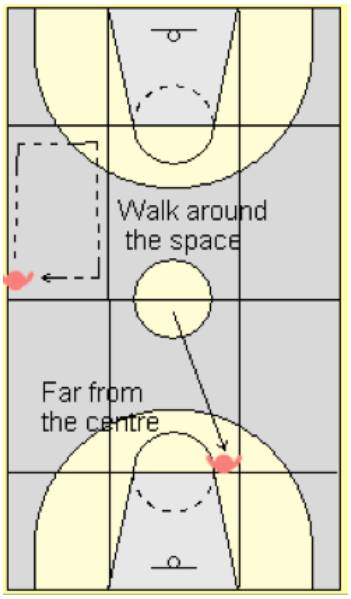
We have divided the court into 12 rectangles. It is formed by combining the three lanes of the court with the four zones. The grid is an excellent way to teach the concept of spacing to players. When we use spots, the athletes often do not learn the concept of space. They need to know why.



Activities

Help the children to understand their space.

- Play music for them to move around to. When the whistle goes or the music stops, they must find open space. If there are more than 12 players, allow two or more in each space.
- Move in your space
    - Walk the perimeter of the space
    - Find the point furthest from the center of the court
    - Closest to the baseline, sideline
    - Do activities in the space
- Switch to a new space.



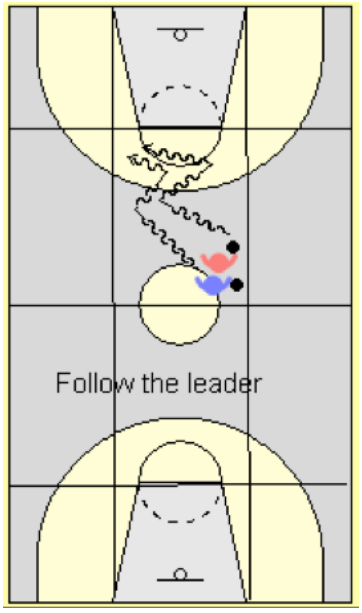
Two Players in Space

Magnets
- Stay close to one another
- Stay away from one another

Sealing
- Push and pull
- Sumo wrestle

Agility
- Knee tag
- Keep away with the ball
- Follow the leader

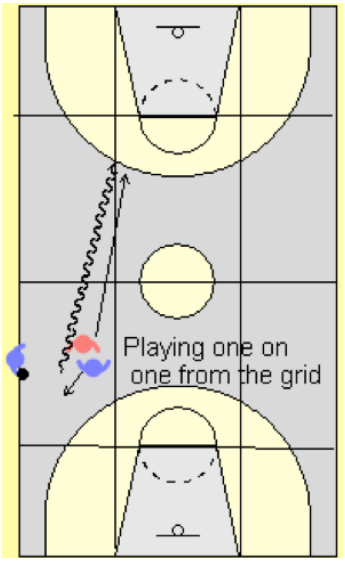
Basketball Skills
- Steal the ball
- Pass and move

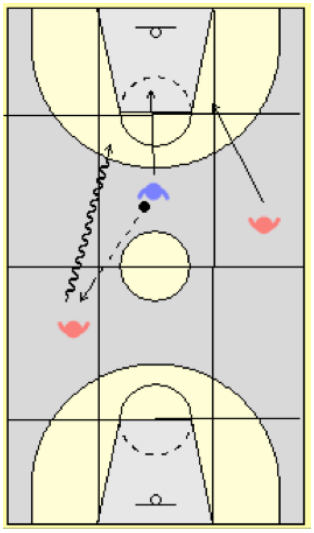


Base Games

The grid is an excellent way in which to teach players how to play the various base games (1 on 1, 2 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 2, 3 on 3, etc.). By playing these games from different positions around the grid, the players learn valuable lessons:

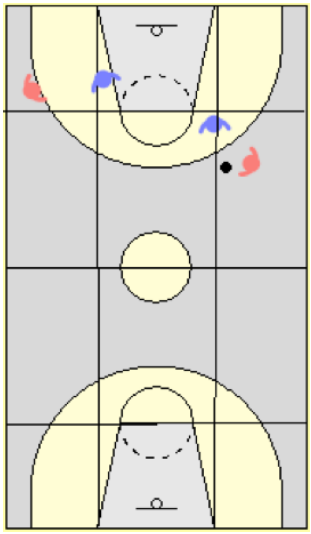
- How should I get open for the ball in this area?
- Where is the best place to be on offense in this area?
- What are my strengths and what are the strengths of the person defending me?
- How can I attack his/her weakness?





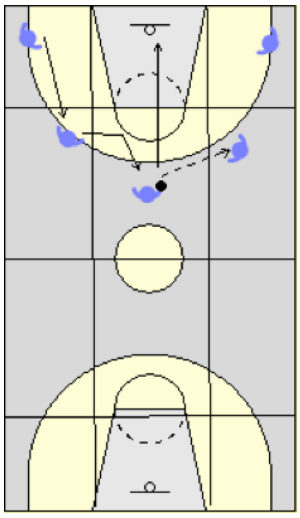
Playing 2 on 1 from the Grid

Start the offensive players in different rectangles. The defense starts in a rectangle and must decide how to play based on the positioning of the offense.



2 on 2

The same concepts occur when we play 2 on 2. The coach positions the offensive players in different positions. The defense must decide where it is best to play. Now the players must understand who my teammate is and who is guarding my teammate. The same happens as we play 3 on 3 and 4 on 4. Start players in different areas around the grid.

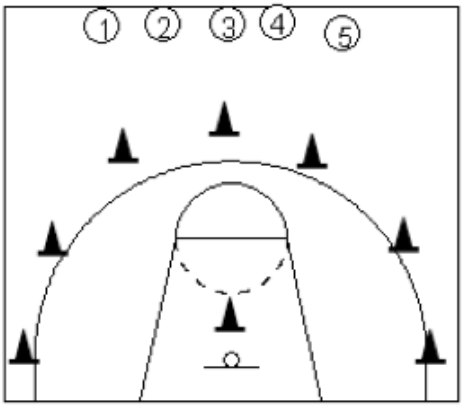


The grid is an excellent way to teach spacing on any 5 player offense. The players should have gained the knowledge from the base games on how to play within each space.

Beginner's Offense

Keys:

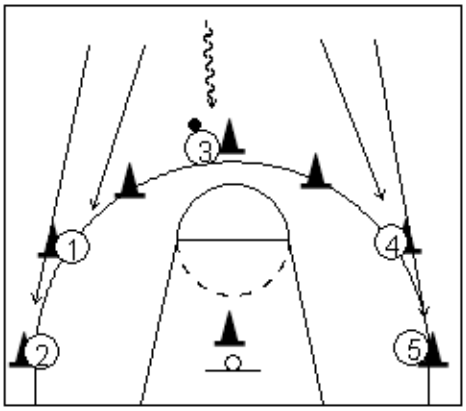
- Proper spacing
- Every player should learn to play every position
- Attack the open basket
- When you have the ball, scan the rim first, then from side to side
- When you don't have the ball, constantly scan your defender, the ball, and the basket
- You need to spend time developing the skills and running a pattern. Players especially need to learn to read the defence.
- Avoid the temptation to teach a set play and putting players in assigned positions
- Each time the players are on the floor, let different players bring the ball up the floor and inbound the ball.



Step 1

Eight pylons are positioned around the floor - one at the top, two on the swing, two on the wing (foul line extended), one at the front of the basket, and two in the corner (the 3-point line straightens out). The younger the players, the closer you can move the pylons to the basket, but remember that these do not have to be in the players' shooting range.

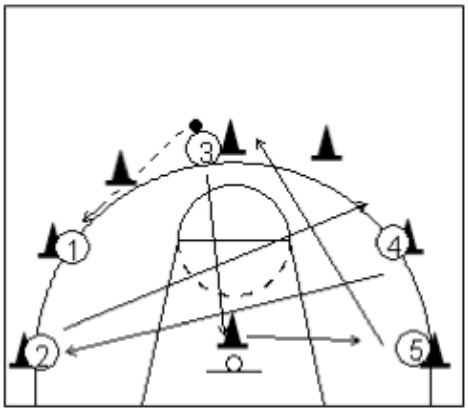
a. When the coach says, "go", the players fill five of the eight spots (no basketball).
b. When the coach says, "change", the players move to a new pylon.



Step Two

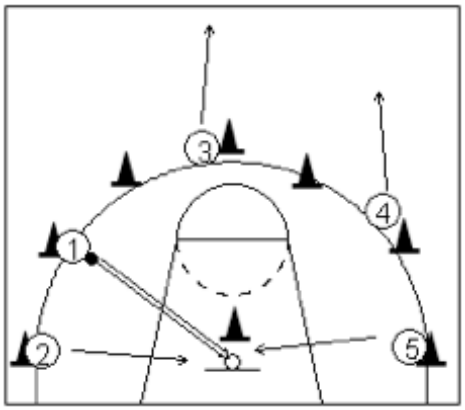
This time, the players start at half with a ball. The player with the ball takes it to the top or one of the swing spots. The other players fill the open spots. Ideally, we want to have some balance. It is not a good ideal to have the right corner, right wing, right swing, and top all filled at the same time.

a. Make a pass, count to 3, and everyone without the ball must move to a new spot.
b. The reason you wait is to allow the person with the ball time to get ready. As the players improve, the movement can occur at a faster rate with the person who passed the ball cutting first.



Step Three

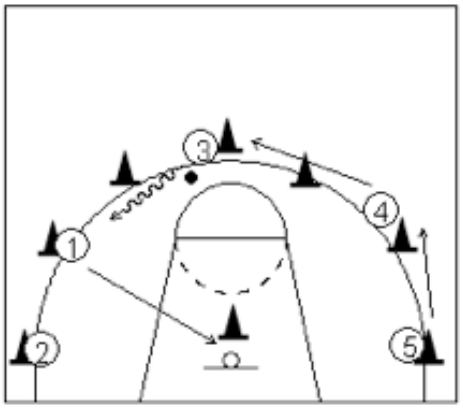
Now the player who passes the ball cuts to the basket. Count to 3, everyone finds a new spot. The player with the ball is taught to scan the rim first and then look to the right and left. This is teaching players "global" basketball. Everyone plays every position. As players improve, they must learn to "time" their cuts. This means to wait until the passer is ready to pass. Eye contact is important.



Step Four

Rebounding

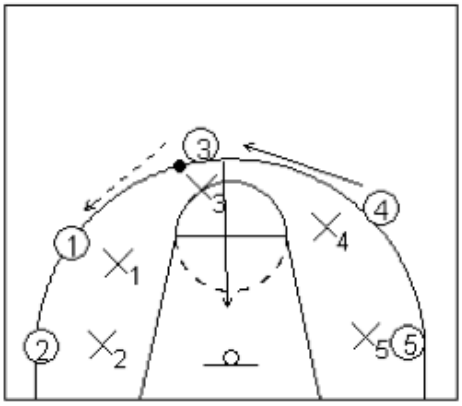
Anyone above the foul line extended goes back on defence. Anyone below goes for a rebound. You now have a great little offense for beginning basketball players.



Step Five

Attack on the dribble

Now a player may dribble. If a player dribbles at you, cut to the basket. If a player dribbles away from you, fill that spot. If the player dribbles at the basket, look to get open if your defender helps.



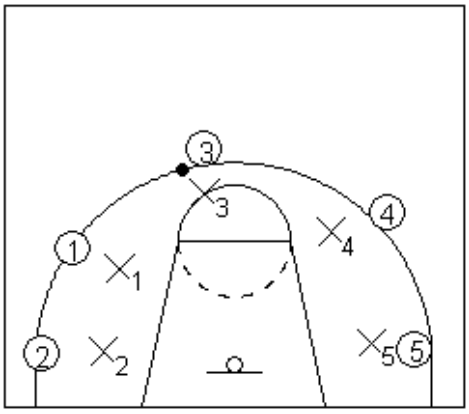
Games Approach

#1 - Control - No dribbles

The players play five on five basketball (**Note**: If you have 12 players, play 6 on 6 with younger players) with no dribbling.

Load the drill:

- Score by passing to a player in the key
- Play full court
- Have a violation if two offensive players are in the key at the same time (only if they are stopped and looking for the ball)
- Make the defence play close to the offense to put more pressure on the ball
- Violation for not squaring to face the basket
- Violation for being a statue by holding the ball above the head
- The coach stands under the basket with two different coloured pinnies. The player with the ball must call out the colour. Violation if no call.

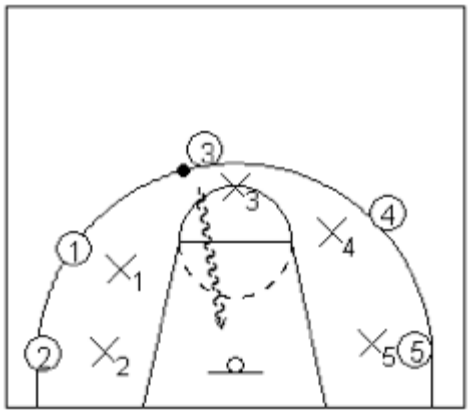


Games Approach

#2 Attack - One Second Rule

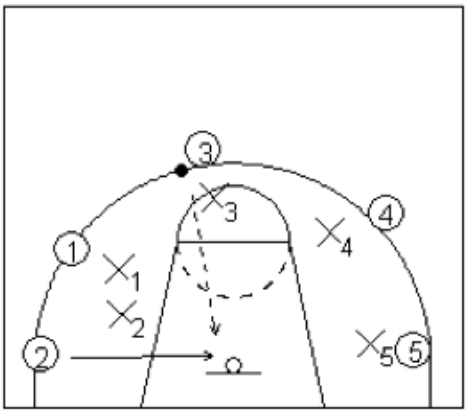
In this version, the offensive player must make a decision with the ball within one second upon receiving the ball. The player must pass, dribble, or shoot. This forces the players to think quickly and make decisions off the dribble. This can be loaded the same way with a few additional rules:

- Must use weak hand dribbles
- Give extra points for a pass-pass
- Have a three dribble limit when playing full court



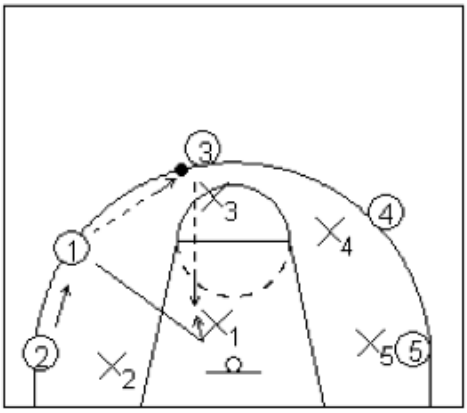
Attack the Open Basket

A key concept we want the players to learn is to attack the open basket. In this example, player #3 sees his/her defender out of position and dribbles to the open rim. The other players must move if their defenders help.



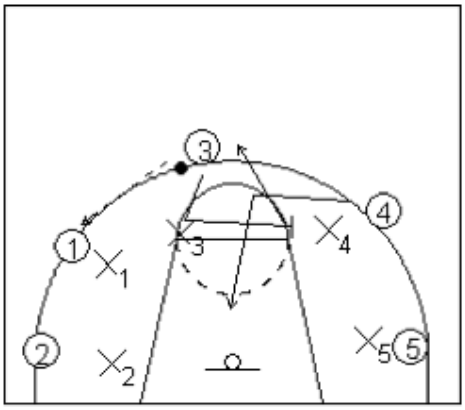
Cut to the Open Basket

In this example, player #2 sees his/her defender getting caught looking at the ball and leaving the rim open. It is important that if the player does not receive the ball he/she quickly exits to leave the rim open for another cutter.



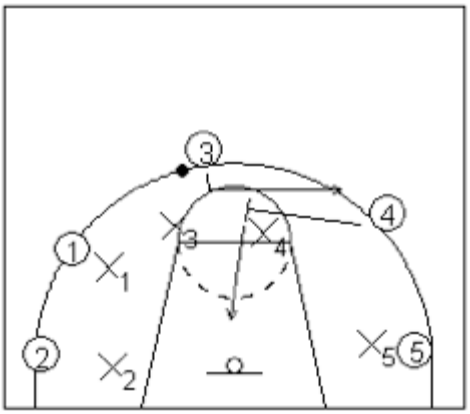
Posting

If a player finds he/she has an advantage or can seal his/her defender at the rim, he/she may do so. If the ball is not delivered, exit cut.



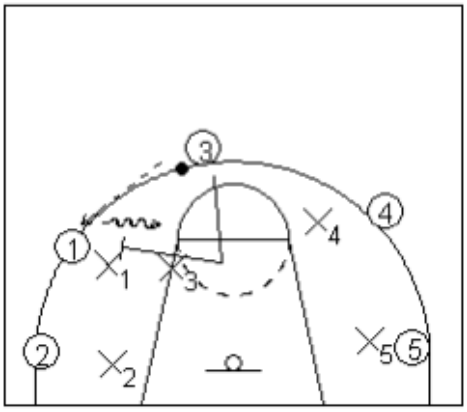
Screens

This is a more advanced option and should not be added until the players have grasped the first concepts. If, when cutting, the basket is no longer open, the player can break off the cut and go and set a screen for a teammate. When first learning, it is best to screen for the player who would fill your spot. If an open basket appears, the player attacks it with the cut.



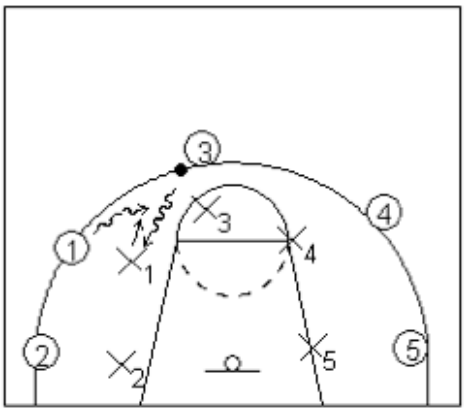
Advanced Screening

At a more advanced level, the offside player should call the type of screen to be set. If the defense is sagging in, set a flare screen or screen the defence in. If the defence is tight, set a down screen or screen the defence out.



Picks

Another option is to set picks. This can be done by the player following his/her pass and setting a pick. Or, a player can call for one of the other players to come set a pick on the ball. It is best to do these when they can create a mismatch.

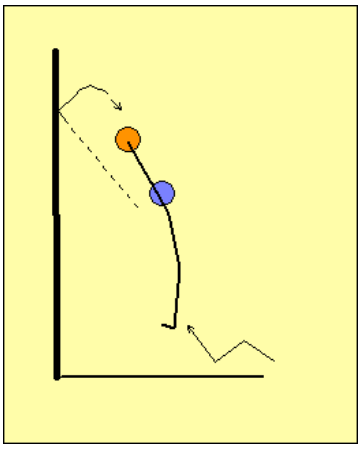


Dribble Hand Offs

Especially against defences that start to sag, it is important to use dribble hand offs or "dribble ats". The ball handler dribbles at the defender of the next perimeter player. The offensive player goes behind for a hand off. Theses work best when they create mismatches on switches.

Break Down Drills for Beginning Offense

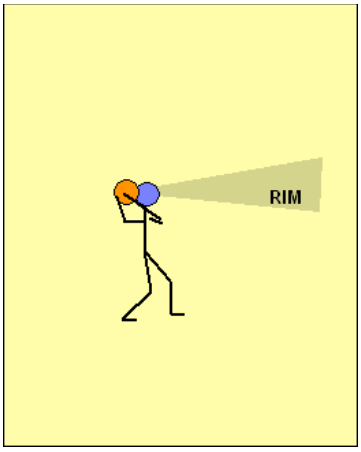
Mike MacKay – Performance Manager, Women's High Performance



These drills are break down drills to help the players improve on the skills required to play offense.

Starting on Offense

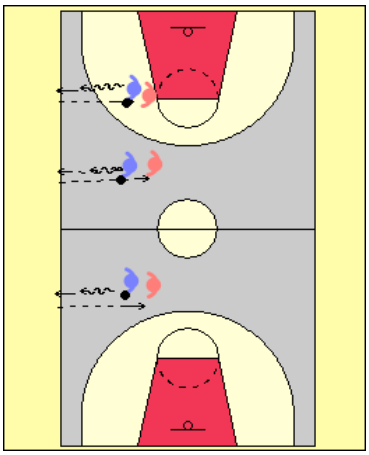
The first break down drill is tossing the ball off the wall, jumping, and rebounding. We want the players to learn to jump and catch the ball with two hands. Call "ball".



Land like a Quarterback

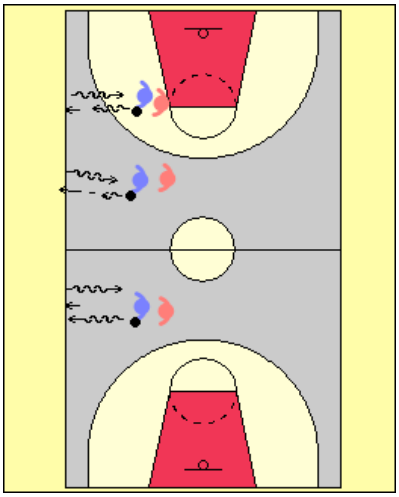
Ideally, we want players to land so they are looking down the floor with the ball being held by the ear with two hands. This requires them to do a quarter turn in the air. Their eyes should be on the far rim.

Have someone hold up fingers or touch different parts of the body. This ensures that the player is scanning. Be sure to practice turning both ways.



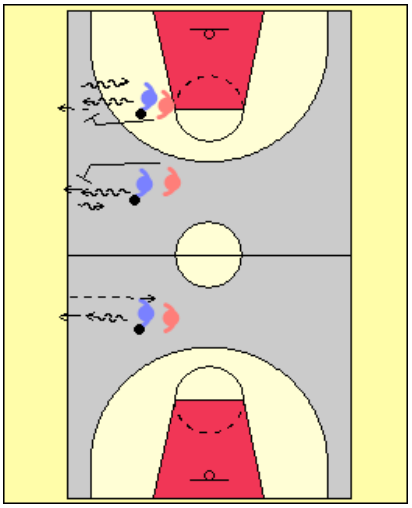
Dribble, Toss, Rebound

Have the players partner up and spread out along the wall. The first player dribbles the ball up and tosses it off the wall. He/she jumps, calls ball, and rebounds with two hands making the quarter turn in the air. On landing, he/she must call out how many fingers his/her partner displays. The ball is passed and the other partner goes. Work dribbling and rebounding both ways.



Breakout Dribbles

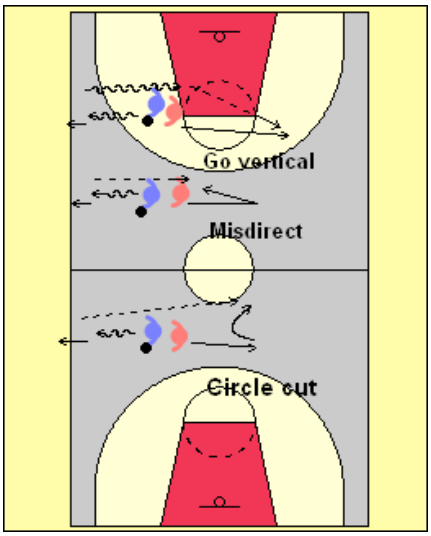
Now when the ball is rebounded, the player scans the rim and sweeps the ball with a strong break out dribble. Take two hard dribble and hand the ball off to your teammate who repeats the drill.



Add a Guided Defender

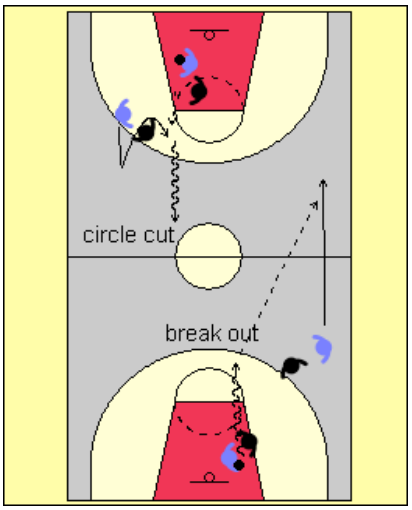
This time, the partner follows the first player to the wall. On the rebound, jam the rebounder to the right or left. The rebounder uses the break out to the proper side. Do not allow them to turn their back and dribble to the sidelines. The dribble must go vertical.

Load
Sometimes the player stays and calls for the pass.



Outlet

We now want to concentrate on the outlet. Once the ball is secure, we want to start by going vertical. This puts instant pressure on the defence and creates space. If the rebounder is in trouble, we can cut straight back to the ball. If the player breaks out, we continue to go long. As players improve, they add the Steve Nash circle cut where they curl in front of the defender as they cut back. This gets their momentum going vertical. This can happen early or late. As players go long, they must always be scanning their teammate with the ball.



Full Court

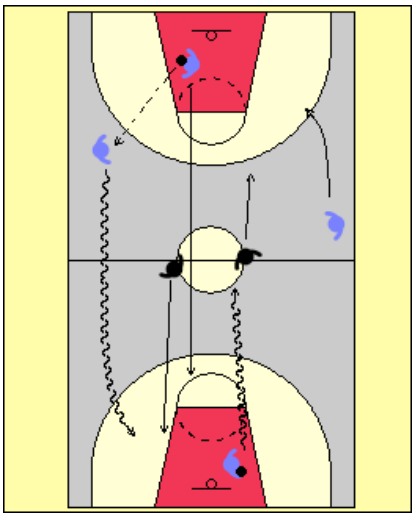
We now work on the various reads in the full court. At first, the coach may have to give the guides, but eventually it is important that the players do this skill. It helps increase their understanding of the game.

Load

- defend the rebounder
- defend the outlet
- defend both
- start from a box out

Play live two on two.

2-1 in Small Spaces



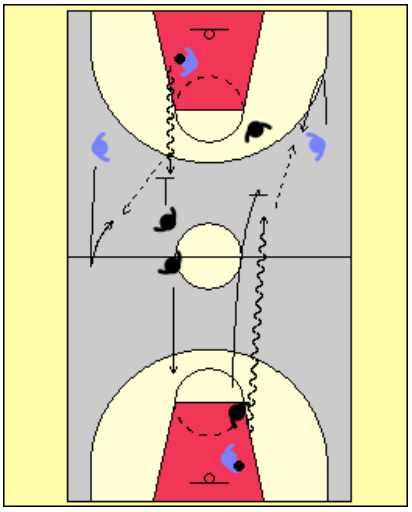
A good progression is to play 2-1 in small spaces. The rebounder can either break out dribble or make the outlet. The players can fill the wing and swing or front the rim on one side of the floor. The defenders are working on making fakes and deciding who to guard.

Load

- Start the defender in different places
- Jam the rebounder to give a read

The player in front must decide to create space for a teammate or to attack the lone defender. If attacking, we like to go through the elbow. This gives the best chance to score at either angle.

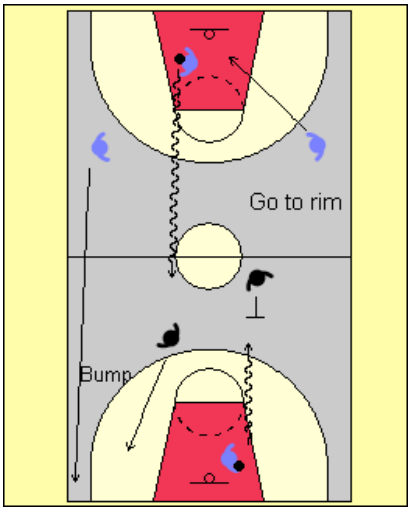
Note: You can call the areas you want the players to play through: Swing-wing, Swing and swing, Top and wing, Front rim and wing.



2 on 2 in Small Space

Now they play 2 on 2. The key teaching point here is for the outlet to recognize when his/her teammate is in trouble. This could be early or late.

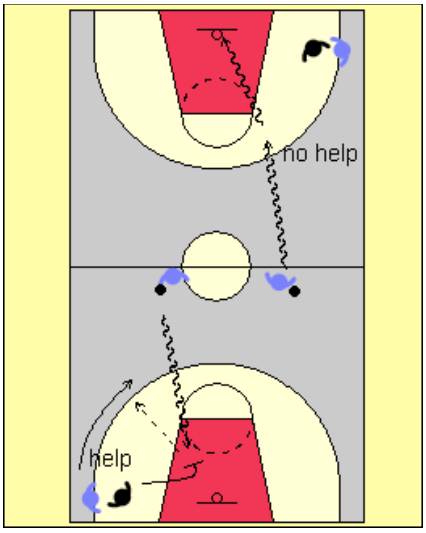
Note: Again, it is important that the coach mix up the spacing the players play in. Do not always use wing-swing. Sometimes, play swing and swing or any other combination.



Attack in the Front Court

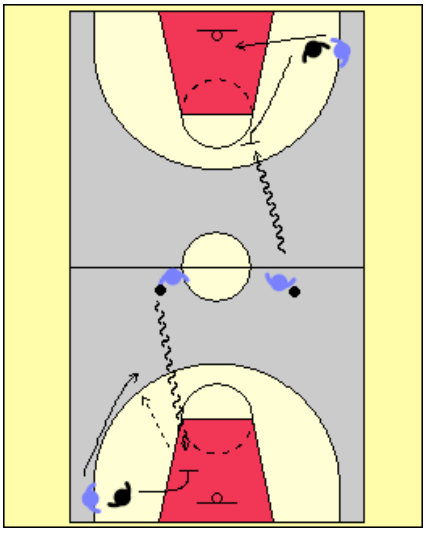
When advancing down the floor, we want players to stay wide and bump the baseline. The exception is if there is no defender between them and the rim. By staying wide and bumping the baseline, we force the defence to spread out and allow for easier entry passes or penetration.

Note: As before, mix up the finishing spaces. The players play through.



Attack the Basket

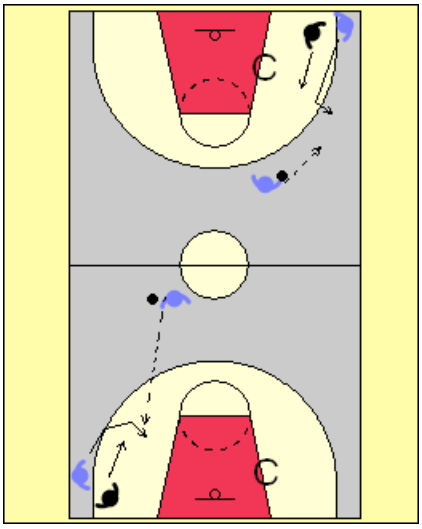
If the player dribbling the ball does not have a pass ahead, he/she should look to attack the basket. The wing player stays wide and deep. If there is no help, go to score. If help comes, make the pass.



Help Up or Over

If the defense helps up, we can back cut to the rim. A good rule of thumb for young players is to attack the back of their defender's head when he/she turns it. If the defence helps over, we prefer to rotate up and behind the ball. This makes it harder for the defence to recover.

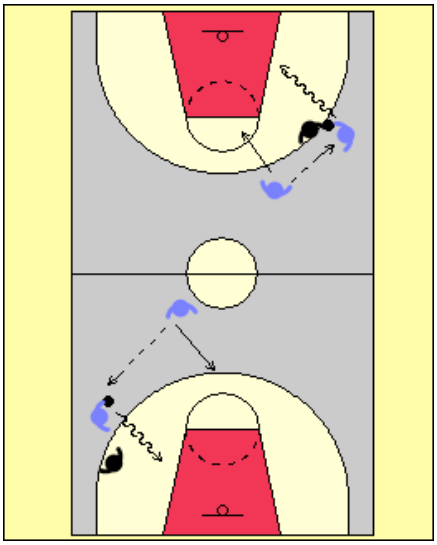
Note: I know I keep saying this, but please be sure to work on this concept from all different combinations of positions. For example, the swing to swing is another important one.



Dribbler Cannot Beat His/her Defender

If the ball handler cannot beat his/her defender, the wing player must look to blast cut to the ball when the dribbler is able to make the pass. There should be eye contact and the wing should be in the passing range of the dribbler. The first reads we work on are a slight deny by the defence. We call it, "fingers in the passing lane". If there is no body in the post, curl over top of this player and look for the ball.

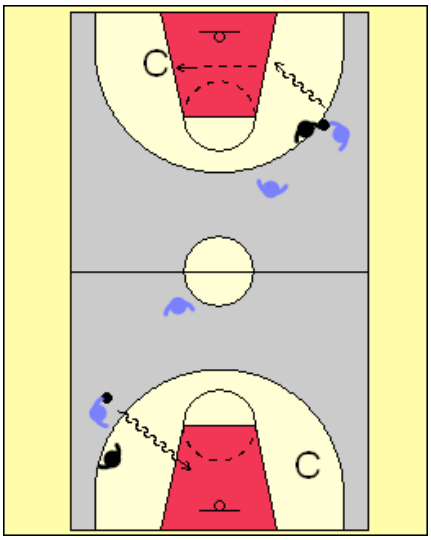
If the coach stands in the post on your side, you have to pop to the wing to receive the pass. Now, players are learning an attack move (curl) plus a control move (pop). The passer must pass to a spot, not the person. This is a hard skill for young kids to learn sometimes.



Attack on the Catch

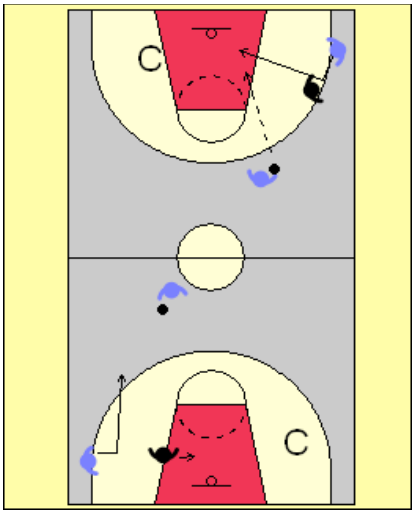
After catching the ball, we want the wing player to play attack basketball. Beat the defender to the side he/she presents. Many coaches talk about attacking the top foot. This is true if the foot splits the defender. If the top foot is outside the body of the defender, the best decision is usually to go at the back foot. After passing, the top player should look to move and be available.

Note: Play from different positions.



Eyes Up

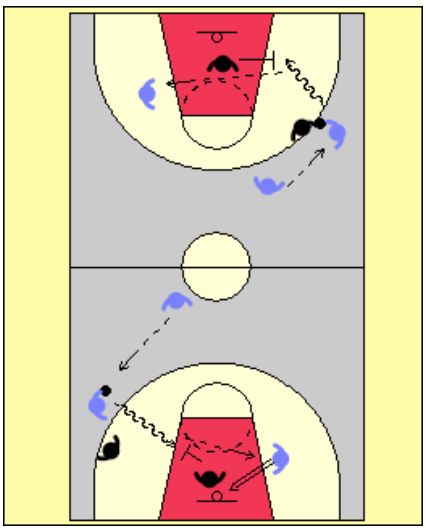
A coach can stand in the vision of the player driving. If the coach shows 5 fingers, the player must pass. The coach will immediately pass the ball back. If the coach does not show fingers, there is no pass.



Other Reads

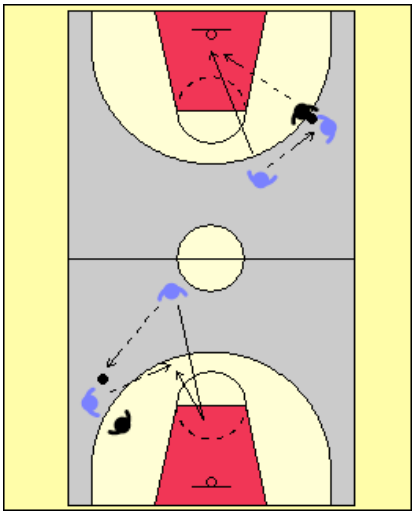
If, on the blast cut, the read is an elbow or chest in the passing lane, look to back cut to the rim.

If the defence plays open sag, you can cut straight to the ball if the player is off two strides. If only off about one stride, you may have to misdirect first. This prevents that player from shooting the gap. If a player puts his/her forearm on, you need to get rid of this arm. This starts to happen at higher levels where contact that is more physical is allowed.



Help Defender

Now add a help defender. If the player helps on the drive, we need to make the pass. No help, keep going to score. Help means the defender has placed a chest in your driveline to the basket. Allow the players to play 3 on 2. This encourages finding the open player. The three on two can start from the dribble. Now the players must read help.

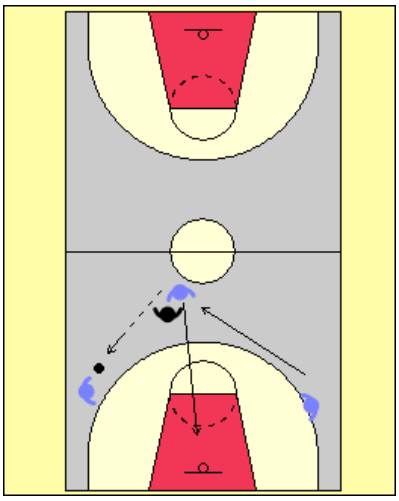


Control on the Catch

Sometimes on the catch we want the player to play control. This means he/she will catch, square up, and read. The first look is to the rim, then to someone in the post, at the basket, and final to the action (happening away from the basket). Here we are showing the player reading the give and go cut. The cutter must make the same sort of reads as the cut off the wing.

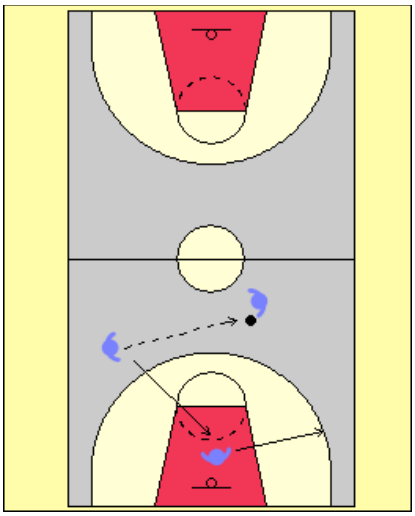
Load:

- guard the passer
- guard the cutter
- guard both



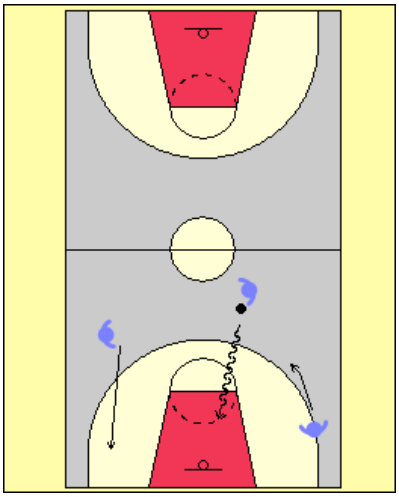
Pass, Cut, Fill

We now look to work on the concept of pass, cut, fill. If the wing player plays control, we need to cut to the rim after passing. The basket is a stop sign. Stop at the front of the rim and look for the ball. As players get older, they need to learn to seal. The next player must fill the vacated spot. The players must decide who has the best pass to this player.



Exit Cut

The player must learn to exit cut. This means to leave the key area. Once this occurs, it allows the next player to cut to the rim. Again, who has the best pass angle?



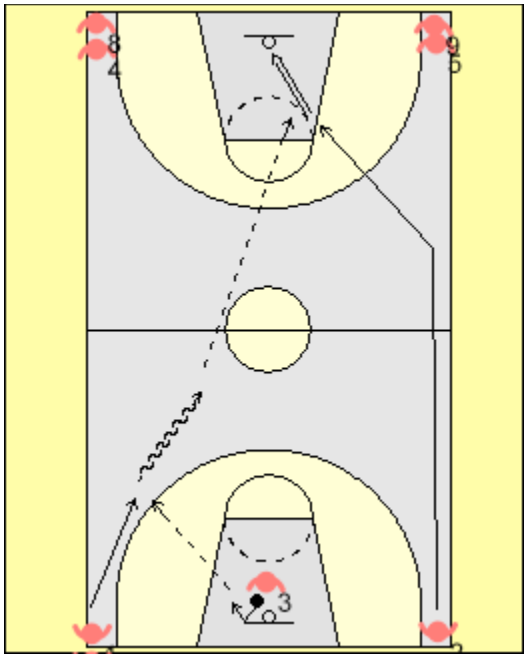
Attack

If at any time a player attacks the other players must play off this move. The players without the ball must stay in the eyes of their teammates and do not allow a three in a row (ball, defender, receiver).

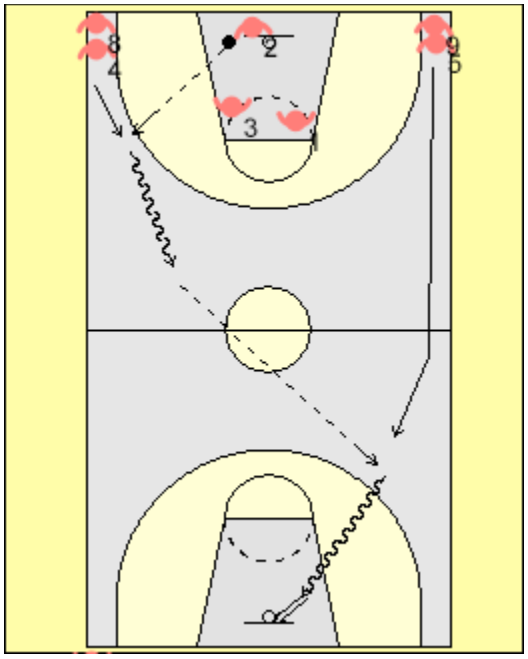
Progressive Transition Drills for Young Players

Four Corner Long Pass Lay-Ups

The players start in four corners of the gym. One player tosses the ball off the backboard and passes the ball to the outlet on that side of the floor. The player must decide to pass or dribble the ball. The other corner player is sprinting to the open basket. The ball is passed and the lay-up is scored.



The player who scored the basket now takes the ball and starts back down the court with the two new players in the corners. The other two players had to sprint to be in the key for the rebound. They now fill the corners as subs. Most of you will recognize that this leads nicely into Italy shooting. This is where the corner people would pass a ball to the two players who did not score before joining in as the next offensive players.

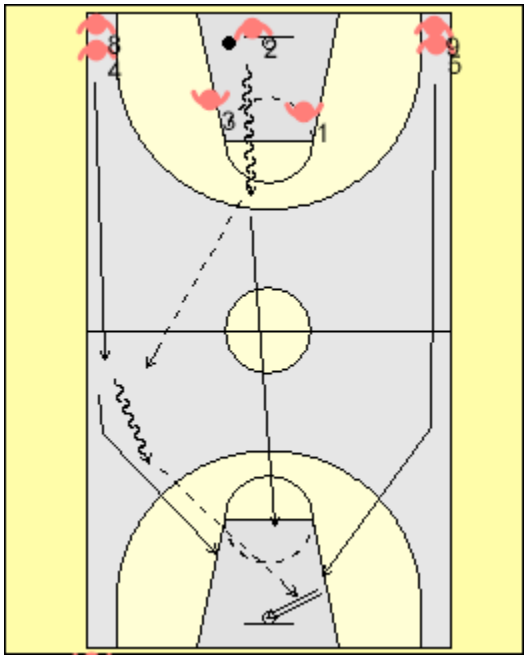


Points of Emphasis

- Choose a side when inbounding the ball, not directly under the basket
- Communicate
- Sprint the floor
- Dribble to shorten the pass
- Lead the player with the pass

Breakout Dribbles

Now we add the breakout dribble. If the lay-up is missed, the player who rebounds drop pivots to see the whole floor. He/she dribbles up the middle of the floor. When one of the wing players is ahead of the ball, it is passed. If the opposite wing is ahead of the ball, it is also passed. Everyone must sprint to be in the key on the shot. It is important that the players waiting in the corners anticipate the rebound or the made basket.

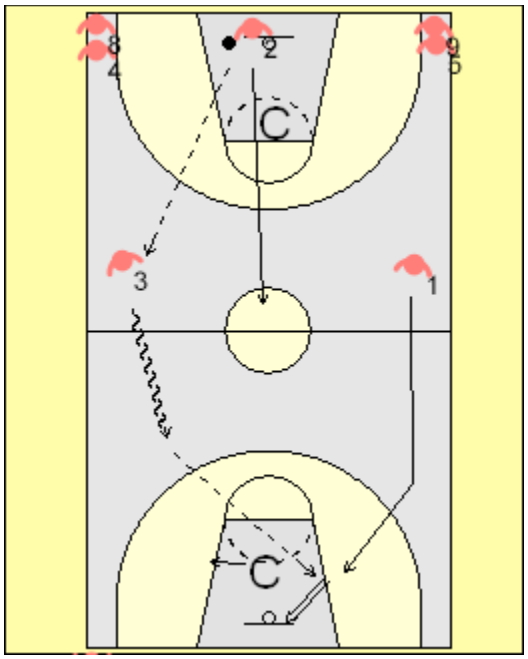


Load the drill

- Add a coach as a guided defender on the rebounder. The player must decide to make the outlet pass or breakout dribble.
- Add guided defenders on the outlets

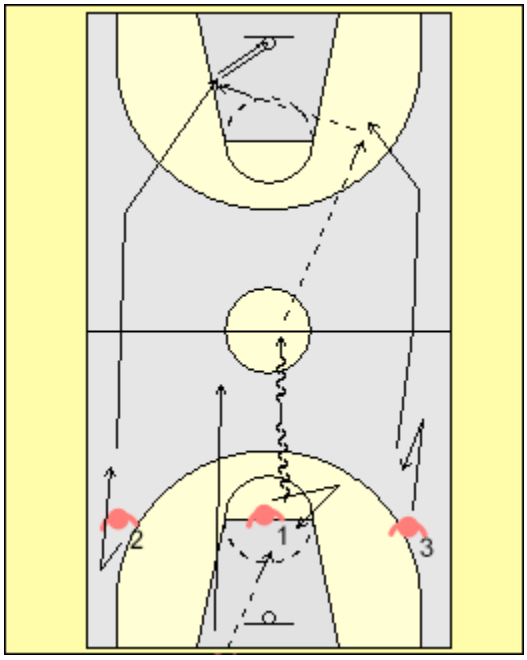
2 on 1

We now add a coach at each end as a guided defender. The players must keep their eyes up and read if the basket is open. Eventually allow the players to play defence.

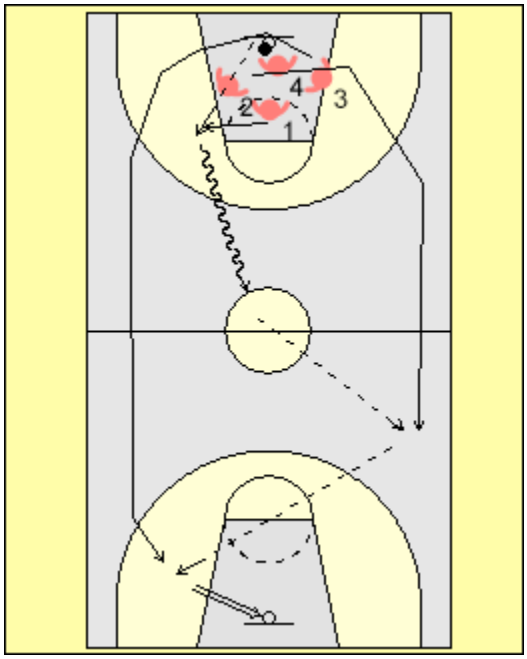


4 on 0

Four players set up as in the diagram. The three players in the lanes use misdirection cuts to get open. The inbounder passes the ball to the player in the center lane. The outside lanes run the floor. When someone is ahead of you, pass the ball. All four players must get into the key for the rebound.



The player who inbounded the ball must rebound the ball before it hits the floor. The two wing players cross and run in the other direction. The outlet gets the ball and the drill starts back in the other direction.

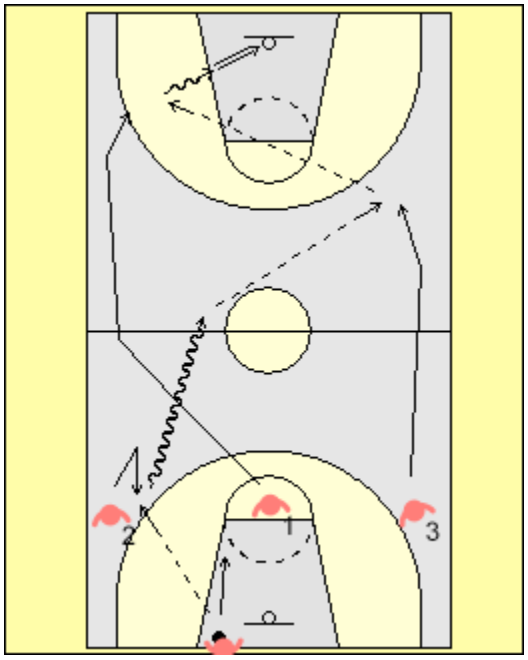


If the pass goes into the side, the middle player must fill the outside lane. The ball is dribbled to the middle and passed ahead as the player appears.

Note: It is very important at younger ages to let all players play every position.

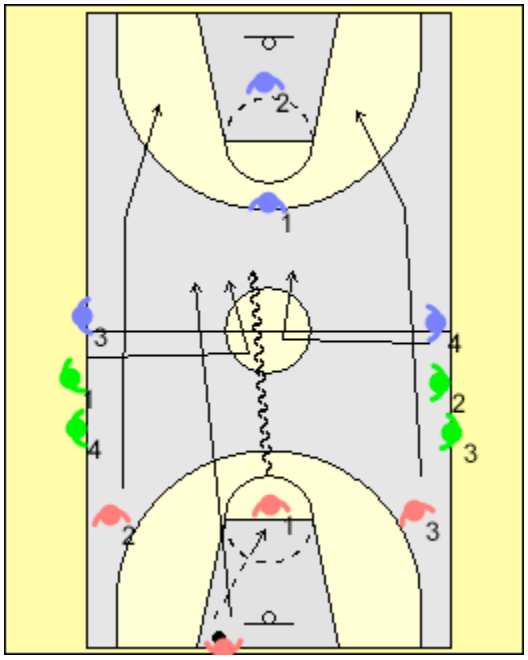
Load

- Add guided defenders who just defend the inbounds pass
- Add defence



4 on 4 on 4

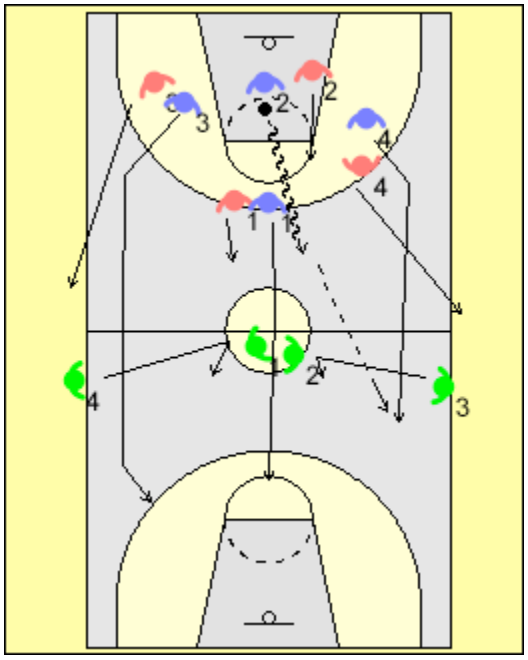
The drill starts the same as 4 on 0. Two defenders from the blue team are back on defence. When the ball crosses half, the other two blue defenders must run in from half through the center circle before playing defence. This gives the red team a brief time to attack 4 on 2.



When the ball crossed half, two of the green player went to the center circle. The other two were at half ready to run in. When the blue team gets the ball, it now attacks green 4 on 2.

When the ball crosses half, the other two green players join in. The red team has two players go to the center circle and the other two to half court on the sideline.

This is a continuous drill. Coach on the fly and let the players play through mistakes. Stop them for rest and debrief key learnings.



Load
The team that was just on offense can press until half. This works on getting the ball over half court in 8 seconds.

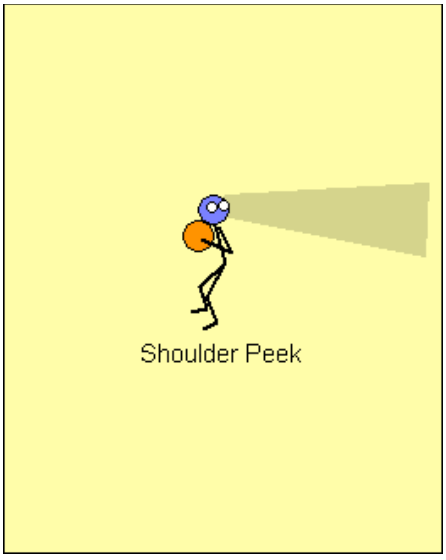
A.C.T.

This is an acronym that I have been using to assist players and coaches in their comprehension of the sequencing of offensive concepts in attack basketball.
A – Attack the basket
C – Create space
T – Teammates

Attack the Basket

There are many ways this can be accomplished:

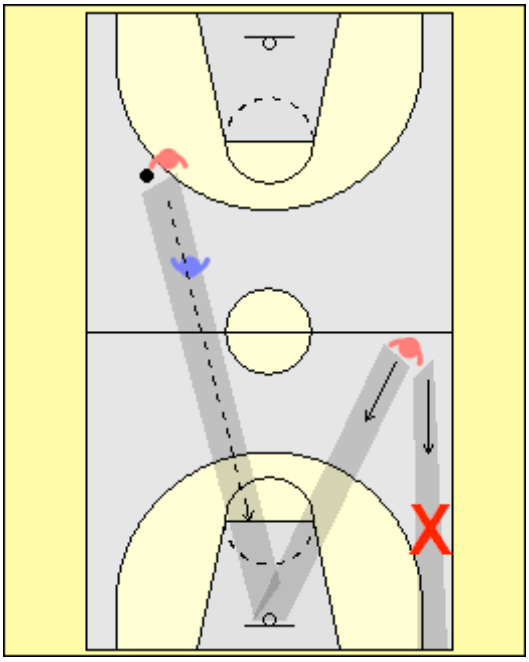
- **Attack with Your Eyes** – players need to scan the rim upon receiving the ball. This doesn't always imply squaring the body to the basket. Sometimes, a simple peek over the shoulder is all that is required.

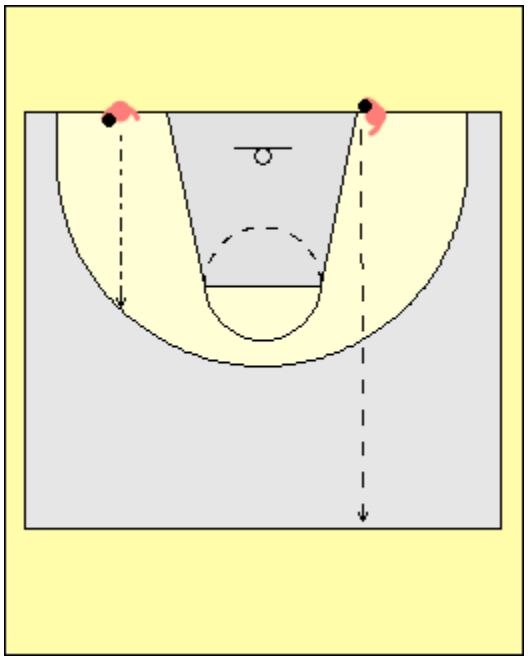


- **Attack with Your Body –** this may be a cutter going to the basket or putting your body in position so you can attack the basket with a pass, shot, or drive.

  Cutters – Attack the Open Basket
  In the diagram to the right we can see that the player running the left sideline cuts to the open basket instead of continuing to run wide down the sideline.

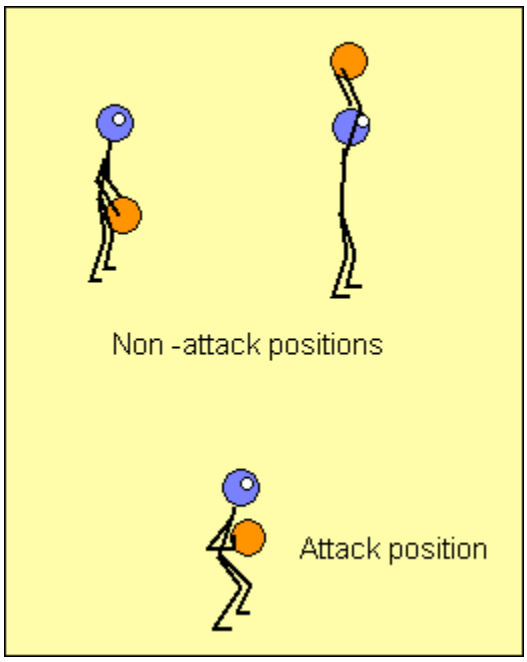
  Body – The ball handler needs to be attacking the basket with his/her eyes in order to see the wing player, but also must have his/her body in position to make a pass. He/she may require a dribble:
    - In order to shorten the distance
    - To avoid the defender
    - To coordinate the feet to throw long





Here is another example of being in position to attack the basket as a passer. If an inbounder stands with his/her feet parallel to the sideline, he/she will not be able to throw the ball as far as when the feet are perpendicular. This is simple biomechanics. To throw long, you need the torque or twisting of the body.

The classic triple threat position embodies the idea of attacking the basket with your eyes and body. The player is able to shoot, drive, or pass the ball. I do want to point out that you do not have to assume this position every time you receive the ball. There are no absolutes.

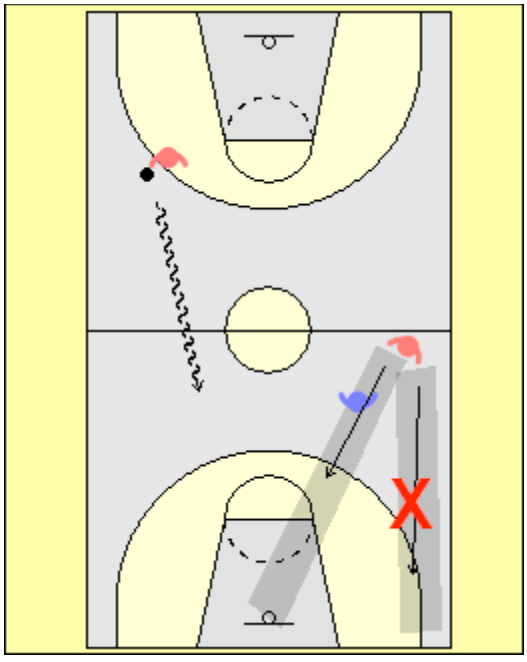


- **Attack with the Ball –** The basket can be attacked with the ball by dribbling, passing, or shooting.

Create Space

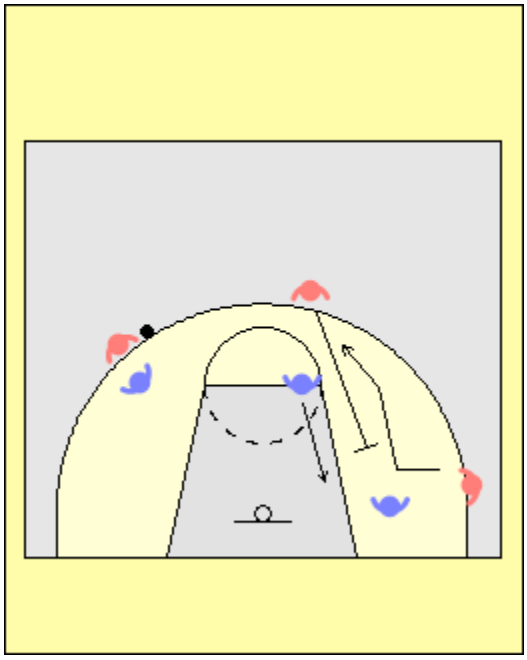
If the basket is not open, players need to learn to use and create space. In the diagram to the right, we see the wing player this time should stay wide in the lane because the defender is between him/her and the basket. By doing this, it leaves the basket open for the ball handler. He/she uses the spaces by dribbling to the open basket.

You can also use or create space by sealing. An inside player can seal off the defender and make space for a pass.



Teammates

When the basket is not open and space has been created, players must now start to include their teammates in their decisions.

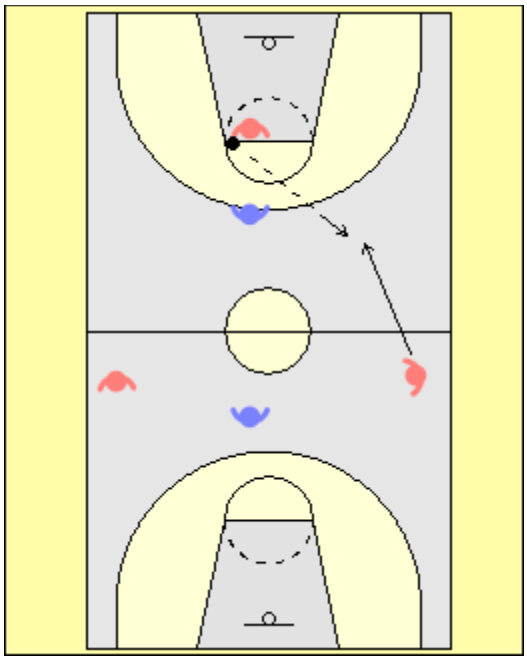


On one level, it is recognizing **strengths and weaknesses**.

As Rick Majerus says;
Who am I?
Who is guarding me?
Who is my teammate?
Who is guarding him/her?

This often involves having a plan based on our collective strengths and weakness. If one sees a shooter in the corner and I am not a good shooter, I can go set a down screen to bring the shooter to the ball.

On another level, it is recognizing **situations**.



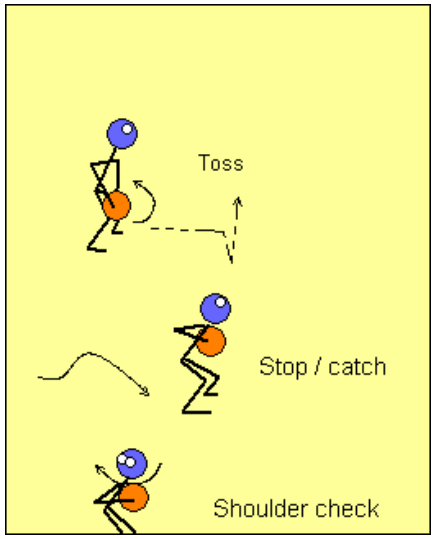
In the diagram we see the player with the ball has picked up his/her dribble. The players on the wings were creating space by running long. The wing player in the left lane sees this ***situation*** and cuts back to relieve pressure.

Other situations may include moving of penetration, cutting action, and post feeds.

Toss Drills

Self-Toss

Players need to work on this skill. Although it is never used in a game, it is an important skill for working on our game.



Toss

- **Low** - this promotes "loading" the legs and hips to catch the ball. A high toss does not require bending.
- **Away from the tosser** - this means the tosser must move to get the ball. Run through the ball.
- **Back spin** - it makes the ball stop and pop up on the bounce. Over spin will make the ball run away from the player

Stop

When stopping, the players need to be on balance in a low loaded position. The players can practice different ways to stop:

- 1-2 stop ending with their back to the basket
- 1-2 stop with a "cut off foot" - here the player steps with the inside foot to the basket. As the ball is caught, the player swings the second foot down to the ground. The player is squaring to the basket on the catch.
- 2-foot stop or jump stop landing with back to the basket.
- 2-foot stop landing with a turn.

Catch

The ball needs to be tight to the body in a protected position. Depending on the situation, the ball can be in the hip or shoulder pockets.

Shoulder Check

This is a little peek over the shoulder to scan the floor. It should precede the pivot.

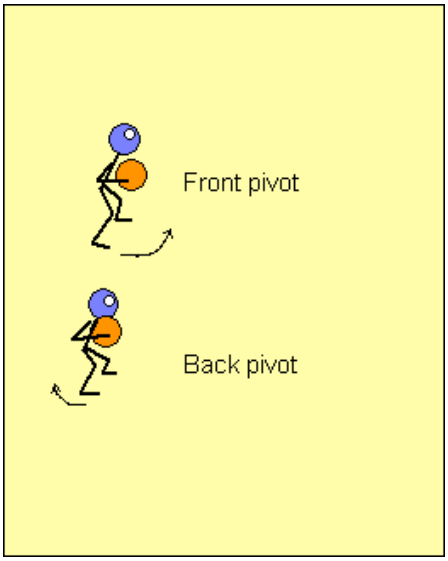
Pivots

The players should work on their four different pivots:

1. Front pivot right foot
2. Front pivot left foot
3. Back pivot right foot
4. Back pivot left foot

Load the drill:

- Add fakes before pivoting
- Pivot with the ball in different pockets

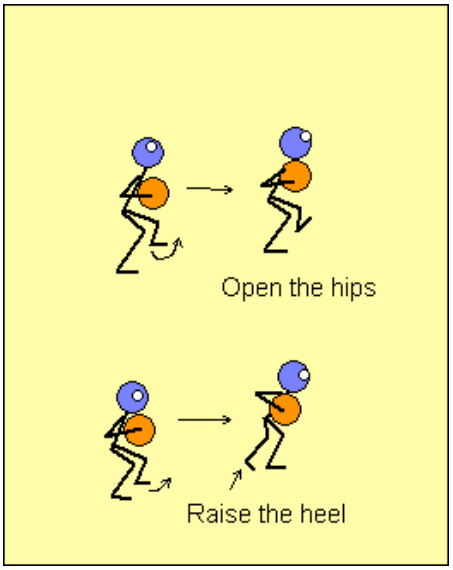


Advanced Point to Consider

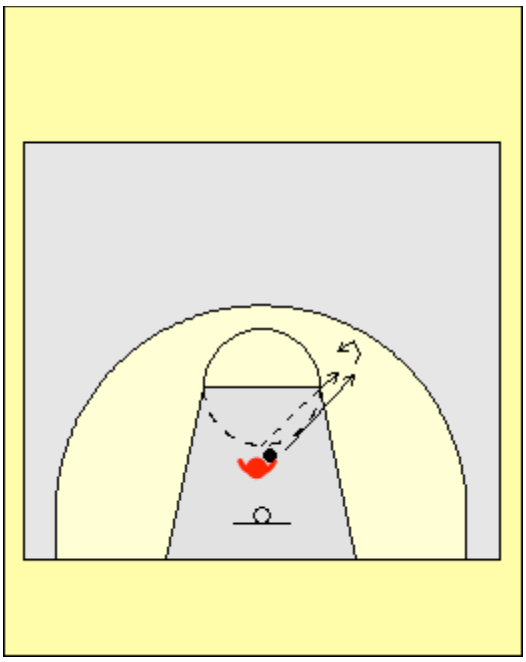
It is very important that the players stay low on their pivots. It is impossible to keep the majority of your body weight on your pivot foot while at the same time twisting on that foot. By spinning on the heel first before pivoting on the ball of the foot, it allows the player to:

- keep weight on the pivot foot
- open the hips
- keep the knee in line with toe to prevent twisting the knee
- gather their weight and stay low

When the players pivot by shifting their weight forward, first they have a tendency to raise the back heel. This puts them a position of poor balance. It is also slower and more difficult to get your weight going back in the direction of the basket.



One Player Toss Drill



The player starts with the ball with his/her back to the basket. The ball is tossed with an under hand toss. The player runs out following the toss and catches the ball. Pivot and shoot the ball.

Load the drill

- mix up the spot
- mix up the distance
- mix up the pivots
- add fakes before shooting
- fake and drive
- fake and dribble jump shots
- toss the ball moving on an angle to the basket
- follow and finish the missed shot

This is a good drill in which the players practice visualizing their defenders. To turn it into a conditioning work out, the player should be in constant motion.

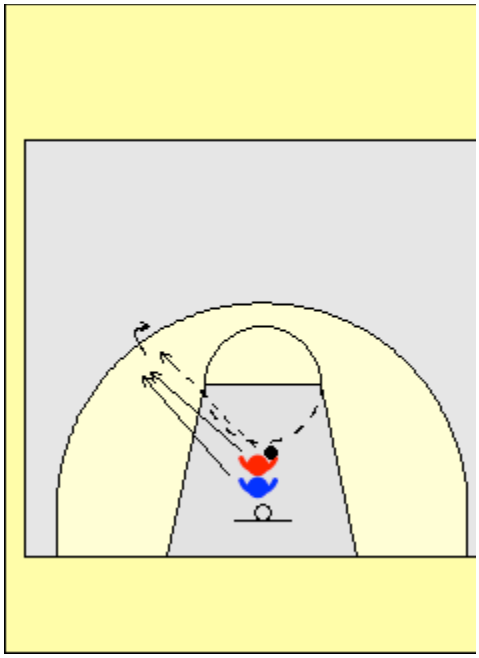
Shooting Game - Beat the Pro

The player picks his/her favourite player to compete against. "Steve Nash" – toss the ball to yourself and shoot. If you score, you receive 1 point. If you miss, the pro receives 2 points (make it 3 for better players, 1 for weaker players). You are trying to score 10 points before the pro scores 20 points. You can pick any number. This would mean you must make 10 shots before you miss 10 which is 50 % shooting. Another way to score it is to see if you can get to 4 points before the pro gets to minus 4. In this version, you constantly add and subtract.

Two Player Toss Drills

Toss with a Guided Defender - the first player tosses the ball and pivots to look at the basket. The second player gives a defensive guide

- over play right - drive left
- over play left - drive right
- sag, hands down - shoot

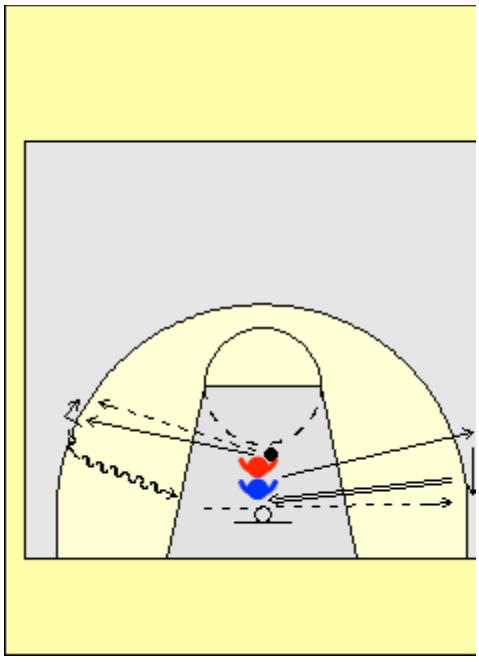


Load the drill

- **Bull Dog** - this is an old drill from Al Yarr, a former National team coach. The player tosses the ball and pivots to face the second player, putting tremendous defensive pressure on the ball. The offensive player pivots and protect the ball. After 4 seconds the offensive player must beat the defender to score.
- Play live 1 on 1 – in this instance, the defence must decide how to play based on where the ball is tossed, location, and who he/she is guarding.

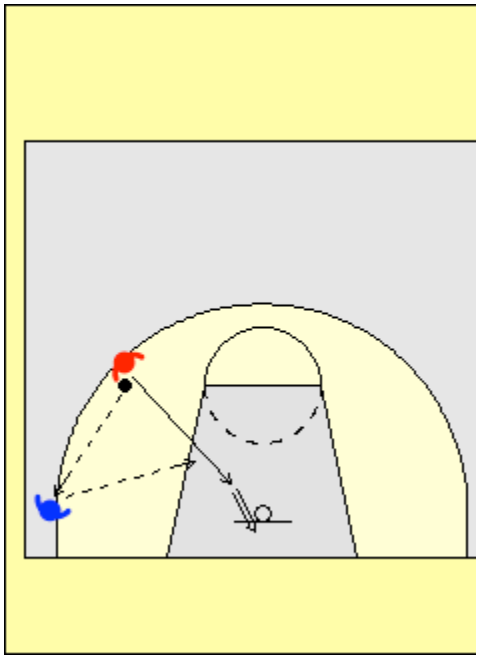
Toss, Penetrate, Pass

The first player tosses the ball while the second player finds complementary space. The player pivots and attacks the basket. The second player moves to an appropriate space to receive a pass for the shot.



Toss, Pass, and Cut

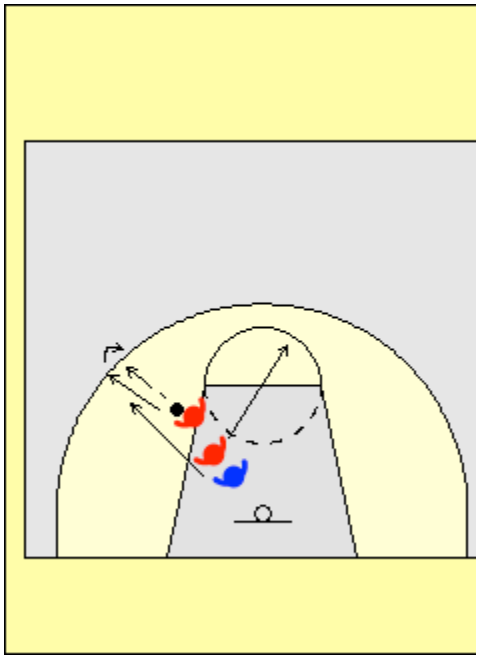
The first player does the same self-toss. The second player cuts to an adjacent space. The player with the ball pivots and passes the ball to the second player. This player immediately speed cuts to the basket and receives a return pass.



Three Player Toss Drills

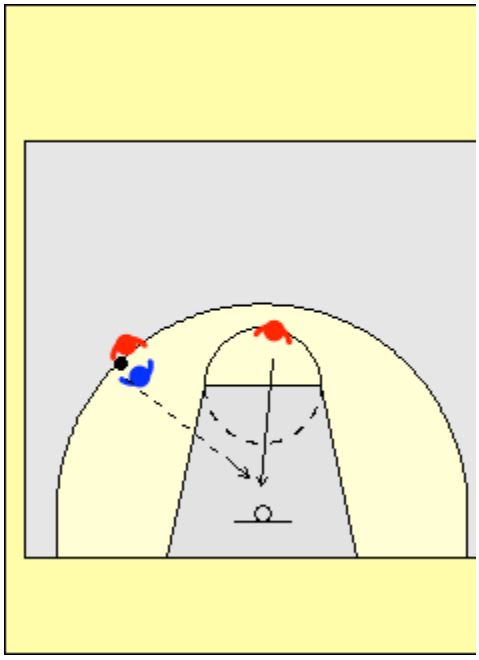
Toss Attack the Open Basket

The players line up three in a row. The first two players are on offense, the last player is a defender who randomly guards one or the other.



Guard the Ball Handler

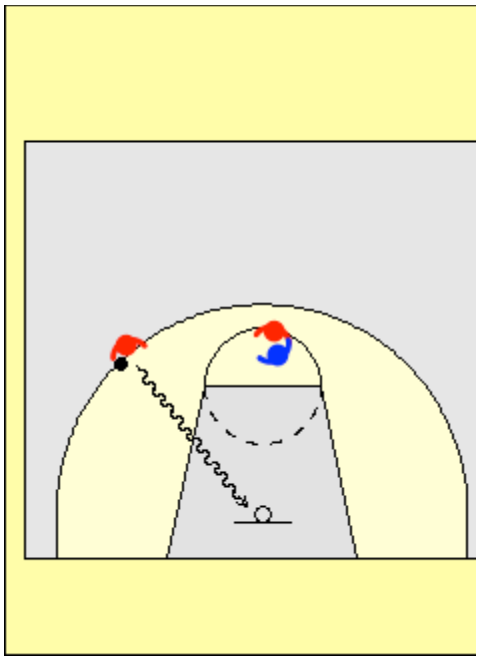
The player without the ball must recognize the open basket and make a basket cut. The passer must deliver the ball vs. pressure.



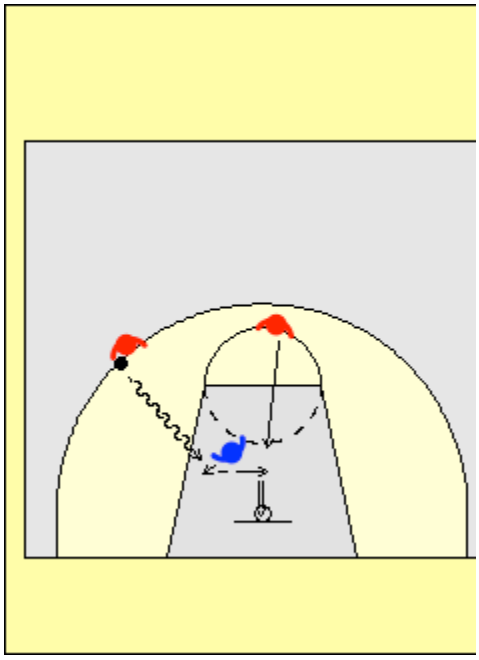
Guard the Second Player

The player with the ball recognizes the basket is open and attacks with a dribble for the score.

These two drills are very important for younger players to master.



Toss to 2-1

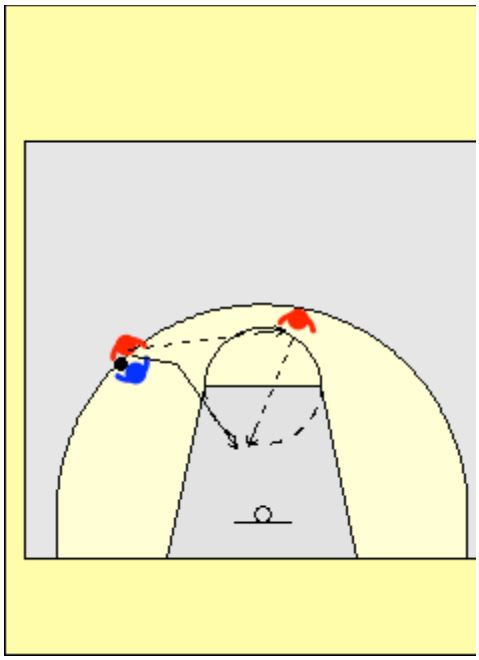


The drill is initiated the same as the previous drill. This time, the defender guards the basket. The ball handler recognizes the situation and attacks the basket through the baseline shoulder of the defender. The other player attacks the basket through the shoulder in the middle of the floor. The ball handler reads the defender's chest. No chest, score the ball. A chest appears, pass the ball.

Load the drill

- work from different spots
- the defender can do any three things: guard the ball, guard the other player, guard the basket

Toss, Pass and Cut with Defensive Pressure on Cutter



The drill begins with the same tossing action. The defender guards the player with the ball. The second player cannot cut to the open basket. The player with the ball passes the ball to the second player and must make a basket cut:

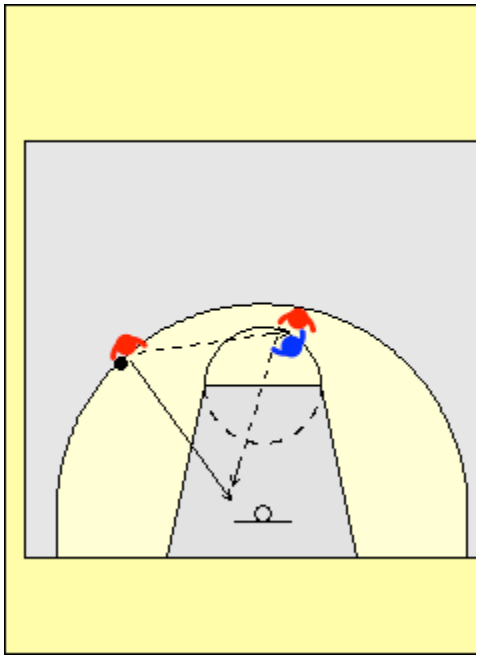
- face cut in front of defender
- back cut behind the defender
- fake and then cut

The passer is working on passing to space and leading the player to the basket.

The defender is working on putting pressure on the ball, jumping to the ball, and defending the give and go.

Toss, Pass, and Cut with Defensive Pressure on Passer

Now the defender guards the pass receiver. The ball handler passes the ball and cuts to the basket. The second player must make the pass vs. pressure.



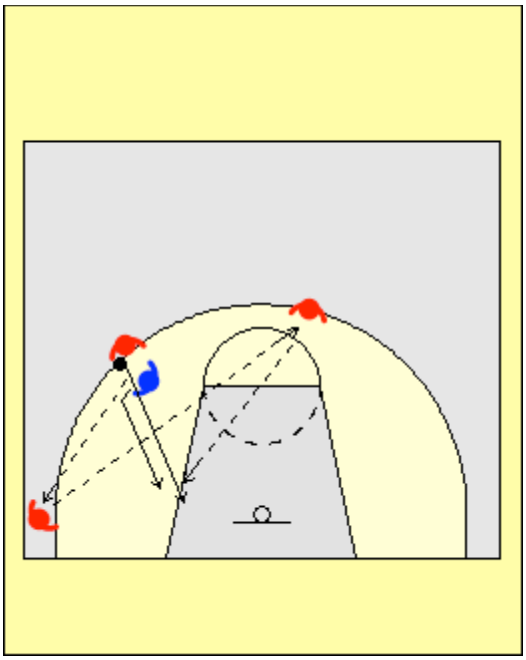
Load the drill

- The defender works on denying the pass to the second player.

Four Player Toss Drills

Toss to Relay Passes

First player tosses to a spot on the floor. The second player defends. The third and fourth players find complementary positions. The goal is to work on give and go and relay passes.

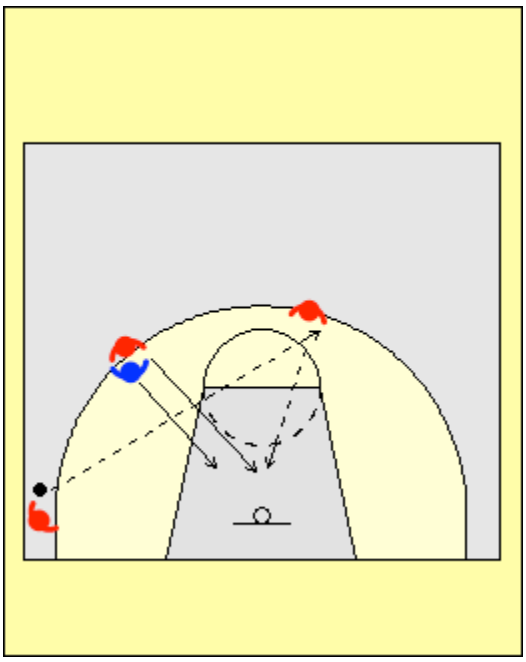


Key points

- If the defence is forcing you in one direction, take the give and go in that way. You already have the step.
- Don't fight the cut. Once the defence has established positions between you and the ball, call for the relay pass.
- The passers must anticipate the relay pass and make quick perimeter passes.

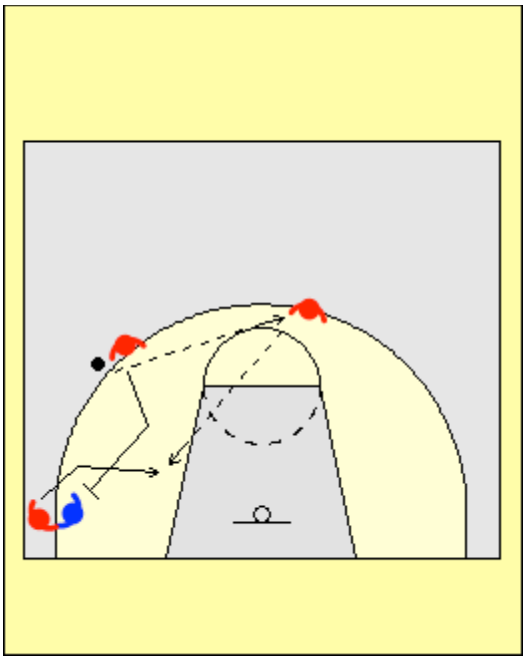
Skip to Relay Pass

On the self-toss, the first player finds space, the second finds space one pass away, and the fourth finds complementary space. The third player denies the second player the pass. We now look to skip the ball and drive to the rim.



Using Screens

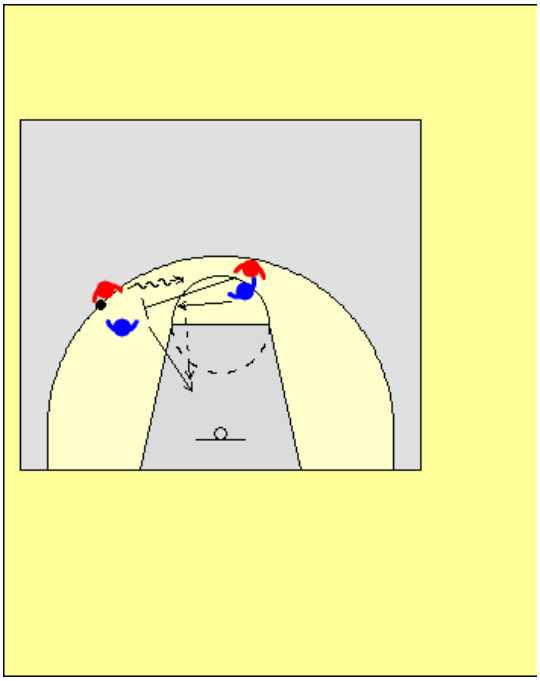
Eventually play 3 on 1 basketball. Only the one being guarded can score. The others look to set screens after passing.



2 on 2

The players self-toss into 2 on 2 situations. Work on attacking live defence with two player concepts:

- Give and go
- Dribble hand offs
- Picks
- Penetration and pass

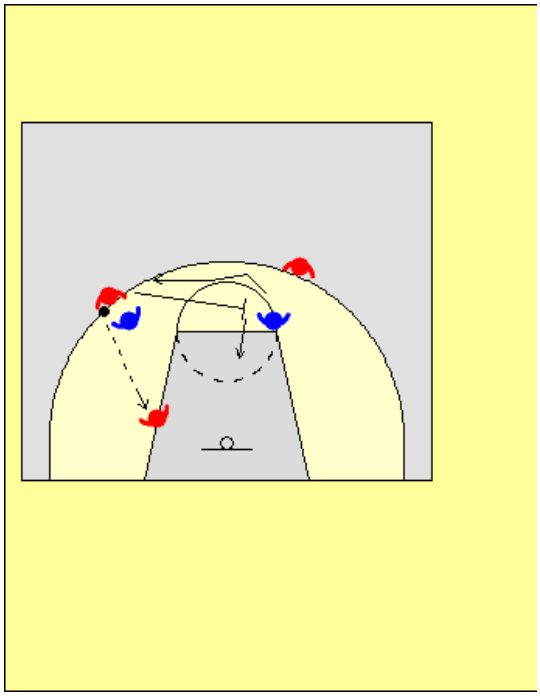


Five Player Toss Drills

With five players you can work on 3 on 2 situations:

- perimeter movement off an open post
- pass and screens away from the ball

By starting with the toss, the players must make decisions on spacing and timing. When we start in static situations, the players often take for granted these very important decisions. They very often just follow the pattern of the player who went before them.

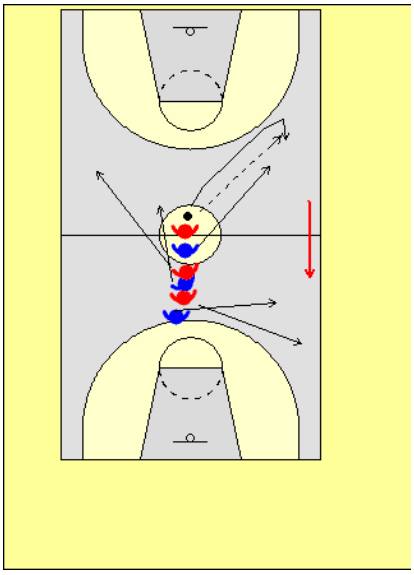


Six Player Toss Drills

These drills lead into playing three on three.

Self-Toss Drills in the Full Court

Self-toss drills can be very effective in teaching full court concepts also. In this example, the red team is attacking the basket at the bottom of the page. Alternate the players in the toss line between offense and defence. The first player tosses the ball, goes and gets it, and squares up. The other offensive players choose appropriate space. The defenders must find the proper defensive stance and position based on the location of the ball, their checks, and abilities.

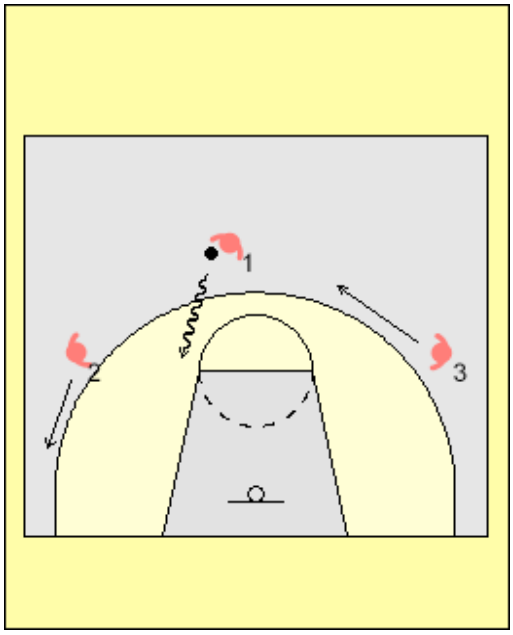


During the teaching phase, the coach may want to freeze the drill and ask players the reasons for their decisions.

Give the offense and defence concepts with which to play. For example, the offense is playing rugby, they can only pass backward until the ball gets inside the three-point line. The defence is looking to force the ball to the sideline and trap.

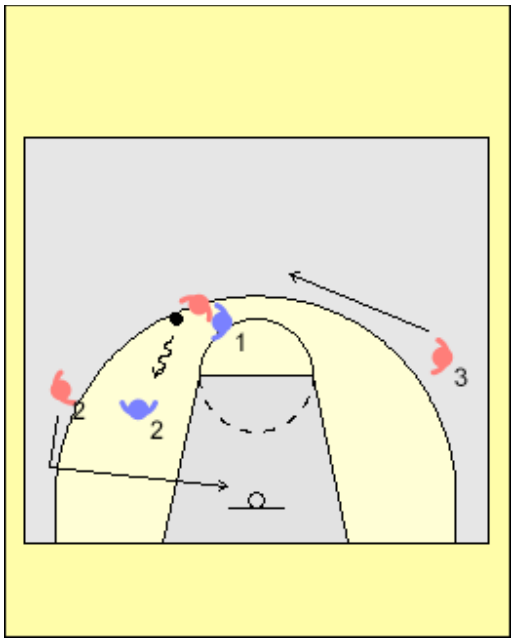
Dribble Penetration

A basic principle that all players need to learn is movement off penetration. Many coaches have different ideas on this concept and have turned it into a strategy that may only apply for certain teams. What I want to present here is a basic concept for coaches who want to help players with simple decisions that can be applied in all situations. This will only look at basic movement decisions for three perimeter players.



The basic concept is the idea of pushing and pulling. If the player dribbling the ball attacks the basket in your direction, your first natural movement is to be pushed in that same direction. If the movement is away, you are pulled in that same direction.

The key is to watch the action of your teammates with the ball first.

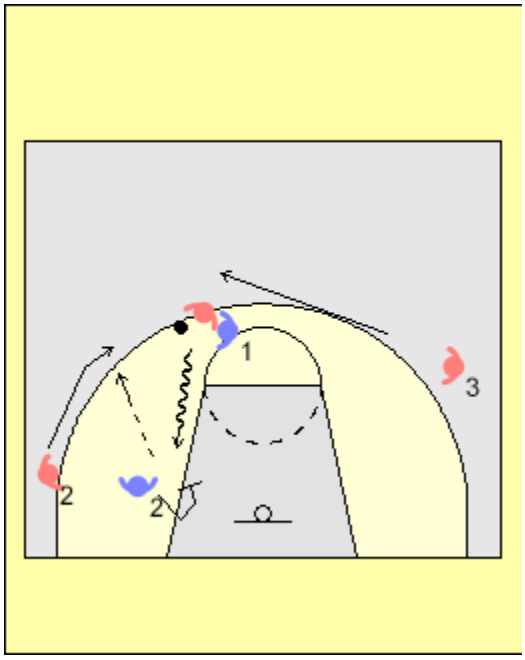


Once movement has occurred, the focus shifts to the reaction of your defender to your initial movement or to the movement of your teammate with the ball.

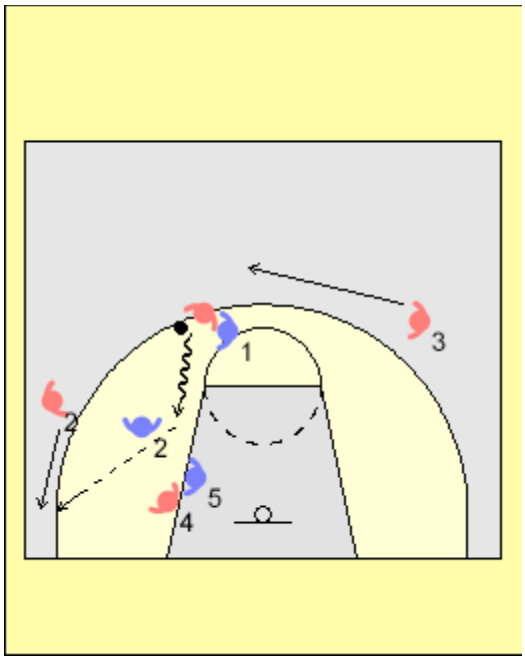
The player without the ball must change focus:

1. Action by teammate - dribble - is it at me or away?
2. Reaction by players - pushed if at me, pulled if away
3. Action by my defender - reaction by player

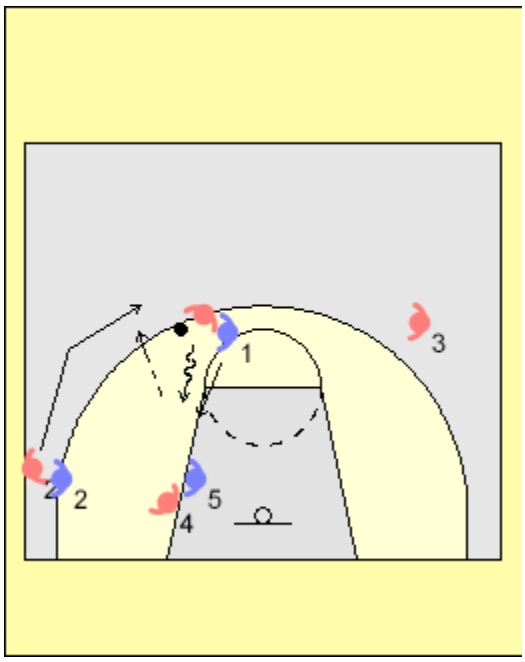
If your player shows his/her back and an open basket appears, cut to the rim.



If the defence helps over, the player can cut to the area of greatest space.



If the defence helps up, the player can slide to space. No back cut is available because the rim is covered by posted players.



If your defender hugs you, stay tight. You may need to cut back behind the ball. This is especially true if the ball handler picks up the dribble.

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