

We are all accountable for the actions of the group. If something goes wrong or we lose a game, we do not blame anyone. We take responsibility for it and try to ensure that it does not happen again.

RESPONSIBILITY

Taking responsibility within a group is another important competence that players need to develop.

Within the context of a team sport, players regularly face situations where they have a responsibility to the group. For example, a player has to defend 1 on 1 against an opponent and must take the personal responsibility in order to carry out the task successfully. The whole team relies on them.

A team's defensive structure relies upon each player assuming the responsibility for executing a task. If a team is trapping the ball handler, but only one defender moves to the position, the trap fails.

It is very important that young people learn to take on personal responsibilities for the benefit of the group. It is equally important that they learn to hold their team mates accountable, which can be as simple as players telling team mates that they are not happy that a teammate is always late to practice.

Inevitably, mistakes will be made by players (for example, a defender will be beaten by an offensive player). Each player must accept their responsibility and acknowledge that they were beaten (rather than blaming other factors).

However, players should not dwell on any mistake that they have made.

The coach should equally be mindful to ensure that the players are not being negative in their relationships with each other. It is not appropriate, for example, for a teammate to blame a loss on a teammate who missed a shot or had a turnover. In this example, team mates should (led by the coach) show support.

It will help develop players to take responsibility if the coach avoids placing focus on the end result of a game and the coach should focus on what to do – the process.

For example, don't say "you must make this shot or we lose" but instead direct the players on where they are each to go and what to do to create the shot that you want taken.

In this example, whether or not the shot is made, and the game won, is the team's responsibility. As Duke University and USA coach Mike Krzyzewski reminds us:

Players have to understand the importance of their own contribution to the team.

It is very important to reinforce personal behaviours that make a significant contribution to the group but may not necessarily result in the player getting the ball, making the score etc.

For example: a coach may emphasize the importance of "blocking out" in the rebound contest in order for the team to get hold of the ball. This is a personal responsibility (each player must take the responsibility of blocking out an opponent) which will result in a favourable result for the whole team (getting the ball).

Some players will undertake the task of blocking out, allowing another teammate to catch the ball. The official statistics credit the rebounder, so the coach must make sure to also give credit to the other players.

By recognizing those players who blocked out successfully the coach is encouraging all players to continue taking personal responsibility for the benefit of the group.

Perhaps even more important is how this will contribute to developing the acceptance of personal responsibility, in the personality of the players and the team.

If the coach simply applauded the player that took the rebound, players will stop blocking out and will instead try to get the ball as their number one priority. Ultimately, this will hurt the performance of the team.

TEAM WORK

Team work requires players to take personal responsibility, however learning to work as a team is a separate competence.

Consider, for example, a simple 2 on 2 activity where offensive players cannot dribble and can only pass the ball and must get the ball from one baseline to the other. To do this, they must collaborate with each other.

This activity teaches the importance of collaboration and team work - one player cannot win the game on their own. The point of “team work” is understanding the value of working together to achieve a common result.

However, a player will not learn to collaborate just because they play basketball. An example of this is the player that will try to beat an opposing player one on one (and may succeed) but opts to do this instead of passing to an open teammate.

Coaches need to highlight the importance of collaboration, and to organize the practice in a way that will encourage players to cooperate.

It is important that the coach does not just recognize or reward the score but instead emphasizes rules of team play.

Another aspect of team work that must be emphasized is that players on a team do not have to be close friends. They need to share a common goal (to which the coach leads them) and players need to appreciate working toward that goal with someone, even someone they do not consider a friend.

ACCEPTING AND FOLLOWING RULES

Obviously, playing basketball (indeed playing any sport) means having to know and respect the rules of the game. Most players understand this but a coach should not assume that players do know the rules and should take the time to explain the rules to them.

It is also important that players (and coaches) learn to accept how rules are interpreted or applied. Referees do not set out to deliberately make a mistake, but mistakes will happen.

A referee may apply a rule incorrectly (e.g. call a “block” when it should be a “charge”), or may get a rule wrong. Regardless of how an error occurs, respecting the rules means accepting that such mistakes will happen.

The coach may seek an explanation from the referee, but once it is given (even if the coach disagrees with it) the coach should move on and have their players focus on the next play.

To contribute to a team, players must also respect team rules such as off-court uniform, training rules and perhaps even behaviour outside of the team (e.g. not going out late the night before a game).

Thus, by playing in a team, young people can get used to not being able to do exactly what they want and having to respect certain rules that foster their coexistence with others and the achievement of goals.

RESPECTING OTHERS

To be able to perform as a team, players must learn to respect the individual differences that exist within their team. Players must accept and coexist with teammates who, in some cases, may belong to a different social group, race, religion, ethnic group, country, city, etc., and who may have different ideas and customs.

A key element of respecting team mates is not to do something that adversely impacts upon a teammate.

For example, every player will have their own pre-game routine. One player may like to listen to music, another may want to pray, some players will be very nervous and want to talk a lot whilst others may want to sit quietly.

In adopting whatever routine suits them, each player must make sure that routine doesn't impact others. For example, the player listening to music should use headphones so others don't hear it.

Players will also have to respect differences that come about while playing basketball, because some play better than others, some master certain skills better or quicker than others, some play more minutes than others, etc.

Coaches must foster a culture of mutual respect and an attitude of solidarity among players through their own behaviour and the coach must be a role model to them, respecting all players in spite of their differences.

Whatever behaviour the coach accepts from the players will define the culture of the team and this can be either positive or negative. The coach must therefore emphasize standards of behaviour that promote respect and solidarity and not accept those that promote anything to the contrary.

For example, players may tease one of their team mates who is not as skilled and drops the ball. Such banter may not be intended to hurt, however it can have a negative effect on the self-esteem and performance of the player.

If the coach accepts such behaviour, it can not only affect that individual player, it also negatively affects the team because it indicates that being disrespectful to a teammate is OK.

If the coach does nothing, they are accepting the behaviour. It does not mean the coach is joining in on the banter, but by not stopping it, the coach is effectively endorsing the behaviour, and this can foster a culture of disrespect.

Coaches should similarly avoid using sarcasm in their comments to players as this can easily be misconstrued or taken negatively by players, or players may act the same way.

In the situation above, the coach must stop such comments being made and make it clear that they will not be tolerated. The coach must also reward those players who contribute to integrating in the group those teammates who are "different".

Basketball is competitive, which means that the teams are "fighting" against each other - both wanting to attain the same goal. Obviously, only one team can reach that goal (winning the game) and coaches must emphasize that "sportsmanship" is the highest priority, which requires being respectful towards opponents and officials.

The coach must place special emphasis on players being well-mannered towards their rivals: they should not insult them, they should help them to their feet if they fall down, they should speak to them once the game is over, congratulate them if they have won, etc.

Under no circumstances should a coach working with young players try to motivate players by pitting them against their opponents, for instance making comments such as: "they have said we are a bunch of...", "last time they won because they were playing dirty", "they said that you are an idiot", etc.

This kind of strategy is unethical and it does not contribute to developing important values as such as respecting one's opponents.

The coach must be a positive example and must not insult, ridicule or underrate an opposing team and instead must show the maximum respect towards any rival.

For example: if coaching a team that has clearly won the game, the coach should not a timeout out in the last minute of a game. It is disrespectful to do so as there is nothing that needs to be said.

A coach may be tempted to call a timeout in order to substitute in a player - if that is the case they should immediately send the team back onto the court, making it clear why the timeout was called.

Coaches must always shake hands with their opposing coach and should not make comments about other players that are not relevant to the game.

Coaches must also not let players, or, to the extent they can control them, spectators, cheer when an opponent makes a mistake.

Along the same lines, the coach must always act respectfully towards the referees, thus encouraging their players to learn to respect them.

This is probably an area where coaches perform the worst. For instance, it is often noticeable that coaches insult, underrate and ridicule referees, and that they blame defeats on referees' decisions in front of their young players. This example, together with similar ones set by parents, makes it very difficult for children and teenagers to learn to respect the figure of the referee.

Coaches and players, particularly at junior level, must accept that referees will make mistakes. They are often learning and developing their skills just as the players are, but even the most experienced referee will sometimes make a mistake – just as players and coaches do. Coaches or players that blame referees are not taking responsibility for their own actions or the performance of the team.

For example, a referee may incorrectly rule that a shot taken at the end of the game was not released before the game ended, and this may mean that that team loses the game (but would have won if the shot was counted).

However, this does not mean that the referees have cost that team the game. Throughout the game, the team will have made mistakes and missed other shots and if any of those things had not happened they would not have been in the situation of needing to make the last shot.

The responsibility for the result of the game rests with the players and coaches, not the referees.

LEARNING TO COMPETE

Life presents many competitive situations and we must be prepared to confront them. Competitive basketball is an excellent opportunity to learn to compete in a way that is both healthy and efficient, adopting a working method that can be very valuable for young players in sport and in daily life, and that can help them now and in the future.

All the values previously highlighted help young players to learn to compete. It is also important that they learn to accept victories and defeats, success and failure, good and bad performances, rights and wrongs all in the same way.

For this reason, it is highly relevant to teams of young players that they confront different experiences during the season: winning, losing, playing well, playing poorly, etc., and that these will be learning experiences for them.

Obviously, the players will tend to be happier if they win than if they lose. However, a team can perform well and lose or perform badly and win. Neither victory nor defeat should be highlighted by the coach. The coach should congratulate players for their effort and reflect upon success by how they played, not whether they won or lost.

When teams lose, players will naturally feel that they have failed. Indeed, they have failed to reach their objective of winning but this does not mean they are a failure. Part of learning to compete is understanding that in competition there must always be a losing team, just as there must be a winning team.

In reflecting upon a defeat, the coach should confine their comments to behaviour related only to the game. It is appropriate to say: "We didn't block out well because we didn't move toward our opponent." It is highly inappropriate for a coach to say: "You're hopeless. You can't even do something simple like blocking out." The latter comment is making a statement broader than the game.

It is also important for coaches (and parents) to take a long-term perspective on the development of players.

Learning to compete is important once players are in their mid-teens. Prior to that, the focus should initially be on:

- getting them to enjoy being physically active and to develop basic movement competencies;
- having FUN, starting to learn the skills that make up games (e.g. passing, catching);
- learning how to train and how to be a member of a team.

Placing too much focus on competing at too young an age is detrimental both to the enjoyment that players derive from participation (making it less likely that they will continue to participate) and to the development of skills (as they will be reluctant to fully explore how to perform skills).

This is not to say that winning is unimportant, just that its importance needs to be emphasized in the context of the age of the children.

Young players can and do enjoy playing, whether or not they win, and it is important that coaches give positive feedback on improvements the player and the team have made, as this is a more relevant measure of success for young players.

3.2.9 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - DEVELOPING MINDSET & RESILIENCE

DEVELOPING MINDSET AND RESILIENCE

Developing the personal competences described previously does not just happen automatically because the players are playing basketball.

Coaches need to help young players acquire and develop the psychological resources to learn, cope with adversity and maintain positive self-esteem and confidence.

PERCEPTION OF CONTROL

People need to feel like they are in control of the things that concern them: this notion of control is the foundation of self-confidence which constitutes a decisive aspect of our psychological strength.

The opposite of feeling in control is feeling helpless. A helpless person feels like they cannot work on the things that concern them and as a result they may come to the conclusion that whatever they do, nothing comes as a result of their actions.

In a sporting context, there will also be situations where an opponent outperforms you, or a referee makes a mistake, and both can be out of the control of the players.

Focusing on what can be controlled helps ensure that players do not lose confidence, even though they may have lost a particular contest.

In practice, when a coach uses an activity with an appropriate level of difficulty and if the players know what they have to do, then the players will feel in control. On the other hand, if the difficulty of the drill significantly exceeds their skill level of the players, they may feel helpless. This will undoubtedly negatively affect their performance.

Unfortunately, many young players feel helpless because they cannot do as much as is expected of them, or because they have not been told exactly what it is that they have to do, or because they cannot perform to the level that other players in the team are able to.

For example consider a coach providing feedback to a young player:

1. The player receives the first pass and shoots. The coach advises them that even though the shot went in, the player should not shoot so soon; the ball should move around a bit more.
2. On the next possession the player receives the first pass when they are unguarded close to the basket and instead of shooting they pass. The coach tells the player to shoot!
3. On the next possession the player receives the first pass, close to the basket, shoots and misses. The coach criticizes the player for missing the easy shot.

After these three incidents, the player is almost certainly going to be unsure as to what they should do. They may feel that it is impossible to do it right and please the coach. This is an example of a feeling of helplessness.

To give the player confidence the coach needs to define what is a good shot and what is a bad shot. If a player takes a good shot, but misses, the coach should reinforce that it was a good shot opportunity. In this way, players will feel in "control".

HELPING PLAYERS TO FEEL IN “CONTROL”

Coaches must help their players to feel in control rather than to feel helpless. With this in mind, coaches should:

- spend time on fundamental skills in each training session;
- allow players to practice skills “in context”. For example, repeatedly having two players pass the ball back and forth does little to prepare either of them to successfully make a pass in a game. Instead, coaches may introduce a skill with a repetitive activity (for a very short amount of time) and then design various activities where they get to practice that skill in a variety of contexts (e.g. passing on the move, with defenders on some players, defenders on all players etc);
- establish attainable goals based on the level of their players;
- have clear principles of play for the team to follow and emphasize these in each training session;
- focus on whether the team has followed its principles of play, not whether or not they scored, won the match etc;
- be consistent about what they want the players to do.

One of the hardest skills to develop in young players is their understanding of the game because there are many factors to consider when making decisions.

For example, taking a 3 point shot can be a good or bad decision, depending upon a range of circumstances.

Perhaps one of the hardest things for a coach to do is to allow the athlete to determine whether or not they made a good decision instead of always telling them.

Asking the player open ended questions like “where was the help defender before you decided to drive?”, or “what was your teammate doing?” will lead them to decide if they followed the appropriate principle of play.

It is vitally important that coaches take the time to listen to the player and not

to assume why the player made the decision that they did.

It might be that having regard to what the player saw, they made the right decision but executed the skill poorly. They may have made the right decision on what they saw, but the coach needs to give them feedback on the need for them to have taken something else into consideration (e.g. position of a “help” defender).

Alternatively, it may be they saw the situation correctly, but did not follow the principle of play.

DEFINING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is closely related to a person’s perception of control. Self-confidence is the trust that the players have in their and their team’s ability to be able to achieve a certain goal.

A player with self-confidence, knows approximately what their chances are, and what actions they must perform to make those possibilities come true. They also know the difficulties that could prevent them from achieving the desired objective, and what they should do to neutralize those difficulties.

A person’s self-confidence may not be the same in every aspect of their life, however increasing self-confidence in one aspect (for example, basketball) may help them to feel more confident in other areas of their life.

To develop self-confidence requires:

- a realistic analysis of both the situation to be faced, and the person’s resources;
- setting realistic goals and having realistic plans to achieve those goals;
- placing an emphasis on what is in your control above anything that does not depend upon your own actions (as these are out of your control);
- an objective and constructive evaluation of your experiences – not simply looking at whether you won or lost and instead focusing on whether or not it was a situation you could control. This is closely aligned to how players must take responsibility - accepting when a situation was in their control and the impact what they did (or did not do) had on the outcome.

Being in control does not guarantee winning, it simply means that your destiny was in your own hands.

A Controlled Success is where a good result is obtained (when players accomplish their goals) and players associate the achievement of those results with following their “process”.

Similarly, a Controlled Failure occurs when the result is not what the player wanted to obtain (e.g. they missed the free throw) but the player still feels that they have controlled the process in trying to attain those results. In this case, they will learn from their experience of failure and they will apply this knowledge to future games.

An example of this is a team being two points down and taking the last shot. If they are able to create the shot that they want to take then they are “in control”. They may miss the shot, but accepting that they were in control will give the team confidence, particularly when they face the situation again.

3.2.10 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - DEVELOPING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Coaches can very positively affect whether or not their players will develop a feeling of self-confidence.

To enhance the development of confidence, coaches should:

- organise competitive activities in practices that present attainable challenges;
- set realistic goals that are based on players' performance (their own actions) and not on the result of the game. The goals should focus on the players' personal efforts to achieve the goals;
- be clear on criteria used to determine if the goals set have been achieved. The coach must then analyse performance in an objective and constructive way, based upon the criteria;
- avoid reaching general conclusions based on isolated experiences that have impressed them (for example, they should not come to the conclusion that the team has played poorly just because the game was lost in the last play);
- avoid judging the players' performance when emotions are running high (for example, at the end of a game in which both teams ended up with very close scores).

How the performance of the team and the players is evaluated is a crucial element in the development and strengthening of self-confidence.

A general evaluation that is ambiguous and arbitrary, or based on criteria that is not known or is unclear, is likely to negatively affect self-confidence. It can also help to develop self-confidence if you question players:

Ask them why they think that something went wrong. As they identify what went wrong, it can help them to identify what was in their control and what options were (or might be in the future) open to them.

Equally, it can help them to realise what was outside of their control and so could not be changed, although what they did in response to it was in their control.

It is, for example, very common in a tennis match to see a player congratulate their opponent by quickly clapping their racket.

This can be a very effective way for the player to acknowledge that the result of that point was out of their control (i.e. their opponent made a very good shot) and that it should not impact how they approach the next point.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

Self-concept refers to the opinion that a person has of themselves; self-esteem shows the extent to which that person likes that opinion.

In both cases, it is a global evaluation that is not specifically related to any activity in particular, but it will be most closely linked to those aspects that each person considers more significant.

With young people, both self-concept and self-esteem are very unstable values that can fluctuate easily. Self-concept and self-esteem change depending on their experience of success or failure in certain aspects that for them are very important, for example, basketball.

Some players will have a self-concept and self-esteem that do not depend upon their success in sports. In these cases, the situation should be maintained, strengthening the players' self-confidence and preventing them from associating their success in sports with their worth as a person.

For other players, particularly from the age of 13, basketball plays a major role in their self-concept and self-esteem.

This is especially the case with players that have been identified as “outstanding” or play in more important teams.

In cases like these, it is possible that other sources of gratification, outside of basketball, may disappear, and the young player may be unable to put basketball into perspective and control success or failure correctly.

These players become especially vulnerable when associating their self-concept and self-esteem with their success or failure in sports. This success or failure can be related to the team (whether the team wins or loses) and also to their individual role within the team (e.g. even where the team has won, they may not have played much and therefore consider themselves a failure).

Coaches must avoid comments that will be detrimental to self-concept and self-esteem. Comments that often can be detrimental are generalisations - for example:

- “You are dumb” - when instead the player may only have made a “dumb” decision;
- “You are hopeless at basketball.”

Coaches are often prone to making sweeping generalisations when they are emotional (e.g. immediately after a close game) and it is often better to not to give feedback at that time.

Under these conditions, basketball can turn out to be a very stressful activity that may harm the performance, health and development of these young people.

THE LASTING INFLUENCE OF COACHES

The relationship between coaches and young players may have a decisive influence on the players’ self-concept and self-esteem. Thus, the coach’s behaviour in relation to players is crucial.

For example, a coach will have a negative influence on players if they:

- insult them (“Are you an idiot?”)
- underrate them (“Are you making a fool of yourself as usual?”)
- make fun of them in front of their teammates (“Kid, the basket isn’t across the street!”)
- scold them without an explanation or without giving them the opportunity to rectify their mistake in the future (“You never get it right! You make nothing but mistakes!”)
- use expressions that compare their worth as athletes to their worth as people (“You can’t do anything right! You’re a mess!”).

It is particularly important to remember that young players may not understand the use of sarcasm and even if the coach is joking or does not mean what they say, the player may take it negatively. Where something is taken negatively, it has a lasting effect on the player’s self-concept or self-esteem.

Coaches can equally positively influence the self-concept and self-esteem of players by:

- setting realistic goals for players;
- defining with clarity and precision the goals that the players must achieve;
- helping players to achieve such goals and reinforcing them for their good actions;
- differentiating actions that relate to players’ athletic performance by referring to them specifically;
- correcting players constructively, pointing out what they do wrong and focusing on what they can do to correct it and giving the opportunity to correct it.

In setting goals, a player should be encouraged to have a “vision” or a “dream” that may be viewed as unrealistic (e.g. to represent their country). The coach’s task is to then help the player identify all the “steps” along the way and to set goals that reflect those steps. As the player achieves each goal it will increase their self-concept and self-esteem, even if they ultimately do not reach their dream.

3.2.11 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL

DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL

It is very important for players and coaches to develop self-control, which is simply the ability to control what they do in response to the situation they are in.

Basketball presents many situations where self-control is important. For example, an adverse decision by a referee, or a teammate making a mistake or being substituted from the game are situations where a player may be disappointed and commonly may “blow up” and complain about the situation.

Coaches must not accept players complaining about referees or teammates or showing they are unhappy when they come off the court. In this situation the player must concentrate more on what they have to do in the next play. Coaches must equally show this self-control themselves, because if the coach is focusing on the referee then their players most likely will too.

The coach can do this through applying a penalty – showing a clear consequence that is linked to not being in “control”. For example, removing a player that complained to the referee from the game and explaining who it is because the player was not focusing on what they have to do.

The coach should also speak to the player about strategies to help them develop self-control.

A particularly successful method for players who get distracted by the decisions of referees is having them tighten their hand in a fist and then “throw the tension away” by quickly opening their hand. This can be done whilst running back down the court.

Other players and teams have successfully used the concept of “next play”, getting athletes to say “next play” to themselves to focus on what they can influence (the next play) not what has already happened and thus can’t be influenced. Having a teammate or coach also use this “cue word” can increase its effectiveness.

Positive, rewarding experiences are important for everyone. In the case of young people, basketball may be a source of positive experiences for them. If the positive experiences surpass the negative ones, then it will be more likely that players keep on playing and therefore obtain further benefit from the playing sports.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Consider your last training session – were you mostly:
 - a. “Reproductive” in approach (specifically directing players so that they do not need to make many decisions); or
 - b. “Productive” in approach (engaging the players in learning)?
2. Discuss with a coaching colleague: how is coaching a junior team different to coaching a senior team?
3. Observe some games and training sessions of other junior teams. Do you see any behaviour of coaches, parents or spectators that:
 - a. reduces the enjoyment that players can derive from being involved in basketball;
 - b. favours some players at the expense of others;
 - c. seems unsafe or requires players to do what they are not skilled in doing?
4. Reflect on your coaching – do you talk to your players about:
 - a. how they are feeling;
 - b. things outside of basketball that may impact them (e.g. work, school, family);
 - c. their current skill level and what they need to work on to develop in basketball?
5. Involvement in basketball can be a positive learning experience for players in terms of:
 - a. commitment;
 - b. perseverance;
 - c. taking responsibility within a group;
 - d. accepting and following rules;
 - e. team work.

Ask colleagues and family how they would rate you in demonstrating each of these factors?

Reflect on your coaching: are you a role model in these aspects?

6. How can you improve your players’ sense of being in control?
7. Review one of your training sessions with a coaching colleague. Ask them to describe whether your feedback is “outcome focused” (i.e. the shot went in) or “process focused” (i.e. it was the right, or wrong, shot to take). If possible, have them also observe a game you are coaching with that team. Again, is your feedback “outcome focused” or “process focused”?
8. Reflect on your coaching, what words do you use to tell an athlete when they have done something wrong? Do you focus on the “solution” or just “describe the problem”? Seek feedback from former athletes or parents of athletes for their opinion.
9. Have someone film you when you are coaching. Watch the video – do you look as if you are in control?
10. Consider your players and rank them on their ability to cope with adversity (such as making a mistake in a game). How can you improve those that you rank lowest?

3.3 OWN COACHING DEVELOPMENT

3.3.1 COACHING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A coach that wants to improve obviously needs to develop a range of skills, including their understanding of technical elements of the game (the “Xs and Os”), their ability to teach concepts and skills and their ability to establish positive relationships.

Development of skills does not happen by accident, and the coach should have a “Professional Development Plan”.

A coach should do this whether or not they are pursuing a “career” as a coach – “professional” relates equally to how they approach their coaching as it does to whether or not they are paid to coach.

DEVELOPING A PLAN

Coaches should:

- evaluate their strengths as well identifying areas to improve – across all aspects of the coach’s role. Seeking feedback from assistant coaches, players and coaching colleagues can inform this evaluation;
- identify experiences that may help them develop their coaching skills. This may include something from another aspect of their life (e.g. being involved with preparing plans at work can also help the coach to prepare plans for their teams);
- read the stories of other coaches and leaders and consider the experiences that shaped those people’s life and success. This is not done so that they can “copy” something another successful coach did or the journey another coach had. Instead it is to help them think laterally about their experiences, which no doubt are already shaping them, and to reflect upon what experiences could assist them in the future.

Like the annual plan for their team, the coach should start with an assessment of themselves – what competences do they have and what do they need to improve? The following areas should be included in this assessment:

- Technical knowledge – how up to date is the coach’s knowledge (relative to the level they are coaching)
- Communication
- Financial – basic budget skills
- Planning – setting goals, achieving goals and reviewing goals
- Relationship building – how well does the coach get people “on board”
- Managing conflict
- Making hard decisions
- Managing stress and relaxing – does the coach “pass on” their stress to players

PRIORITISING ACTIONS

The coach should then prioritise any areas that they have identified as needing improvement and most coaches will quickly identify a range of areas for improvement and also experiences that may be beneficial.

However, few coaches have the resources to be able to do everything that they identify and the coach's most limited resource is often time. To help a coach to prioritize actions they should utilize a method such as the "ABC" model of allocating priorities:

PRIORITY

A	Addresses a weakness that is affecting my current coaching	60%
B	Before I can get my next position I need to improve in this area	30%
C	Continuous improvement makes me a better coach	10%

The final column indicates how much of a coach's resources (which includes time) should immediately be devoted to that priority. Importantly, the coach should not devote all their resources only to Priority A. Doing this would invariably mean that priorities B and C never get any attention.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The national federation or regional body may have resources that the coach can use to help in their development. The World Association of Basketball Coaches regularly runs coaching clinics throughout the world and federations often have coaching courses or clinics. Further information is available through the WABC Coaches Education Platform.

However, the coach should not limit themselves to looking within basketball; other sports or community groups may have courses that may be of benefit to an aspiring basketball coach. There may be formal courses of study that the coach can take that will assist their coaching (not limited to specific Sports Coaching courses) but there will equally be a wide range of activities that may be of benefit.

It can also be useful for the coach to develop an understanding of basketball from the perspective of officials or administrators. Undertaking a referee's course and officiating some games may help a coach understand how hard an official's job is and appreciate the different responsibilities the referee and the umpire have in a game of basketball, or the mechanics of officiating, which dictates position on court and areas of responsibility for each official.¹¹

Similarly, helping administrators to conduct a tournament or helping to manage a team may give the coach an understanding of the difficulties that administrators (whether volunteers or paid) face.

This may further help the coach to understand how they can make the role of an administrator easier to perform, which in turn will help them to build a rapport with those administrators.

At all levels of coaching, having a good relationship with administrators (and team managers) will help the coach greatly!

BEING AN ASSISTANT COACH

One of the most overlooked strategies for developing coaching skills is to be an assistant to an experienced coach, particular if the coach seems to have a different coaching style. Working with another coach can help to improve technical knowledge of the game, however it can also be instructive to see how different coaches deal with (and avoid) conflict, build relationships with players and administrators and carry out the wide range of tasks required of a coach.

The role of an assistant coach is ultimately to help to improve the team's performance beyond what it would be if the assistant wasn't there. This might be players receiving more feedback during practice because there are more coaches "on the floor" or it may be that an upcoming opponent is able to be "scouted" because the assistant can do that while the head coach does another task.

¹¹ The differences between the role of the referee and the umpire are not complex, however many coaches would be unaware that there is any difference. The "mechanics" of officiating are designed to ensure that officials have comprehensive coverage of the court and that each official is in the position to most likely to determine the correct calls

An assistant coach should provide comments, suggestions and ideas to the head coach and must not be discouraged if the head coach decides not to follow a particular one (or even any) of the assistant's suggestions.

This does not mean it wasn't a good suggestion or that it wasn't appreciated by the head coach, it simply means that the head coach has made a different decision.

Assistant coaches must be loyal to the head coach and ensure that they are providing feedback and messages that are consistent with those of the head coach. Even if the assistant coach has a different view to the head coach, once the decision is made the assistant coach must become an advocate for the head coach's decision.

If the assistant coach is unsure of what the head coach wants, it is appropriate to answer a question from a player by saying "I don't know, but I'll speak to the head coach and come back to you".

To be an effective assistant, a coach must learn when and how the head coach wants to receive feedback from them. The easiest way to learn this is to ask – some head coaches may want the assistant to pass on ideas or suggestions whenever they think of something, whilst other head coaches may prefer the assistant coach to wait until they are asked for an opinion.

Neither approach is wrong, but it is obviously important for the assistant coach to understand what preference the head coach has!

TEACH TEACHERS

It may also help a coach to identify areas for their own improvement by getting involved in presenting coaching clinics or courses. After all, "in order to be a teacher, you've got to be a student first".¹⁶

Conducting a coaching clinic is different to instructing players because the focus of the coaching clinic is how to teach a concept, not how to perform the concept. This is a subtle difference, but conducting a coaching clinic really requires a coach to:

- Present information in a logical order, which may be different than what would be done in a training session. For example, with players a coach may teach a concept over a number of weeks – each week building progressively on the previous week. In the clinic, the coach must present the entirety of the information in a very short space of time.
- Teach without the benefit of being able to give the student an end objective (e.g. shoot the ball with a high arc) and let them explore how to best do it.
- Give fuller explanations than they may give to athletes. With athletes the coach may simply direct what, but in a coaching clinic they must also be able to explain why.

¹⁶ Attributed to Gary L Francione, an American legal scholar

FOLLOW-UP

1. What are some areas that you would like to improve?
List three things that you could do to improve.
2. Ask a coaching colleague to identify some areas of development for you.
Discuss with them some ways that you could improve in these areas.

3.4 IMPROVING COACH PERFORMANCE

3.4.1 REFLECTING UPON YOUR PERFORMANCE

For players, practice does not make perfect, it makes permanent.

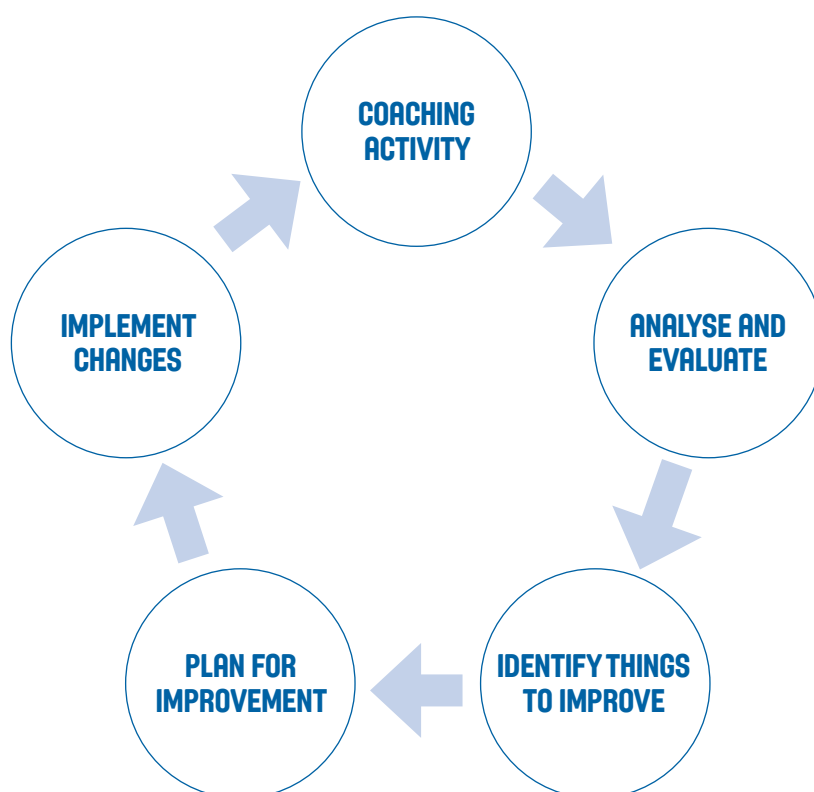
The role of the coach is to guide and assist the player to develop their skills and providing constructive feedback to the player is particularly important to achieve this.

Similarly, a lifetime of coaching will not necessarily make a coach any better – it may just mean they continue to make the same mistakes over and over. Like players, “coaches need to know how to best learn through their experiences. Reflective practice is a major learning tool in this regard”.¹²

Reflection is at the heart of any learning process and it is what links experience with knowledge – providing an opportunity to constructively explore performance and to then make adjustments based upon that considered reflection.

A simple reflective technique (that many coaches will do) is to record on the practice plan how the team performed in a particular activity (e.g. how many shots were made) as well as how the activity itself worked and note any change required for next time the activity is used.

“Reflective practice” is simply the process of identifying whether or not there is a better way to do something and, if so, implementing changes. The process is shown as a continuing cycle opposite.



¹² Farres, LG (2004, Fall). Becoming a better coach through reflective practice. BC Coach's Perspective, 6, 10-11

Often, coaches embark on a process like this only when something has gone wrong, which may be identified (for example) through a poor team performance or a player asking questions, having not understood the teaching points at a recent practice.

However, coaches should plan to undertake such reflection regularly, not just in response to a perceived issue. Indeed, reflective practice may validate that things are going well!

There are many ways that a coach can “self-reflect” upon their performance. However they do it, self-reflection is simply thinking about your coaching, evaluating your performance and identifying what needs to be done to make it better.

It can be anything from kicking yourself for neglecting an important point in a skill demonstration to patting yourself on the back for fostering a positive and supportive training environment.

The key features of self reflection are:

- Self-reflection focuses on what the coach is doing
- Self-reflection links thought to action
- Self-reflection makes improvement a continuing process

There is no formula for effective coaching, only principles that a coach can adapt to suit their individual needs. By focusing on what they actually do as a coach, self-reflection provides a powerful means for checking that they have successfully applied the principles of effective coaching.

Just thinking about your coaching does not lead to much improvement. To be of value, self-reflection needs to systematically link back to your practical coaching. The self-reflection process is similar to a circle, which includes action as a vital stage. Without taking action the circle is broken.

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING

When analysing and evaluating their performance coaches should consider:

- Objectives set for the team, individual players and the coach;
- Content of a particular practice or context of a particular game;
- Progressive learning demonstrated by players (what is their skill level now compared to at the start of the season?)

The coach should be systematic in gathering feedback, or evidence, upon which to make their evaluation. Many coaches will tend to see what there is left to do rather than also seeing what has been done! It is accordingly important that coaches have an objective reference point.

Similarly, after losing a game on the last shot or losing a game by a large margin, a coach may immediately feel that the team (and they as coach) has performed very poorly because of that result. However, their evaluation must be broader than simply looking at the scoreboard at the end of a particular game.

OTHER SOURCES OF FEEDBACK

Coaches can gather feedback from a range of sources, such as:

- Players
- Colleagues
- Parents
- Mentor coach.

In seeking feedback, the coach may have a specific focus and if that is the case they should let the person know before asking for the feedback.

For example, if a coach wants to evaluate their communication with athletes during a practice session they may ask a coaching colleague to watch the session. The coach does not need to understand basketball to provide feedback on the level and effectiveness of communication during the session.

Feedback can be gathered through a range of methods, from asking participants to complete an evaluation sheet, interviews or, less formally, by simply asking questions and listening to the answers!

Another effective method can be to obtain video of the coach in action – whether that is a practice or a game. The video can focus quite closely on the coach, which will give good information to evaluate the coach's communication style and, in particular, unconscious communication such as their body language.

Another technique can be for the coach to keep a journal or diary, where they record on a daily basis their thoughts, feelings, questions and concerns related to their role and responsibilities as a coach. They can then review this with a mentor or colleague on a regular basis (weekly or fortnightly).

IDENTIFYING THINGS TO IMPROVE

This part of the process enables the coach to identify their strengths and weaknesses in a range of areas, such as:

- Group management;
- Communication;
- Analysis and correction;
- Safety;
- Transition between activities;
- Interaction and relationship with athletes and officials.

In undertaking this stage, the coach should equally reflect upon what they do or did well as well as any aspects that require improvement.

Where a number of things are identified, they should be prioritised based upon the effect that a change is likely to have. The coach should then focus their initial efforts on those changes most likely to make the most productive change.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

It may be relatively evident how to improve a particular aspect or it may require the coach getting input from a colleague, mentor or club official on how the aspect can be improved. It is this aspect that beginner coaches may find the hardest, as they have less experience to draw upon to develop strategies.

The coach will undoubtedly identify areas they would like to improve, which might be:

- (a) "technical knowledge" – what they are teaching;
- (b) teaching points – being more effective in how they teach;
- (c) communication skills – particularly remembering that communication is "what is heard, not what is said";
- (d) general coaching skills;
- (e) relationship skills – how the coach deals with players, parents and officials.

It is better to identify a small number of things to work on than try to do too many things at once. It can also be worthwhile to discuss with a colleague what you have identified, as they may have some ideas on things you could do to improve.

A plan for improvement should be as specific as possible:

- What will you do? Attend a coaching clinic, work with a mentor, observe some other coaches, research (books/DVDs/online resources) etc.
- When will you do it? Be realistic in how much time you have. Prioritise the different things so that you can determine what to do first.
- How will improvement be measured?

IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGE

Implementing the change is simple in one sense – it is just doing what is set out in the plan for improvement.

Sometimes though, that may mean the coach changing an aspect of their behaviour that is a habit and may be something they are not even conscious of doing (e.g. not listening when a player makes a suggestion or asks a question).

To help implement the change, the coach can consider:

- asking someone they trust (e.g. assistant coach) to remind them if they are reverting to the habit (e.g. the assistant coach could tap them on the shoulder if they start to speak over an athlete);
- arranging to do activities with somebody else;
- simply telling friends and colleagues what they are doing, and why. This help to make sure it gets done. Having told other people can make the coach accountable to those people, who will naturally ask “how is the change going?”;

- writing a note to remind themselves of the change – e.g. at the top of a practice plan.

Most importantly, the coach needs to continue to reflect upon their performance so that they can see how effective the change has been.

COACH BEHAVIOUR

Most coaches are not fully aware of how they act during a game and it is therefore useful for all coaches to get some feedback, which can be provided by a coaching colleague, or anyone that the coach asks to watch the game.

For example, a coach may ask an observer to note down how many times a coach addresses players during periods of active participation and how many times they do it during pauses in the game (without counting timeouts or half time).

A SIMPLE TOOL CAN HELP COLLECT THIS INFORMATION:

COMMENTS MADE DURING PLAY	COMMENTS MADE TO A PLAYER NOT INVOLVED IN PLAY
1st Quarter Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):	1st Quarter Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):
Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):	Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):
Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):	Player: Related to present task (Yes/No):

Whether or not a comment is related to a “present” task is simply whether the comment was general in nature or a direction in relation to a particular skill or strategy.

Obviously, the observer may not always be able to hear what is said, but even noting the coach’s demeanour when they said it can be useful.

The coach may appear to be angry, and even if the coach feels that they were not angry, it is likely that the players will have also perceived that the coach was angry.

It can also be useful to keep track of when in the game the coach is providing the feedback. Often, coaches act differently (without realizing it) toward the end of the game (particularly if the score is close) than they do earlier in the game.

FOLLOW-UP

1. How do you get the attention of athletes before you speak? Could you do this more effectively?
2. Have someone watch one of your practice sessions and for each activity record:
 - a. how long you speak for;
 - b. how long you observe the activity before stopping it;
 - c. in total how much time the athletes spend engaged in physical activity.

Are you surprised by what they recorded? Should you change anything?

3. Have a colleague observe your training session and provide them with a list of the teaching points that you want to emphasise for each activity (a copy of your training plan should provide this). Have your colleague record how many times you referred to those teaching points.

Are you surprised by what they recorded? Should you change anything?

4. After practice, ask your athletes what they thought were the key “teaching points” in that session. Did they recall what you intended to be the key teaching points?
5. Arrange to watch a practice conducted by another coach, in a sport that you are not particularly familiar with. Can you identify their teaching points? How do they relay them to their players?

LEVEL 1



COACH

CHAPTER 4

MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 4

MANAGEMENT

4.1 EXPECTATIONS OF ATHLETES

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4.1 EXPECTATIONS OF ATHLETES

4.1.1 SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH PLAYER

One of the first tasks for the coach is to organize the team. Specifically:

- *How many players are on the team?*
- *What commitment is required from the players?*
- *What team rules will be established?*

How many players are on the team will obviously depend upon the number of players available and may also be influenced by the maximum number allowed in the competition, or possibly the requirements of the club or school.

When coaching young players, the coach should bear in mind the following:

- anyone interested should be allowed to play; if necessary, two or more teams can be formed so that everyone has a chance;
- there should be enough players per team to allow the activities to be carried out in the right conditions, but not so many as to make it difficult for all the players to participate;
- the level of players on one team should be similar. This is much more beneficial for all the players than including players of different levels on one team;
- one of the main motivators for children to play a team sport is to play with friends. Accordingly, if possible, mini-basketball teams (and sometimes teams made up of 13/14-year-olds) should be made up of players who already share other activities.

ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS

Coaches need to consider a wide range of factors in determining what commitment they will require from their players. Some considerations are:

- During which months is the activity carried out?
- How many days a week will the team train? How many games will be played?
- Are the games played on weekends?
- Will the players have to travel?
- What school commitments are players likely to have?

Players can only be expected to dedicate a reasonable amount of time to the team, as they must also have time for school, other sports or activities they may do as well as friends and family. Some may also have work commitments. Many of these things may be outside the control of the coach and player, whilst some may be a choice that the player can make. Whatever commitment the coach requires, the coach must make sure that all players (and their families) understand them.

If the players' obligations are not made sufficiently clear or the coach establishes obligations that all or some of the players are not willing to fulfil, sooner or later this will create a serious problem that will affect the way the team works.

In determining what commitment is required, the coach should establish obligations suitable to this team and not simply copy rules from another team.

The commitment required should be reasonable, based on the players' age and other characteristics, and the most important thing is that once the commitment is made by the athlete they, and their family, are expected to fulfil it.

For this reason, it is not appropriate to set out a commitment but then to allow players to train or play only when they feel like it or when they have nothing better to do.

In many cases, it would be a good idea for the coach to talk with the players and their parents, involving them in the decisions concerning the commitment they expect. If all parties decide on this together, the players should feel more committed.

Once the required commitment has been set, it must apply to all players and the coach.

CHOOSING TEAM RULES

Establishing team rules is a key element in the organization of a team. The rules do not have to be lengthy but they are important in setting the culture and accepted behaviours for the team.

Establishing them early can avoid problems occurring later and also provide a framework for dealing with any problems that do arise.

The commitment required from players is an important part of the team rules but it is only one part of the rules.

To be successful the rules need to be few and very precise; they should be clearly defined and should not give rise to doubts, arbitrary interpretation or conflict when applied.

They should be suited to the circumstances and level required of each team, keeping in mind the level of commitment undertaken by the players or the level that can be reasonably expected of them.

For example: certain working rules can be established such as being ready to start the practice at the agreed time, arriving one hour before the game properly dressed, taking turns collecting the balls at the end of the practice, etc.

Rules can also be set up for mini-basketball teams, related to participation in games. For example, a rotation system can be established so that all the children will play a minimum number of games throughout the season and a minimum amount of time in each game.

For these teams, it could also be appropriate to establish rules regulating the parents' behaviour, explaining the reasons behind these.

For example, they should not tell the children what to do during games or sit on the bench with the team. Young players often find it difficult if they feel they must "choose" between what the coach is saying and what their parents are saying.

Coaches should consider having team rules in relation to:

- The expectation of sportsmanship from players and spectators;
- Philosophy on "playing time" (e.g. everyone plays equally, everyone plays every half, playing to win which means some players may not play in some games, etc.)
- How players are to communicate with the coach (particularly about any absences);
- Time commitments (e.g. when to arrive for games/practice.)

Having organized, well-written and clearly explained policies will both make it less likely that the rules will be broken (because the players know what they are) and also make it easier to deal with a situation where rules are broken.

For a junior team, the coach should at a minimum set rules about:

- Practice
 - When does the team practice?
 - What time are the players expected to arrive?
 - What do they wear to practice?
 - How, and when, does a player communicate if they cannot attend practice (e.g. SMS, email, phone call to the coach)?
 - What are the ramifications if a player does not attend practice (e.g. not starting in next match)?
 - Are injured/ill players expected to attend practice? If they do attend practice what are they expected to do? For example, a coach may have an “injured player’s skill workout” or require them to be with the coach during the training.
- Games
 - What time are the players expected to arrive for games?
 - What do the players wear to games?
 - How, and when, does a player communicate if they cannot attend a game?
- Respect and Fairness
 - Standard of behaviour expected between teammates
 - Standard of behaviour to be shown to officials and opponents
- Travel (if applicable)
 - How is travel done (e.g. bus, individually)?
 - Accommodation rules (curfew, non-basketball activities, laundry)
 - What is provided by the club (e.g. meals) and what is the players’ responsibility
 - Smoking & alcohol policy. For junior players neither smoking nor alcohol should be permitted.
- Discipline
 - How will team rules be enforced? (Does the club have a process in place?)
- Values
 - What values underpin relationships within the team and how they play (e.g. honesty, integrity, perseverance)

4.1.2 WHAT BEGINNER PLAYERS EXPECT FROM A COACH

With junior players (as most beginners are), it is not just what the players expect but what their parents expect that is important!

The expectations of Beginner players are likely to be that the coach:

- has a knowledge of the sport and is enthusiastic about the sport;
- will teach (and that the players will learn) how to play the sport;
- has a positive attitude and will conduct all activities safely in a safe environment;
- is well organized;
- is a good role model of sportsmanship;
- will treat players with respect and allow everyone to participate (and hopefully have fun).

Finally, the player is likely to have an expectation that they will enjoy the sport (otherwise they wouldn't be playing it!)

4.1.3 MANAGING JUNIOR ATHLETES AND THEIR PARENTS

"I'd say handling people is the most important thing you can do as a coach. I've found every time I've gotten into trouble with a player, it's because I wasn't talking to him enough."

LOU HOLTZ

"Coaching is people management – getting people to do what you want them to do and for them to like doing it."

ANONYMOUS COACH

The role of a coach is not limited to designing team strategies, developing athletes' individual skills and instructing them on the implementation of tactics.

In addition to the tactics and skills of the game, the role of a coach, particularly a coach of junior athletes, is to:

- Develop the players' love and understanding of the game;
- Have the players work together to achieve collective goals as a team;
- Foster a spirit of sportsmanship and fair play amongst all members of the team (players, coaches and parents).
- Provide the players with opportunities to experience success;
- Make them want to come back and play next year!

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

The cause of most dissatisfaction amongst players is their expectations not having been met.

Whether the player is dissatisfied with the amount of "court time" they get in games or whether they are unhappy with the knowledge of the coach, the root cause of the problem is that the player or their parents have an expectation that has not been met.

Some players may have unrealistic expectations. Others may have expectations that, whilst not unrealistic, do not coincide with the coach's philosophy. In either event, when those expectations are not met there is the potential for unhappiness.

Accordingly, coaches must be clear about their expectations of the players and also what their coaching philosophy is.

It can be very effective, and avoid problems later, if coaches are able to take the time to speak with their players to determine what their goals are and why they are involved in basketball.

CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF RULES

Whatever rules are set the coach must comply with them. If the coach requires the team to be at practice 30 minutes before it starts, and the coach regularly arrives only 5 minutes before it starts, the athletes will quickly see the rule as unimportant.

Often it will help if the players can see the reason behind a rule. For example, a coach may require them to be at practice 30 minutes beforehand in order to do warm-up and stretching in this time.

A coach may set different rules for players than themselves but again should explain the difference.

For example, due to work commitments a volunteer coach may not be able to get to practice 30 minutes before it starts. The coach should explain this to the players and again be clear about what they want the players to do in this period, whether or not the coach is there.

In terms of team rules, **the coach's behaviour will be reflected in the players' behaviour.** If the coach sets rules, but does not follow them or does not enforce them when a player breaks them, then they will quickly not be regarded as rules.

Some coaches will involve more experienced players, or the whole team, in the development of rules. If a coach involves the team in the development of rules, they must be prepared to implement what the team comes up with.

To avoid this being *carte blanche*, the coach may set some minimum parameters and then let the team develop other rules.

The engagement of the players in developing the rules can certainly lead to a greater level of engagement and adherence to the rules. The coach must ensure that the rules are not used by groups within the team to disadvantage or belittle other players.

This particularly applies, where a team wishes to institute “fines” or “penalties” for various behaviour breaches (e.g. a fine for wearing the wrong singlet to training).

Ultimately, the coach must ensure that the team rules, however developed, are fair and respect everyone involved in the Programme.

The coach also needs to be very clear regarding their coaching philosophy, particularly in relation to substitution patterns.

With athletes aged under 14, it is recommended that all players on the team play at least some time in each half of every game.

For older children it is recommended that every player should play in every game. If this is the coach's philosophy (or if it is the philosophy of their club), this must be communicated to all players.

All players need to learn to accept playing roles – the better players need to understand that they will not play the whole game.

Particularly in the mini-basketball age groups, coaches will often strive to give players equal playing time, a philosophy that again must be communicated. Obviously, having communicated the philosophy the coach needs to apply it!

INDIVIDUAL ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

The coach should be clear on the expectations that they have for each player. They should not tell every player that they will be a “superstar” but should be honest in their assessment of where the player is in the playing group – particularly with older teenagers. With 17-18 year olds, it is not expected that they will all be treated equally (e.g. court time) however they must all be treated fairly.

Where a coach identifies areas of the game that a player can work on, the coach must equally provide an opportunity for that player to demonstrate to the coach the improvement that they have made both at training and in games.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Most coaches have expectations of what their players may achieve. Equally, each player will have expectations (realistic or not) of how the season will go.

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that their expectations are communicated, so that any difference between the expectations of coach and the player can be identified.

There are a number of methods of communication that a coach can use:

- Meeting with players individually at the start of the season – listening to their expectations as well as setting out the coach's expectations;
- Written team rules that are provided to all players. The coach may require the players to sign the rules as a signal of their intention to abide by them;
- Discussing expectations of the team with the team as a whole;
- Appointing a team captain or leadership group that are responsible for raising matters with the coach on behalf of the players and also for the implementation of rules;
- Having signs in the changing room or practice facility. These are most effective if they are positive statements (e.g. "Show Your Pride in the Uniform" rather than negative statements (e.g. Don't forget to wear your uniform);
- Setting goals for individual players and the team.

The keys to managing the expectations of athletes are:

- Provide feedback throughout the season to each athlete on how they are doing; It is particularly powerful when coaches identify "success" or improvement that the player has made. Too often, coaches focus on what more there is to do, rather than appreciating what has been done;
- Give athletes an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns;
- LISTEN to the athletes.

By taking these steps, the coach will be able to identify early on if there is a "disconnect" between the players' and the coach's expectations.

A disconnect may be caused by the coach not acting as they said they would (e.g. saying everyone will get court time and then not playing some players) or it may be that the athlete has an expectation that the coach does not agree with (e.g. the player may have a higher opinion of their skills than the coach does).

In either event, once a disconnect is identified, the coach can take steps to address it.

There may be factors that the player has overlooked (e.g. the player was not attending training and accordingly was not given game time), there may be things that the coach can change (e.g. giving additional work for the player to do to develop their skills) or there may be factors that the coach has overlooked.

MANAGING THE EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

When coaching junior players, their parents will often be a key influence on them and can be a source of support for the coach. Equally, they may make the coach's job more difficult.

Parents are not necessarily attempting to make things difficult for the coach, however if their expectations of what will happen during the season are different to the coach's then this can certainly be a source of disconnect.

The parents may speak directly to the coach if they are unhappy.

However, a more common issue that can arise is the parents (either deliberately or unknowingly) telling the coach something that is different to what the player does.

For example, the parents may assess "success" by whether the team has won or lost, whereas the coach may be focusing on the development of skills and being able to execute them in the pressure of a game, not just at practice.

COMMUNICATION REMAINS THE KEY

Just as when dealing with athletes, communication is the key to ensuring a good relationship with the parents of athletes. It does not need to be a particularly close relationship but if the parents have expectations that are not met this may lead to dissatisfaction.

The coach should communicate with the parents in regards to any team rules and also the coach's philosophy, particularly on topics such as court time.

The coach may use various strategies for communication with parents:

PRE-SEASON MEETINGS

Meetings with the parents at the start of the season can be a good way to discuss the coach's approach to:

- Court time;
- Training expectations (and what happens if a player does not train);
- Objectives for the team for the season.

It is obviously important that whatever the coach states that they will do is, in fact, what they will do.

Coaches should also find out what expectations the club has of the coach and make sure that they meet them.

SUMMARY OF TEACHING POINTS

It can be good to provide parents (and players) with a summary of teaching points after each training, which can be a simple hand-out that you provide to them. This can be beneficial for two reasons:

1. The parents can then emphasise these teaching points with their child when they are practicing at home.
2. It can give the parents a point of reference for evaluating improvement and performance. For example, if parents know that a team has been working on a "press breaker" (to beat full court pressure), they will be able to "see" the success in the game when the team execute this well. Often, parents will judge "success" only as whether or not the team won the game.

INDIVIDUAL PLANS

The coach should have a "plan" for each player of things that the player needs to work on.

Providing this information to the parents again provides them with information on how to evaluate "success" – the improvement that their child is making!

"REPORT CARD"

Coaches may also choose to provide parents (and the player) with a "report card", similar to what a school teacher provides. This can be provided during the season, which also provides an opportunity for the player/parents to address any issues, and/or at the end of the season.

The coach does not have to give a "grade" (e.g. A, B, C...) but can simply make some comments against some key criteria, identifying where the athlete has improved and what further improvement is required.

It is recommended that the coach should address the following matters:

- (a) Training Attendance (how many sessions have they missed?);
- (b) Attitude at Training;
- (c) Attendance at Games
- (d) Attitude at Games
- (e) Individual Skills – key areas for improvement (offence and defence)
- (f) Team Concepts – level of understanding and key areas for improvement

"OPEN DOOR" TIMES

The coach may like to set aside time when parents can contact them to discuss any questions or concerns that they have. Doing this can prevent the coach from receiving phone calls at all hours of the day and night.

The "Open Door" time may be before or after training or a different time altogether. It is recommended that it not be immediately after games, as this is often a time when a parent's emotions may be "running high", particularly if they are unhappy with court time.

The coach can also designate how they want parents to contact them.

Coaches may prefer parents to email them prior to meeting, or may prefer to speak with parents first. Whatever the coach's preference, they should advise the parents.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

It may be inevitable that a coach of junior players will at some stage have a disagreement with a parent regarding a player but it is natural that the coach may wish to avoid this if possible. However, the coach should always provide an honest comment or response to questions.

Sometimes it may seem easier to “agree” with the parents as this may avoid conflict at the time, however this will only make for a bigger problem in the end.

Coaches should avoid making statements regarding how much court time a particular player will get, other than their general coaching philosophy (e.g. all players play in all games). coaches should also be careful in making comparisons between one player and another player and must limit any discussion with a parent to that parent’s child.

DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL DO

The most important aspect of communication is that the coach must do what they say that they will do. This establishes trust and respect and makes it more likely that parents will help with the enforcement of team rules etc.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS?

Some parents will have a particular expectation regarding the ability of their child and this view may or may not be realistic. As noted above, communication is a key factor in avoiding conflict and, where it cannot be avoided, handling the conflict.

However, there are other expectations that parents will have of the coach and often if these expectations are not met, they will look to have their child play somewhere else!

These expectations are that the coach will:

- be organized;
- have the best interests of the players (and their child) as a priority;
- be able to teach basketball skills and concepts;
- treat players consistently and fairly;
- be enthusiastic about the team and the sport.

These expectations should not be hard to meet as they are part of the fundamentals of being a coach.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Ask each player to write down your team rules.
Do they write down all the rules that you thought were in place?
2. Discuss with a colleague how you each communicate your team rules and expectations.
3. Reflect upon the last time a parent raised an issue with you. To what extent (if at all):
 - a. did the parent have different expectations about the situation than you did?;
 - b. could you have done something earlier to avoid the situation occurring?
4. Write down your coaching philosophy in regards to coaching juniors. At the end of the season ask parents whether they observed any actions by you that were different to the stated philosophy?



LEVEL 1

PLAYER

CHAPTER 1

**DEFENSIVE
BASKETBALL SKILLS**

CHAPTER 1

DEFENSIVE BASKETBALL SKILLS

1.1 DEFENSIVE FOOTWORK

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1.1 DEFENSIVE FOOTWORK

1.1.1 BASIC DEFENSIVE FOOTWORK

Defence and offence must be given equal emphasis when coaching young athletes, and all players should be taught the fundamentals of defending both perimeter and post players. Having sound fundamental skills will enable those players to play in whatever defensive schemes a particular team may choose.

The key fundamental skills are:

- Balanced Stance;
- Lateral Movement ("big to bigger");
- Changing Direction;
- Transition from lateral movement to sprint.



BALANCED STANCE

In basketball the same basic stance is used in offence and defence. The key is that the feet should be approximately shoulder-width apart, with knees bent. The back should be slightly bent forward, but keeping the "nose behind the toes".

In defence, the hand position varies depending upon the situation.

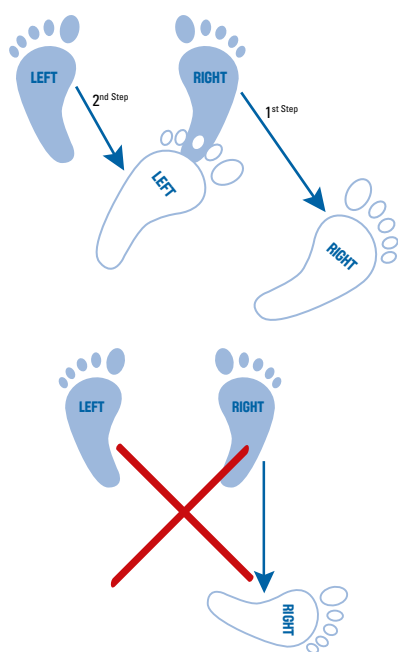


LATERAL MOVEMENT ("BIG TO BIGGER")

When moving laterally to guard someone with the ball, players should be taught to use "big to bigger" footwork, sometimes called a "defensive slide". The premise is simple – when moving to your right, step with the right foot first. The second step brings you back to a balanced stance.

Once a defender establishes a legal guarding position, they can move laterally to maintain it. Further, if there is contact with the defender's torso (even if the defender is moving) it is considered that the defender was in position first.¹³

¹³ Article 33.4, FIBA Basketball Rules

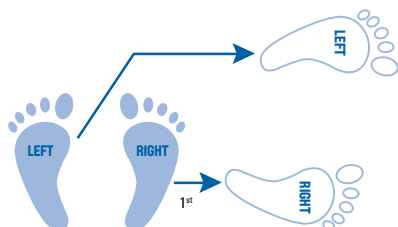


CHANGING DIRECTION

To change direction, the player performs a reverse pivot (also called a “drop step”) with the foot of the direction that they are moving. The second foot returns to a balanced stance.

It is important that the step is to an angle, keeping the defender’s torso pointing at the offensive player.

A common mistake that players make is that their first step goes behind them, which turns them sideways to the offensive player. Once the defender does this, the offence will easily get past them.



TRANSITION FROM LATERAL MOVEMENT TO SPRINTING

Lateral defensive footwork is slower than running – it is used for the specific purpose of legally blocking the dribbler and trying to take a charge.

However there comes a time when the defender will need to run in order to keep up with the offensive player. The transition to running is easier.

Again, step with the foot of the direction you are moving, turning the foot to point in that direction.

The second step, rather than just returning to a balanced stance, is long and explosive as the player moves into a sprint.

Young players should practice each type of footwork regularly. Many activities in training that have an offensive purpose can also include defence – giving an opportunity to practice footwork without requiring any more time in the practice session.

1.1.2 CLOSING OUT

“Closing Out” is an individual defensive skill – simply when a defender transitions from defending a player that does not have a ball to defending them as they receive the ball.

When “closing out” the defender aims to stop their opponent from shooting and from driving. Key teaching points are:

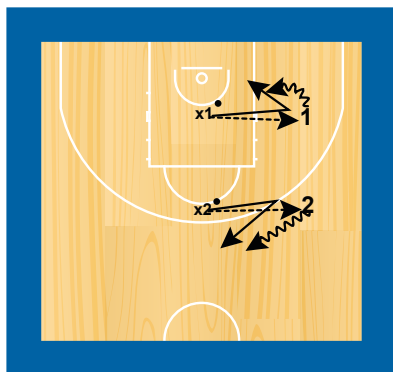
- “Fly with the ball” – the defender needs to move as the ball is passed, not waiting until their opponent has caught it
- Move efficiently – if the defender moves to their left, they should step with their left foot first
- Sprint – the defender needs to move as quickly as possible, particularly if they have to cover a long distance (e.g. if they were on the help line and are moving to an opponent outside the three point line)
- “End with a chop” – as the defender gets closer to their opponent (having covered approximately two thirds of the original distance between them), they should start to take smaller steps (“choppy” steps). This helps the defender to balance and to be ready to defend their opponent.
- “2 Hands High” – the defender raises both hands in front of their face, while taking small, choppy steps. This protects against a quick shot, but also moves their hips forward and brings the weight slightly back, which is important for finishing in a balanced stance (ready to move laterally if necessary). The defender should not reach forward with one arm (which is commonly done to protect against a shot) as this will put them off balance and leave them unable to defend the dribble.

A further two teaching points are that players should:

- Communicate – the defender should call “ball” as they start to move and not leave it until they are in position. The earlier they indicate to team mates that they will defend the ball, the less likely it is that two defenders will move to defend the one player.
- Anticipate – if the defender believes that a pass may be made to their opponent, they may move their position slightly to be closer to their opponent.

Perhaps most importantly, defenders need to practice the skill of “closing out” in contested situations, as it more than simply moving to a new position on the court. As they Close-out, the defender must be ready to change direction to defend a dribble.

ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE “CLOSING OUT” SPRINTING

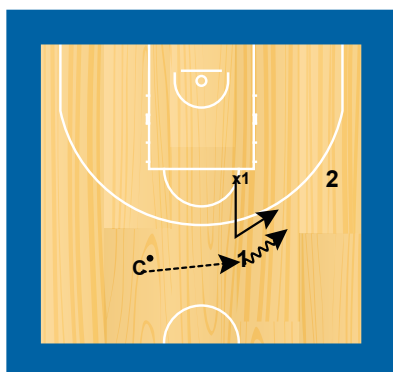


1X1 CLOSE-OUT

Many coaches will introduce “closing out” without an offence player, with the defender moving towards a chair or other marker.

It is recommended that this type of activity is used sparingly, if at all. Instead, closing out is best practiced in a contested situation – although when first learning it, the coach may limit what the offensive player can do. Here, the defender passes to an offensive player and “closes out”.

Initially, the offensive player may not move, but does shot fakes and/or drive fakes, which the defender reacts to. Progress to where the offensive player may dribble (after the defender touches the ball) and then to fully contested, where the offence may move when they wish.

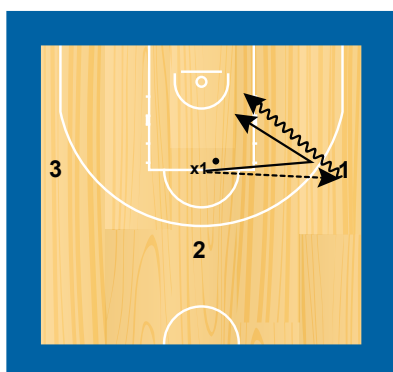


2X1 CLOSE-OUT

The coach passes to one of the offensive players, and x1 must Close-out and defend that player. The number of dribbles of the offensive player can be limited.

With young players, the activity should be done so that both offensive players are in a position where they can shoot.

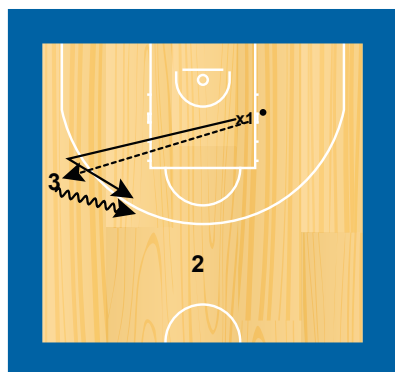
x1 should “read” the coach, anticipating where the pass will be made and moving slightly towards that player.



CLOSE-OUT 3

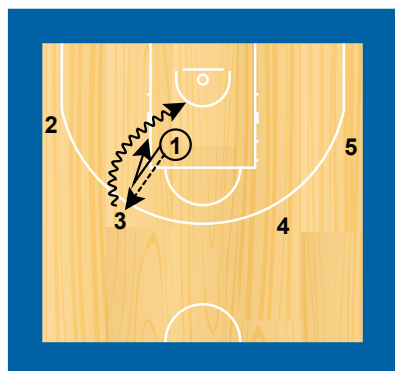
x1 passes to one of the perimeter players, closes out and defends them. The offensive player has no more than 3 dribbles as they attempt to penetrate into the key, to emphasis attacking the basket.

If the offensive player does not make the key, x1 is awarded one point.



The ball is then given to x1 who passes to whichever player they wish, closes out and defends that player.

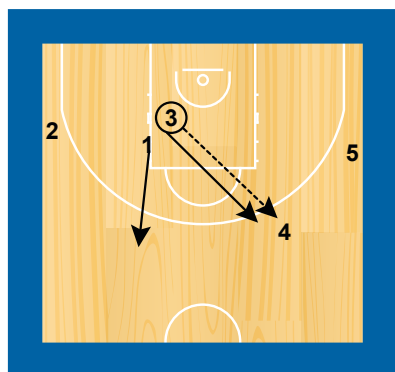
Once x1 has defended each perimeter player they will have a score out of 3. Rotate another player into defence.



CLOSE-OUT 4

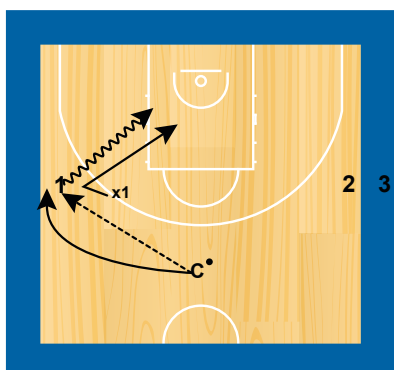
1 passes to a perimeter player, closes out and defends. The perimeter player has a maximum of 3 dribbles to penetrate into the key.

If they do not get into the key, the defender receives a point. They take the ball and pass to another perimeter player.



If the perimeter player penetrates the key, they now become the defender, pass the ball to the perimeter and Close-out.

Continue for a set time (e.g. 3-5 minutes), with the player scoring the most points being the winner. Points are only earned on defence and players only get to play defence if they can penetrate into the key as an offensive player.

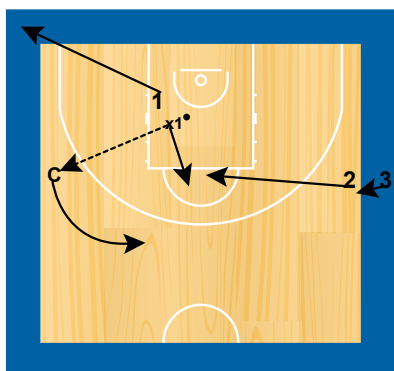


DEFEND 3

x1 starts in a denial position, defending 1.

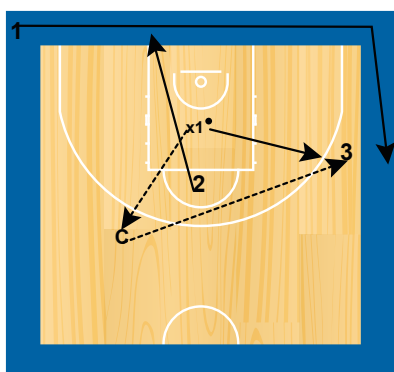
The coach passes to 1 and x1 closes out and defends.

Number of dribbles can be limited and play continues until x1 has the ball, 1 has reached the key or 1 has stopped dribbling.



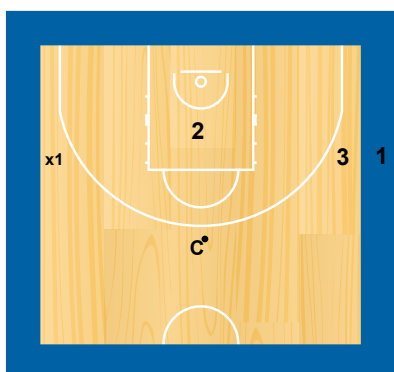
Once x1 has the ball they pass to the coach (who is now on the wing) and defend 2 who will "flash cut" into the key.

Again, x1 and 2 play until x1 gets the ball or 2 receives the ball.



The final stage of the activity is when x1 passes to coach and moves to the split line (if they were not in that position). The coach then passes to 3, and x1 closes out and defends.

3 and x1 play until 3 scores or x1 has the ball.



The players then rotate, with one of the perimeter players moving into the defensive position.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a basketball coaching colleague the key factors in athletes being balanced and moving efficiently, and how these attributes can be improved. Have the same discussion with a coach from another sport.
2. Do you agree with the following statement: "in defence, heart and effort are more important than technique"? Discuss with a coaching colleague how they would improve a player's "heart and effort".
3. Some coaches describe "closing out" as the most difficult technique in basketball. Do you agree? Identify a player on your team that is proficient in the technique- can you identify anything that they do differently to players who do not perform the skill as well?

1.2 INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE MOVEMENT & POSITION

1.2.1 DEFENDING PLAYER WITH THE BALL

All players must be taught how to defend a player that has the ball on the perimeter.

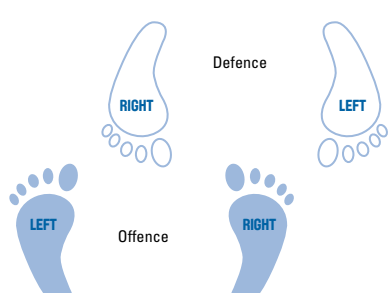
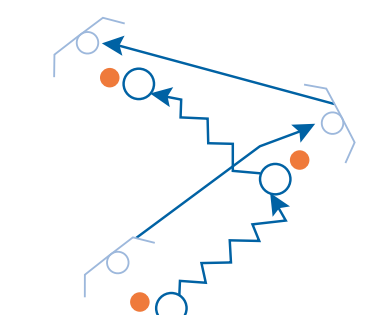
In this position there are three techniques which in particular must be developed:

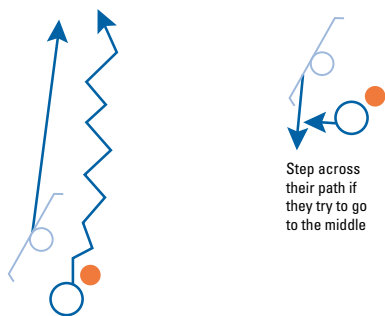
- Containment
(stopping them getting past the defender)
- Turning the Dribbler
(making them change direction)
- Channelling the Dribbler
(forcing them to dribble to a particular area on the court or towards another defender)

Rather than focus on the specific footwork ("big to bigger" or running), the coach should emphasise the position that the player needs to get to.

If they need to run, then run! If they can get to that position whilst using "big to bigger" then that is OK.

Most importantly, players need to develop a desire to beat their opponent and to not be beaten.

	<h3>ON BALL DEFENCE - CONTAINMENT</h3> <p>When an opponent has the ball, the defender must stop them from dribbling into the key. The defender must be balanced and ready to move into their opponent's path, moving laterally to stop the offence moving forward.</p> <p>Rather than wait for their opponent to move, the defender can force the offence to one side by standing with their feet outside one of the offence's feet.</p> <p>In this example, the defender is forcing the offence to the offence's left.</p> <p>A key teaching point for defenders is that they must always use two feet when defending the ball. As the offensive player moves the ball, the defender should adjust their position, moving BOTH feet.</p> <p>If the defender only moves one foot, they will quickly be off balance. Similarly, if they reach for the ball without moving their feet, the offensive player will easily get past them.</p>
	<h3>ON BALL DEFENCE – TURNING THE DRIBBLER</h3> <p>"Turning the dribbler" is simply making them change direction. To do this, the defence must get directly in front of the offensive player – they must get their "head on the ball", and have their chest facing the offensive player.</p> <p>This position forces the offensive player to move in another direction because they cannot move in their original direction.</p>

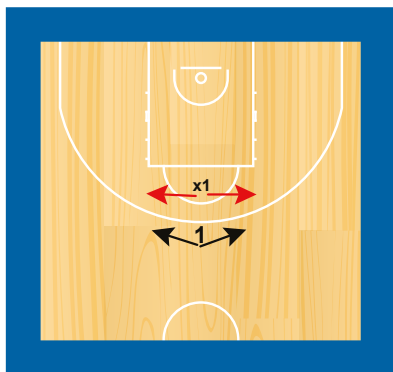


ON BALL DEFENCE – CHANNELLING THE DRIBBLER

“Channelling the dribbler” is making them continue in a particular direction and is used particularly when the offence has been forced towards a sideline and the defence want to keep them there.

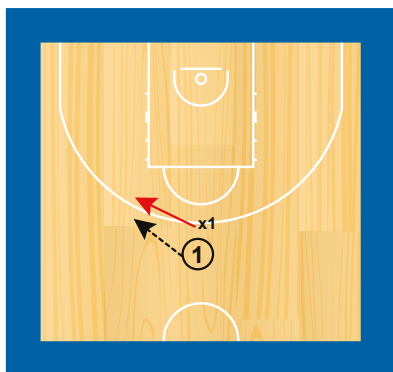
The defender stays in front of the dribbler with the foot closest to the dribbler approximately at the dribbler’s shoulder and the defender’s chest opposite the ball. The hand closest to the dribbler should be low (to stop a cross-over dribble) and the other hand should be shoulder height (to stop a pass).

If the dribbler tries to move to the middle, step into their path. If they dribble forward, stay in front of them and on their side.



“GUARD 1 STEP”

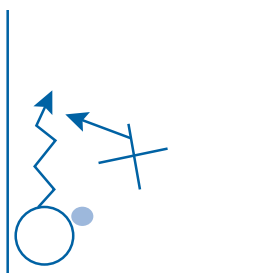
Players are in pairs, without a ball. One player is designated offence and they take one step (to whichever side they wish). Defender uses lateral footwork to maintain position.



“GUARD THE CATCH”

Players are in pairs, with 1 ball.

Offensive player throws the ball to one side, moves after it and catches it (with feet in the air), landing in a stride stop (two count) and facing the basket. The defender does not intercept the pass, but moves to be in a good position as the ball is caught.

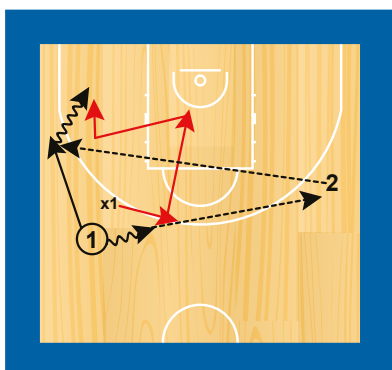


“GUARD THE CORNER”

Players are in pairs, with 1 ball, and move to an area on the court where there is a marked corner.

The offence stands in the corner and must try to dribble out, the defender uses a lateral step to take the charge! If the offence steps on the line, they are out of bounds.

The offensive player may use fakes to get the defender off balance, whilst the defender should practice moving their feet first, rather than reaching for the ball.

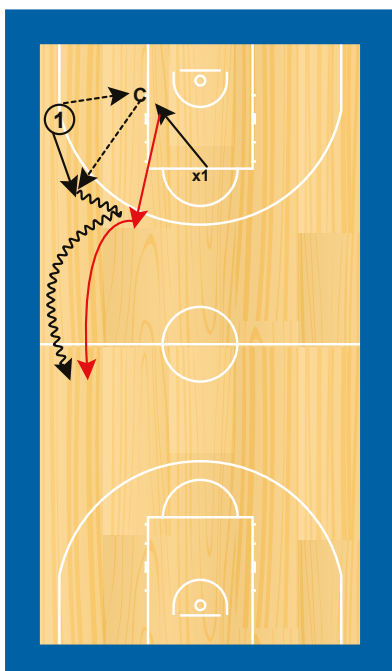


"CLOSE-OUT & GUARD"

The defensive player defends the player with the ball to stop any penetration to the keyway. If offence can't drive, they pass to the other offensive player.

x1 adjusts position, relative to the ball, and continues to defend the player that started with the ball.

The first offensive player relocates and receives pass back. The defender must Close-out and play contested 1x1.



"1X1 CATCH UP"

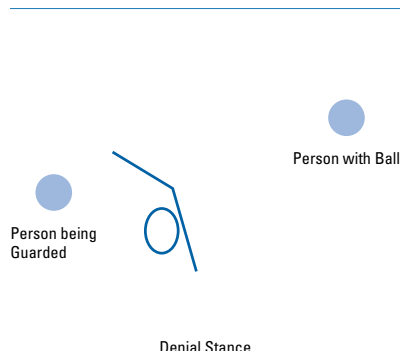
Offence starts in the corner and defence starts at the foul line. Offence pass to the coach (under the basket) or in the post and the defender closes out to the coach.

The coach returns the pass to offence, who looks to make a lay-up at the other end. Defence must sprint after the offensive player in an attempt to guard them. Defence should use both the turning and channelling techniques.

1.2.2 DEFENDING PERIMETER PLAYER WITHOUT THE BALL

There are a number of techniques for defending a player that does not have the ball:

- Denial stance;
- Open stance;
- Hedge & Recover.



OFF BALL DEFENCE – DENIAL STANCE

In denial stance, the defender's back is to the ball and their chest is facing the person they are guarding. One arm is stretched out, with thumb pointing toward the ground and the palm facing the ball, so that they can deflect a pass.

The defender should keep sight of both the person with the ball and the person they are guarding by putting their "chin to shoulder".

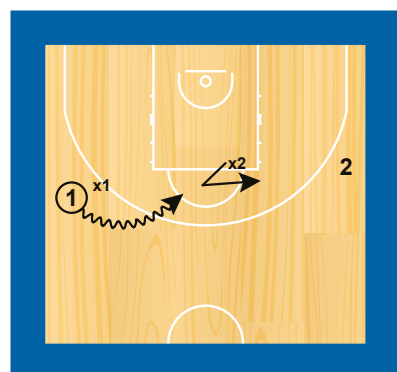
The closer the defender is to the "passing lane" (imaginary line between the person with the ball and the person being defended), the more aggressive the defence is.

The defender may have their body in the "passing lane", often called full denial, or they may take a step towards the basket and have their hand in the passing lane.



OFF BALL DEFENCE – OPEN STANCE

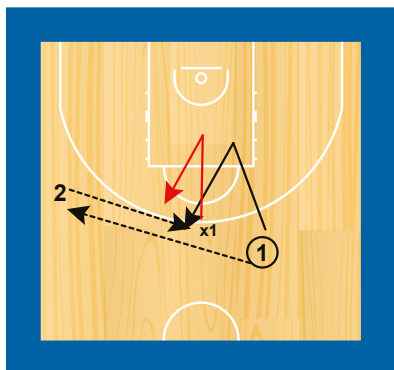
In an open stance, the defender generally has their back to the basket and is standing "side on" to both the player they are guarding and the player with the ball.



OFF BALL DEFENCE – HEDGE & RECOVER

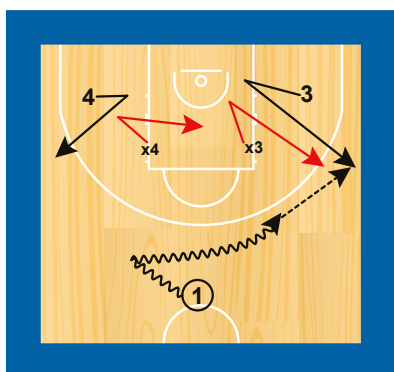
A "hedge" is simply a fake by a defender. The defender "fakes" that they are coming over to guard another player. This is typically done when an opponent is dribbling, although it can also be used to pressure a post defender.

The footwork is the same as for lateral defensive movement – taking one or two steps. Most importantly, the defender should move both feet! Keeping a balanced stance is very important, and lunging (stepping with one foot only) will make it hard to then recover to guard their own player.

BELOW ARE A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED TO PRACTICE GUARDING OFF THE BALL.**"GUARD THE LEAD"**

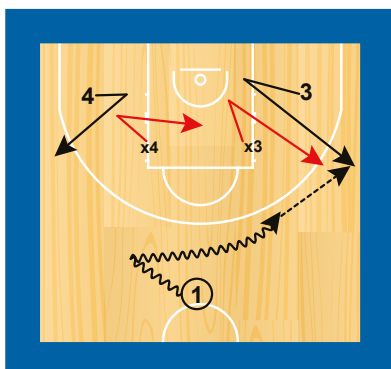
Players are in groups of 3, with 1 ball.

The player with the ball passes to their team mate and then makes a "v-cut" lead to receive a pass back. The third player defends this lead.

**"1+2X2"**

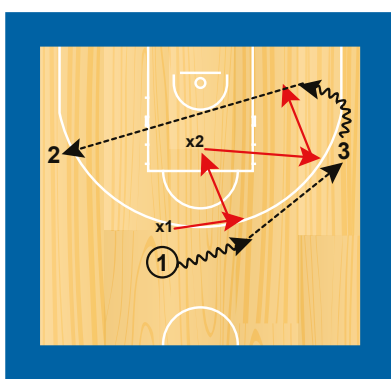
The player with the ball in point guard position dribbles side to side, with wing players trying to get open to receive a pass at the wing position.

Defenders are in open or denial stance, depending upon ball position. After receiving the ball, the players contest 1x1.

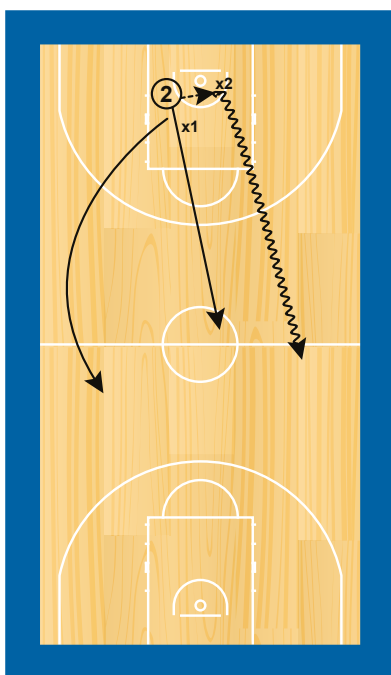


"3X2 HALF COURT"

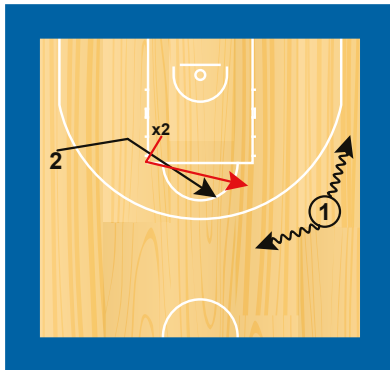
Players play 3x2 in the half court. Initially, make the goal of the activity to dribble into the key, to emphasise both offensive spacing and also defensive containment.



The defenders should aim to have one person defending the ball at all times and the other defender in a "help" position in the key.

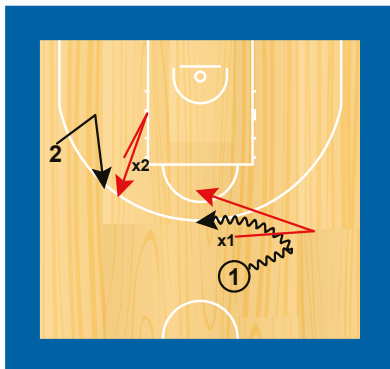


After the ball is penetrated into the key, the two defenders play offence to the other end of the court, defended by the player that dribbled into the key.



"GUARD THE CUTTER"

Players compete 1x1, while the player with the ball attempts to make a pass from a dribble. The defender should adopt a good position, relative to ball position.



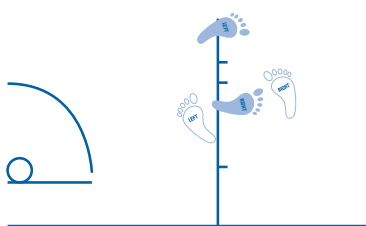
"2X2"

2x2 contested drill. Play to a score or defensive possession.

1.2.3 DEFENDING IN THE LOW POST

All players should be taught basic skills of post play. There are three main techniques for defending a post player:

- Denial stance;
- Fronting – toes in and toes out;
- Behind



POST DEFENCE – DENIAL STANCE

A denial stance may be established on either side of the post player – shown here on the baseline side. The defender has their feet straddle the post player, and their arm extends across the post player's body.

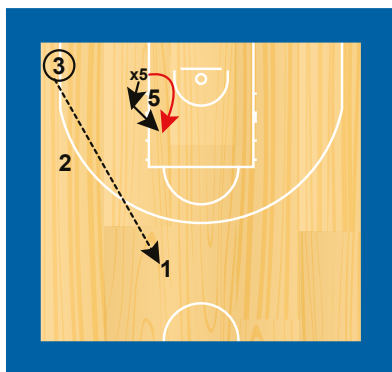
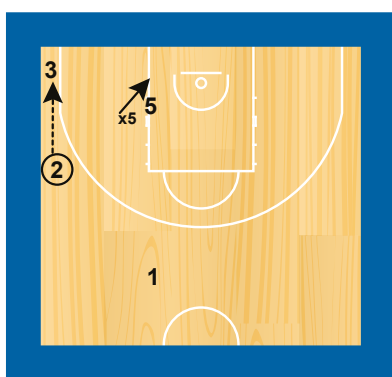
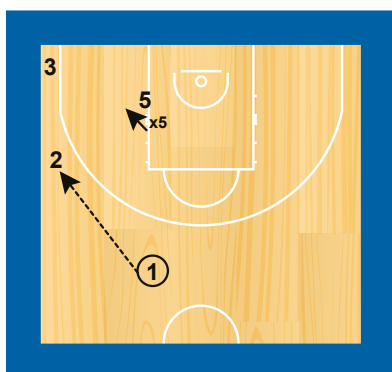
The defender may step their front foot in front of the post player, although the more that this is done, the more the defender exposes themselves to being “sealed inside” by the post player (i.e. the post player is closer to the basket). Keeping one foot behind the post player makes this less likely.

POST DEFENCE – BEHIND

Keeping the defender behind the post player (which allows a pass to be made) means that the post defender is better able to be involved in “help” defence. It may also be used where the offensive player is less skilled in the post.

Keys for guarding from “behind” are:

- Make sure the post player remains in sight at all times. Young players in particular will tend to watch the ball;
- Be close enough to the post player to get to them as they receive a pass. This is the same philosophy as guarding on the perimeter.
- Do not try and intercept the pass from behind. If a player wishes to intercept the pass, they need to move to a denial position – moving their feet, not just reaching around the post player.



"3 PASSERS POST DRILL"

x5 adopts a denial stance, with the ball at the top of the key. When the ball is passed to the wing, x5 moves to a position to deny that pass.

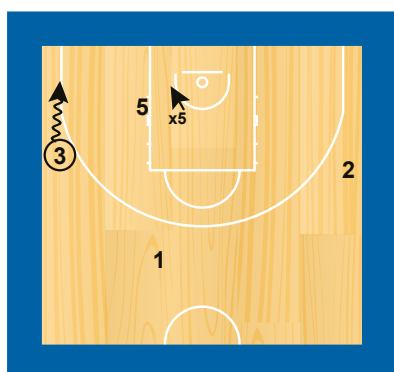
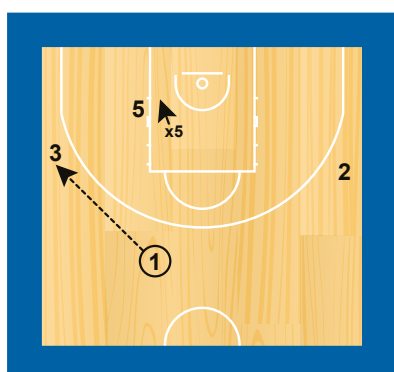
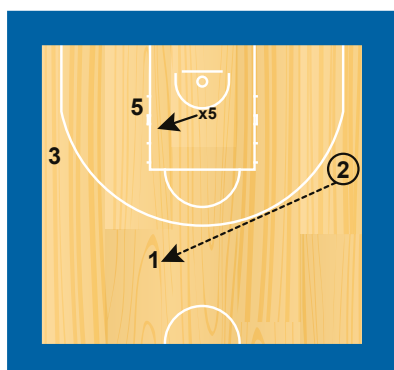
As the ball is passed to the corner, x5 moves to a denial stance on the baseline side.

Players pass the ball when they can to 5, who makes a move to the basket.

No lob passes (as there is no help).

Defence can also be added on the perimeter players.

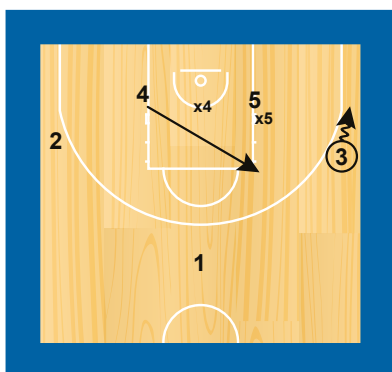
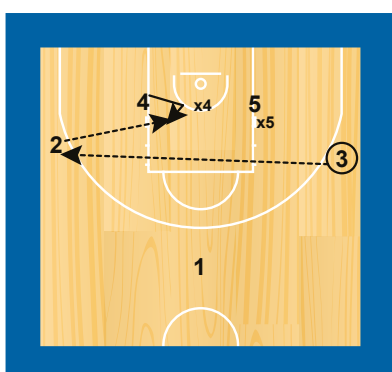
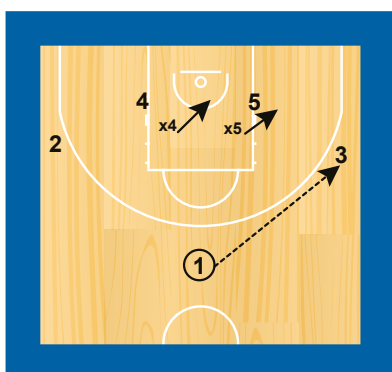
If the ball is passed from the corner to 1, x5 may find it easier to establish their new position by going behind the post player (shown in red), rather moving in front of 5.



PLAYING BEHIND THE POST

Offensive players are in position on the wing and at the point position. x5 defends the post player from behind, adopting a “split line” position when the opposite wing (in this diagram player 2) has the ball.

On each pass, x5 adjusts their position. Again, defence can also be placed on the perimeter players.



DEFEND 2 POST PLAYERS

With two post players, perimeter players pass the ball, looking to feed the post players. The post players stay in the low post, focussing on establishing a position against their player and not “chasing” the ball.

When the ball is on the wing, the post player on the “weak side” (opposite the ball) may be able to establish a position against their defender by stepping in to the key.

A skip pass (from one wing to the other) is then the most effective way to pass the ball to that post player.

Perimeter players should be encouraged to dribble to create a better passing angle. The coach may also allow the weakside post player to cut to the high post, which serves two purposes:

- Ensures x4 keeps sight of their player, otherwise the cutting player will be open;
- Takes away the split line defender so that a lob pass may then be used.

1.2.4 BLOCKING OUT AN OFFENSIVE REBOUNDER

Few players will naturally move to “block out” an opponent in a rebound contest. The natural instinct of most players will be to jump to the ball and try to secure the rebound. This makes the result of each rebound contest dependent on a combination of luck (where the ball bounces) and the player that jumps the highest.

A good defensive team, however, will reduce the impact of those factors through “blocking out” the offensive players.

“Blocking Out” is simply establishing a position between the basket and the offensive player. It is important that the defensive player has made contact with their opponent, not simply standing in front of them.

The defender must make sure that they are at least a step or two away from the basket, otherwise rebounds will bounce over them. The “no charge” circle provides a good reference point.

The keys to blocking out are:

- When a shot is taken, turn to face the offensive opponent;
- Step towards the offensive opponent, making contact with your forearm, while still looking at the offensive player;
- As the offensive player attempts to get around the defender, the defender pivots so that their bottom makes contact with the offensive player. The defender is now facing the basket, with their hands up ready to jump and rebound!

GETTING REBOUNTING POSITION

Although very important, it is not enough to simply go for the rebound. A defensive player must first “block out” or take steps to ensure that their opponent does not get position to get an offensive rebound. For offensive rebounders, they must beat their opponent to get to a rebounding spot.

There are three key “rules” regarding rebounding spots:

1. Do not be positioned under the basket.
The preferred position is to be at least a metre from the basket, so that you are catching the rebound in front of you;
2. A missed shot from one side goes most often to the opposite side;
3. Long distance shots rebound longer than short distance shots.

Offensive players should be especially alert to their defender going to help or losing sight of them, as this is an opportunity to get to a rebounding spot. A simple cue for offensive players is that if they can see the back of their opponent’s head, their opponent cannot see them!

Getting to a rebounding position is not a matter of racing your opponent to see who gets to the position first. Both offensive and defensive players must be prepared to use their body to establish a rebounding position.

The key to blocking out is:

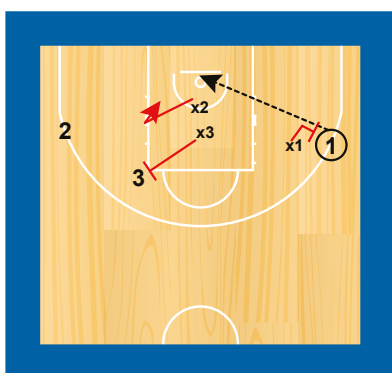
1. **See your opponent.** When a shot is taken, many players simply turn towards the basket, thus losing vision of their opponent.
2. **Balance.** Players must have good balance with knees bent.
3. **Contact with your opponent.** Next, the player must move to establish contact with their opponent. This should be done using an “arm bar” that is kept close the body (within the “cylinder”), so it requires moving the feet! Players that extend their arms and push their opponents are fouling. A defender that is on the “split line” may be a significant distance from their opponent. In this instance, step to the side of the key, so that if their opponent moves to rebound contact is made there.
4. **Turn to the basket.** After making initial contact, the player should then pivot to face the basket, again keeping contact with their opponent.
5. **Hands Up and rebound.** One of the most common mistakes players make is having their hands down. Hands should be just above shoulder height, elbows out, which makes the player “wider” and harder to get around.

JUMPING AND CATCHING THE BALL

This will be instinctive for some players but others will need instruction and guidance. The following points are important:

- Be balanced before jumping as high as possible;
- Timing is crucial. Players must learn to jump at the proper moment to catch the ball as high as possible.
- Jump and move arms upwards, without fouling the opponent. The temptation to have their hands in the opponents back must be resisted.
- Land in a balanced stance, with the ball protected, holding the ball in two hands—with hands on each side of the ball and elbows pointing out, not down.

Sometimes, the offensive player will be outside the key when the shot is taken, but the defender is inside the key (e.g. the defender is in a “help” position. In this situation, the defender still looks at their player, but does not move all the way to them. Instead, they move to the edge of the key. If the offensive player is going to contest the rebound they will need to move into the key, and the defender can then make contact.



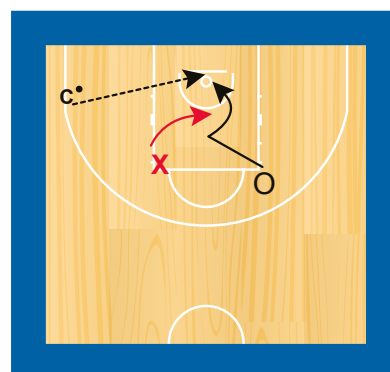
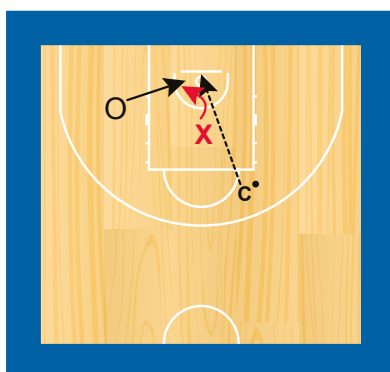
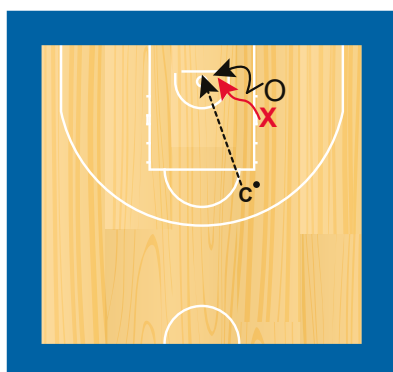
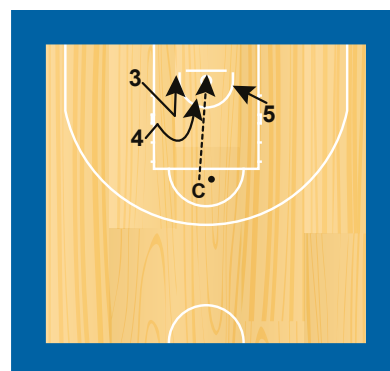
1 shoots the ball and their defender contests the shot and then “blocks out”.

X3 (who is close to their opponent) steps towards them, making contact and “blocking out”.

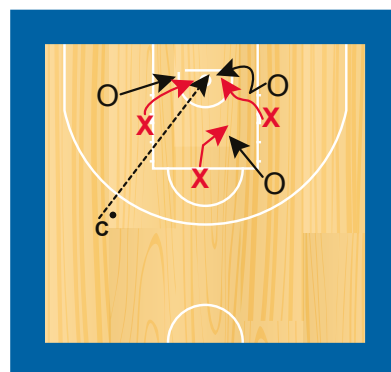
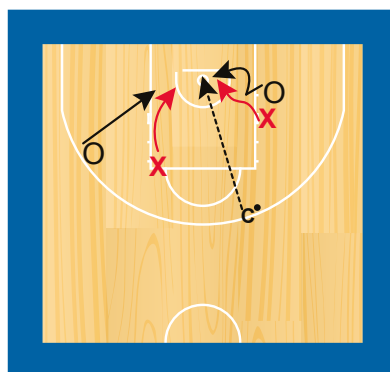
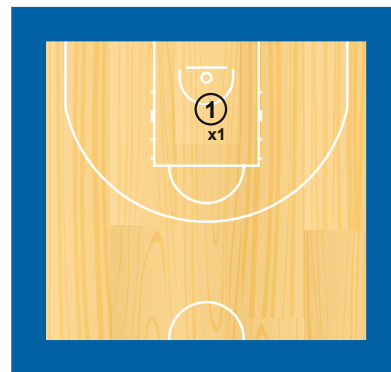
X2 (whose opponent is outside the key), watches their opponent and steps to the side of the key. They will “block out” if 2 comes to rebound the ball.

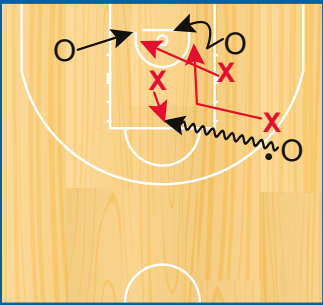
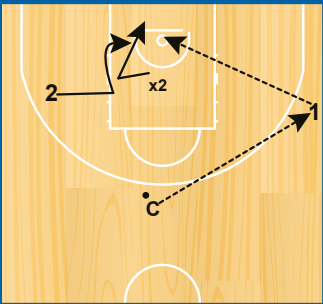
With young players, coaches should not emphasise making contact but should still emphasise “finding” their opponent and getting a position between them and the basket.

Activity	Description	Suggested Change
"Plyo Rebounds"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes are in pairs, with 1 ball • One stands on a chair and holds the ball at a height their partner can reach, but must jump high • The partner jumps and taps the ball with their right hand, lands, and immediately jumps to tap with their left hand • Make 5 touches with each hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced landing • Use arms to help with momentum of jump
"Put Backs"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete stands in the key and throws the ball against backboard • Jump to rebound and then jump to score • Make 5 shots with each hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the basket before shooting • Keep the ball at shoulder height or higher
"Get to the Spot"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity can be done with 1-3 players • Players start outside the keyway. Coach shoots (to miss) • Players move into the keyway, and compete for the rebound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players should focus on getting to a rebounding position quickly • If near another player, establish contact to keep them out of position.
"1x1 Rebounds"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach shoots the ball and the offensive player attempts to get the rebound • Defensive player "blocks out" • Work from different positions • On defensive rebound, outlet to coach. On offensive rebound, shoot and continue until there is a score or defensive rebound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence – establish contact • Offence – don't accept being "boxed out"



<p>“Disadvantage Rebound”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offence starts with the ball, near the basket. Defence starts behind them. • Offence shoots (defence does not defend shot) and players compete for rebound. • Continue until defender gets the rebound. Offence gets a point for each successful shot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offence should make contact with defender before shooting • Defence should move to at least the side of the offence player in an attempt to claim the rebounding position.
<p>“2x2 Rebounds” & “3x3 Rebounds”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as for “1x1 Rebounds” • Vary starting position, to replicate different game situations. This can be done by the coach moving, and the defenders adjusting their position as they would in a game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate the shot and move to the rebounding spot as early as possible • Defenders establish contact

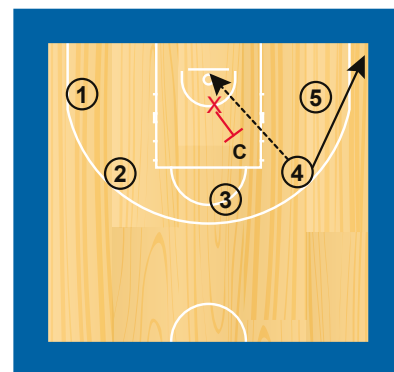


<p>“Penetrate & Rebound”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play 3x3 or 4x4, with two rebounders in the low blocks • Perimeter players play 1x1 or 2x2, looking for an open shot or penetration into the key. • Offence score 1 point if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made shot; • Dribbler gets into keyway; • Offence rebound. • Defenders in the keyway help to prevent penetration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offensive rebounders look to take advantage when their defender moves to help guard penetration
		
<p>“Split Line Box Out”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defender (x2) starts in a “split line” position. • coach passes to Player 1, who shoots the ball. • Player 2 contests rebound and x2 must move toward them to Box Out. • If offence rebound the ball, make an outlet pass. • Activity continues until the defender gets a designated number of rebounds (e.g. 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence must move toward offensive player – do not stay on split line • Offence use change of pace and direction to avoid box out
		

“Box Out, Box Out, Box Out”

- Offensive players each have a ball. The defender is in the keyway and the coach has a “bump bag”
- Offence shoot, the defender steps to box out the coach (“hit the bag”) and then passes back to the shooter, who relocates to an outlet position.
- Once an outlet pass is made, the next shot is taken. The coach moves around.

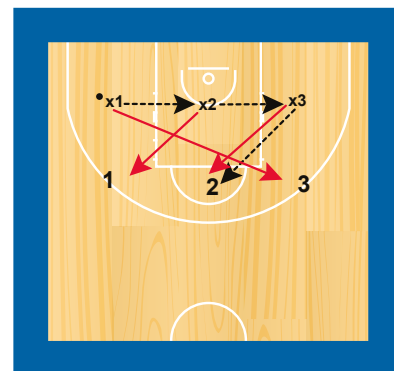
- Defence must see the coach first, then move to get box out.



“Square Box Out”

- 3 defenders in line with the low block. 3 offensive players along the foul line
- Defenders pass the ball between themselves and then move to guard an offensive player.
- 3rd defender passes to the middle offensive player, who shoots. Contest rebound until defence get the ball or offence score.

- See your player – don’t just look at the ball
- Remain balanced
- Make contact and then spin to face the basket.



FOLLOW-UP

1. Observe a training session of a colleague and consider how much time they spend on development of defensive skills (both on and off the ball). Do you spend more or less time? Discuss any differences with the coach.
2. Video one of your practice sessions (which includes individual defensive techniques). Review the video and consider how well the players perform the skills? At practice, did you identify and correct any technique deficiencies?
3. Video one of your games and review the video, paying particular attention to how your players are executing individual defensive techniques (e.g. closing out, channelling/turning dribbler). Do you need to change how these skills are practiced?
4. Review your practice plans for the last six weeks – how much time have you allocated to individual defensive techniques? Have a coaching colleague observe a practice session and record how often your players spend practicing individual defensive techniques. Discuss with your colleague whether or not you need to change the amount of time spent on these skills.



LEVEL 1

PLAYER

CHAPTER 2

**OFFENSIVE
BASKETBALL SKILLS**

CHAPTER 2

OFFENSIVE BASKETBALL SKILLS

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2.1 BASIC MOVEMENT SKILLS

2.1.1 BASIC STANCE

In offense, only one player has the ball and as such the other four play without the ball. Footwork, appropriate body stance and balance are essential for moving efficiently around the court.

Players should use a stance that is comfortable and that prepares them to move quickly:

- legs spread, a bit more than shoulder width; feet parallel;
- knees and hips slightly flexed, keeping the body's centre of gravity low;
- head up, being able to see the ball and the basket (do not look at the floor);
- upper body slightly flexed;
- body weight equally balanced on both feet, slightly on the toes;
- hands ready to receive the ball, with arms held close to the chest.

In this position the player can move quickly. If, for example, they stand with straight legs, then before they can move they must bend their knees! Similarly, if a player leans their head to one side this affects their balance and before they can change direction, they need to move their head back to the middle.

Sometimes players will be facing the ball, at other times their stance will be away from the ball, but they will need to turn their head or waist to be able to see the ball.

2.1.2 BALANCE

Body balance is extremely important and the body stance described above will give the player good balance. Players should learn to shift the degree of inflection of their legs, their weight from one leg to the other, and the inclination of their upper body to perform effective moves without the ball.

A good stance does not include a straight back as this would put their weight on their heels. Before a player with a straight back can move, they would need to shift their weight to be slightly over their toes.

Accordingly, to be balanced, players should lean slightly forward, making sure they keep their “nose behind their toes”.

When moving, it is important that players get into the habit of moving their feet first! If they reach with their arms (e.g. to catch a pass) this takes them off balance. They should move their feet to get to the ball.

2.1.3 FOOTWORK

Coaches must take time to teach correct footwork, as this underpins everything that a player does (on either offence or defence). Coaches should not assume that players have efficient footwork – some will have, but many will need improvement in how they run or change direction.

Changing step length is another very important aspect of footwork, and is particularly important when attempting to beat an opponent – small steps can be used to slow down, and long steps to accelerate quickly.

One of the best ways to improve footwork is to play games that require players to avoid other players (such as “tag”).

2.1.4 RUNNING

Many young players need to be taught how to run in basketball – particularly how to move in offense without the ball. In particular, knowing when to move is just as important as knowing where to move.

Three common mistakes are losing sight of the ball, running sideways and running along the wrong “pathways”.

To correct these mistakes:

- Players must learn to run while turning their necks to see the ball – “chin to shoulder” will keep the ball in sight (e.g. when running a fast break) whilst still being able to run as quickly as possible;
- Players should also learn when it is appropriate to run sideways. For example, it may be appropriate when cutting into the keyway to run sideways in order to prevent the defensive player (if behind them) from intercepting the pass;
- Finally, they must learn to run using the right pathways. For example, it would be inappropriate to run the Fast-Break without respecting the lanes or to cut to the basket leaving a gap between themselves and a screener. In both instances, the wrong movement makes the defensive task easier.

2.1.5 SPEED

The speed that players move without the ball can be crucial. Sometimes, moving at maximum speed is required, whereas at other times they need a slower pace. In many cases, a change of speed will actually be the key to getting open.

To develop the ability to effectively change speed, it is not enough for the coach to occasionally tell their players to “change speed”. As with any skill, players must be given an opportunity to work on this specifically.

Some players will naturally be faster (or slower), however, for all athletes a change of speed can be effective. Coaches should include activities that allow players to move at different speeds because awareness of their own speed is the first step to being able to control it.

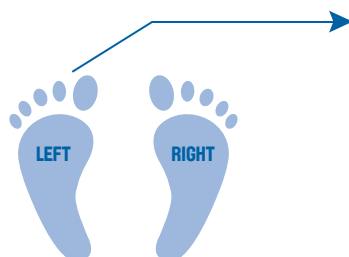
2.1.6 EFFICIENTLY CHANGING DIRECTION

CHANGING DIRECTION

In basketball players have to change direction often. To do this efficiently requires leg strength, a high degree of coordination, good body balance and proper footwork. A player that can change direction with efficient footwork will often be able to beat an opponent who is faster than them in a “straight” line.

There are two techniques to changing direction – using a pivot and without a pivot. When using a pivot, the player may pivot either forwards or backwards.

To change direction with a pivot means that the player will usually stop for a short time.



- the foot closest to the direction you want to move (i.e. the right foot when moving right) is the pivot foot;
- the last step in the current direction may be shorter; the knee should be bent and body weight is on the foot away from the direction you want to move;
- body weight transfers to the pivot foot, which pushes into the floor (on the front part of the foot) to turn the torso in the new direction;
- the first step in the new direction is with the foot away from that direction and is a longer step to accelerate.

Particularly when executing a backward (reverse) pivot, the player should quickly (and first) put their “chin to shoulder” so that they can see in the direction they want to move.

Changing direction without pivoting is a faster technique:



- the last step in the current direction is with the foot away from the new direction;
- the body weight moves to that leg, but the player should ensure their head does not move over that foot;
- the first step in the new direction is with the other foot and must be a long, powerful step.

This style of direction change is quicker and more explosive than pivoting. The technique is sometimes referred to as pushing off the “outside” foot because after the change of direction the player moves away from the foot that is grounded.

Pivoting, however, is often used in conjunction with a dribble or post move or when the player is stationary and just starting to move. Players need to be able to do both.

COMMON MISTAKES WHEN CHANGING DIRECTION ARE:

- shortening the length of step 3 or 4 steps before changing direction. Instead, the player should run normally and only shorten the last step;
- losing balance because the player’s centre of gravity is too high. Keep the centre of gravity lower by bending the knees and keep the head centred;
- the move is made as a curve and not as an angle. Instead, players should stop movement, shift body weight and take an explosive first step to the new direction.

2.1.7 STOPPING

To stop, players may use either a one-count stop ("jump stop") or a two-count stop ("stride stop"). In the first case, both feet touch the floor at the same time, whereas in the second case one foot will touch the floor first and then the other foot lands. In both cases, the most important thing is to keep the body balanced, landing with an appropriate body stance.

The most common mistake when players are stopping is a lack of balance. Basically this occurs because the players do not bend their legs (or leg) sufficiently when they stop, they do not spread their body weight properly, or they do not spread their legs to get the basic basketball stance.

With a one-count stop, the body weight should be equally distributed between the two legs and the feet land at the same time.

About 60% of their weight should be on the front of their foot, with the heels lifting slightly. Commonly though, players transfer too much weight to the front of the foot, causing them to fall (or step) forwards.

Alternately, with a two-count stop the weight is initially focused on the first foot to land, with the knee bent in order to stop forward momentum. As the other foot touches the floor, weight is transferred so that it is even between the two feet.

Whichever technique they use to stop, if they are stopping with the ball in their hands, the player should generally face the basket and must also know which is their pivot foot.

The pivot foot is important because:

- If the player wants to dribble, they must start dribbling before lifting their pivot foot;
- If the player does lift their pivot foot, they must throw, shoot or pass the ball before it touches the ground. If it touches the ground while they still have the ball it is a travelling violation.

The jump stop ("one count") may be preferred particularly because it gives a player with the ball a choice of pivot foot. On a two count stop, whichever foot landed first must be the pivot foot. However, if on catching the ball the player is going to turn to face the basket, a stride stop ("two count") may be preferable as it is quicker than stopping and pivoting. Most importantly, players should be taught, and become proficient at, both techniques.

2.1.8 PIVOTING

A player that has the ball is limited in how they can move. They can only run if they are dribbling the ball (bouncing it with one hand) and once they finish dribbling they cannot start dribbling again. When they have the ball and are standing still a player may step with one foot, which enables them to change direction (e.g. to move away from a defender).

Pivoting is when a player stands still and steps with one foot. The foot that stays on the ground is called the pivot foot. To determine which foot is the pivot foot:

- If the player caught the ball with one foot on the ground – that foot is the pivot foot;
- If the player caught the ball with two feet on the ground – they may choose which foot to pivot on but once they make that decision they cannot then pivot on the other foot;
- If the player catches the ball in the air – whichever foot lands first is their pivot foot. If both feet land at the same time (a “jump stop”), the player may choose which foot to pivot on.

The pivot foot is important because:

- A player must start dribbling the ball before lifting their pivot foot;

- A player may lift their pivot foot as long as they pass or shoot prior to the foot being put back on the ground.

There are three common mistakes that players make when pivoting:

- They twist only the top half of their body instead of stepping with their feet (i.e. they are not pivoting but they should be);
- They stand with legs straight, which means that they have little balance;
- They bend down (looking at the floor) which both affects their balance but also makes it hard for them to see open team mates.

A pivot should be a controlled, balanced move performed with legs bent so that the player has good balance. A player can pivot either forwards or backwards (a backward pivot is also called a “drop step”) and before pivoting backwards they should move their chin to their shoulder so that they can see behind them and ensure that they are not moving into trouble.

In 2017, the rules were changed in relation to a player catching the ball whilst on the move (either from a pass or to end their dribble). This change has been described as a “zero step” or a “gather step” and applies in limited situation.

CASE 1: PROGRESSING PLAYER / STOP-SHOOT-PASS

After getting possession of the ball on the move (progressing) a player can now take two steps before stopping, shooting or passing

When the ball is gathered/received when one foot touching the floor (upon dribble or after pass while progressing), NEXT foot (AFTER gather) to touch the floor is first step (diagram 1).

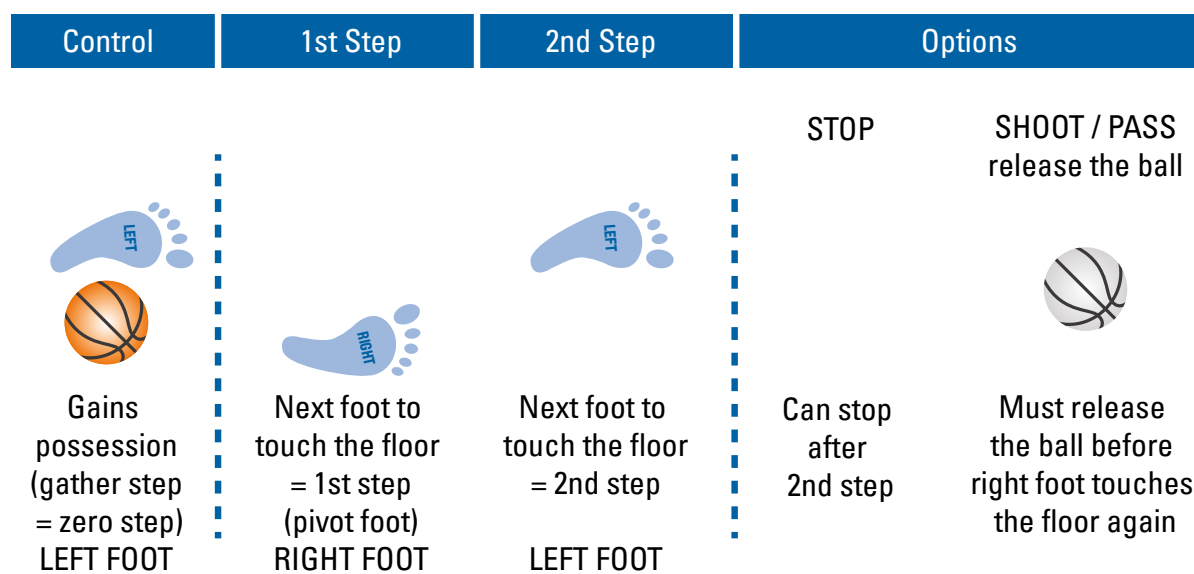


Diagram 1.

When the ball is gathered/received both feet in the air, NEXT foot to touch the floor is first step (pivot foot – diagram 2).

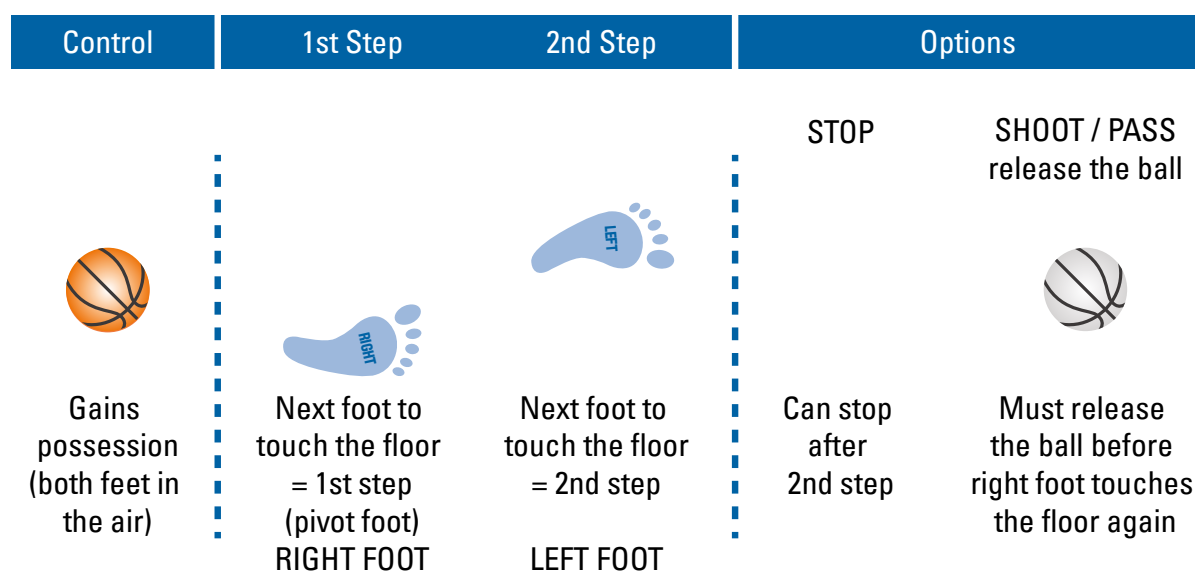


Diagram 2.

CASE 2: PROGRESSING PLAYER / START DRIBBLING

However, if player wanted to start dribble while progressing, the ball must be released before 2nd Step.

When the ball is received when one foot touching the floor while progressing, NEXT foot (AFTER receiving the ball) to touch the floor is 1st step and the ball must be released before 2nd step (in example left foot touches the floor) to start dribble (diagram 3).



When the ball is received in the air, NEXT foot to touch the floor is 1st step (pivot foot) and the ball must be released before 2nd step (in example left foot touches the floor) to start dribble.



FOLLOW-UP

1. Assess each of your players on their ability to perform movement fundamentals (stopping, starting, changing direction, changing speed). Have a coaching colleague watch one of your games and provide their assessment of how well each of your players perform movement fundamentals in that game. Discuss with your colleague any discrepancy in the assessments.
2. Observe a training session of another sport (e.g. soccer/football, hockey, volleyball). How similar are the movement patterns in those sports? Discuss with the coach how they develop movement fundamentals.

2.2 GETTING OPEN FOR THE BALL

2.2.1 GETTING OPEN - SOME FUNDAMENTALS

Whilst there are a number of techniques that players should be taught, the best way to teach a player to get open is to give them plenty of practice in competitive situations.

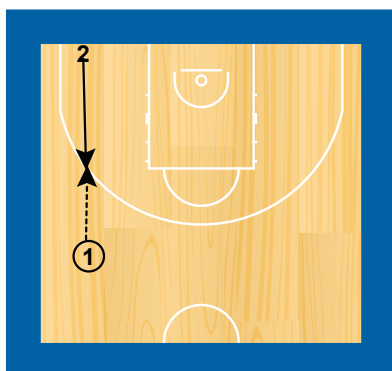
The following guidelines will also help:

- Use a change of pace, or even stop and then start. A person moving at a constant pace is predictable and easy to guard;
- Use change of direction (particularly with change of pace) and step into or across their path;
- If you can see the back of the head of the person guarding you, they can't see you – it is time to cut!;
- Moving away from the ball can be effective, particularly if your opponent thinks that you are “out of the play”. Once they have relaxed, you can attack!

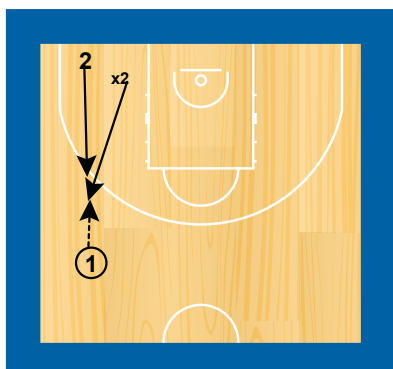
- Always give a target with your hands for where you want the ball to be passed – have your hands ready to catch the ball.

STRAIGHT CUT

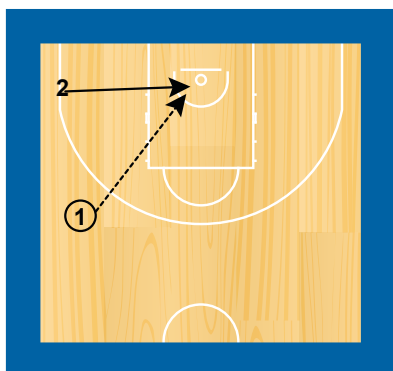
Players will usually be taught to pass and catch while standing still because this allows them to focus on those particular skills, however, basketball is a dynamic game and players must quickly be introduced to passing while on the move and passing to a team mate that is moving.



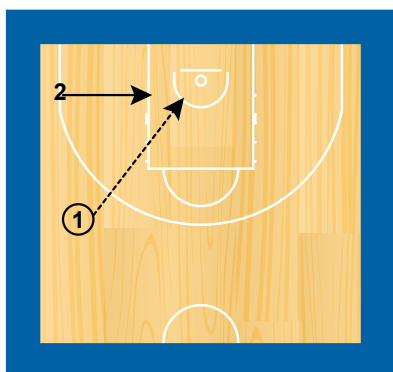
Players can quickly progress to “leading” for the ball, simply by having them run towards the player that will pass the ball to them. This is a “straight cut”.



Young players will often stop their cut before catching the ball, which gives a defender the opportunity to run past and catch the ball. Players should be encouraged to keep running until they have caught the ball – a small jump in the air as they catch the ball will help them to stop.

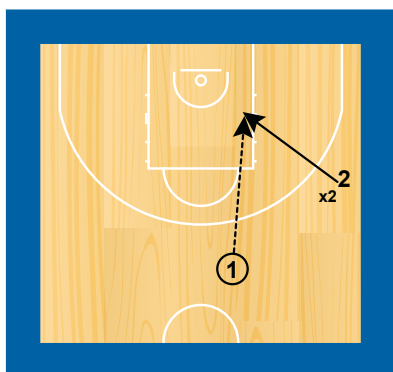


Next, players need to learn to pass the ball to someone who is moving, but not directly towards them. There are many examples of when this will happen in a game, and it can be practiced anywhere on the court.

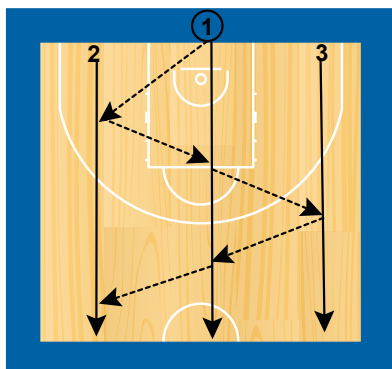


Players must learn to aim their pass ahead of their team mate. This is not an issue when the team mate is running toward the ball. How far in front they need to pass the ball will depend upon how fast their team mate is moving and how far away they are.

It is important during practice to give as many opportunities to practice passing as possible and the coach should always consider having players act as the “passer” in an activity rather than the coach.

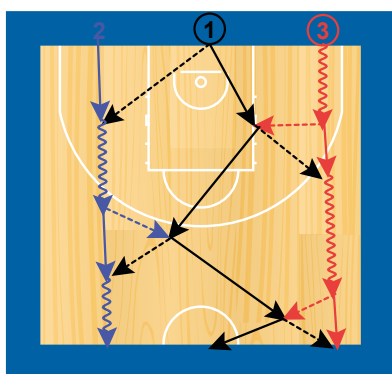


One of the most common examples of a straight lead that moves away from the passer is a “back door” cut toward the basket, when the defender is denying the pass.



Finally, players must learn to pass while on the move. There are many activities that can be used.

A simple activity is to have players in 3 lines, moving up the court passing the ball between each other.

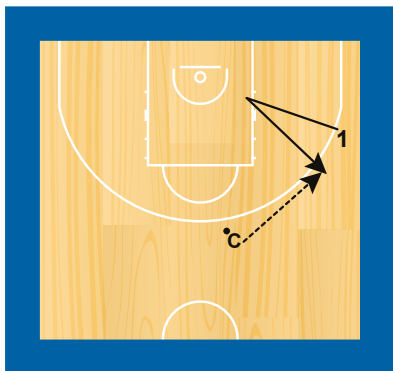


Obviously a player that is running with the ball must be dribbling it (otherwise it would be a travelling violation) and players need to learn to pass “off the dribble”.

In this activity, 1, 2 and 3 are moving down the court (as quickly as they can):

- 1 passes to 2 and then leads toward 3;
- 3 dribbles the ball initially and then passes to 1;
- 1 catches the pass and immediately passes back to 3 (who kept moving forward);
- 1 now moves toward 2 to receive a pass

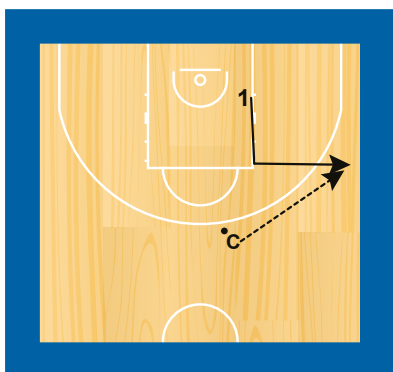
2.2.2 SKILL CATEGORY: GETTING OPEN



"V CUT"

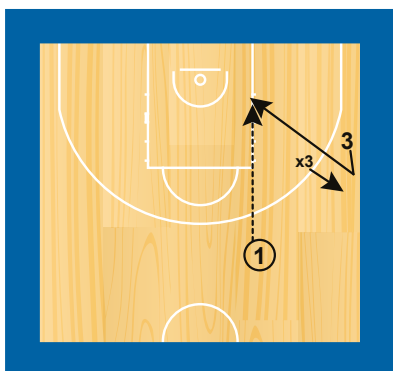
- After cutting towards the basket, change angle to get into the path of the defender
- "Front foot" advantage is important for creating a passing lane
- After cutting into the key, the player may stop before cutting to the perimeter.

It can also be effective to use a "catch fake" (by putting hands up toward the basket, as if catching a pass). If the defender moves to stop that pass (they are moving toward the basket), the offensive player has an advantage as they move to the perimeter.



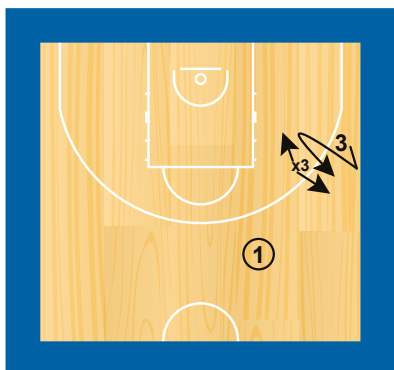
"L CUT"

- Walk up the key and make a quick change of direction to cut to the perimeter

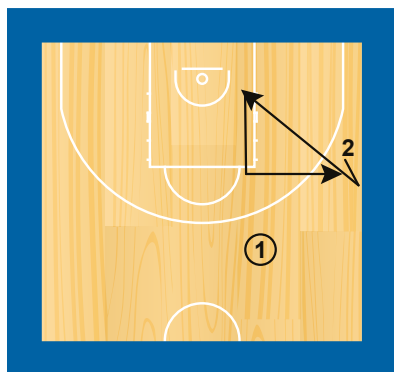


"BACKDOOR CUT"

- Step away from the basket, showing the hand as a passing target
- Push off and cut to the basket
- Do NOT take only one or two steps



With this cutting pattern (taking only a few steps), the defender is able to deny the movement by 3 as they are only taking a few steps in each direction.



TRIANGLE LEADING PATTERN

- Putting together the three elements above.
- Using change of pace is important.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Use an activity at practice that emphasises players getting open to receive a pass.
What techniques do your players use the most? Is there any difference between what they do at practice (and what is successful) and what they do in a game (and what is successful)?

Discuss with your assistant coaches or a coaching colleague any discrepancy that you observe and whether or not you need to change what is done at practice.

2. What footwork do you teach players to use when catching the ball? Discuss with a coaching colleague what they teach.

2.3 CATCHING

2.3.1 BASIC CATCHING

Many players will catch proficiently without instruction from their basketball coach, however, the coach should not assume that all players can catch and must be ready to teach how to catch or correct how a player catches the ball.

The importance of catching cannot be overemphasised – not only because a missed catch will often be a turnover, but a poorly executed catch can affect the player's ability to shoot, dribble or pass effectively.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CATCHING

Players should first be instructed to catch the ball with two hands using the following technique:

- Fingers pointing up;
- Thumbs pointing toward each other;
- Palms facing toward the ball, with hands comfortably at chest high;
- Let the ball come into the hands;
- As the player catches the ball, their thumbs and "pointer" fingers will be behind the ball. The other fingers will be on the side of the ball.

The player should watch the ball until it is in their hands. Their hands may move towards their body as they catch the ball, absorbing the momentum of the pass.

COMMON PROBLEMS WHEN CATCHING

There are a number of problems that are commonly observed, particularly when coaching young players:

1. Not having hands behind the ball.
This is often characterized by the player moving their hands together as they attempt to catch in a clapping movement. This will often mean that the player's fingers are pointing towards the ball, which can result in a painful injury if the ball hits the fingers.
2. Not looking at the ball. Some players do not look at the ball (and even close their eyes), which will result in their hands not being in the correct position to catch. This is particularly so if the player has previously hurt their fingers when trying to catch.
3. Hands or fingers too close together. If a young player's hands are too close together, the ball will often bounce off their hands as they do not get sufficient grip on the ball.
4. Fingers pointing at the ball. This is most commonly seen when a player "claps" to get the attention of the passer, and then has their hands close together. Players should be encouraged to use their voice to get the passer's attention and to have their hands in a good catching position.

TEACHING CATCHING TECHNIQUE

Once the coach has explained the key points of catching, giving the players plenty of opportunities to catch may be all the “coaching” that is required. Remind them as necessary of the correct technique (e.g. “show your hands”, “fingers up” etc). This can be done mostly “on the run”, without needing to stop activities.

However, with some players the coach may need to do more to teach catching technique:

- “Maravich Drills” – there are an almost infinite number of ball handling drills, often named after NBA great Pete Maravich. The importance is for players to get used to controlling the ball in their hands, which is particularly important for young players with small hands. Some examples are:
 - Ball wraps – pass the ball around the body (waist, neck or knees) from one hand to another. Encourage players to go so fast that they drop the ball. Go in both directions.
 - Air Dribble – hold the ball in one hand, toss it up and catch it in the same hand. Start with low throws and progress to high throws and both hands at the same time!
 - Figure 8 – move the ball around one leg and then the other in a figure 8 pattern. Young players may start by rolling the ball in this pattern, progressing to passing it from hand to hand.
 - Hard Catch – holding the ball in two hands, the player throws it into the ground as hard as they can, immediately catching it in both hands.
- Tug of War – one player holds the ball in

both hands at chest height, facing their team mate (or coach). The team mate puts two hands on the ball and pulls it away. They then push the ball back into the player’s hands. Do this five times and then swap roles.

- Change the Ball – it is important with young players to use a ball that is an appropriate size for them. A size 5, or even size 3, ball can help a player to develop confidence.

2.4 HAVING THE BALL

2.4.1 PROTECTING THE BALL

An offensive player that is “closely guarded” (when a defender is no more than 1 metre away) has 5 seconds to shoot, pass or dribble, and if they don’t a violation is committed and the opponent gets possession of the ball (to be thrown in from the sideline). Accordingly, the player that has the ball must protect it from being taken by a defender and must do so in a way that allows the offensive player to pass, dribble or shoot.

Protecting the ball is not a specific technique to be taught, and instead the coach needs to ensure that there is defensive pressure at practice and to provide feedback to the players based upon the following considerations:

When under defensive pressure.....

DO

- Have two hands on the ball
- Keep balanced with the head “up”, so that potential passes can be seen
- Move the ball forcefully, knocking the defender’s arms out of the way if necessary.
- Use fakes (drive fakes, shot fakes, pass fakes) in an attempt to move the defender
- Pivot away from the defender. In particular, a reverse pivot can be effective if the defender “chases” the ball.
- Dribble backwards if necessary to create space to make a pass

DON'T

- Turn and twist only the upper body. Instead, step (pivot) away from the defender
- Keep the ball in front of the body – move it to keep it away from the defender
- Put the ball behind the head as it is difficult to pull the ball away from a defender in this position
- Bend or lean away from the defender as this affects balance. Instead, step (pivot) away from the defender.
- Keep your back to the basket, as this limits the area of the court you can see.

When there is a lot of defensive pressure on the ball, the “team” also has a responsibility to get open, and should consider the following:

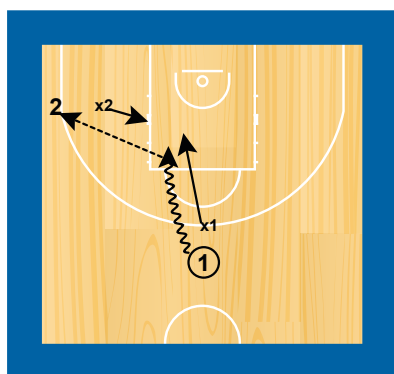
- Move behind the ball – sometimes the easiest position to make and receive a pass is behind the player that has the ball.

- Don’t stand in space – a player that is standing in an open space should move if they do not receive the ball. This will help create “space” for a team mate to cut.
- If a defender is denying a pass, the offensive player should perform a backdoor cut towards the basket.

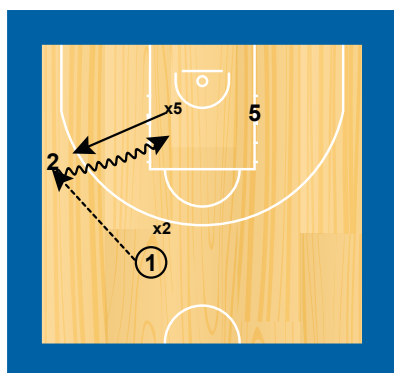
2.4.2 BEING READY TO PLAY – TRIPLE THREAT POSITION

When an offensive player receives the ball, they must be ready to pass, dribble or shoot depending upon the situation.

Sometimes the player should take immediate action, for example:

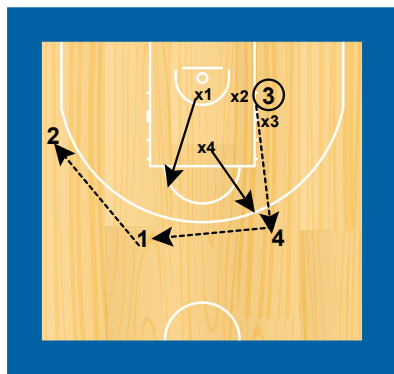


After a team mate has penetrated into the key and then passes out to the perimeter, this may be a situation where 2 should “catch and shoot”



One purpose of “reversing” the ball from one side to the other is to create a situation where a defender has a “long close-out” from the split line to the perimeter. This may be a situation where the perimeter player should immediately drive.

In this example, the defence are “scrambling”, and x5 may be mismatched against 2, which is another cue for immediately dribbling.



When defence are in a scrambling situation (here, a double team to stop 3 driving into the key) players may need to make a quick “second pass”. For example:

- 4 quickly passes to 1 as x4 is close whereas x1 has a long Close-out to defend 1
- 1 quickly passes to 2 as they may be in position of having no one to defend them (x3 may be rotating across)

Apart from situations where an instant decision needs to be made, a player receiving the ball should do so in “triple threat”. Triple threat is simply having the balance and ball position, where they can either pass, dribble or shoot.

Accordingly, for “triple threat” the player must:

- Face the basket if on the perimeter (a post player should identify where their defender is but may not turn to face the basket);
- Identify which is their pivot foot
- Have the ball approximately at hip height
- Create “space” by being strong with the ball – having elbows out and forcefully “sweeping” the ball to knock the defender’s hands out of the space between the two players
- Have sight of their team mates and the basket

Many coaches will instruct their players to be on the “front foot”, which may be established with a short drive fake, ball movement or sweeping across their body to move the defender backwards slightly.

2.5 PASSING

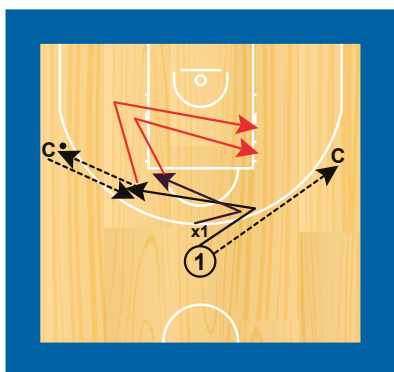
2.5.1 BASIC PASSING

SKILL CATEGORY: PASSING		
What to Teach	Description	Fun Activities to Teach
Chest Pass (two hands)	This is a 2 handed pass. Hold the ball on the sides, with thumbs behind the ball, pointing at each other. Step forward and push your arms forward. Your thumbs should point to the ground after the ball is released and fingers should point to the target. The ball is released as the stepping foot hits the ground. Players should be able to do this stepping with either foot.	"Pass Tag"
Push Pass (one hand)	The passing hand is behind the ball with the elbow tucked in. The other hand is on the side of the ball (this is the same grip as for shooting). Step forward and push the ball. Your other hand also extends to help protect the ball. Pass with the right hand when passing to the right hand side, and with the left hand when passing to the left hand side.	"Moving Pairs Passing"
Bounce Pass	A bounce pass is simply one that hits the ground on the way to the receiver. It should bounce up to waist level.	"Partisan Lay-up Drill"
Head Pass	This is a two handed pass, often used after rebounding or from a post position. The ball is held on the sides above the passer's forehead (they should be able to see it though). Step forward and throw both arms forward. The most common mistake with this pass is stretching the arms behind the passer's head.	"Circle Keep Away"
Passing Lane	The passing lane is simply the path between two team mates, one that has the ball and one that doesn't.	"Passing Lane – Driving Lane"
Pass Fakes	Often, to be able to make a pass the player needs to get the defender to move (out of passing lane) or to move their hands (defender's hands high – pass low). This can be achieved through pass fakes.	Triangle Passing
Key Teaching Points for Passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step forward as you pass, which helps to give the pass strength • Pivot and move the ball to avoid defensive pressure. Keep knees bent when pivoting. • Practice passing both standing still and on the move 	
Tips for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Fake a pass to make a pass" • When passing to a post player – pass away from the defender's head • Practice passing with either hand 	

ACTIVITIES TO TEACH PASSING - PASS TAG

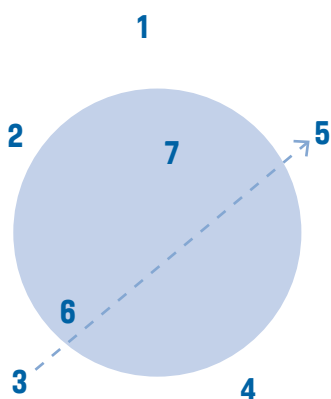
Nominate 3 to 5 "taggers". "Taggers" must pass the ball to each other and try to tag other players with the ball. "Taggers" cannot travel when they have the ball, but they should pivot in an attempt to tag opponents.

To tag a player, the ball must remain in the hands of the tagger – they are not throwing the ball at their opponent. When tagged, players leave the playing area and jog continuously around the outside of the court until everyone has been tagged.



TRIANGLE PASS 2 BALL DRILL

- Players are in pairs, offence has a ball. There are two coaches, and one has a ball.
- Offence passes to coach, and then leads to receive a pass from the other coach, using change of direction. After catching the ball, the players should face the basket. They may need to pivot to pass back to the coach.
- After receiving the pass, they return it to the coach, and lead to receive from the other coach.
- Defence initially have a good position, but do not try to intercept. Progress to making activity contested 1v1.

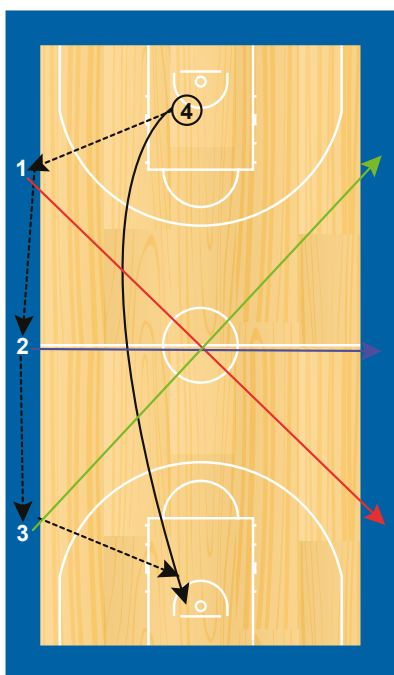


CIRCLE KEEP AWAY

Players 1-5 form a circle and must pass the ball to each other but cannot pass to the person either side of them. Two defenders (6 and 7) stand inside the circle.

If a defending player touches the ball they become a passing player and whoever made the pass become a defending player.

You can designate the type of pass to be used (e.g. Overhead Pass) or leave it up to the passer.

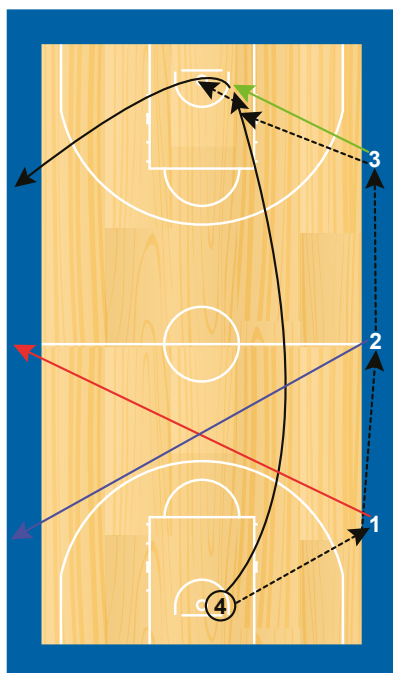


PARTISAN LAY-UP DRILL

This is a full court lay-up activity, which will require some explanation. However, once players are proficient at it, it combines accurate passing, sprinting to position and shooting lay-ups!

4 rebounds and outlet passes to 1. 4 then sprints the floor receiving a pass for a lay-up at the other end.

1 passes to 2 and moves to foul-line extended at the other end. 2 passes to 3 and moves across court. 3 passes to 4 for lay-up and moves to foul-line extended at the other end.



PARTISAN LAY-UP DRILL CONT...

4 rebounds own shot and outlet passes to 1. Again, 4 sprints the floor and receives a bounce pass for lay-up.

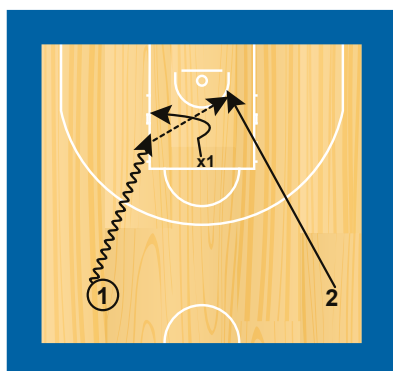
1 passes to 2 and moves to passing line at half way. 2 passes to 3 and moves to 3rd passing line. 3 passes to 4 for lay-up, and then rebounds shot (before it hits the floor). 3 then starts the drill again.

After shooting, 4 moves to the first outlet position. Optimally, you would have a 5th player already at the position.

Two teams can race each other to reach a certain score, or score the most points in a certain time.

The groups can do the activity on the same court, however this is easiest if they are in different coloured uniforms.

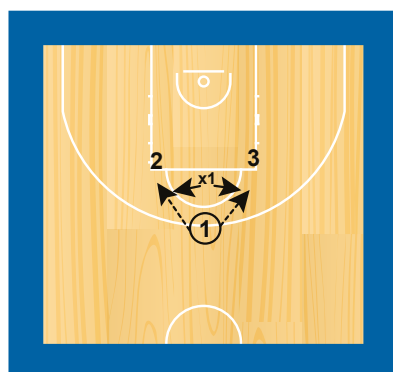
In a competitive activity, players can select which shot to shoot (lay-up, 2pts or 3pts), although they only get one shot.



PASSING LANE – DRIVING LANE

This is a simple 2v1 activity. The player that starts with the ball attacks the basket. If the defender commits to guarding them (i.e. steps into the driving lane), the dribbler passes to their team mate.

The dribbler must read when to pass and which hand to pass with. If the defender never commits then the dribbler shoots a lay-up. Often to make a pass, the player will need to change hands. For example, as shown, 1 would dribble with the left hand, but pass to 2 with their right hand.



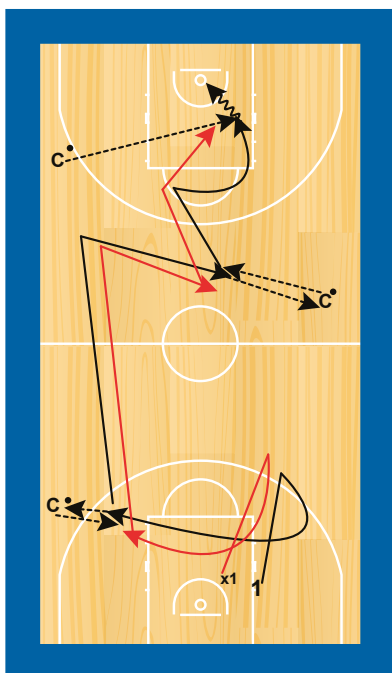
TRIANGLE PASSING

Two players stand at the elbow and a defender stands slightly in front of them. Passer tries to pass to either receiver and the receivers cannot move.

The passer should use pass fakes (and bounce passes!).

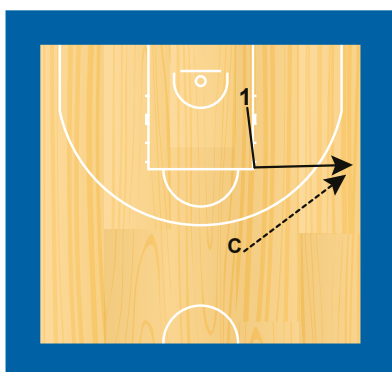
The defender should have active hands and hedge to try to deflect the pass.

2.5.2 FUN ACTIVITIES TO TEACH MOVING, PASSING AND GETTING OPEN



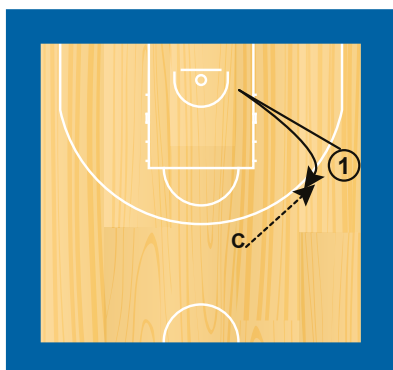
3 PASSES CONTESTED

- This is a contested 1 on 1 activity
- The offensive player leads to receive a pass from the coach. After catching it they pass back to the coach.
- The offensive player attempts to get open to receive a pass from the next coach. After catching it they return it to the coach.
- When the third ball is received, the offensive player plays to score



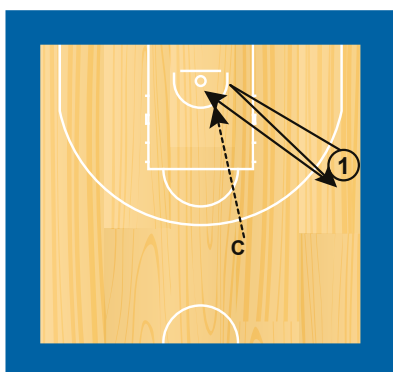
3 LEADS

The athlete starts at the low post, facing the coach, and executes an "L-cut", catching the ball, and then faces the basket. After "squaring up" they pass the ball back to the coach.



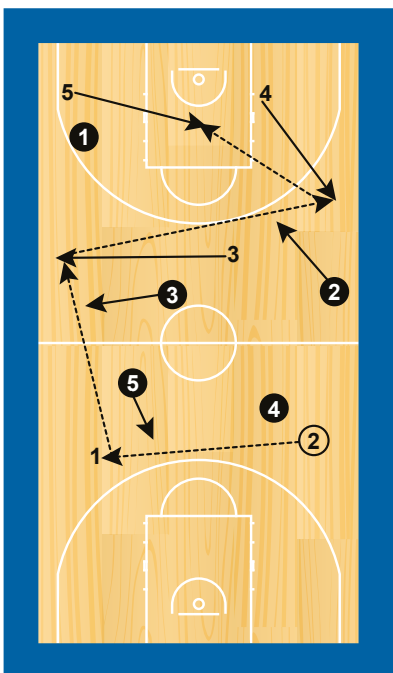
3 LEADS CONT...

The athlete then executes a “v-cut”, curling at the end of the cut, so that their chest faces the coach as they catch the ball. This “banana cut” also has the effect of moving in front of the defender. After catching the ball, they face the basket and then pass the ball to the coach.



Lastly, the athlete makes another “v-cut” and as they get to the 3pt line they plant their outside foot, give a catch fake (put their hands up as if to catch the ball) and then cut “back door”. The coach passes the ball to them for a no dribble lay-up. The first step on the backdoor cut is with the foot closest to the basket.

Add a defender and play 1v1 after the third “catch”.



TALLYBALL TOUCHDOWN

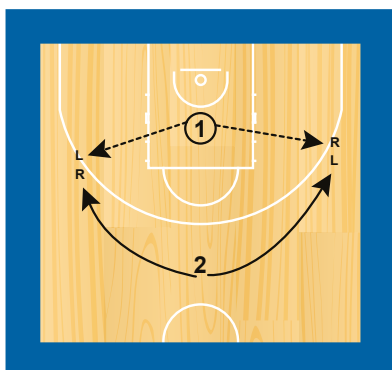
The aim is to complete a minimum number of passes (e.g. six consecutive passes) and then to pass the ball to a team mate in the keyway.

One point is scored when the player in the touchdown area receives the ball after the minimum number of passes. After a point is scored the opposing team has possession from the keyway.

A new count starts each time there is a fumble, or interception.

No dribbling, no travelling, no fouling. If violation occurs, possession is taken from the side line.

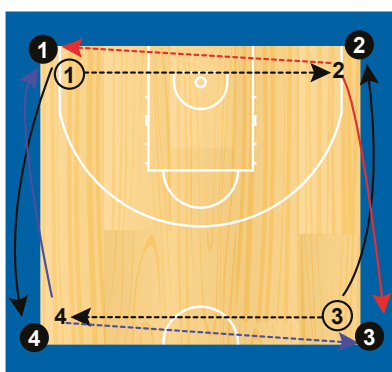
You can also set a maximum number of passes and if a score is not made within that number, the defenders get the ball.



CATCH AND SQUARE UP

Two players, with one ball, start facing each other. The player without the ball leads to one side and catches a pass, landing in a "stride stop". The first foot to land should be the one closest to the passer, and they "square up" to face the passer.

After stopping they pass the ball back and lead to the other side.

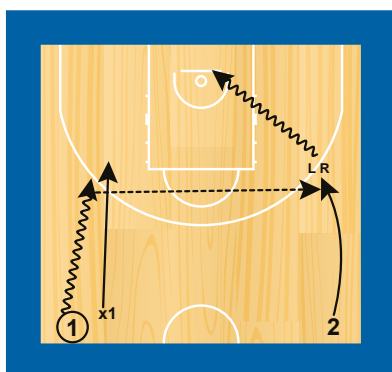


CORNER PASSING

Athletes pass the ball and then cut to the other corner to receive a pass and make a pass. The coach can designate the type of pass to be made.

A team of 8 players should be able to do the activity with 4 balls.

With young players, the player receiving the pass should cut toward the ball (to reduce the distance of the pass). They should stop before making their pass but can progress to passing on the move.



1X1 + 1

An offensive player starts at half way and dribbles to the 3 point line. The defender may initially be "passive", but should progress to exert "game like" pressure. At the 3 point line, they pass to the cutting team mate, who stops in a "stride stop" (two-count), before driving for a lay-up.

The activity should be done on both sides of the floor.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Pick a particular individual skill (e.g. low post move, shooting) and discuss with coaching colleagues:

- (a) Teaching points you each use;
- (b) Activities that you use to teach it;
- (c) How you correct an athlete if they are performing the skill incorrectly.

Observe a training session of a colleague and consider how much time they spend on development of these skills. Do you spend more or less? Discuss any differences with the coach.

2. Ask one of your players to explain to their parent how to perform a skill.

This can identify how well the player understands the teaching points you have given them.

2.6 DRIBBLING

2.6.1 BASIC DRIBBLING

Individual basketball skills should be the starting point for every coach - “forget about tactics until your players have learned the technique because knowing the tactics without having the technique turns out to be a bad basketball product.”⁴

⁴ Aleksandar Avakumovic, Basketball For Young Players, p208

The key offensive individual technique categories are:

- Dribbling;
- Passing and catching;
- Movement Fundamentals and Getting Open to Receive the Ball;
- Shooting;
- Rebounding;
- Basic Perimeter and Post Moves.

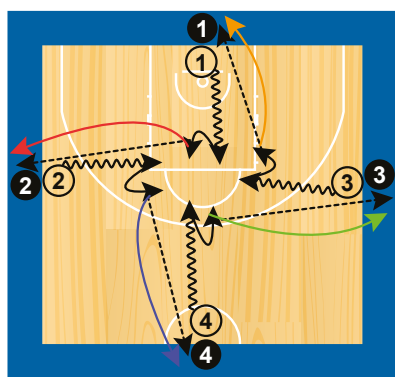
Coaches of junior athletes, at all ages, should focus on each skill category. Importantly though, the level of detail that is taught depends upon the age and relative skill level of the players.

For example, when coaching 8 or 9 year olds, the skill of “shooting” may simply be getting them to be balanced before throwing the ball at the basket, without worrying too much about their shooting technique. At the age of 11 or 12, technique (elbow under the ball etc.) is of paramount importance.

SKILL CATEGORY: DRIBBLING		
What to Teach	Description	Fun Activities to Teach
Left and Right Hand Dribble	Push the ball to the ground, flexing the wrist. Don't look at the ball.	“Dribble, Pivot, Pass”
Crossover Dribble	Use this to change hands. Keep the dribble below the knee.	“Zig Zag Lay-up”
Hesitation Dribble	Stop your feet and keep the knees bent. Dribble the ball slightly above your waist and lift your shoulders and head.	“Dribble Chicken”
Speed Dribble	Bounce the ball directly in front of your body. Pushing with the right hand, then the left hand etc. (using natural running motion).	“Relay Races”
Retreat Dribble	Turn sideways and dribble the ball at your back foot (keep it away from the defender) still look ahead at the defender in front of you.	“Punch & Retreat”
Behind the Back Dribble	Slide the dribbling hand to the back of the ball and push the ball forward, slapping your bottom so the ball goes in front of you. An alternate method is to do a crossover dribble (in a “v”) behind the back. This is most effective when stationary.	“Dribble Knockout”
Fake Crossover Dribble	Push the ball as in a crossover and then with the same hand dribble it back to the same side (dribble the ball in a “v”).	“Dribble Chicken”
“Double Moves”	Combining different dribble moves	“Dribble Mirror”

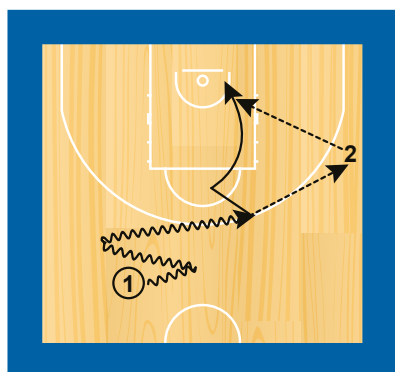
Attacking the Legs	Emphasise using dribble moves to beat (get past) the defender, not just look fancy!	"Gauntlet"
Key Teaching Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread fingers around the ball – don't have the ball touch the palm of your hand • Push the ball with force • Don't look at the ball – "see with your fingers" • Move your hand on the ball. For example, to do a cross over dribble, move the hand to the side of the ball. 	
Tips for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to dribble with either hand (left hand going to your left – right hand going to your right) • Always dribble with the hand that is furthest from your opponent 	

DRIBBLING ACTIVITIES



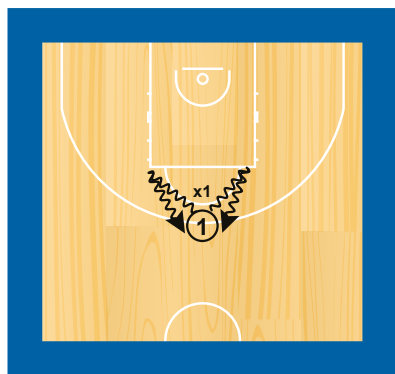
DRIBBLE, PIVOT, PASS

- left-handed dribble to the middle and jump stop.
- drop step (pivot backwards) with the left foot (step with the left foot, with the right foot staying on the ground as the "pivot foot").
- right-handed pass to the next player in line counter clockwise.
- Passer follows the pass to the end of the next line.
- Alternate dribbling hand, pivot foot and direction of pivot.



ZIG ZAG LAY-UP

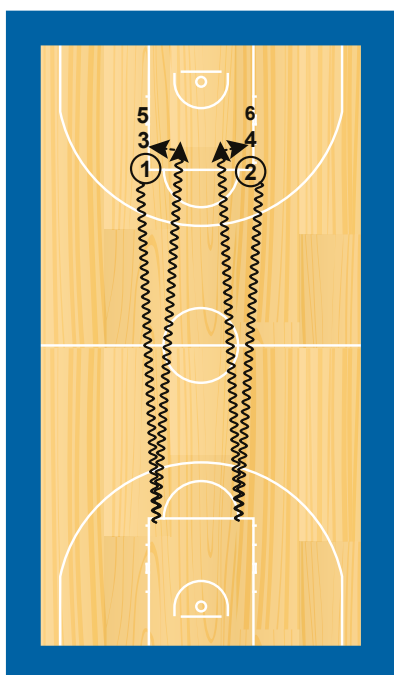
- offensive player starts with a right hand dribble for 2-3 steps
- change direction and change to a left hand dribble with a cross over
- after 2-3 steps, change direction and change to a right hand dribble with cross-over
- after 2-3 steps, pass to 2 and cut to the basket to receive a pass back for a lay-up



PUNCH AND RETREAT

This is a great drill to teach players to retain their dribble under defensive pressure. The dribbler "punch dribbles" to get to the elbow in 1 or 2 dribbles. They must then retreat to their starting spot and "open" their stance to face the basket. They continue for 30 seconds, recording how many times they touched the elbow.

Initially, the defender may stand and just be a reference point for the dribbler to "attack the hips". Progress to where the defender attempts to stop the dribbler reaching the elbow.



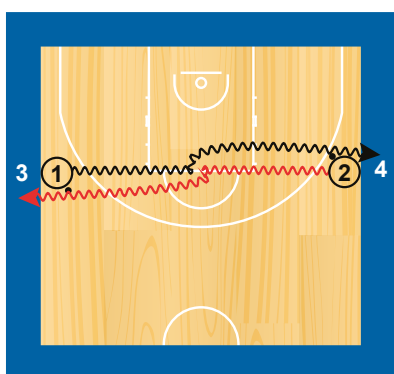
RELAY RACE

The athletes begin at the foul line and speed dribble to the opposite line, then touch and sprint back. Players must stay in control of the ball, aiming to do 14–15 sprints in a minute.

Divide the athletes into teams and have them race against each other.

You can also place obstacles in the way of players so that they have to change direction using cones, for example.

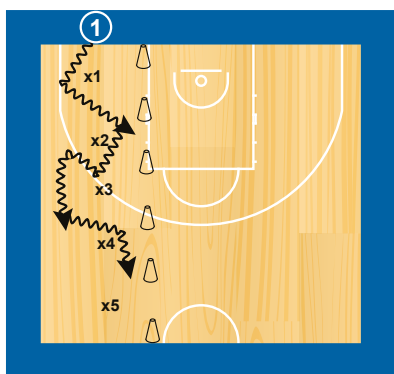
Similarly, the coach can walk in front of dribblers which will reinforce them needing to look up! The coach can even have another two groups going across the court, instructing players to stop (but to keep dribbling) to avoid any collision.



DRIBBLE CHICKEN

Players dribble towards each other (starting with the same hand) and change hands using a designated dribble move and dribble past each other. Players should take a quick “first step” as they move past their partner. They should also “attack the hips”, moving past their partner, not moving sideways.

The coach can have groups moving in the other direction in the area. Players are to use hesitation dribbles (stop and go) to avoid bumping into others.



GAUNTLET

The offensive player attempts to run through a corridor. Defenders move laterally to try and stop them. Once the offence gets past a defender, the defender stops.

If offence does not have a ball, make the corridor narrow. If offence is dribbling, make the corridor wider. Offence must (at times) retreat, in order to beat the defender.

DRIBBLE KNOCKOUT

Players must move and dribble continuously within an area (e.g. inside 3 point line), attempting to knock away with their free hand other players' balls. Players are eliminated when:

1. their ball is knocked out of the area
2. they go outside the defined area; or
3. they are caught double dribbling

Reduce the size of the playing area as numbers decrease. When eliminated, players sit or stand outside of the area, dribbling their ball. These players can also attempt to knock the ball away from dribblers, but these players cannot step into the area.

DRIBBLE MIRROR

Two athletes stand opposite each other, both with a ball (or two balls). One athlete is the leader and does various dribble moves (either on the spot or on the move). Their partner copies the moves.

BONGO DRUMS

A player has 3 balls and must dribble them at the same time! They start by dribbling two balls (say 4 times) and then change one ball for the 3rd ball (which a team mate has been dribbling).

This can also be done with 4 balls, as players dribble two balls four times and then the other balls four times and continue in this pattern. The other player must act like a mirror, imitating the moves.

FOLLOW-UP

Discuss with another basketball coach how you would correct:

- (a) athletes looking at the ball while they are dribbling;
- (b) athletes dribbling too much and not passing to open team mates;
- (c) a player that always dribbles with their preferred hand;
- (d) a player that is a competent dribbler but struggles to get past defenders.

2.7 SHOOTING

2.7.1 BASIC SHOOTING - INTRODUCTION

Shooting is an aspect of the game that most players are very happy to practice. It can be practiced alone or with team mates. Go to any basketball court and you will see many different styles and techniques used by players because shooting is a skill that is often “self-taught” from many hours of shooting at home or in playgrounds.

Coaches must remember that it is very hard to change habits once they are ingrained and so:

- With players that are just learning to shoot – do not over complicate. Focus on them being balanced and give them lots of opportunities to practice. Where possible, use lower rings, smaller balls and even vary the target (e.g. hitting the ring may score a point with 7-8 year olds);
- With players that have an established shooting “technique” – do not make changes just because their approach is not “textbook”. Identify key changes to be made (e.g. shooting with a high arc instead of flat) and give the athlete the opportunity to explore how to best achieve that.

What to Teach	Description
Balance	With young athletes (8-9 year olds), focus on them stopping and bending their knees (getting balanced) before shooting.
Lay-up Footwork	Lay-up footwork can be introduced at a young age and athletes should practice both “right-left” as well as “left-right” footwork. Have athletes catch the ball with their feet in the air and then take two steps (one foot landing and then the other).
Shooting Technique	<p>There are probably as many different shooting techniques as there are basketball players!</p> <p>Key aspects for shooting are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance; • High arc on the shot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high release point; • backward rotation (backspin) on the ball • Power comes from the legs (pushing up)