

10x Early Offense CREATE AN ADVANTAGE



10x Early Offense Triggers

In modern basketball, every offensive sequence starts with a trigger — a simple action that creates an advantage on the court.

This initial advantage sets the foundation for a conceptual offense, where players react to reads instead of running fixed plays.

The following ten triggers represent the most common and effective ways to initiate offense out of a 5-Out alignment.

They blend movement, spacing, and timing to force defensive reactions and open up high-value scoring options.





Early Offense Triggers

#1 Drag Screen



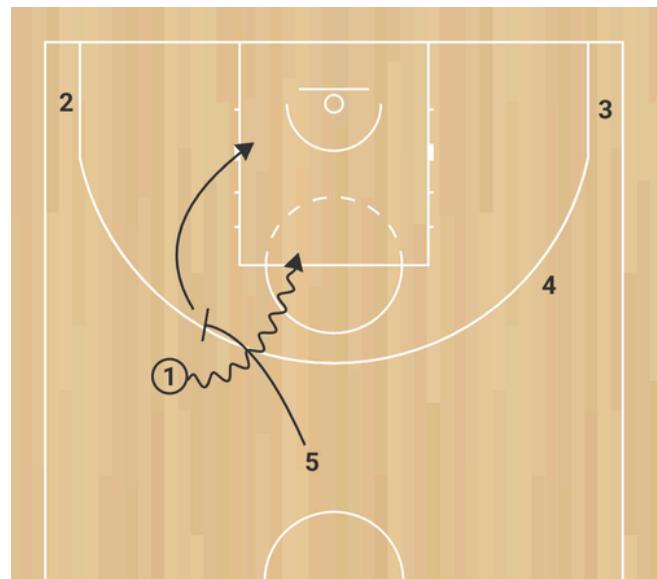
#1 Drag Screen

The **Drag Screen** is one of the simplest but most effective ways to start your half-court offense right out of transition.

It creates spacing, tempo, and open driving gaps before the defense is set.

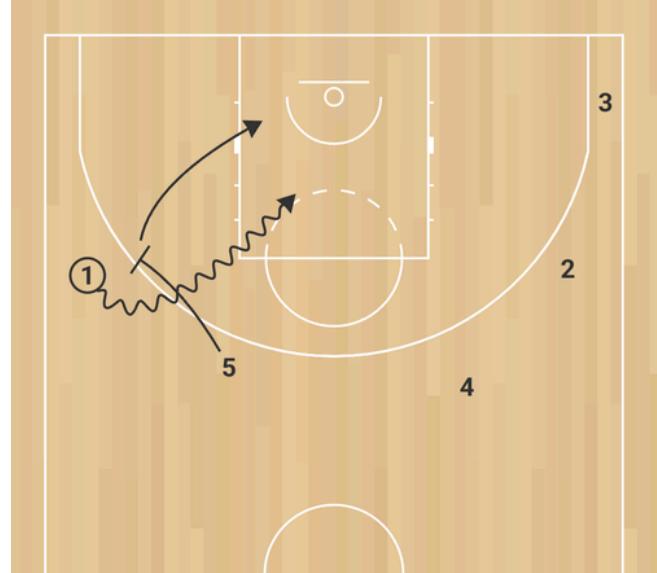
Setup

- Start in 5-Out spacing.
- Two players sprint to the corners, one fills the weak-side wing.
- The trailer (often your big) sets the **drag screen** for the ball handler.



Empty Drag

The screen is set on the wing with the strong-side corner empty, removing early help defense.



Reads & Coaching Points

- If the defense goes under → pull up.
- If they switch → hit the roller or attack the mismatch.
- If help comes → skip to the weak side.
- Keep the action quick — don't wait for the defense to get organized.



Early Offense Triggers

#2 Double Drag

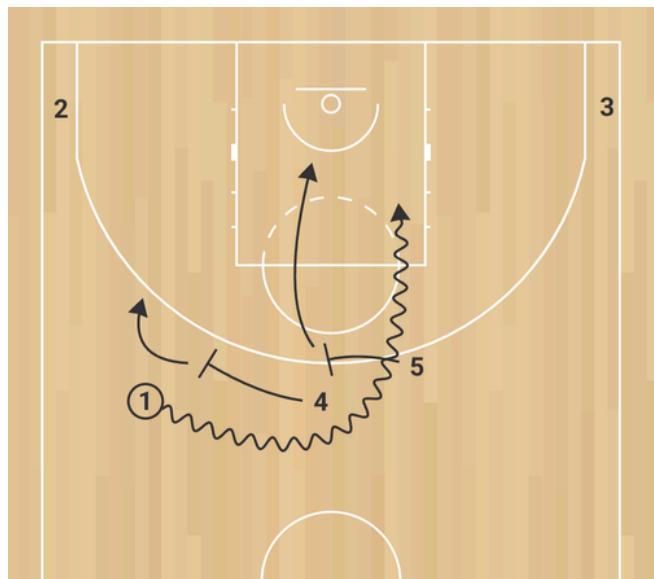


#2 Double Drag

The **Double Drag** is a dynamic early-offense action that builds on the same concept as the single drag screen, but adds a second screener to increase pressure on the defense.

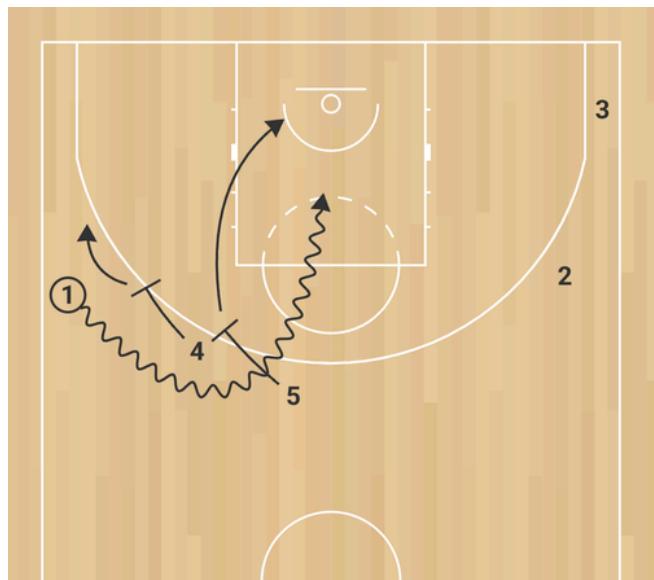
Setup

- Starts from a 5-Out alignment.
- Two screeners — usually your 4 and 5 — sprint into **consecutive ball screens** for the ball handler.
- The first screener (4) typically **pops** to the perimeter, while the second screener (5) **rolls** hard to the rim.



Empty Double Drag

Run the action with an empty strong-side corner to remove the tag defender. You can also **switch the pop and roll assignments** to fit your personnel.



Reads & Coaching Points

- If the defense goes under → the ball handler can pull up.
- If they switch → attack the mismatch or hit the roller.
- If help comes from the weak side → skip the pass for an open three.
- Timing is key — both screeners must arrive in rhythm and on the move.



Early Offense Triggers

#3 Flip & Drag



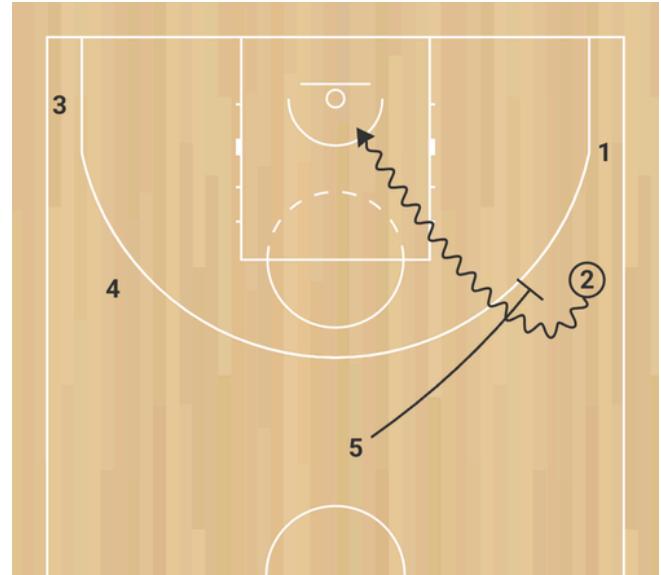
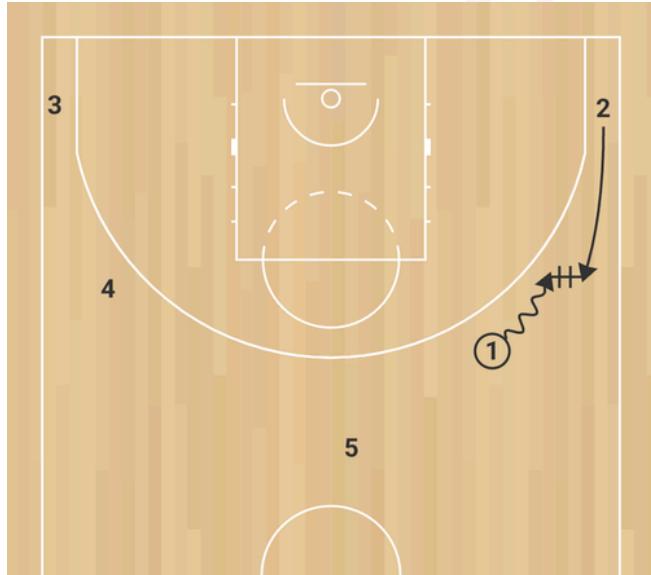
#3 Flip & Drag

The **Flip & Drag** combines two actions in one — a dribble handoff followed immediately by a drag screen.

This sequence keeps the defense moving, forces multiple reactions, and creates instant advantages without breaking your 5-Out spacing.

Setup

- Start in 5-Out spacing.
- The two wings fill the corners, the weak-side slot stays opposite, and the trailer (usually your 5) is at the top of the key.
- The ball handler initiates a **dribble handoff (flip)** with the strong-side corner player.
- Right after the handoff, the trailer sets a **drag screen** for the new ball handler.





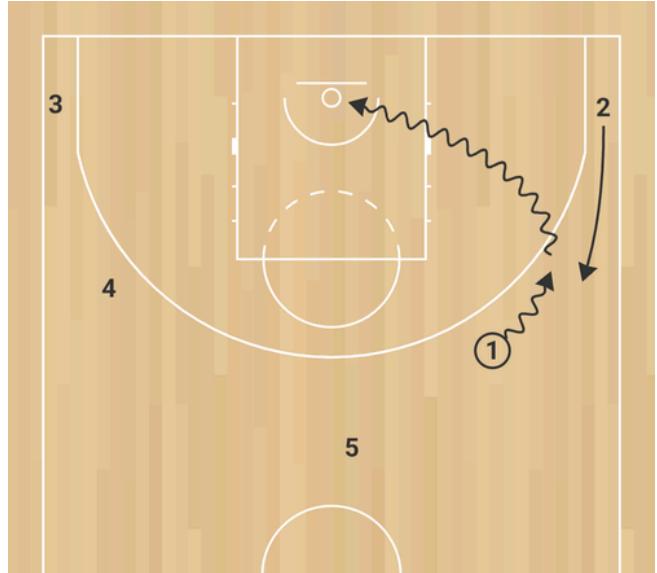
Early Offense Triggers

#3 Flip & Drag

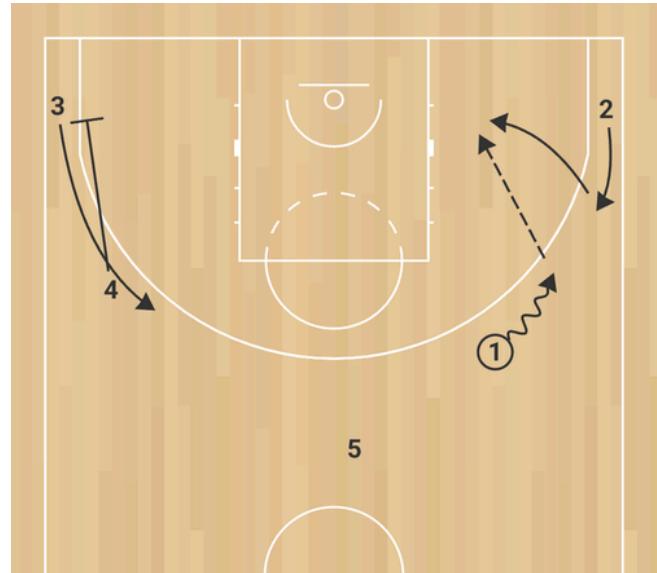


Variations

- **Fake the handoff:** The ball handler keeps it and attacks the open lane.



- **Reject the handoff:** The corner player back cuts if overplayed.
- **Add a weak-side pin down:** Keeps all defenders occupied and adds a third layer of movement.



Reads & Coaching Points

- The defense must react twice — to the handoff and then to the screen.
- Maintain a smooth rhythm — both actions should flow together as one continuous movement.
- If the defense goes under → shoot.
- If they chase → attack downhill or hit the roller.
- Use this action early in the shot clock to catch the defense unbalanced.



Early Offense Triggers

#4 Zoom

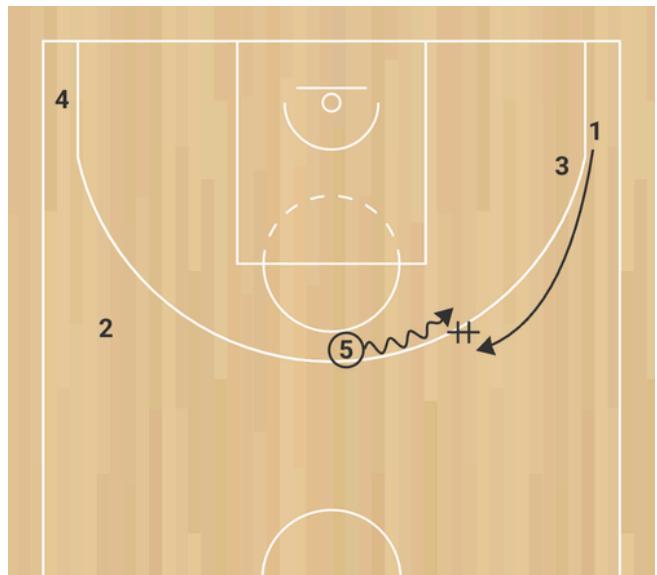
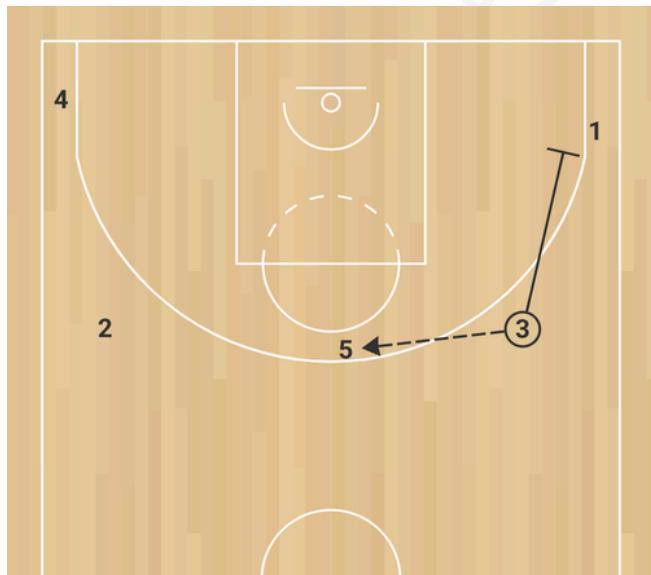


#4 Zoom

The **Zoom Action** is one of the most effective modern triggers in basketball. It connects a **pin down** with a **dribble handoff**, creating continuous movement and multiple scoring options while maintaining 5-Out spacing.

Setup

- The ball starts at the top, usually with your trailer or big.
- The corner player comes off a **pin down** set by the slot player.
- Immediately after using the screen, the corner player receives a **dribble handoff** from the big.
- The weak-side players stay spaced to stretch the defense and prevent early help.





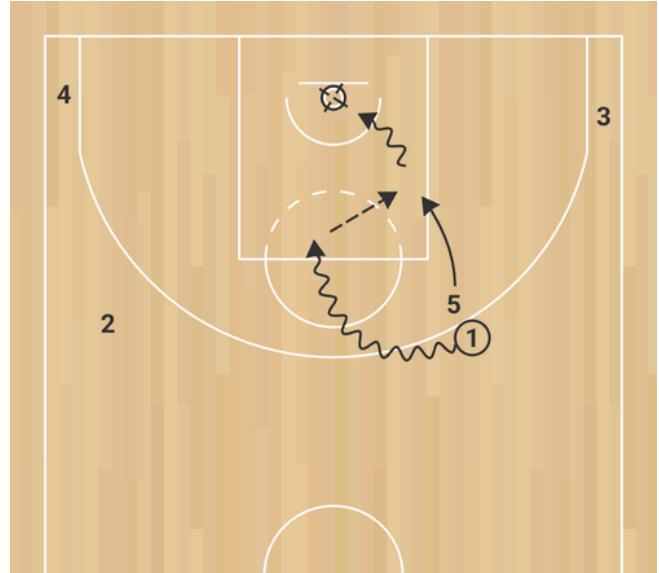
Early Offense Triggers

#4 Zoom

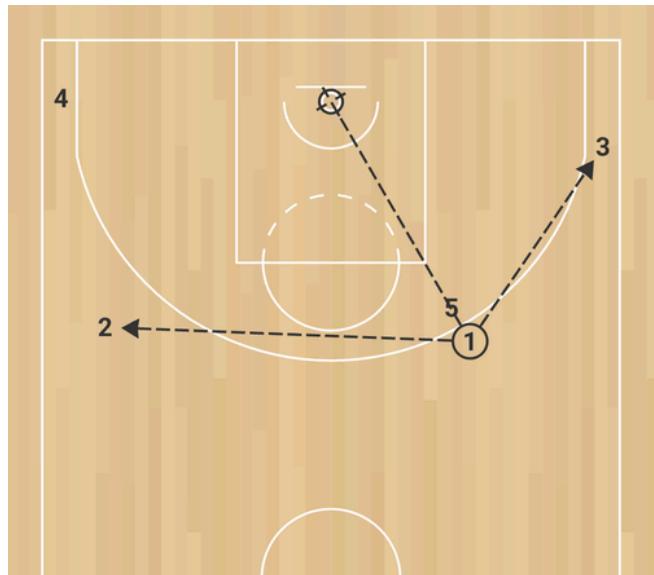


Options

- The guard can attack downhill, and the big can **roll or pop** after the handoff, depending on personnel and defensive coverage.



- The guard can go for an instant **pull up**, or
- a **quick pass** can punish the defense for converging in the same spot.



Reads & Coaching Points

- The timing between the pin down and the handoff is crucial — both must happen seamlessly.
- You can add different wrinkles to keep the defense guessing:
 - the receiver can go backdoor or reject the handoff,
 - the screener can slip the pin down and cut,
 - or the player setting the screen can reject the pin down and turn directly into the handoff.
- Encourage players to read space, not just follow patterns.



Early Offense Triggers

#5 Stagger

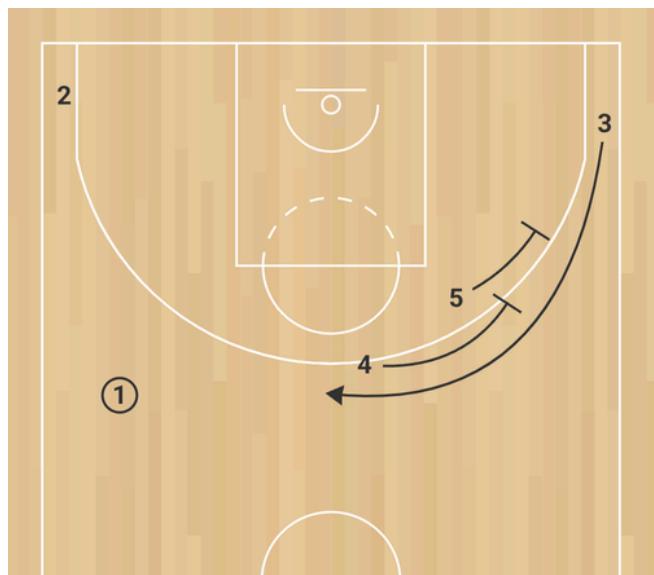


#5 Stagger

The **Stagger Screen** is a classic off-ball action that uses two consecutive screens to free up a shooter or cutter on the weak side.

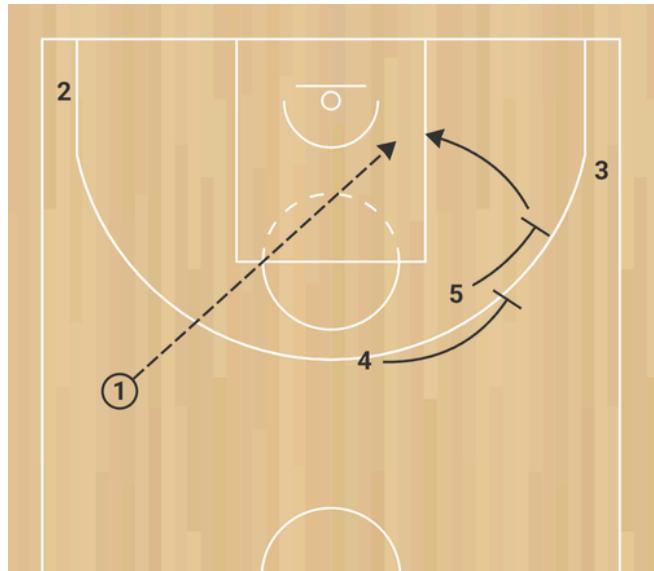
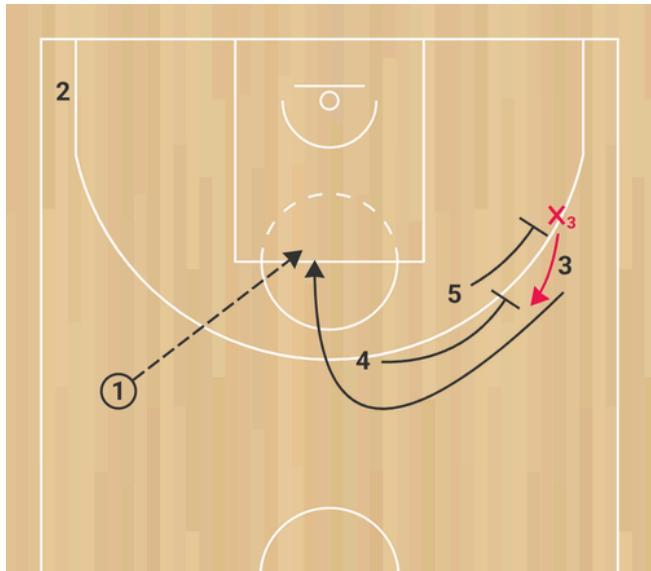
Setup

- Starts from a 5-Out alignment.
- Two players - usually your 4 and 5 - set **staggered screens** for the weak-side corner player.
- The corner player uses both screens to get open at the top or wing for a catch-and-shoot or to continue into the next trigger.



Variations

- The cutter can **curl to the rim** if the defender trails.
- The first screener can **slip to the basket** if defenders switch.



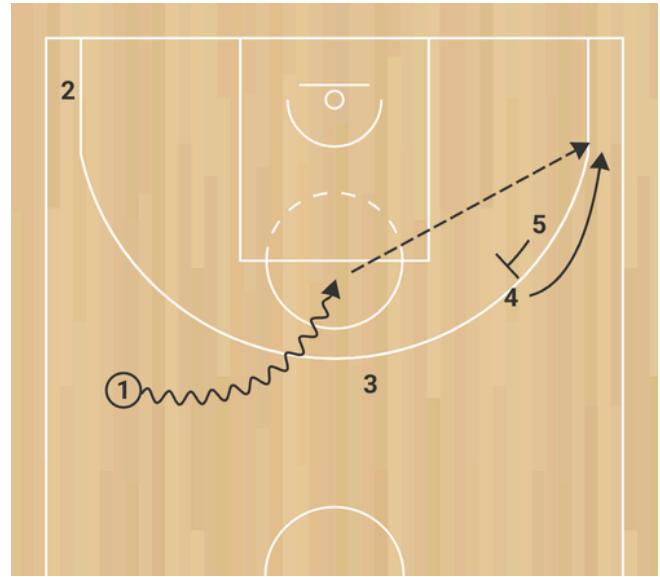
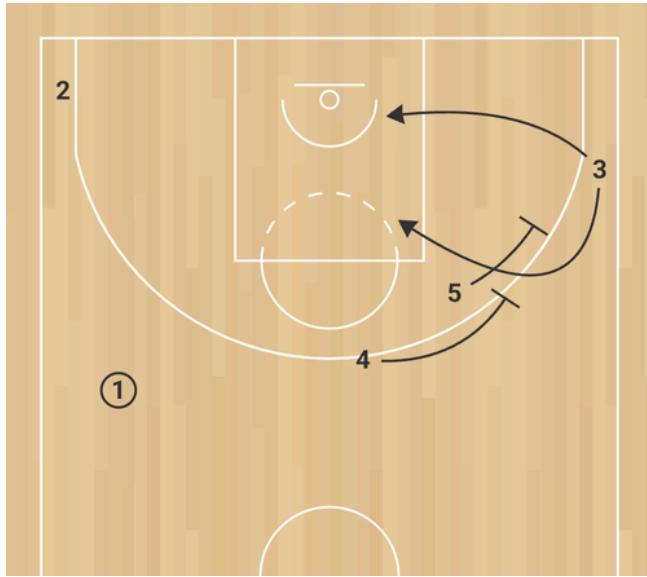


Early Offense Triggers

#5 Stagger



- The cutter can **reject either screen** for a **backdoor cut** to the rim.
- The first screener can **set a flare screen** for the second screener, opening up an outside shot.



Reads & Coaching Points

- Read the defender's position early:
 - trail = curl
 - under = pop
 - switch = slip
- Screeners should stay wide and hold position long enough to create real contact.
- Timing matters: the cutter should start the movement as the first screener arrives — not before.
- Use this action to build rhythm and flow before your next trigger (like a DHO or ball screen).



Early Offense Triggers

#6 Pistol

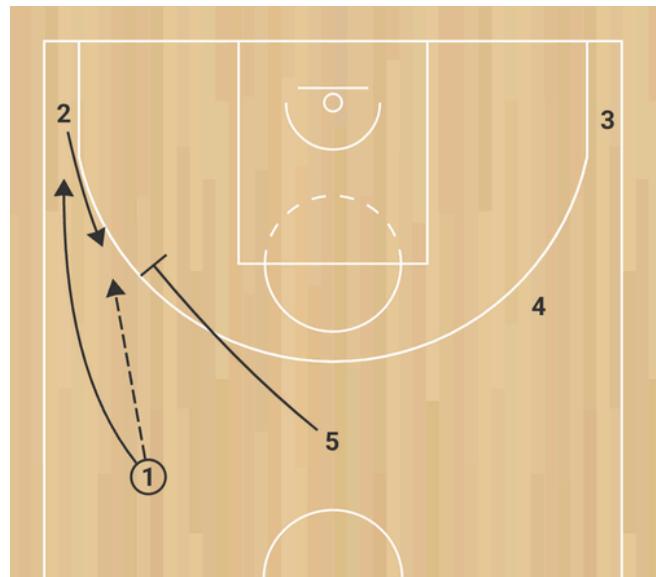


#6 Pistol

Pistol is a three-man action that features an **exchange on the wing**.

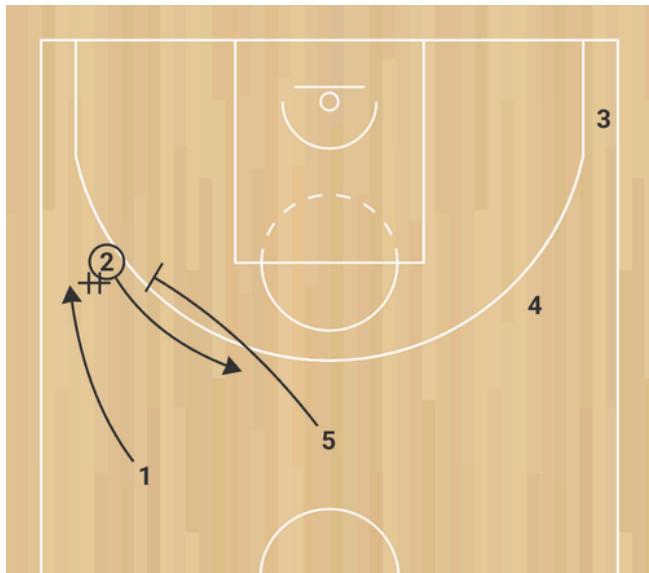
Setup

- The point guard passes to the wing and immediately **fills the empty corner or wing position**.
- At the same time, the trailer - usually your 5 - follows into a **ball screen** for the new ball handler.
- The weak-side players maintain spacing to prevent early help.

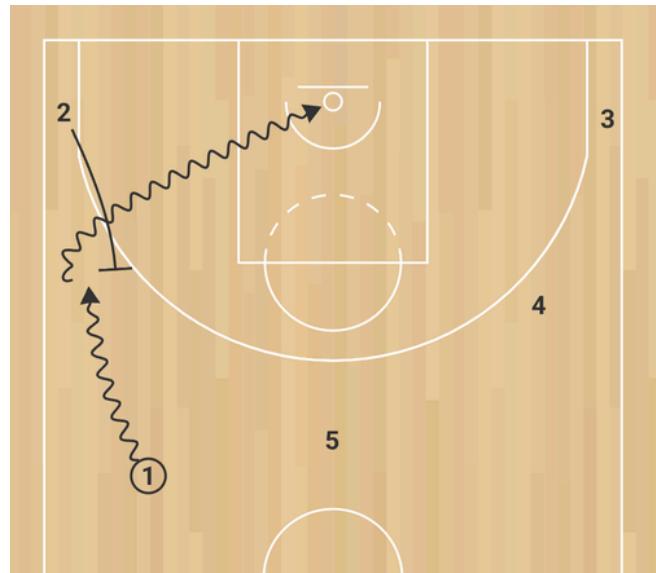


Variations

- You can **add a handoff** between Player 1 and Player 2 before the ball screen.



- The **wing player sets a back screen** instead of receiving the ball.



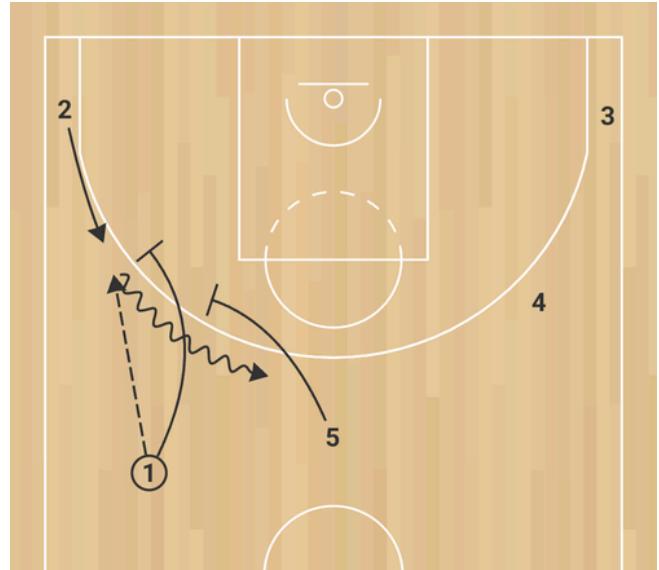


Early Offense Triggers

#6 Pistol

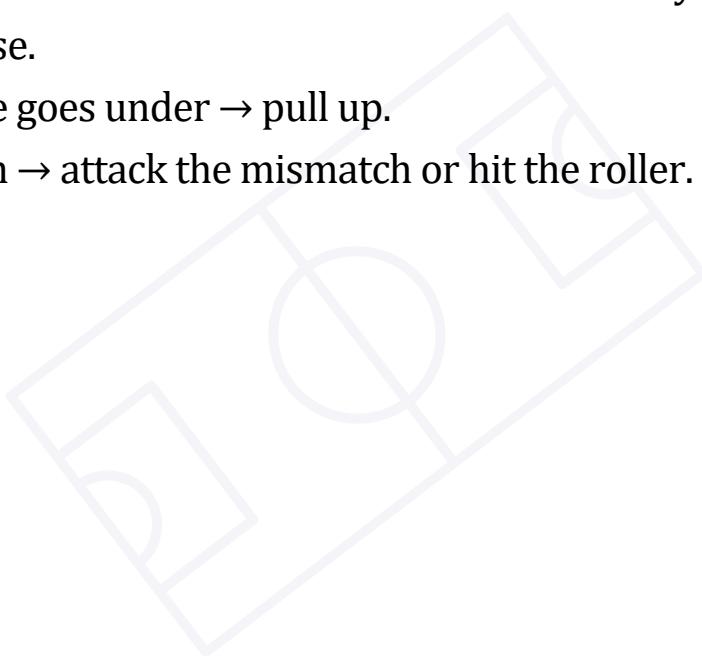


- The **former ball handler sets a first screen** for the receiver before Player 5 sets the second screen — creating a smooth two-screen sequence.



Reads & Coaching Points

- Keep the tempo high — the action should flow directly from transition.
- The handoff and ball screen must connect seamlessly to maximize pressure on the defense.
- If the defense goes under → pull up.
- If they switch → attack the mismatch or hit the roller.





Early Offense Triggers

#7 Get

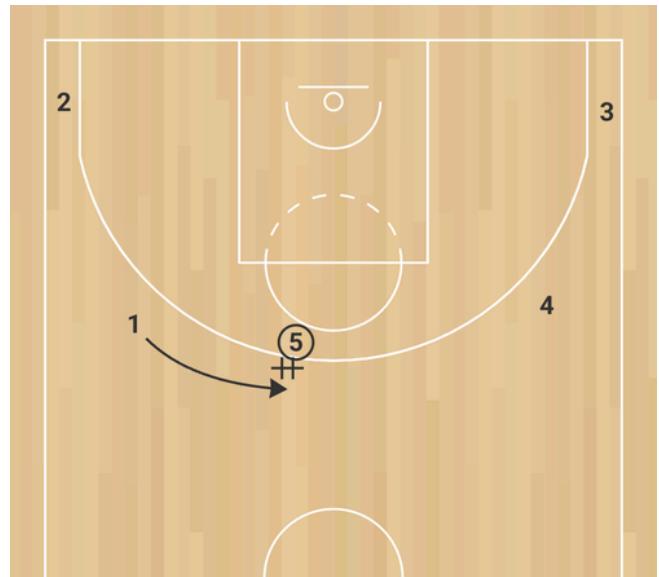
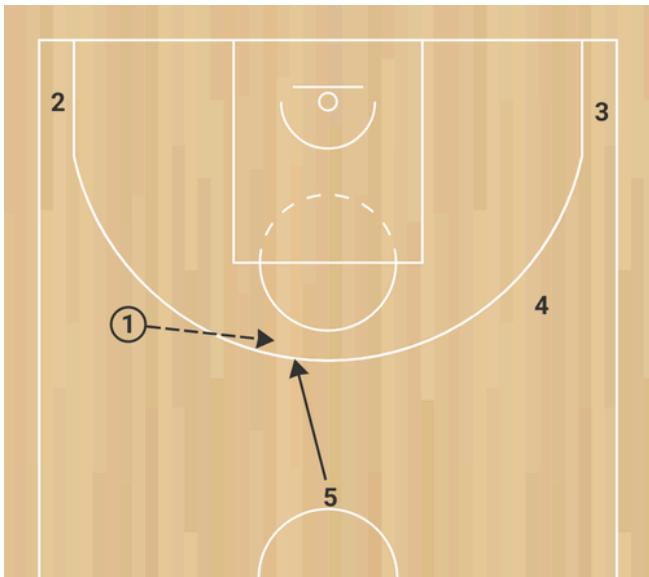


#7 Get

The Get Action is a simple but highly effective two-man game that keeps your offense flowing and constantly puts pressure on the defense.

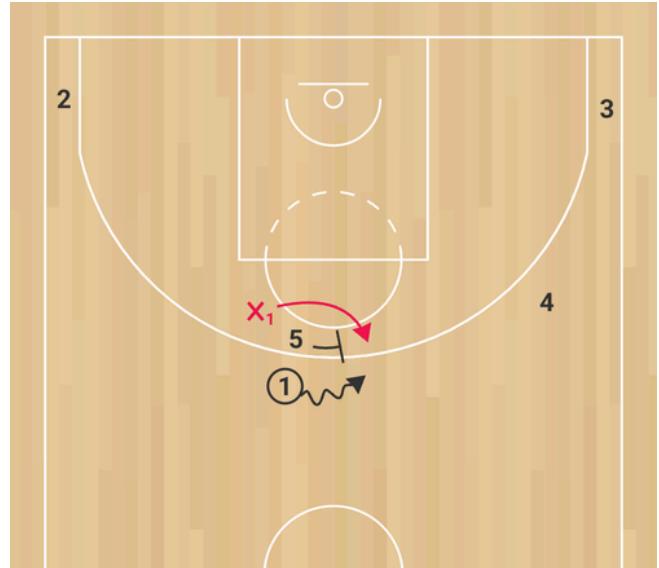
Setup

- The ball handler passes to the trailer — usually your big at the top of the key.
- Immediately after the pass, the guard **follows the ball** to receive a **dribble handoff**.



Variations

- Add a **Twist Screen** right after the handoff — the big turns and sets a second screen to counter defenses that go under or switch.





Early Offense Triggers

#8 Spanish



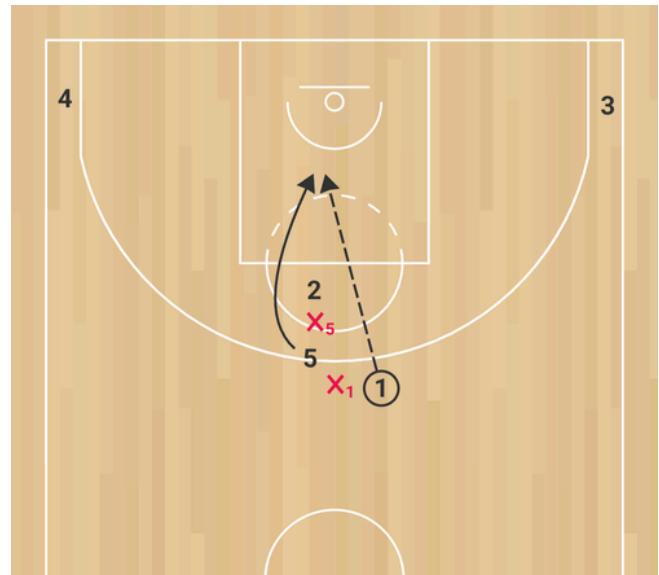
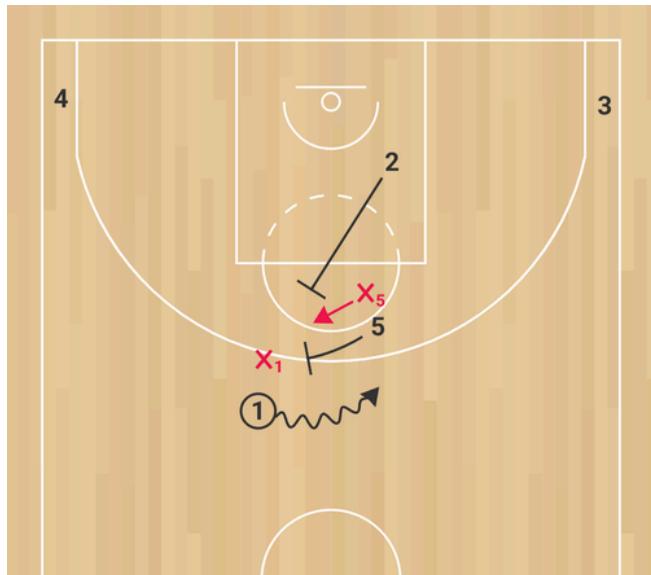
#8 Spanish

The Spanish Pick and Roll, also known as Spain Action, is one of the toughest actions to guard in modern basketball.

It adds a back screen right behind the traditional ball screen.

Setup

- Start with a **high ball screen**, typically with your big (5) screening for the ball handler.
- A guard or shooter sets another back screen on the big's defender (X5).
- The big (5) rolls to the rim.





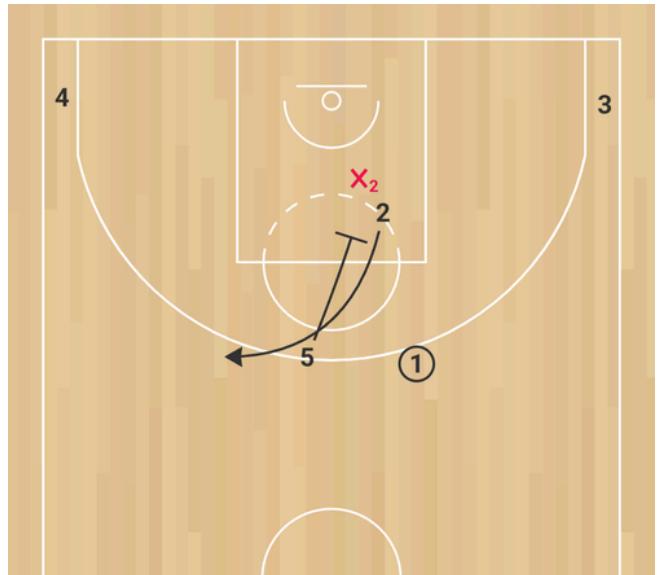
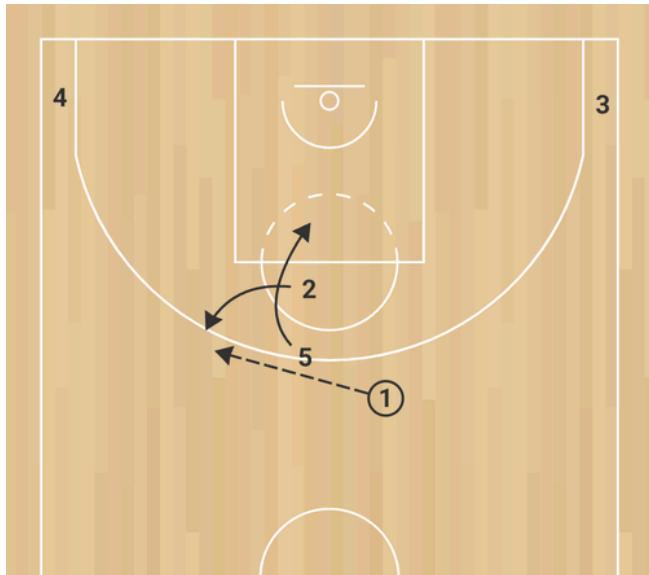
Early Offense Triggers

#8 Spanish

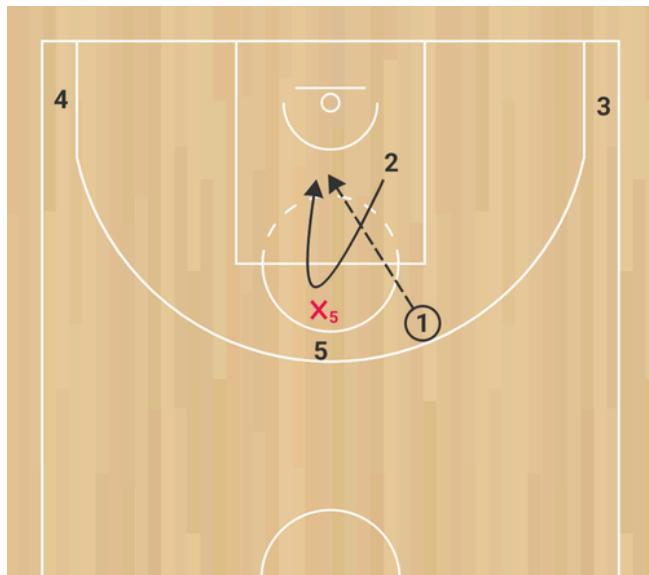


Variations

- The **second screener (2)** pops to the perimeter for a catch-and-shoot three.
- The **roller (5)** sets a down screen for the back screener to pop out after the initial action.



- The **back screener (2)** slips the screen and cuts to the basket for an easy finish.



Reads & Coaching Points

- Timing: The back screen must occur as the big rolls.
- If the defense helps on the roller → hit the pop.
- If they stay home on the shooter → the roll is open.
- If they switch → attack the mismatch.
- Keep spacing wide to give the roller and screener room to operate.



Early Offense Triggers

#9 Iverson



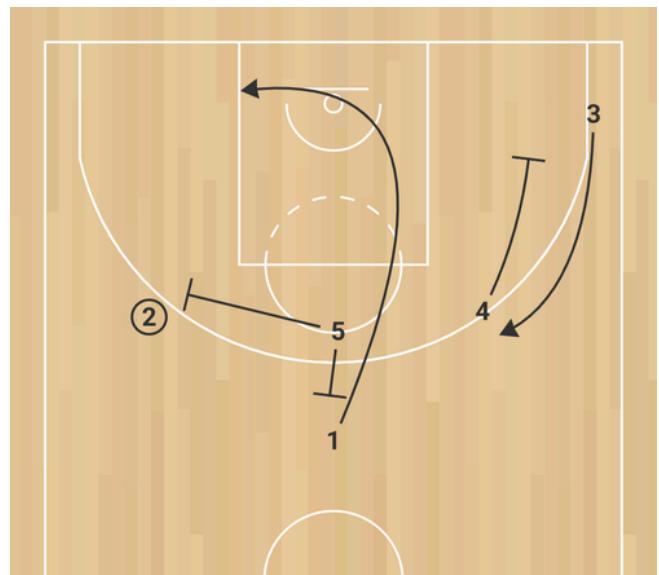
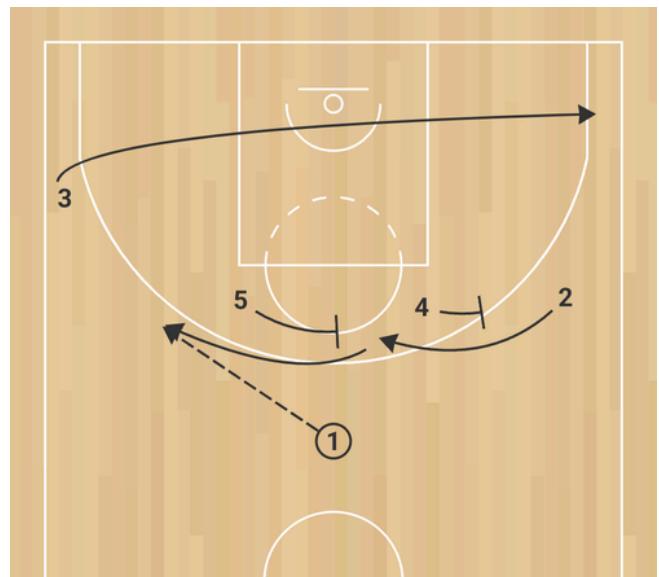
#9 Iverson

The **Iverson Action**, named after Allen Iverson, is a very effective way to start your half-court offense.

It uses a strong horizontal cut across two screens at the elbows to get your best scorer the ball in motion — creating spacing, rhythm, and immediate flow into your next trigger.

Setup

- Start from a **1-4 high set**, with two screeners (4 and 5) at the elbows and two wing players.
- One of the wings (3) clears out to the opposite corner.
- Player 2 uses **two staggered screens** near the elbows to get open on the other side and receive the ball.
- From there, the team flows directly into the next action, such as on-ball screens, off-ball screens, curls or slips.





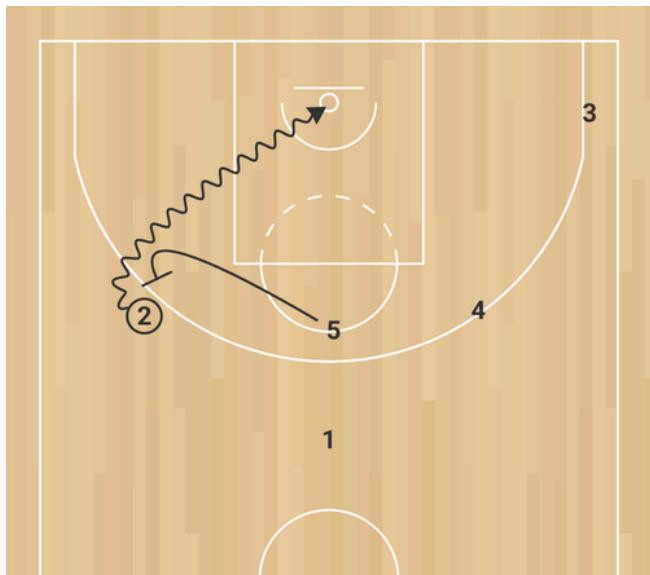
Early Offense Triggers

#9 Iverson

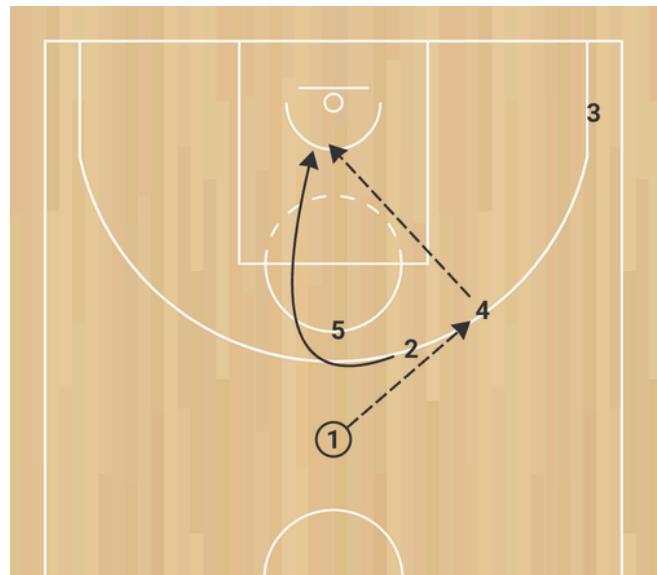


Variations

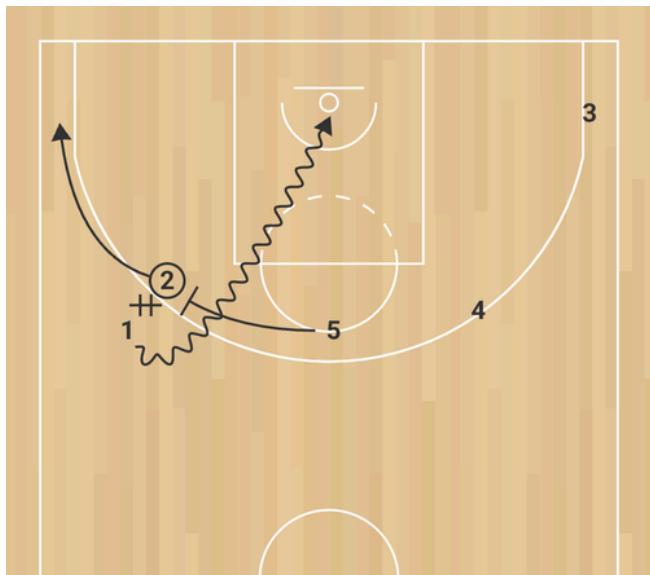
- Player 5 can **step up for a ball screen** after the catch to exploit the open gap.



- Player 2 can **curl to the rim** if the defender trails.



- You can add a **handoff** with Player 1 or a **second screen** from Player 5 to create additional motion.



Reads & Coaching Points

- The cutter must read the defender's position: over = curl, under = pop.
- Screeners should set firm, shoulder-to-shoulder screens to force contact.
- The timing of the clear-out is essential to keep the lane open.
- Use the Iverson cut as an entry — not an endpoint — to flow directly into your conceptual offense.



Early Offense Triggers

#10 Horns

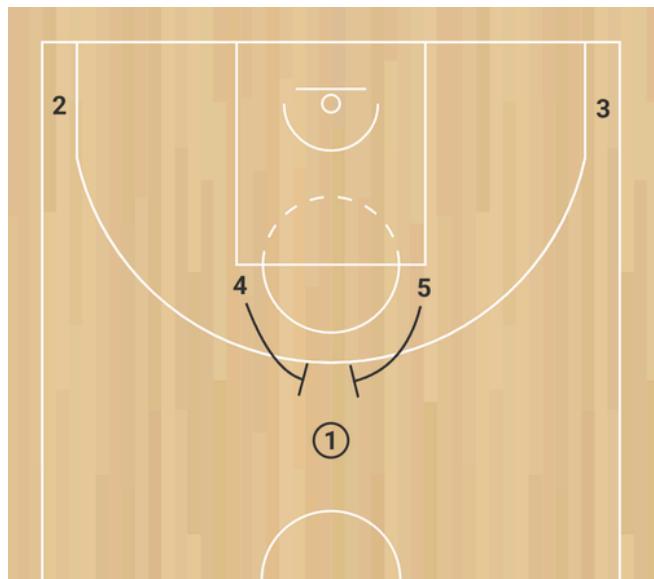


#10 Horns

The **Horns Action** is one of the most versatile and widely used offensive setups in basketball.

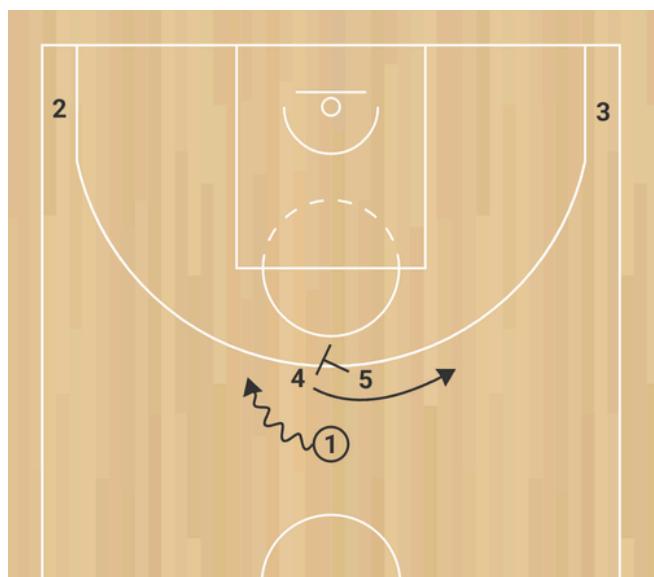
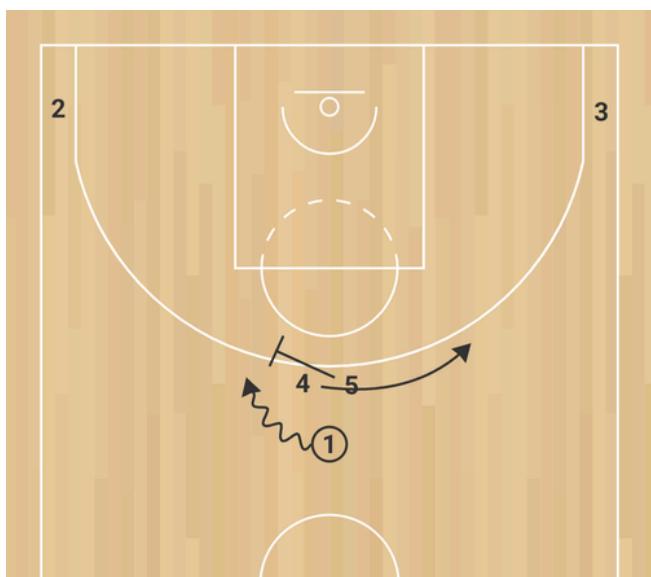
Setup

- Two screeners are positioned at the **elbows**, the ball handler is at the **top**, and two players occupy the **corners**.
- **Double Ball Screen:** Both elbow players set a screen for the ball handler — one **rolls**, the other **pops**.



Variations

- The second screener can **re-screen**, ...
- ... or set a **flare screen** for the first to open up the next read.





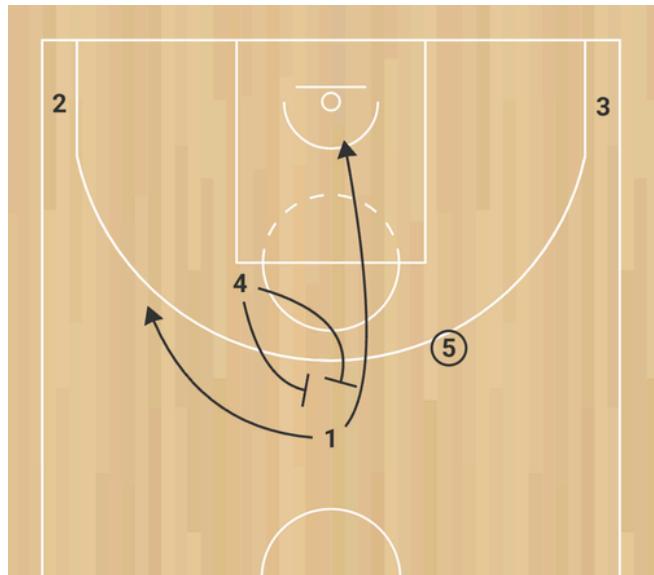
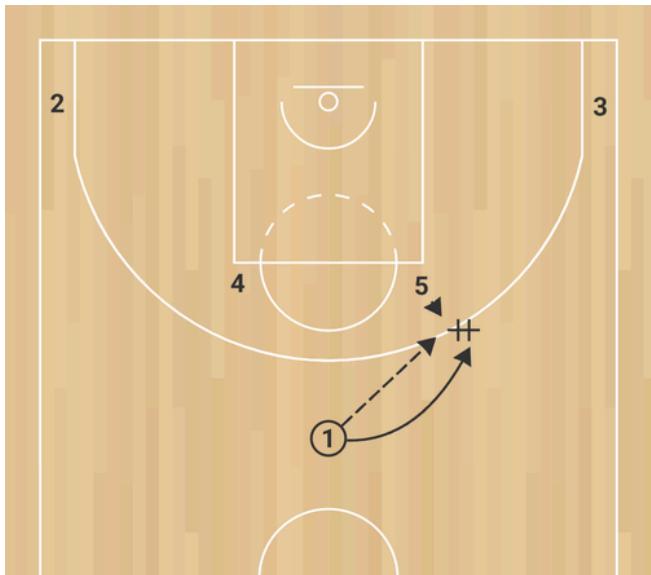
Early Offense Triggers

#10 Horns



Variations

- The ball handler can pass to either elbow and immediately flow into a **handoff**, ...
- ... **backdoor cut**, or **flare screen**.



Reads & Coaching Points

- Emphasize decision-making — Horns is a framework, not a set play.
- If the defense helps on the roll → hit the pop.
- If they switch → attack the mismatch.
- If the pass to the elbow is denied → back cut or reverse the ball.
- Keep spacing balanced — the corners stretch the floor and open the middle.



Early Offense Triggers

Conclusion



Conclusion

All ten triggers share one simple principle — they help your team **create an advantage** before the defense is fully organized.

Whether through a screen, a handoff, or a cut, each action initiates the domino effect that leads to high-percentage shots.

These triggers are not isolated plays but **building blocks** of a conceptual offense. Once the first advantage is created, your players read, react, and continue to play — not by running patterns, but by understanding spacing, timing, and opportunity.

Keep the teaching simple:

Start with one or two triggers, install them with clear reads, and let your team learn how to connect them naturally.

For more breakdowns and teaching points, check out my videos on YouTube:



[10 Offensive Triggers to Create an Early Advantage](#)



[Zoom Action - Drills](#)

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Hi, I'm Chris — Welcome to Basketball Orbit!

Basketball has been a huge part of my life. Growing up in Germany, I fell in love with the game and have been lucky to play it for most of my life. Over the years, my passion evolved into coaching, where I've worked with players and teams of all levels — from beginners to experienced athletes.

Coaching can be challenging — planning practices, teaching plays, and motivating players isn't always easy. That's why I started Basketball Orbit: to share the strategies and tools I've learned to help coaches like you create confident, successful teams.



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On my [YouTube channel](#), I focus on practical drills, plays, and strategies for youth and senior teams alike. My goal is simple: to help you grow as a coach and take your team to the next level.

Basketball is about more than just winning — it's about teamwork, resilience, and having fun. Join me on this journey, and let's build stronger teams together.