



WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
**BASKETBALL
COACHES**

LEVEL 1

COACHES MANUAL



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COACH

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LEVEL 1



COACH

CHAPTER 1

ROLES AND VALUES

CHAPTER 1

ROLES AND VALUES

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1.1 LEADERSHIP

1.1.1 BEING A ROLE MODEL

The most admired coach may not be the one who has the most wins. The most admired coach, and perhaps the coach who can make the biggest difference to a young player, is the one who:

- *Nurtures athletes;*
- *Understands athletes;*
- *Sets clear boundaries as to what is acceptable;*
- *Help athletes recognize right from wrong.*

“A leader’s most powerful ally is their own example”

COACH JOHN WOODEN

WHAT KIND OF TEAM AM I GOING TO COACH?

It is very important that a coach takes the time to understand the team they are coaching, using the following questions as a guideline:

- Is it a mini-basketball team? A children’s team? Is it a team made up of promising young players? Is it a first-class elite team?
- What sort of organization does the team belong to? Is it a school team? A club team? What sort of school or club?
- How good are the players? How long have they been playing? What is their potential?
- Why are the players playing? For fun? To spend time with friends? To learn and get better at basketball?

The answer to each of these questions will help the coach to understand the context of the team. This will help the coach to avoid the kind of mistakes that can arise if the coach and players (or their parents) have different expectations for the team.

Once the coach understands the type of team they are coaching, it is important that they communicate their expectations to the team. In the context of coaching young children, this must also include communication with the parents.

A coach who is training young players has the responsibility of contributing to the players' overall development both in sport and life in general – taking a holistic approach. The coach should not only be interested in short-term achievements.

Taking into account all of the above, coaches should decide upon general objectives for the team which reflect that particular team and those players and their particular motivations.

For example: a coach training a mini-basketball school team (ages 9-10) might want to consider the following:

- All players should have equal opportunity to participate in games.
- Some of the players may never have played before; some may have been playing for only a year and in general, the skill level of all players is likely to be low.
- Some players will have good basic movement skills (running, jumping etc.) while others will not and the level of fitness of players may vary widely.
- The coach's main priority will be to contribute to the personal development of these children in developing a positive and sportsmanlike.
- Therefore, general aims that the coach may adopt could be that the children:
 - enjoy themselves
 - improve their physical development
 - learn certain values (such as team work, respect for others, etc.)
 - work on overall improvement of basketball fundamentals (dribbling, passing, etc.)
 - see that success is measured by the improvement of skills (team and individual) and executing those skills in games.

1.1.2 BEING PART OF "THE SYSTEM"

It is very important that coaches have an understanding of the development pathway for both players and coaches in their particular region.

If players are involved in other programs, the coach should encourage that participation and be prepared to vary the workload for the athlete on their own team.

Even if the coach is not interested in participating in regional or national development programs, they should find out what is available so that they can make players aware of it. Making contact with the organisers of regional or national development programs can be very useful for all coaches and, in particular, might make resources available to the coach.

KEEPING THE PERSPECTIVE ON THE ATHLETES

The performance of coaches is often summarized by reference to their "win-loss" ratio as if they alone were responsible for those results. This is undesirable.

Unfortunately, some junior coaches merely attempt to maximize wins, often at the expense of long term development. Playing the "best" players may win games in a given season, however the coach's performance is more accurately assessed by the progression each athlete, and the team, makes throughout the season.

ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE "SYSTEM"

Coaches should consider participating in the development system within their region as this will be good for their own development and will enable them to better understand the requirements such programs place on athletes in their own teams.

Time is obviously limited, but even if the coach cannot regularly attend sessions, speaking with players and other coaches is also useful to gain an understanding of these development programs.

DON'T WAIT TO BE ASKED

Sometimes, coaches may be asked to participate in regional development programs and this may be based upon their performance within their club team, or a coaching colleague may have recommended them.

However, coaches that are interested in participating in regional development programs, or simply want to know more about them, should be pro-active in making contact with coaches within those programs either to find out more, observe or perhaps actively participate.

SUPPORTING "THE SYSTEM"

Often a good way to connect with development programs is to make contact and ask if there are ways that you can support the program. If you have players from your team that are in the development program, ask if there is anything in particular they would like you to work on with those players?

For example, often within a local competition a player may play in one position (e.g. Centre) but at higher levels of the sport they may be required to play in a different position (e.g. Forward). All coaches should introduce every player to each playing position, and specifically they may be able to support a development program by providing opportunities to emphasise what is being done in that program.

1.1.3 GETTING SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Effective communication is a key element in building support for your program and, in particular, getting people to contribute to your program.

The better people understand the aims of your program, the more likely it is that they will be willing to contribute to its success.

DEFINING THE PIECES IN THE PUZZLE

A program is like a jigsaw and the coach's role is to communicate not only what the complete picture is but also what each of the pieces looks like.

A coach is much more likely to garner support if they are specific about what they require. Having clarity about what a coach needs enables potential volunteers and helpers to evaluate whether or not they can commit the time and resources required and whether or not they have the right skills or experience.

It is also important that the coach understands the minimum level of support that they require and is clear about that. Accepting anything less than that can lead to more problems rather than providing the necessary support.

For example, a coach may want an assistant coach, particularly to help at practice. This can be easily defined – e.g. two practices a week of two hours' duration and 15 minutes before and after each practice. A total of 5 hours per week.

If someone offers support but can only attend one practice, the coach should not feel that they automatically have to accept and instead might explain that they need the help at both practices. Of course, in this example, they may still encourage that person to attend sessions whenever they can, whilst continuing to look for an assistant coach that can make the greater commitment.

VALUE EVERY CONTRIBUTION

People perform best when they feel that their contribution is valued and they understand what it is that they are contributing towards. A simple "thank you" can be very motivating and coaches may do this verbally, by writing a short note or by acknowledging to the team a particular contribution that has been made.

Having a clear understanding of what support the coach wants will also help them to understand the importance of each contribution. Sometimes one task cannot be undertaken until an earlier task is completed and at other times something can be achieved more easily because of previous achievements.

Some things to consider in relation to how a coach demonstrates that they value a contribution:

- Say please and thank you. Whenever you ask someone to undertake a task, you are asking them to prioritise your needs above everything else in their lives. The common courtesy of “please” and “thank you” is the least that you can do!
- The more specific you can be about what you need, the more likely it is that you will get it.
- Every volunteer deserves a “moment of your time”. Take time to speak to the people that support your program. When you truly don’t have time, explain this and ask if there is another time when you could talk?
- Talk about them, not you! Ask if there is anything that you can do to help them? Ask what their goals from being involved in your program are and don’t assume that you know them. For example, a coach of a development program may want the local coaches to focus on something in particular. Simply asking “could you please make sure that you let Player X practice post moves” may not get a particularly supportive response. Instead, offer to run a clinic, or provide some information, about the teaching points you have for post players. Not only is this more likely to be effective, it is also more likely to have the local coaches implementing your teaching points.
- Be aware of the effect that your program may have on another coach’s program. For example, you might only practice twice per week and want players to prioritise your practice over other programs, however if those practices are at the same time as games or practice the player has with another team, then always attending your practice would have a significant impact.

WHO CAN HELP?

To help to identify possible sources of help, a coach should ask each player to provide an overview or summary of what other commitments they have not only to basketball but also any other sports and matters such as jobs, family and school.

Getting players to provide you with a simple diary of their activities can be a good way to get this information.

It can also help the coach to build their network. For example, one player on the team may also do athletics and by connecting with their athletics coach, the basketball coach may be able to provide some specific tuition in running for another player.

Coaches of young players should also not dismiss the role that parents can play in helping. Whether as an assistant coach at practice (undertaking a simple role such as passing to shooters) or carrying out an administrative task (e.g. setting up a Facebook page for the team), parents are often the easiest people to recruit because they are already involved in the team through their child.

Some of the roles that a coach may need assistance with are:

- Strength and conditioning – personal trainers, health clubs and other gyms may be able to assist.
- Physiotherapy – whether for injury rehabilitation or prevention, a physiotherapist can help athletes to look after their bodies.
- Team management – arranging uniforms, travel, pre/post game food and a host of other tasks
- Stats – not official statistics (that may be provided by the league) but other statistics that mirror what the team has been practicing (for example, a team that has been working on help defence may want to keep track of how many times the opponent passed the ball from one side of the court to the other before shooting. The more times they passed the more pressure the defence has put on them).
- Technical assistance – sometimes a coach may not be confident in teaching a particular topic. Asking another coach to come to their session and work on that topic not only helps the players to develop, it will also improve the ability of the coach to teach it next time.

1.1.4 HAVING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Whether in a practice session or a game, coaches working with young players should have an objective, constructive and positive attitude toward their players and the officials.

The best players in the world, during their best games, have missed shots that seemed easy

Coaching in games can be frustrating for a coach, because whilst they may see mistakes being made and know what needs to be done, they cannot directly do it.

If coaches act (or react) out of frustration or stress, it will not have a good result, particularly when coaching young children. Having an objective, constructive and positive attitude is particularly important.

- Objective, because they should objectively assess what their players can do (before the game), what they are doing (during the game) and what they have done (after the game).
- Constructive, because whatever happens during the game, coaches should use it so that their players, both individually and collectively, obtain benefits that will influence their athletic and personal development.
- Positive, because during the game is not the time to make an in-depth analysis of mistakes, but to emphasize the players' positive behaviour and to encourage them to do things without being afraid of failing.

The coach's comments during a game should focus on what the team needs to do or is going to do, not what has happened previously.

Obviously, what has happened previously in the game informs what the coach wants the team to do, but the coach will be most effective if they use positive, action-oriented language ("now this is what we are going to do...").

Coaches should be realistic in their expectations of players and not demand more from them than the

players are capable of at their stage of development. They should assume and accept that the players will make many mistakes because:

- the best players in the world, during their best games, have missed shots that seemed easy;
- even the best players make mistakes when passing and/or have turnovers. No team has won a championship and recorded no turnovers;

Unfortunately, many coaches lose the appropriate perspective and the self-control that they should have during games - when players make mistakes such coaches add to the stress of the players by making unproductive comments that only increase their insecurity, turning the game into a negative experience.

In fact, many young players who start out enthusiastically playing basketball lose their enthusiasm and quit because games become very stressful experiences that they cannot deal with.

The coach's behaviour is an essential element in avoiding this problem and in getting games to be positive experiences, whatever the result on the scoreboard.

Similarly, the coach must assume and accept that officials will make mistakes. Even the most experienced official will sometimes make a mistake and the coach, and their team, must not focus on that and instead focus on the next play. A coach that speaks after a game about how referee decisions cost them the game will soon have players that do not accept their accountability for performance.

1.1.5 UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATIONS OF PLAYERS

It is important for a coach to understand why their players are involved in sport and for the coach's expectations for the team to align with those motivations.

Various studies have confirmed that children are primarily involved in sport to have fun, with the following reasons typically being given by children as to why they play:

- To have fun
- To learn new skills
- To be with friends
- To do something that I am good at
- To keep fit

Not having fun is the primary reason why children stop playing sport and children rarely rank "Winning" as an important factor in why they play sport. It is not that winning is unimportant, necessarily, it is just not the reason that they are involved in sport. Indeed, some studies indicate that high school students prefer to play on a losing team rather than sit on the bench as a substitute on a winning team.

Clearly, a coach that makes decisions based purely on winning games (e.g. court time) may actually discourage players from being involved in sport. Often when coaching junior athletes pressure to win will come from parents rather than players and this can be difficult for a coach to deal with.

One approach is for the coach to make sure that the parents see the improvement that the players and the team are making because often parents will only evaluate success according to the scoreboard. The coach should also be very clear what their approach will be (e.g. giving young players equal playing time) so that the players (and parents) can decide whether or not they want to be involved with that approach.

Even professional athletes will generally perform better if they are enjoying the experience and if it is an environment where they are learning and developing their skills. There is no specific time when winning becomes a major motivation for players and it is always worthwhile for a coach to discuss with players why they are involved in the team and what they want to get out of their time with the team.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Consider each of the teams that you are involved with and for each team:
 - a. what are the various motivations of players within the team?
 - b. what expectation does the club have for the team?
 - c. what expectations do parents (if it is a junior team) or club supporters and sponsors (if it is a senior team) have for the team?
2. Based on your answers to question 1, does this make any difference to how you will coach the team? Describe any differences you identify.
3. Describe to a colleague how you coach, specifically:
 - a. how often do you speak to players?
 - b. are you a loud coach?
 - c. are you an emotional coach?
 - d. how do you interact with referees?

Then have your colleague watch you coaching at either a training session or a game and have them comment upon the following:

- a. from what they observed, do they agree with how you describe your coaching behaviour?
- b. do players reflect your emotional demeanour at any time during the practice/game?
- c. do the players interact with referees similarly to how you do?

1.2 WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

1.2.1 APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION WITH OFFICIALS

The coach's attention should be on the performance of their players and the team.

TALK AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

The coach should introduce themselves at the start of the game, wish them all the best and then say thank you at the end of the game. Particularly when coaching juniors, this may be the extent of communication with officials.

YELLING IS A DISTRACTION

There may be times when the coach wishes to clarify a decision that the referee has made or seek other information. Yelling at the official while the game is going on is not an appropriate way to raise the matter and is likely to distract them from their job of officiating the play that is going on at that moment.

Instead, the coach should wait for a break in play and to then speak with the official in a conversational tone. If the coach's concern is in regards to the score or a timing issue, this should first be raised with the scoretable and they will notify the referees if necessary.

ASK A QUESTION

Once the coach has the official's attention they should ask the question which they want answered. Simply saying "that was a foul" or "didn't you see that the screener moved" is unlikely to be helpful.

Instead the coach should speak to the official to:

- Seek clarification of a ruling that has been made (which may include both calls that were made and calls that were not made) (e.g. "my player was standing still well before the shooter started their lay-up so why was a block foul called?");
- Bring something to the attention of the referee and ask them to look at it (e.g. they are moving when setting their ball screens);
- Raise a concern with regard to the score or timing (although this should first be raised with the scoretable).

QUESTION ASKED, QUESTION ANSWERED

Once the coach has asked a question they should accept the answer. They may disagree with it (particularly if it was about a matter of interpretation – was it a "block" or "charge"), but simply repeating the same question several times is not productive.

There is little point in engaging in an argument with the official. For example, the coach may believe there was contact and a foul should have been called. The official may explain that they did not see any unlawful contact. The coach re-iterating that they believe there was a foul is unlikely to change the official's belief that there wasn't a foul.

The coach should turn their attention to the efforts of their players and the team. Like the fable of the “boy who cried wolf”, the more often a coach questions or complains to the officials, the less likely it is that they will consider that the coach is saying anything of merit and the less likely it is that the officials will take what the coach is saying into account.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

The key to having a good relationship with officials is the same as any interpersonal relationship and coaches should look to build relationships over the course of a season or a tournament. Being respectful toward the official and the role that they have is key. The coach should have conversations with the official, not attempt to dictate to them or berate them.

Before the game is an excellent opportunity to start to build a rapport with the official and to raise with the official anything of concern to the coach. For example:

- “Last time we played this team, there was a lot of contact in the post and we felt that their players were pushing us out of position”
- “I’ve noticed during the season that a lot of latitude has been given to the defenders in the post and allowing them to push the offensive player off the post. Has there been any direction in this regard?”
- Asking the official “how have you found the season? Are there any particular trends you’ve seen?”

WORK WITH THE OFFICIALS

A coach is responsible for the conduct of team staff and players and a coach’s behaviour can have a significant impact upon the behaviour of the fans and spectators.

For example, if a player is distracted by the officials, and particularly if they are starting to complain to referees, the coach should take action. That action could be:

- Presenting the player’s concern to the referees – for example, “my point guard feels that he is getting pushed a lot by #5 who hand checks every time. Could you have a look at it please?”
- Take the player from the game to “cool down” – it is certainly better that the coach takes this action rather than the official calling a technical foul
- Changing tactics to relieve the player from a particular situation – e.g. moving to “5 Out” if the player is concerned at contact in the post.

The coach can also influence the behaviour of spectators and the most obvious example of this is that the more the coach complains to the officials, the more spectators will see that as an acceptable action and join in.

Instead, the coach should set an expectation for the team’s spectators to focus their energy on positively supporting the team, rather than commenting upon the referees.

EXPECT MISTAKES

Officials will make mistakes in every game – just as players and coaches do. Officials work together as a team to “cover” the whole court. Basketball is a very fast-moving game and sometimes players may move quicker than the officials can, however most times officials will be in a better position than the coach is to see what happened.

Officials make hundreds of decisions every game, mostly in a split second and the official barely has time to think about the last decision before needing to make their next decision.

If they do make a mistake, the official (like a player) should then be focussing on the “next play”. Coaches should assist this by making their communication at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way and making sure their players communicate similarly appropriately (if at all) with officials.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Do you have a good relationship with referees? After answering the question, ask a colleague or administrator who has watched you coach whether they believe you have a good relationship with referees. If possible, seek feedback from referees on how they find officiating your games.
2. How would you respond if one of the experienced players told the team after the match “we only lost because the referees made a mistake at the end of the game – the offensive foul they called was wrong”.
3. Would your answer to question 2 be different if you agreed that the referees had made a mistake? Discuss with a colleague how they would approach the situation.

LEVEL 1



COACH

CHAPTER 2

KNOW-HOW

CHAPTER 2

KNOW-HOW

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2.1. PLANNING

2.1.1 PLANNING PRACTICE-INTRODUCTION

Planning activities (practice sessions and games) is an essential aspect of a coach's role.

Coaches who do not plan tend to drift. They will often spend too much time on one aspect (particularly if the players are not doing it well) and not enough time on other areas. This will invariably result in a lack of progress by the players, which is compounded because coaches who do not plan often end up doing the same things from one training session to the next.

By contrast, coaches who plan sessions find they have a goal and a clear idea of how to attain it; they know exactly where they want to go, the path they should follow and how to follow it, the problems they will encounter and how to overcome them. This will help the athletes to develop their confidence.

Coaches who plan well also avoid the mistake of spending too long on one aspect of the game. Even if the players are not executing something perfectly, a coach who has planned knows that to continue working on that means not doing something else that was important and which they had planned to do. In this circumstance, the coach should note what stage the team reached so that they can return to it at the next session.

There are many factors that need to be taken into account by the coach.

Often when coaching a junior team, the coach will not have an assistant coach; if that is the case they should consider whether or not parents can assist. Simple tasks such as rebounding the ball or being an "obstacle" that players dribble around can often be delegated to a parent.

Often the resources are limited (few balls, little court time, only half a court available, outdoor courts, etc.). Coaches must use their imagination to make up for these deficiencies. For example, if only a few balls are available, use a "circuit", where players work in small groups with different types of activities for each group – some activities with the ball and some without. Alternatively, players could be encouraged to bring their own ball.

Coaches must always try to avoid a situation where players line up in a long line, waiting a long time until they finally have a turn with the ball.

Coaches should also explore what other possibilities are available to make up for the lack of resources. For example, the team may only have the use of one court with two baskets for practice. The coach could consider the possibility of training on another day in a space without baskets, taking advantage of this session to do activities that do not require a basket (e.g. agility). This can allow the coach to use the limited time with baskets to the best advantage.

THE FIRST CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING A SESSION IS WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE, SUCH AS:

- courts, basketballs, hoops, etc.;
- off-court area, whiteboard;
- do the players have reversible uniforms so they can be divided into "teams";
- how long is the session;
- number of players attending;
- number of coaches at the session;
- other training aids (e.g. cones, bibs, "bump bags").

TRAINING RULES

Coaches should establish training rules and communicate these to the players (and their parents) at the start of the season. In order to do this, they should consider the following:

- How early should the players get to practice? When should they be dressed and ready to start training?
- What should the players wear to practice? Is there a designated practice uniform?
- How does the practice start? Will the coach meet with the players in the locker room before going out on the court? Should the players go out when they are ready and start to train by themselves until the coach calls them? Should the players go out on the court and wait until the coach calls them before doing anything else?
- Who is in charge of the equipment needed for the practice? Who is in charge of the balls? Who picks them up after practice? Who has the key to the locker room? Who is responsible for the whiteboard? Is there an alarm code to lock up after practice?
- Are players that are injured and unable to train required to attend practice? If so, what is their role at practice (taking statistics, doing a limited workout?)
- What happens if a player gets injured during practice? Who takes care of them? What should be done?

By being clear about their training rules a coach can then hold players accountable to follow them. Team mates can also hold each other accountable.

Coaches should also establish simple rules when speaking to the players so that they pay attention to them. For example, they could use a whistle when they want the players to stop what they are doing and listen, and whistle twice if they want the players to move over to the coach.

There is little point in the coach speaking until they have the attention of the players. Similarly, when speaking to an individual player the coach should first get their attention. Many coaches will yell during a drill: "Move to the

baseline, Michael." Unfortunately, Michael may not start listening until he hears his name, which means he would actually miss the coach's instruction. Accordingly, the coach should say: "Michael, move to the baseline."

Coaches may also establish a rule that when they are speaking to the players that players should not be dribbling the ball, tying their shoes, talking to each other or doing anything else, but should look at them and pay attention to what the coach is saying.

There is research that suggests that some players will be able to stand perfectly still while others will "fidget"; but both are listening. The overriding rule must be that no player can do something that makes it hard for another player to hear or distracts the attention of another player.

Nevertheless, in order to keep the players' attention in these situations, coaches must make sure that their explanations are short and very precise.

Coaches should also establish procedures such as whether or not players sit down or drink water between activities. Training rules should also emphasize that players must remain positive with each other and set out whether visitors (parents, friends, etc.) may attend.

HOW FAR AHEAD SHOULD YOU PLAN?

A coach should have a plan for the season. First, the coach identifies where the players and team are currently in terms of ability to execute skills and tactics. The coach should then have a plan for what they want the players to learn throughout the season. This enables the coach to ensure that they spend some time in each practice on all aspects.

Once the coach has identified goals for the season, each session should be a step toward achieving one of the goals for the season.

2.1.2 PLANNING PRACTICE-SETTING GOALS

SETTING GOALS

The coach needs to identify two or three key goals for each training session. These should relate to the overall goals for the season and may also be linked either to the previous game or the next game. Linking them to a game helps define how and when success is measured. The goals of each session should be few and two serious mistakes are:

- trying to do too much in a single practice or a single activity;
- the coach not knowing clearly what they want to achieve during the training session as a whole and/or with each specific activity.

There are two types of goals - outcome goals and performance goals.

OUTCOME GOALS

Outcome goals refer to collective or individual results, for example, making a certain number of shots, taking a certain amount of time to complete an activity or scoring a certain number of points. Outcome goals may be divided into two types:

- intra-subject or intra-group - results by an individual player or group, (e.g. make 10 shots)
- inter-subject or inter-group - results of an individual group compared to another individual or group (e.g. first to make 10 shots)

PERFORMANCE GOALS

Performance goals focus on the desired steps toward an outcome, rather than the outcome itself. For example, improving a chest pass, shooting more often from specific positions on the court, blocking out or passing the ball to the low post.

Achieving a performance goal does not guarantee that an outcome goal will be achieved, but it does increase the probability of achieving it. Performance goals help players to develop confidence in the execution of skills.

For example, shooting more often from ideal positions (performance goal) does not guarantee that more points will be made (outcome goal), but does increase the probability of making more points, and only by shooting more often from these positions will the player be able to control how to make more points.

In general, outcome goals work better at enhancing the players' interest, but performance goals are better at helping the players to understand that they can control the situations with which they are faced.

It is advisable to combine both types of goals depending on the players' age group, keeping in mind the following:

- inter-subject and inter-group outcome goals are advisable for teams made up of 15-18-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, for teams made up of 13-14-year-olds. They are not advisable for mini-basketball teams.
- individual and collective performance goals are highly recommended for all teams.

In order to be efficient, goals should be **SMART**:

S	Specific	Goals should be specific and clearly defined rather than general and ambiguous.
M	Measurable	There must be some criteria set as to how the goal is measured and, where possible, this should be objective.
A	Achievable	Goals should be challenging for the players. Goals that are too easy (requiring little effort) or that require too much effort are not suitable. Goals should be challenging in such a way as to motivate the player; goals that are too easy, although attractive, are not challenging.
R	Realistic	Goals should show the progress that a player or a team will make. To be realistic, those goals must seem possible. Sometimes you will set a series of goals toward achieving a goal. For example, for a ten-year-old having a goal of dunking the ball is very unlikely to be realistic (at least at that time). However, having a series of goals (e.g. the height they can jump) they can realistically take steps toward the ultimate goal.
T	Timely	each goal should have a time frame set to it, whether that is end of the season, the end of the year or the next week. Having a time frame provides a sense of “urgency” and will help track progress.

Goals should be established for the team and for the individual players. If only collective goals have been established, individual motivation can easily diminish. And with young players, it is important that each player be allowed to progress at their own pace; therefore, individual goals are important. It may be that within one activity, different players will have different goals depending upon their skill level.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE GOALS

Performance goals are particularly important when coaching young players because they:

- are centered on what the players do and how they do it, rather than on the consequences of what they do (missing a shot does not mean it was a bad shot and similarly making a shot does not mean it was a good shot);
- allow a more realistic evaluation of the feasibility of the goals;
- facilitate a simple and reliable assessment of output;

- permit the players to use their own behaviour to measure their progress;
- increase self-confidence (which comes from feeling “in control”) and motivation (which comes from belief that the goal can be achieved).

Coaches of 6-9-year-olds should use only performance goals. Coaches of athletes aged 10-12 years should concentrate on performance goals but may include some intra-subject or intra-group outcome goals related to those performance goals.

For example, in order to work on the individual performance goal of improving lay-ups:

- a coach of 6-9-year-olds should focus on the players being balanced and using correct footwork;
- a coach of 10-12-year-olds may set an intra-group outcome goal for how many lay-ups the group can achieve (with correct balance, footwork and shooting with the correct hand) in a certain time;
- a coach of players aged 13+ may divide the squad into two groups with an inter-group outcome goal of the first team to make a certain number of baskets.

Using performance goals with younger players does not mean that coaches cannot use games that keep score. Often, it can be a lot of fun for an activity to be competitive, however the coach should be careful to focus on performance goals.

For example, teams may play a game where players attempt lay-ups and the first team to make 20 points wins. With young players, the coach may award 3 points for correct footwork and only 1 point if a basket is made (and no points if it is made with incorrect footwork). This is a competitive game, but the coach's focus is on correct performance of the skill.

Having an outcome can also be useful as it gives a natural ending to an activity (e.g. when one team scores 20 points). Using performance goals with younger players equally applies to games, and indeed in many competitions for players under the age of 10 there are no outcome goals because no scores are kept. Even if scores are kept, the coach should set other goals for the team that relate to processes that they have been practicing.

Performance goals also remain important when coaching older age groups. For example, if players are struggling to make a lay-up with their weaker hand the coach may:

- award two points if the correct technique is used and the basket is made;
- award one point if the correct technique is used but the basket is missed;
- deduct a point if the basket is made but incorrect technique is used.

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE GOALS

Once the coach decides which goals are appropriate, they must decide if these can be achieved within the coaching time available. In many cases, because of the lack of time, they may have to leave out some goals.

Where this is the case (a common occurrence when coaching young teams), the coach has to choose which goals they consider most important, omitting the rest. To do this, they can use criteria such as:

- the importance of each goal, taking into account the type of team they are coaching and, based on this, the team's general goals; obviously those goals considered most important will take precedence;
- the proximity of each goal with respect to the present. In general, if the degree of importance is similar, those goals that can be achieved first should take precedence;
- the relationship between different objectives, bearing in mind whether the attainment of one goal is essential to achieving others. In general, the simplest goals that facilitate the attainment of later, more complex, goals should take precedence;
- combining offense and defence goals (for example, improve offense 1-on-1 fundamentals and improve defence 1-on-1 fundamentals). Both on an individual level and on a collective level, the development of offense and defence should follow a parallel progression;
- the "cost" necessary to achieve each goal, defining cost as the physical and psychological effort necessary. In general, those goals requiring lower cost should take precedence.

In general, goals that are geared toward the development of skills or understanding the game are preferable to those that are geared toward winning a particular game.

2.1.3 PLANNING PRACTICE-STAGES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

The effectiveness of any particular activity will be influenced both by what is done and equally importantly, when the activity is done within the overall practice.

Coaches should be realistic when determining the activities to be done in the practice session, keeping in mind:

- the skill level of the players;
- the amount of time available for each activity;
- the specific “teaching points” to emphasize in each activity. It is often possible to use one activity to teach a range of different skills;
- the simplicity of the activity; generally the simplest activity should take precedence over more complex activities. The coach should also consider whether or not the activity has previously been used with the team. The more familiar the team is with a particular activity the lower the psychological load;
- the integration of the activity, into the overall framework of the session; the activity that fits in best should take precedence;

STAGES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

In general, a training session should be divided into three stages:

- In the first stage, the aim is to prepare the players to be physically and psychologically ready when they reach the main stage of the practice. Warm-up activities without the ball such as running, stretching, etc., should be included here, and simple activities with the ball (low physical and psychological load) that, little by little, require greater concentration and physical effort.

- In the second stage, the coach should incorporate the main objectives of the session, those requiring greater physical and psychological effort, combining activities of greater and lesser physical and psychological intensity. This is where the most teaching is done.
- In the third stage, the coach should progressively reduce the physical and psychological intensity, although not necessarily simultaneously. Thus, in the first part of this third stage, they may include a physically intensive drill requiring low concentration. Or they can organise it the other way around, a psychologically intense drill with a low physical workload (for example, a shooting contest). Then it would be appropriate to end with exercises that require little physical and mental effort, such as basic stretching exercises.

The coach must decide what the main goals of the training session will be and, based on this, select the contents to be included and the most appropriate drills, taking into account the time available and the physical and psychological loads that they consider most appropriate at a given time.

In general, the goals of an activity can be grouped into four main blocks:

- **learning:** the objective is for the players to learn or perfect new skills, both technical fundamentals (passing, dribbling, shooting, etc.) and tactical skills (1 on 1, 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 strategies, etc.);
- **repetition:** rehearsing skills that players have already mastered in order to consolidate them and to perfect them. These activities can also be used to provide a physiological change, as the case may be (for example: shooting a series of twenty shots or running and passing for a period of ten minutes). It is important that repetition is done in context - for example, having someone stand in front of a shooter will help the shooter to develop a higher release.
- **exposure to real game conditions:** the objective here is for the players to train under real game conditions (mainly stressful conditions) so that they get used to these conditions;
- **specific game preparation:** the objective is to prepare the team to confront specific rivals who present specific difficulties.

With athletes aged 12 and under learning activities will predominate and, to a lesser degree, repetition goals. It is not appropriate to spend training time on the other two areas.

For teams of 13-14-year-olds, learning and repetition should predominate but the players should also practice skills mastered in non-stressful game conditions. However, it is not appropriate for this age group to spend training time on specific game preparation.

For teams of 15-18-year-olds, learning, repetition, exposure to game conditions, and specific preparation for games should be adequately combined. Learning drills should generally be done early in the practice session (when the psychological load has been low) or after a break.

The contents included in practice sessions should correspond to the goals for that session (e.g. perfecting foot movement in 1 on 1 defence; repeating passes already mastered, etc.).

Well planned activities are essential for making the most of practice time. A session made up of good, well-coordinated activities will benefit the players much more than a session with inappropriate or poorly coordinated ones. With each activity that the coach uses, they must clearly identify their "teaching points". These are the things that they will emphasize for the players to do. They are "process goals" and form the basis for evaluation of players.

In planning practice, the coach should also plan how much time will be used to "present the activity. Simply, this is briefly explaining the activity to be done and explaining the teaching points, which are the specific things that the coach wants the players to concentrate on.

The explanations given should be very brief. The players cannot be standing still for a long time, listening to long explanations. If an activity is to go for 10 minutes, no more than two minutes should be spent presenting the activity. Many coaches will try to restrict the amount of time used to instruct athletes at practice to 1 minute (the length of a timeout) or 2 minutes (the short break between quarters).

2.1.4 PLANNING PRACTICE-CHOOSING APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

There are many factors that contribute to a successful activity. In order to control the players' attention, the coach should try to make the environment closely related to the goals of the activity. For example, reducing court space when working with small groups of players and limiting the actions permitted (no dribbling, no screen etc.).

Activities with a simple structure (e.g. where players move) also help the players to concentrate better on the goal and the contents of the activity.

Activities with a complex structure, on the other hand, force the players to devote attention to adapting to the structure, rather than concentrating on the key aspects.

In complex activities, coaches often provide feedback, mostly about the structure of the activity (e.g. where players move after passing the ball) instead of concentrating on the teaching points that the activity is meant to emphasise.

The coach can vary the difficulty of an activity by introducing rules for the players to follow, which focus on the teaching points.

For example, if the aim of an activity is for the players to dribble using their non-preferred hand the coach may use a half-court 3 on 3 game where the sole goal is to dribble with the non-preferred hand. If a player dribbles with their preferred hand their team loses possession of the ball. This is an example of a "working rule". This way, the players will pay more attention to the goal of the activity.

Although activities using a simple structure help the players to concentrate on the goal, using the same activity again and again leads to lower motivation and concentration.

For this reason, it is a good idea to vary the activities by changing either the structure or the goals or both.

If after one activity, another one is done that is similar to the first in its goal and/or its structure, the players will be better prepared mentally to perform the second, especially if the level of attention required progressively increases.

For example, the coach can begin with an activity with a single goal and a limited number of stimuli and then progressively add complexity. For example, moving through the following activities:

1	In pairs, in a reduced space, with one ball per pair. Players can only move without the ball and pass the ball to each other. The player receiving the ball must face the basket while the player who passed should immediately change position;
2	2 on 2 situation, playing in a larger but still limited area. Offensive players get free to receive the pass. If the defensive players steal the ball they change to offense and the offense changes to defence. The goal is still for the players to look at the basket when receiving the ball and change position as soon as they pass;
3	The players now move to another activity, keeping a similar structure but with a different goal. Still 2 on 2 but the goal now is to score using left-hand lay-ups;
4	The players do another activity, keeping the same structure and combining the two previous goals. 2 on 2, the players should make at least three passes before the lay-up. The player receiving a pass must face the basket and the player passing changes immediately to another position; players can only score using left-hand lay-ups;
5	Finally, the players change to another activity with the same goals but adding more stimuli such as a 4 on 4 half-court game. Players receiving the ball should look at the basket; the players passing should immediately change position. The team must make at least five passes before doing the lay-up and they can only score using left-hand lay-ups.

Organizing activities where the players compete among themselves or against themselves is a way to increase motivation and concentration, as long as they have enough resources to be successful. Here are some examples:

- divide the team into four groups, two at each basket. See which group does more left-handed lay-ups in three minutes;
- divide the team into groups of three players each. Each group executes chest passes running from one basket to the other (at least three or four passes), ending with a lay-up. Each basket made is worth two points, with one point taken away for every pass not completed. The drill is to last three minutes; the point is to see which team makes more points. The second phase repeats the same drill but the aim is to see which teams can improve their first-phase score;
- two players play 1 on 1 (with specific working rules) until one makes three baskets;
- divide the whole team around all baskets available. The players work in pairs and shoot simultaneously (the player who shoots then rebounds the ball and passes to the other player who is waiting, etc.). In three minutes, they have to make the maximum number of baskets. At the end of the time limit, the score is recorded. Periodically (once or twice a week) this drill can be repeated to see if the players can improve their top score and set a new record.

If used correctly (posing challenges that can really be achieved) and not used too often, these competitive drills increase motivation while incorporating into the practice sessions an important element in training young players, which is to get them used to competing.

Having fun is essential, especially for younger players. When coaching young players, the coach's main objective should be that the children enjoy themselves.

Doing enjoyable activities is not to be confused with letting each player do whatever they want or making an effort only when they want to. Enjoyable drills are those that are attractive to the players, in a relaxed, non-stressful setting that allows the player to feel at ease and have a good time, but they should also have a purpose, working rules and require a certain level of performance.

For example: an enjoyable activity for a mini-basketball team might be for a group of players to each have a ball in the keyway; they have to dribble their own ball and try to knock the other players' ball away without losing their own. The last player dribbling in the keyway wins.

In this type of activity, the players work in a relaxed setting and have fun, but the activity has a purpose, working rules and requires a degree of performance, making it doubly useful: the players have a good time and they are working on objectives that are important to their development as players.

TRANSFER OF SKILLS BETWEEN ACTIVITIES

When the goal of the training session is learning technical or tactical skills, the coach should still include short activities to give the players a chance to put the skills into practice.

Basically, these activities consist of incorporating more stimuli in such a way that the players have to concentrate on more than simply the skill they were learning. If, when faced with this more complex situation, the players do not apply the skills that they have been learning, it would indicate that these skills are not yet sufficiently mastered and consequently, that the players still need specific work in a certain area.

For example, if in a previous activity, the players had the goal of learning to make left-hand lay-ups. They worked half-court in a 2 on 2 game during which they could only shoot using left-hand lay-ups.

Now, in the test drill, the coach organises a full-court 4 on 4 activity (more stimuli and consequently, greater demand) and watches to see if the players make left-hand lay-ups when they have the chance or if they continue to use their right hand. In the latter case, the coach may conclude that the goal of making left-hand lay-ups still needs more specific training.

2.1.5 PLANNING PRACTICE- DURATION OF ACTIVITIES

When deciding how long activities will last, the coach should take into account aspects such as boredom and psychological fatigue which lead to decreased concentration.

The activities should last long enough for the players to have enough time to understand and assimilate the contents, but if they go on too long, concentration decreases and, from that moment, productivity decreases as well. This is especially important for younger players.

Running activities for 7-10 minutes is a suggested maximum before having a change of activity or a break.

Some activities require the players to concentrate more than others. If the coach uses various activities that all require a high level of concentration in a practice session, the players will tire and their concentration will decrease.

For this reason, it is important to schedule psychological rest periods throughout the practice session by either planning complete rest periods or using some activities that do not require a high level of concentration.

The coach should use activities in which all of the players participate frequently. For example, it is best to avoid training sessions where the children are lined up in a long line to do lay-ups and have to wait more than a minute to have their five-second turn (sometimes longer if the coach stops the activity to correct someone). It is also best to avoid practice sessions where some of the players spend a long time sitting down while their companions play a game.

2.1.6 PLANNING PRACTICE- USING STATIONS AND GROUP WORK

Even if the resources available are limited (for example, a single ball and a single basket), the coach has to use their imagination to keep players actively involved during the entire session.

A lack of resources is no excuse, it is a problem that the coach should compensate for as well as they can.

For example, it is a good idea for the coach to divide the players into small groups, establishing specific goals for each group. If there are not enough balls or baskets, some groups can do drills without the ball and without a basket (defensive moves, fakes without the ball, plays without the ball, etc.), while others do drills with the ball. Then, the groups switch activities.

The players should never be standing around except for short breaks to recuperate from an intense effort. If the number of players does not allow all of them to participate at the same time (for example, there are eleven players and the idea is to play a 5 on 5 game), the players who cannot participate should be the lowest number possible (in this case, one) and for a very short period, with the players rotating frequently.

It can often be useful for the coach to designate a rule by which substitutions are made (e.g. the scorer is substituted) as this enables the coach to concentrate on observing the activity and giving feedback. Many coaches have fallen into the trap of forgetting to substitute players into an activity.

2.1.7 PLANNING PRACTICE-MANAGING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

When planning, the coach must consider both the physical and the psychological load that training places on players.

THE PHYSICAL WORK LOAD

When planning practice sessions, the coach includes technical and tactical aspects (passing, dribbling, 3 on 3 drills, etc.) as well as activities to improve the players' physical development (e.g., drills to improve coordination or speed). The coach can improve the physical condition of the players, not only with the more specific physical work but also by including technical and tactical training that involves physical work (for example, when the players perform fast-break activities).

However, it is equally important to avoid fatigue and burnout. When young players are overtired, they no longer enjoy themselves, they learn less and there is a greater risk of injury.

To control the balance between physical work and rest, coaches need to consider both the work they are doing with their teams as well as other activities that players participate in.

Young players are likely to participate in other sports or play basketball with their school or other teams as well as in their free time, apart from the work they do with the team. Players that have commitments with a regional or national team, for example, may need to train less with their club team in order to avoid overtraining.

It is important to keep in mind that the players should be rested before a game. So, training sessions in the day or two before a game should have a lighter physical workload. Similarly, training sessions for the day after a game should be relatively light.

Most importantly, the balance between work and rest needs to be kept in mind during each training session. The players should perform a series of activities and then be able to recuperate from the effort by either resting or doing activities that require less physical effort.

For example: after full court 1 on 1 (intensive exercise) activity the players will need to rest or do low-intensity drills (for example, free throws).

When estimating the physical workload, a distinction should be made between volume and intensity. Volume is the total amount of physical work performed by the players. Intensity refers to the physical work that the players do within a unit of time.

For example: an activity including thirty full court sprints has more volume than an activity involving twenty full court sprints. However, the second activity requires more intensity if it is done in 3 minutes and the first activity is undertaken in 5 minutes.

Coaches need to consider the total volume (workload) in a session and ensure that players have adequate rest between high volume practice sessions. They should also balance the intensity of activities, providing longer rest breaks in between high intensity activities or following a high intensity activity with a less intensive activity.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

Just as the coach should control the physical workload, they must also control the psychological load.

The psychological load is related to such aspects of training as:

- the players' commitment to their sport: the greater the commitment, the greater the psychological load;
- players' participation in the activities: the greater their participation, the greater the psychological load;
- the novelty, variety and complexity of the tasks set during a session: the greater the degree of novelty, variety and complexity, the greater the mental effort required;
- the degree of attention demanded of them: an activity that the players are doing for the first time may require more attention than an activity that they have done many times;
- stressful competitive situations: exercises that pose stressful competitive situations (for example, playing a game with a time limit in which the winning team gets a prize) impose a greater psychological load;
- the behaviour of the coach; if the coach is on top of the activity, giving instructions, commenting, correcting, reinforcing, etc., the psychological load is greater. This is particularly so if the coach's behaviour produces stress.

However, coaches must also be conscious that without a minimum psychological load, the training session is dull and boring. Therefore, monotonous sessions (doing the same drills again and again) or where the players participate little (for example, a long line of players waiting for their turn) will be counter-productive.

Similarly, sessions that do not include competitive drills or if the coach does not provide evaluation of the players' performance may lead to boredom.

Also, when the coach appears disinterested and is not involved in their work, it can lead the players to a sense of boredom and a loss of interest.

The coach must seek to provoke a psychological effort on the part of the players which helps them to control a difficult situation that can actually be controlled. For example: dividing a team into two groups and organizing a shooting competition between them is a common activity.

If the players shoot from positions in which they can actually score and if the level of the two groups is similar, the activity will have a productive psychological load. The players will be concentrating on the task and they are faced with a competitive situation that they can handle. They will have to deal with the frustration of missing in order to keep on trying and they will be faced with the success or failure of the final score (thus learning to control emotions related to success and failure).

However, if the players are shooting from positions from which they can barely reach the hoop, or one team is much better than the other, the psychological load will be negative. After several failed attempts, the players perceive that they are not controlling the situation because no matter how hard they try, the goal of scoring is beyond their reach and, in these conditions, both motivation and effort will diminish.

In general terms, the psychological load for players that are aged 12 or under should be moderate. In order to achieve an adequate load, the following should predominate:

- activities in which all players participate (thus avoiding situations where they are waiting a long time for their turn);
- simple activities which the players know or can quickly perform;
- general contents that do not force the players to make a special effort to concentrate on very reduced stimuli;
- short activities to avoid losing the players' attention;
- competitive activities, carefully monitored by the coach in such a way that successes and failures are evenly divided.

For these teams, the total volume of psychological load can be similar in most of the practice sessions. During each session, either activities of a similar load can be used or activities with a greater load in conjunction with others of a lesser load.

For teams of 13-14-year-olds, the psychological load can be greater and even more so for 15-18-year-olds although, in both cases, greater and lesser loads should be alternated in practice sessions and in the drills performed during each session.

Let us consider, for example, a one-week plan of four practice sessions for a team of 15-18-year-olds:

- the first day, the coach introduces new offensive objectives that require the players to make a significant mental effort (medium-high load);
- the second day, the same objectives are repeated, using non-stressful activities (medium-low load);
- the third day, the coach uses competitive drills related to that objective and others that the players have already mastered; some activities may be stressful (high-very high load);
- the fourth day, objectives are repeated using non-stressful activities (low load).

When planning the entire season, the coach should bear in mind the importance of psychological rest periods as well as physical rest periods, so that the players will be able to assimilate the work they have done and be in a fit state for new productive efforts.

It is therefore a good idea, during the season, for young players to have rest periods which involve taking a break from basketball. It is advisable for them to divide their time between their sports activities and other physical, recreational and intellectual activities.

For example, a coach may plan sessions that have a low psychological load when the players have school exams.

Similarly, having a team watch a video of the game immediately after playing does not take into account the psychological load of the game or the psychological load of watching a video of this type. A game involves a very high psychological load producing extreme psychological wear and tear, and requires a period of psychological rest so that the players can recuperate.

2.1.8 PLANNING PRACTICE- ADDING COMPLEXITY

ADDING COMPLEXITY BY CREATING TRAFFIC

One method that can be used to vary an activity and to increase its psychological load is to “create traffic”.

For example, a team may do an activity such as “3 man weave” - where 3 players pass the ball between themselves up the length of the court and then attempt a shot. Teams may do a number of “up and backs” before stepping off.

A variation on this drill is to have 2 or more groups of 3 doing the activity at the same time. This creates “traffic” by increasing the number of people on the court and forcing players to be aware of where people are positioned on court and to avoid contact with them. The coach can emphasise that players not travel with the ball and that the ball must not hit the ground.

This is a simple, yet very effective, mechanism for making an activity more complex, without players needing to learn more rules and patterns of movement.

2.1.9 REVIEW-REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

A coach should spend time after each practice to make some notes about the practice.

Some things that the coach should record are:

- Any injuries that occurred or other incidents (such as players arguing). This is particularly important with junior players so that the coach can discuss with the parents if necessary;
- Any activities that were planned but that were not done;
- Scores achieved in any activities (e.g. number of lay-ups made in two minutes) which can be compared to future practices to measure improvement;
- Any skills or concepts that the coach wants to work on at future practices (whether for the whole team or individual players);
- Any activities that worked particularly well (perhaps because the players really enjoyed them) and the coach wants to use it again;
- Any activities that did not work well (perhaps because they were poorly explained or did not achieve the intensity the coach hoped for), with any suggestions on how they could be improved.

This simple review will help the coach to prepare their next practice and, importantly, to get continuity from one practice to another. The better the players know the activities that are being used the less time is required to do them (as the coach does not need to explain the activity), although having some variety will help to reduce complacency.

2.1.10 CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Coaches should have a constructive attitude when leading practice sessions. The role of the coach is not to harshly reprimand the players when they do something wrong, nor should they be in a bad mood, and they certainly should not insult players, make fun of them or ridicule them.

A coach must take a positive and constructive attitude when coaching young players. To do this a coach should:

- create a pleasant environment in which attractive and achievable challenges and positive comments predominate;
- accept the fact that the players' mistakes are a part of their training and that, there will always be mistakes;
- understand that each young player learns at their own pace, and the coach must help each one, respecting that pace, without underestimating those who learn more slowly or with greater difficulty. It is also important to recognize the various methods of learning and to present information in different ways to cater for different learning styles;
- always have a realistic perspective concerning what they can and should require of the players;
- appreciate and emphasize the efforts made by the players more than the results obtained. If the players try, and the coach controls the training process, sooner or later they will see an improvement;
- focus on what the players are doing right and what you want them to do, not on what they may be doing wrong;
- be patient when things do not turn out as expected and encourage the players to try again.

A key factor in developing a positive environment is not to dwell or focus on what the players cannot do and instead to focus on what they can do.

This includes acknowledging improvement when it occurs, even if an ultimate goal has still not been achieved.

An example of this is a coach working with players to get them to "look up" when dribbling in order to see team mates so that they can pass the ball. Anyone who has observed young basketballers will know their tendency to dribble, dribble, and dribble!

Where a player does look up and attempt a pass, it should be acknowledged by the coach – even if the pass was unsuccessful.

Parents can also play a key role in the development of a positive environment. Parents will not necessarily have played basketball and indeed may know very little about basketball.

For these parents it is natural to evaluate "success" as whether or not the team won, or the basket was scored.

Coaches should keep parents informed about the skills that the team is practicing, so that the parents can share the enjoyment when there is improvement in a particular skill.

2.1.11 PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A coach is obligated to provide a safe environment for their athletes.

This has a number of elements:

- Teaching safely, using activities that are appropriate to the skill of the athletes, their understanding of the game and their physical capabilities;
- Ensuring that the court is free from dangerous obstacles or hazards;
- Creating an environment free of harassment - either between team mates or from someone external to the team.

Some strategies that a coach can use to provide a safe environment are:

- Inspect the court before practice and games and remove any rubbish or obstacles.
- If there is any water on the court, wipe it with a towel, and then check the area again to see if there is an ongoing leak. If there is an ongoing leak, the coach should alter activities so that players do not go near that area and mark the area (e.g. with cones).
- Ideally, a court will have a least 1 metre clearance from the sidelines and any obstacle (e.g. grandstand or wall). If there is not this much clearance, then do not use the whole court in activities (e.g. treat the three-point line as a sideline)
- If the court is dusty, see if it can be swept. Having a wet towel on the sideline that players can wipe their feet on can also help reduce the risk of players slipping over.
- Choose activities based upon the level of experience and skill of the players, not just their age. In contested activities, consider grouping athletes of similar skill or similar physical size together.

A coach must treat all athletes with respect and should not belittle or demean the athletes. When correcting an athlete, the coach must do so in a positive manner – focusing on what the athlete needs to do. The coach should avoid sarcasm as it may be misunderstood by children.

Similarly, the coach should regulate how the players speak to each other and how they treat each other. Often a child that feels “bullied” will not say anything to the coach about their feelings, but that does not mean it will not have a significant impact upon them.

Sometimes behaviour may be good natured and not intended to hurt, however, being teased for not being as good, or missing a shot (for example), can certainly hurt their feelings. The coach must lead by example and make it clear that such comments will not be tolerated.

Harassment is often subtle and can be as simple as players being critical of a teammate. The coach must make it clear that negative comments will not be tolerated, whether they are made at practice, away from practice (e.g. at school) or online.

Some players may not be offended or upset when a teammate criticises them. However, the coach must still address this behaviour, making it clear that it is unacceptable (even though no complaint was made). If the coach does not act, then the culture of the team will be to accept the behaviour.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Reflect upon your last 5 practice sessions – to what extent (if at all) did they deviate from your practice plan for the session?
2. How do you keep track of time during a practice session? Do you:
 - a. use your watch?;
 - b. use the scoreboard? Counting down or counting up?;
 - c. delegate someone else to keep track of the time?
3. Do you share goals for each practice session with your players?
Do they have their own goals for practice sessions?
4. Discuss with a colleague the advantages and disadvantages of using “performance goals” instead of “outcome goals”.
5. Plan a practice session and note specifically for each activity:
 - a. your assessment of whether it has a high, medium or low physical load;
 - b. your assessment of whether it has a high, medium or low psychological load.

At the end of the practice, ask the players to rate each activity for physical and psychological load. Do their ratings agree with yours?

6. Consider an activity that you commonly use in practice. How could you:
 - a. decrease the physical or psychological load that the activity imposes;
 - b. increase the physical or psychological load that the activity imposes;
 - c. vary the activity if you are using it to introduce the skill;
 - d. vary the activity if you are using it to replicate “game-like” pressure.
7. Have someone video your practice, keeping the shot as wide as possible – i.e. showing as much of the court as possible. As you watch the video, consider:
 - a. how often are players standing and either listening to you or waiting for their turn?;
 - b. when you speak, are you facing all the players?;
 - c. note where you are standing during activities – does the camera angle show you things that you didn’t observe at the practice?
8. Watch another team at practice and observe:
 - a. how does the coach organize players into groups?;
 - b. how often are players standing around waiting?;
 - c. what are the teaching points being used? How clear are they to you?;
 - d. how many different activities does the coach use?

Reflect upon your own sessions. Is there something that the coach did that you could incorporate into your coaching or that you should avoid doing?

9. Exercise 7 can be particularly useful if you watch a practice session of another sport. If possible, discuss with the coach after the session why particular activities were used.

2.2. TEACHING

2.2.1 LEARNING STYLES

In essence, a coach is a teacher, basketball is their subject and the basketball court is their classroom. Therefore, to be effective, coaches must understand how people learn.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Basketball players must learn to pay attention and to concentrate on many different stimuli – whether it is what an opponent is doing, remembering and implementing team rules in a certain situation or knowing how much time is left on the clock.

Sometimes the stimulus is a single thing, but often they have to focus on more than one stimulus at the same time, with more or less intensity, and for a longer or shorter amount of time.

Basketball may help players to develop their skills of selecting and processing external information. From all the stimuli that they receive, they must select only those that are relevant and that can be associated with what they have already stored in their memory. Given the fluid nature of the game, they must learn to process this information and then make quick decisions.

Many of the stimuli that a player will receive are irrelevant to the game, for example, the sound of the crowd, the lights, advertising banners (particularly if they are moving) and what is happening on an adjacent court.

Other stimuli could be relevant (e.g. what an opposition coach is saying) but should the player focus on that or ignore it?

These cognitive processes - selection, association, storage, use of stored data, and decision-making - can be developed better if the coach promotes them by making suitable demands depending on the players' capacity.

For instance: if the coach of a mini-basketball team sets up an activity that

demands from the players a great amount of attention (several stimuli at the same time), that may result in an information overload. This overload will complicate subsequent cognitive processes, and that will negatively affect their decision making process.

Stimuli can be a wide variety of different things. The logistics of an activity (where the pass is made, who cuts where) and the rules of an activity are stimuli, particularly when the activity is new.

The markings on a court can be stimuli particularly if there are a lot of different markings (as players must then identify which are relevant to them). Again, similarly to learning a new activity, once the players are familiar with the court markings it becomes much less of a stimulus because the players don't have to pay particular attention to it.

Another example: if the coach of a team of girls between the ages of 13 and 14 wants the players to learn several new concepts at the same time, these concepts may not be associated and stored properly. Thus the learning goal will not be achieved, and the cognitive efforts made by the players will not be worthwhile.

In the same way, if the stimuli offered by the coach are inadequate, this will not stimulate the appropriate cognitive processes of the young players.

For example: monotonous practices with unexciting drills, or contents that are too simple, without allowing players to contribute with their own initiatives, do not lead to better cognitive development of children and teenagers.

This can be very challenging for the coach where they have players of varying abilities, because an activity that one player finds hard, another may find too simple.

To address this, coaches may instruct players differently. For example, the coach may use an activity where players dribble the ball. For the less skilled players, this may be the only instruction. For more skilled players, the coach may have them dribble with their non-preferred hand or may have them dribble two basketballs.

Through practice the players will learn to prioritise the various stimuli that they receive, based upon how much of an impact it will have on their performance. Particularly, whilst players are learning, some stimuli will automatically have a high "ranking" and the voice of their coach will be one of those things.

Unfortunately, the voice of their parents will often be the most dominant stimulus, with players hearing that above everything else. Coaches need to establish clear rules for the parents of their teams, asking them to keep their comments constructive and general (e.g. "well done", "good play").

THE 4 STYLES OF LEARNING

Confucius is quoted as stating "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand", which probably suggests that he was a kinaesthetic [UK spelling, not capitalised] learner, and quite possibly good at sports!

It is generally accepted that there are 4 styles of learning and that each individual has a preference for how they best receive and process information. This has immediate ramifications in either a classroom or a practice session in terms of how well they will understand, act upon and process instructions.

VISUAL	Visual learners have a preference for learning by pictures, shapes, patterns or watching.
AUDITORY	Auditory learners want useful direction. They focus on sounds and rhythms to learn movement patterns along with verbal direction.
READ/WRITE	Reading or writing learners prefer descriptions and instructions in written form.
KINAESTHETIC	Kinaesthetic learners need to experience what a certain movement feels like and prefer a dynamic environment.

The choice of preferred learning style is not conscious, rather it is part of an individual's personality. People can learn regardless of how information is presented, but a person will learn quickest, and most efficiently, when information is available in their preferred style.

It is important that coaches understand their own preferred learning style as most coaches will present information to athletes in the coach's own preferred

learning style or in the style in which it was first presented to them. At the end of this chapter is a simple test that can give an indication of your learning style.

WHAT IS YOUR ATHLETES' LEARNING STYLE?

Some research has suggested that whilst only 5% of the overall population identify as Kinaesthetic learners, 18% of athletes identify as kinaesthetic learners.¹ Indeed kinaesthetic learners

¹ Jones, DC (2010), Hey Coach, One Teaching Style Does Not Fit All, World Swimming Coaches Association, Vol 10, no 4:4-6

suited to sport (or at least more suited to sport than learning in a traditional classroom setting) as the physical nature of sport and learning “on court” through doing various activities certainly suits the kinaesthetic learning style.

An indication of an athlete’s preferred learning style may be determined through observation. For example:

- Athletes that sit back and watch when new training activities are introduced before stepping on the floor may be visual learners;
- Athletes that ask for copies of a playbook are likely to be read/write learners;
- An athlete that comments to the coach “show me” or “I see” is likely to be a visual learner;
- An athlete that says “it doesn’t feel right” may be a kinaesthetic learner;
- Athletes that ask a lot of questions may be auditory learners.

Particularly when coaching juniors, it is highly likely that a coach will have a number of different preferred learning styles amongst their players as well as the coach having their own preferred learning style.

HOW TO CATER FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES?

There are a number of things that coaches can do to cater for the varied learning styles that their athletes may have:

- Where athletes tend to stand back and watch an activity before joining it (likely visual learners), do not put these athletes first in line or use them to demonstrate a new activity, but let them observe first;
- Have a whiteboard courtside at training and use it to draw or describe activities – this can be done by coaches or players and will particularly help read/write learners and possible visual learners;
- Provide copies of training session plans to your team prior to training;
- Provide players with key words and concepts and teaching points after training sessions;
- Prepare a short playbook that sets out key concepts and teaching points;

- Watch a game with your team and discuss with the team how your team’s rules would apply to situations in that game;
- Have one of your games or training sessions filmed and then watch it with your team and discuss the key teaching points and concepts;
- “Coach on the Run” – stop practice as little as possible and allow athletes as much opportunity to perform and practice the physical skills.

IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE DISCONNECT WITH AN ATHLETE’S LEARNING STYLE

The attentiveness (or lack of it) and behaviour of players is the best indicator of whether or not the player is engaged in the teaching that the coach is undertaking.

For example, if the coach is giving a lengthy explanation of a team concept, auditory learners may remain focused, however visual, read/write and kinaesthetic learners may lose attention.

This is not wilful disobedience, it is simply that the player has difficulty engaging with the presentation of information.

If the coach accompanied the lengthy verbal explanation with diagrams on a white board, that may help to keep the engagement of visual learners. Similarly, writing key teaching points and key words on the white board may help to keep the engagement of read/write learners. They will also be assisted by being given written information by the coach, or given the opportunity to write their own notes.

Kinaesthetic learners simply want to get on the floor and “do it”. Using them as demonstration athletes, whilst giving the lengthy explanation, will help to keep kinaesthetic learners engaged.

All athletes will be helped by the coach presenting information in positive, action-oriented language. For example, a coach may scout an opponent and then determine how they want their team to play to counter what the opponent is likely to do.

The coach should take their athletes through the principles of play that the coach wants the team to do. The coach does not necessarily need to give a lengthy explanation of why they want the team to do it. Detailed information about what the opponent may do may be given after they have become familiar with the particular action that the coach wants them to do.

For example, a particular opponent may use a lot of ball screens and may have the screener “roll” to the basket when the screen is set on the side of the court. The coach does not have to tell the team that information.

The coach can simply say which defence they want the team to use when a ball screen is set. Because the opponent uses ball screens frequently, the coach may present this as one of the three key things before the game. With a different opponent (that doesn't use ball screens) the coach may not emphasize it.

HOW TO DETERMINE A PLAYER'S LEARNING STYLE?

A good way to get an indication of the learning styles of your players is to show them a video of a player executing a skill. A video of a professional player doing something in a game works very well, and can be obtained easily through YouTube and other sites.

Show the video to the players and ask them to go onto court, when they are ready, and attempt to perform that move. This works better if the move is a little complex (e.g. multiple dribble moves) or unusual. Let the players watch the video as much as they wish.

Usually you will find a range of reactions from players:

- Watching it relatively little (compared to team mates) and getting out on the floor to attempt to perform the move – these athletes are probably kinaesthetic learners;
- Watching relatively longer, or returning to watch the video after initially attempting the move – these athletes are probably visual learners;
- Asking questions (of either the coach or team mates) or talking to team mates – these athletes are probably auditory learners

2.2.2 THE STAGES OF LEARNING

Importantly, the stage of learning is also contextual – a player may learn a skill in an uncontested situation at practice, working through the stages. When it comes to performing the skill in a game (under competitive pressure) they may be at an earlier learning stage!

Regardless of preferred learning style, everyone goes through identifiable stages of learning a new skill (or behaviour, ability, technique, etc.). Some may progress faster than others, but everyone goes through them.

The concept is most commonly known as the 'conscious competence learning model', and it remains essentially a very simple and helpful explanation of how we learn, and also serves as a useful reminder of the need to train people in stages.

Put simply:

- Learners begin at stage 1 - 'unconscious incompetence'
- They pass through stage 2 - 'conscious incompetence'
- Then through stage 3 - 'conscious competence'
- And ideally end at stage 4 - 'unconscious competence'

Confusion about what stage a learner is at is perhaps the most fundamental reason for the failure of a lot of training and teaching. The difference between each stage can be illustrated by a competency learning matrix.

Importantly, the stage of learning is also contextual - a player may learn a skill in an uncontested activity at practice and progress to either stage 3 or 4 of competence. However, when it comes to performing the skill against contested pressure in a game they may be at a stage of incompetence.

INCOMPETENCE	STAGE 1	UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE	STAGE 2	CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner is unaware of the existence or relevance of the skill • learner is unaware they have a particular deficiency in the area • learner might deny the relevance or usefulness of the new skill • learner must become conscious of their incompetence before development of the new skill or learning can begin • the aim of the learner and the coach is to move the learner into the 'conscious competence' stage, by demonstrating the skill or ability and the benefit that it will bring to the learner's effectiveness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner becomes aware of the existence and relevance of the skill • learner is also aware of their deficiency, ideally by attempting to use the skill • learner realises that by improving their skill in this area their effectiveness will improve • ideally the learner has a measure of the extent of their deficiency in the relevant skill, and a measure of what level of skill is required for their own competence • the learner ideally makes a commitment to learn and practice the new skill, and to move to the 'conscious competence' stage

COMPETENCE	STAGE 3	CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE	STAGE 4	UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner needs to concentrate and think in order to perform the skill but can perform it without assistance • learner will not reliably perform the skill unless thinking about it - the skill is not yet 'second nature' or 'automatic' • learner should be able to demonstrate the skill to another, but is unlikely to be able to teach it well to another person • learner should ideally continue to practise the new skill, and if appropriate commit to becoming 'unconsciously competent' at the new skill <p>NB: Practice (repetition) is the single most effective way to move from stage 3 to 4</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the skill enters the unconscious parts of the brain - it is 'second nature' • arguably the person is no longer a "learner", although coaches must be cognisant of the difference between competence at practice and at games and various standards of competition • it becomes possible for certain skills to be performed while doing something else, for example, dribbling and "reading" the position of other players • the person might be able to teach the skill, although after some time of being unconsciously competent the person might actually have difficulty in explaining how they do it • this arguably gives rise to the need for long-standing unconscious competence to be checked periodically against new standards

Coaches should choose activities based upon the stage of learning their players demonstrate, and if they incorrectly assess that stage it can compromise the player's learning – if activities are too easy, the player loses motivation. If they are too hard the player will become disenchanted.

For example, let us assume a coach wrongly thought players were at stage 2, but in fact the players are still at stage 1. The coach assumes the players are aware of the skill, and how it is to be performed and that they are aware of their deficiency in not being able to perform it.

In fact, the players are at stage 1 – unconscious incompetence – and have none of these things in place, and will not be able to address achieving conscious competence until they've become consciously and fully aware of their own incompetence.

PROGRESSING FROM ONE STAGE TO THE NEXT

The progression is linear and it is not possible to jump stages. For some skills, especially advanced ones, people can regress to previous stages, particularly from 4 to 3, or from 3 to 2, if they fail to practice and exercise their new skills. A person regressing from 4, back through 3, to 2, will need to develop again through 3 to achieve stage 4 – unconscious competence again.

Progression is also contextual, and a person may be at stage 4 in execution of a skill at training and without defence (e.g. catch and shoot) but be at an earlier level in regards to execution of the skill in a game.

Interestingly, progression from stage to stage is often accompanied by a feeling of awakening - 'the penny drops' or things 'click' into place for the player as they feel like they have made a big step forward, which of course they have.

A very clear and simple example of this effect is seen when a person learns to drive a car: the progression from stage 2 (conscious incompetence) to stage

3 (conscious competence) is obvious, as the learner becomes able to control the vehicle and signal at the same time; and the next progression from 3 to 4 (unconscious competence) is equally clear to the learner when they are able to hold a conversation while performing a complex manoeuvre such as reverse parking.

And since the conscious competence theory forces analysis at an individual level, the model encourages and assists individual assessment and development, which is easy to overlook when so much learning and development is delivered on a group basis.

We each possess natural strengths and preferences, and this affects our attitudes and commitments towards learning, as well as our ability to develop competence in different disciplines.

People begin to develop competence only after they recognise the relevance of their own incompetence in the skill concerned. Certain brain-types and personalities prefer and possess certain aptitudes and skills. We each therefore experience different levels of challenge (to our attitudes and awareness in addition to pure capability) in progressing through the stages of learning, dependent on what is being learned.

Some people may readily accept the need for development from 1 to 2, but may struggle to progress from 2 to 3 (becoming consciously competent) because the skill is not a natural personal strength or aptitude.

An example of this is learning to shoot a lay-up with the non-preferred hand. Coaches can magnify this effect if they penalize shots being missed as this will reinforce to players the need to perform the skill with their preferred hand (which has a higher rate of success). Instead, coaches should highlight attempting the shot with the non-preferred hand (regardless of whether or not it goes in) as "success".

Some people may progress well to stage 3 but will struggle to reach stage 4 (unconscious competence), and then regress to stage 2 (conscious incompetence) again, simply through lack of practice.

Having a general understanding of the stages of learning can help players to cope with “failing” (being unable to perform the skill) because correctly seen, it is not failure, but simply the first step to learning the skill!

2.2.3 THE IMPACT OF THE COACH'S LEARNING STYLE

A coach should take the time to understand their own preferred learning style because it is likely that it directly impacts how they will teach. Most coach's will teach skills and tactics:

- In the way they were taught the skill/tactic; and/or
- In a manner that suits their own learning style.

Having an understanding of their own preferred learning style will help coaches to better understand the possible causes of "disconnect" with their athletes (the coach should reflect upon situations where they have found learning difficult) and the need to cater for the range of learning styles that is likely to exist.

WHAT IS YOUR LEARNING STYLE?

This test will provide an indication of your preferred learning style. For each question, choose the answer that best explains your preference and then circle the corresponding letter (V, A, R or K).

1. You are about to give directions to a person on how to get to your house. Would you:	6. You are about to buy a new camera. Other than price, what would most influence your decision?
V draw a map on paper	A a friend talking about it
R write down the directions (without a map)	K trying it out
A tell them the directions	R reading the details about it
K go and get them in your car	V its distinctive appearance
2. You are visiting a friend and have a rental car. You don't know where they live. Would you like them to:	7. Which game do you prefer
V draw you a map	A Pictionary
R write down the directions (without a map)	R Scrabble
A tell you the directions	K Charades
K pick you up	
3. You have just booked tickets to see the Basketball World Cup, which your friend would be interested to know about. Would you:	8. You are about to learn how to use a new computer programme. Would you:
A call them immediately and tell them about it	K ask a friend to show you
R send them a copy of your printed itinerary	R read the manual
V show them a map of where you are going	A telephone a friend and ask questions about it
	V watch a "how to" video on YouTube
4. You are going to cook a dessert as a special treat. Do you:	9. You are not sure whether a word should be spelt "dependent" or "dependant". Do you?
K cook something familiar that you don't need instructions	R look it up in the dictionary
V thumb through a cookbook for ideas from the pictures	V see the word in your mind & choose the best way it looks
R refer to a specific cookbook where there is a good recipe	A sound it out
A ask others for advice	K write down both versions
5. You have been assigned to tell a small group about famous sites in your city. Would you:	10. Apart from price, what would most influence your decision to buy a particular book about coaching?
K take them to the various sites	K using a friend's copy
V show slides and photographs of the various sites	R skim-reading part of it
R give them a book that includes the various sites	A a friend talking about it
A give them a talk on the sites	K it looks OK

Whichever letter you have circled most is indicative of your preferred learning style.

It is possible to have more than one preferred learning style, which would be indicated by two letters being about equal.

2.2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF KEY / CUE WORDS

Even the most basic of skills usually involves a degree of complexity to a novice who has not yet been introduced to it.

For example, instructing a player to adopt a balanced stance could involve the following teaching points:

- Feet shoulder-width apart;
- 60% of weight on the front part of the foot;
- Have one foot slightly in front of the other (approximately half the length of the foot);
- Keep the back straight, but be slightly flexed at the hips (so that the chest is not in front of the feet).

Once introduced, these points can be summarized with the word “stance”, however the athletes will need to learn to associate the word with those teaching points (and to remember the teaching points).

Key words (or cue words) such as “stance” make it possible for the coach to quickly remind players of a lot of information. When introducing the key word, the coach must use it consistently and regularly, making sure to explain and demonstrate what it means. It can also help to provide players (and parents) with a written list of key words.

FOLLOW-UP

1. When was the last time you learnt a new skill? Can you remember:
 - a. how you felt before you started to learn? Was there something in particular that made you want to learn?
 - b. how long did it take for you to feel comfortable learning the skill?
 - c. how was the skill shown to you? What "teaching points" were you given? Did they help?
2. What do you think is your predominant learning style? Complete the activity in the chapter to assess your learning style – does the result surprise you?
3. Reflect on a team that you are coaching: what do you think are the predominant learning styles of each player? Are they all the same?
4. Reflect on your coaching: how well do you cater for each of the learning styles:
 - a. Visual;
 - b. Auditory;
 - c. Read/Write;
 - d. Kinaesthetic.
5. Consider one of your recent training plans. How many activities did you use that:
 - a. a coach used when you were a player?;
 - b. you have watched a coach use and thought was worthwhile to use?;
 - c. you have put together for that particular team?;
6. Consider a particular skill (team or individual) that you are currently teaching with a team. How would you assess the progression of each player – which stage of learning are they at?:
 - a. "unconscious incompetence";
 - b. "conscious incompetence";
 - c. "conscious competence";
 - d. "unconscious competence".

Having regard to your assessment of your players, should you be doing anything differently to assist learning?

7. Discuss with a coaching colleague how you can help a player that is in the early stages of learning a skill but gives up because they are frustrated that they cannot do it well.
8. In two minutes write down as many "cue words" that you use in your coaching as you can. Have your athletes do the same thing. Compare the two lists.

2.3 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SESSIONS

2.3.1 COMMUNICATING WITH ATHLETES - LISTEN MORE, SPEAK LESS

“Teaching is listening, learning is talking”

DEBORAH MEIER

“Communication isn’t what you said. Communication is what the other person heard.”

MICHAEL HAYNES

LISTEN MORE, SPEAK LESS

Every coach wants players to listen to them and the best way to foster that is for the coach to listen to the players. Listening to the players is more than asking “any questions?” at the end of a presentation, waiting 5 seconds and then moving on to the next point.

With their actions players may demonstrate to the coach that they do not understand a particular skill or team concept.

However, it is only through words that they can tell the coach the extent of what they do understand and what they don’t understand and once the coach knows that, they can address the problem.

This is further complicated because sometimes the player may not understand specifically what it is they don’t understand.

Too often though, coaches will observe a “breakdown” and will simply repeat the instruction that they have already given and then observe again only to see the same breakdown occur.

How can the coach break this cycle and actually understand what is causing the breakdown?

USE QUESTIONS THAT ARE OPEN ENDED

By using questions that are open ended, the coach can have the player identify what it is they don’t understand. Sometimes the player may not consciously know what it is – they were probably doing what they thought was right.

An open ended question is simply one that the player cannot answer with “yes” or “no” and instead the player has to give more information. For example, assume that a player has thrown a pass that was intercepted and the coach believes that the pass contravened team rules

- The coach asks: “Do you understand our passing rule for 2v1.” The athlete answers: “Yes.”
- The coach says: “So, I don’t understand why you threw the pass. Couldn’t you see that the defender would get it?” The athlete answers: “I don’t know.”

Here the coach has assumed they know what went wrong (the player passing when their defender was in the “passing lane”) and has no explanation for how the mistake occurred. Nor does the coach have information to help them to correct the mistake.

“Constantly talking isn’t necessarily communicating.”

JIM CAREY

“Your ability to communicate to your young people will determine your success.”

JIM HARRICK

Alternatively, the coach could use more open ended questions:

- The coach asks: “What players could you see?” The athlete answers: “I was driving toward the basket and John was running the left lane. There was a defender in front of me.”
- The coach says: “OK, what did the defender do?” The athlete answers: “They looked at John but stayed in front of me.”
- The coach asks: “Can you show me on the whiteboard the position the defender was in?”. The athlete draws a picture showing that the defender was around the middle of the court.
- The coach draws the athlete on the whiteboard, towards the side of the key, and says: “I thought this was your position and the defender hadn’t moved right across to you. If that was the case, what would you do?” The athlete answers: “They didn’t look like that to me, but if that’s where they were I’d take the lay-up.”

The coach has now established that the player does understand the team rule. The coach may plan to do some activities to help the players identify when the defender has “committed” to them, but doesn’t need to repeat the rule.

Often the time constraints of practice or games mean that coaches do not have time to meaningfully seek feedback from players, however this is ultimately to the detriment of the team. Coaches should include some time in practice for team discussion and this can be scheduled before or after the team finishes “on court”.

“Coaching on the run” is also an important tool for the coach to use. If the example above occurred in practice, the coach could have asked the player to step off the court, but let the activity continue, rather than stopping all players.

Coaches will soon find that it is very valuable to ask players “why?” instead of the coach talking about “what”. For example, a player may have thrown a bad pass (what). If the coach asks questions like: “Why did you pass to that

player?”, “Where was their defender?”, “Were other passes open?” the coach will begin to understand where the player made the mistake.

Not only can such a session provide an opportunity for the coach to discover areas of uncertainties amongst the group but it also gives the group the opportunity to learn from each other. The coach can simply start a conversation or that can be delegated to a team captain or leader.

Below are some principles that can be practiced to “speak less”:

1. Listening isn’t just “not talking”. Actively think about what players are saying or asking.
2. Let them finish... then pause. Resist the temptation to answer their question before they have finished asking it. Pause for a second or two after they finish talking – to see if they may continue speaking.
3. Help them find the answer. Rather than simply answering the question, ask the player other questions to help them to discover the answer themselves. It may mean “breaking down” the concept into smaller parts, or asking a question about something similar and then helping them to “apply” it (e.g. ask a question about half court defensive concepts, which then apply to full court).
4. It’s not about you, it’s about them. Whilst it can help to build a rapport with players for a coach to talk about their own experience, this should not become long and drawn out. If the player has a question, answer it!
5. Take time if necessary. Before answering a question, take a few seconds to organize your thoughts. And, if there isn’t time at that particular point in practice to answer the question, explain to the player that you will discuss it with them after practice. The coach must then approach the athlete after practice to answer the question – not wait for the player to come to them.

2 Getting Better, best practices for your best practices, Peter Vint, PhD, United States Olympic Committee

2.3.2 "COACHING ON THE RUN" TECHNIQUE

Repetition is important to learn any skill and the "coaching on the run" technique is one of the coach's most important tools to ensure that athletes have the opportunity for many repetitions!

Simply, "coaching on the run" is giving feedback to players while the activity is still happening.

The timeliness of feedback is very important to its effectiveness and if the coach waits until the end of the activity to provide feedback:

- Athletes won't associate it as closely to their own performance;
- The coach may forget some of the points the wished to make.

Both of these outcomes need to be avoided. When "coaching on the run", the coach either:

- Speaks to an individual athlete when they have completed a task in the activity, allowing the other athletes to continue;
- Speaks to the athlete while they are continuing to do the activity.

Particularly if the athlete is still involved in the activity, the coach's feedback needs to be precise and quick. The use of key or cue words will greatly assist this. It is also important that the coach first gets the attention of the athlete and then gives the feedback.

2.3.3 PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Dr Peter Vint encapsulated the importance of feedback for athletes: “There are exactly two things which contribute more to the development of skill and human performance than anything else. These two things are practice and feedback. Without one, the other is ineffective and in some cases can be completely useless.”

“...And, it is important to note that not all types of practices and not all sources or methods of delivering feedback are equally effective.”³

PETER VINT

The essence of coaching is not defined by the knowledge that the coach has. The essence of coaching is defined by how well the coach can cause a change in the behaviour of an athlete. In regards to skill learning, there are broadly two types of information a coach will impart:

- New information: explanation of a concept;
- Feedback: an evaluation of the athlete’s performance.

POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE

In general, coaches should have a positive and constructive attitude. Their job is not to reprimand players when they do something wrong. Nor should the coach be in a bad mood, and they certainly should not insult players, make fun of them or ridicule them.

It can be difficult for a coach that has had a “bad day” to project a positive attitude when they really don’t feel positive. However, they must do it, just as they will equally demand that their players have a good attitude at training, even if they have had a bad day.

In most cases the attitude that you give to people is the attitude that you will receive – if the coach is positive, upbeat and enjoying themselves then it is likely their players will also have that attitude.

One practice that may assist coaches to always bring a positive attitude is to have a “worry tree”, which is a powerful visualization technique designed to allow them to focus on their team:

- The coach chooses something that they will always walk past on the way to basketball (it could be a door, the car, a wall or a tree);
- As they walk past they touch it. This is where the coach puts any “worries” that they have from outside of basketball;
- As they leave practice or a game, the coach touches it again. This is where they “pick up” their outside worries again.

Whilst this may seem simplistic, it can be a very effective way to help to focus on the practice or game, without being distracted by other things that may be going on away from basketball.

During practice sessions, the coach’s job is to help the players achieve the established goals, and to do this, coaches must:

- create a pleasant environment in which attractive and achievable challenges and positive comments predominate;
- accept the fact that the players are not perfect and will therefore make mistakes. Indeed an important part of the learning process is to make mistakes;

³ Getting Better, best practices for your best practices, Peter Vint, PhD, United States Olympic Committee

- realise that people learn differently. Some players can follow verbal instructions, others need to see it. A period of training will be necessary before the players assimilate and master the information they receive;
- understand the impact of the stages of learning that everyone goes through as they learn new skills and use activities that are appropriate to the stage of learning of their players;
- in regard to stages of learning, the coach must understand that the stages of learning are also contextual;
- understand that each player learns at their own pace, and the coach must help each player. Sometimes this may require giving players different instructions within the same activity. For example, in a dribbling activity the coach may direct that the better players must dribble with their non-preferred hand whilst players less adept at the skill use their preferred hand;
- always have a realistic perspective concerning what they can and should require of the players;
- appreciate and emphasize the effort made by the players more than the results obtained;
- notice and highlight improvements rather than defects. Use positive “action-oriented” language – tell the athletes what you want them to do, not what they have done wrong;
- be patient when things do not turn out as expected and encourage the players to try again.

In regards to the stages of learning, coaches should be particularly aware that players may be at a reasonably advanced stage of learning of a skill in the context of training, but that they may be at an earlier stage of learning in the context of performing skills in the game. This can also change again when players move from one level of competition to another.

Players may lose confidence when they find they cannot perform skills in a game, which they felt they had “mastered” at training. In this situation, the coach may need to include activities at training that focus on that skill but in a more contested manner to attempt to simulate “game pressure”.

2.3.4 CHANGING BEHAVIOUR WITH FEEDBACK

The purpose of giving feedback is to change the behaviour of players – to get them to execute an individual or team skill in a particular manner.

Sometimes the player will already have a behaviour (or habit) which needs to be changed. In other circumstances, the skill being taught is new.

The timeliness of the feedback is very important to the effectiveness of the feedback.

The purpose of the learning process is the acquisition of, or perfecting, a behaviour (for example, shooting technique). Accordingly, any feedback should be provided as soon as possible after the player makes an attempt.

If the player produces proper behaviour, either a “reward” should be applied (which can be as simple as saying “well done”) or a “penalty” should be withdrawn (such as not having to run a sprint, which players that did not produce the behaviour have to do) in order to reinforce the behaviour so that the player will repeat it.

If the feedback is given immediately, the athlete will have a good memory of what they did which they can then repeat. The longer the delay between the athlete attempting the skill and receiving the feedback, the less strong their memory will be of what they did.

UNDERSTANDING REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Rewards and penalties can both be effective in changing behaviour. For example, the coach can congratulate a player (a “reward”), or they can decide that a particular player has to pick up the balls after practice (a “penalty”).

Withdrawing a penalty (e.g. exempting a player from having to run sprints) is also a reward, however such negative reinforcement may not be as effective as granting a reward because it may not be recognized by the player in the same way that receiving a reward is.

Just as rewards or penalties can be used to promote a certain behaviour, they can also be used if the aim is to eliminate a certain kind of behaviour. When the player produces an unwanted behaviour (for example, protesting to the referee) a “penalty” should be applied (e.g. being substituted) or a “reward” should be withdrawn so that the behaviour will be less likely to be produced in the future.

In both cases, “rewards” and “penalties” should only be applied based on the athletes’ direct behaviour, never on their results, over which they may not have full control. Below are some examples of an effective use of rewards/penalties:

- A 13-year-old player makes a decision that the coach considers correct in a 3 on 3 situation. The coach immediately congratulates them (“reward”);
- The players of a team of 17-18-year-olds are carrying out a very intense defence drill and they are tired. A player performs a defensive help that the coach wants to develop. As a reward, the coach allows the player to rest for a few minutes. In this case, the coach is withdrawing a “penalty” (performing such an intense drill when the players are tired);

- The coach wants a 17-year-old to defend without fouling. Besides showing them the necessary technique, the coach sets up an activity in which the player gets a point every time they foul. At the end of the practice, the player will have to stay on for a three-minute defence drill for every point accumulated. At the same time, every time the player defends without fouling, the coach reinforces them by saying “well done!” to strengthen the correct defensive behaviour. This is particularly important if the offensive player still managed to score. The coach could also consider deducting a point when good defence is played (whether or not a basket was scored).
- The coach of a team of 15-16-year-olds organises a half court 3 on 3 game in which they do not want the players to use their right hand when they could use their left. Every time a player uses their right hand when they shouldn't, their team loses possession of the ball.

As can be seen, “reward” is used to strengthen desired behaviour and “penalty” is used to eliminate undesired behaviour.

Also, when punishment is applied, it is very important to reinforce the alternative behaviour that is required instead of the undesired behaviour. In the previous examples, defence without fouling or shooting with the left hand.

An example of a less effective use of rewards/penalties would be:

- On the last possession of a close game, the opposition took an offensive rebound, scored and won the game on the buzzer. No player had attempted to “box out” the player that took the offensive rebound. At the next practice, the coach made everyone on the team run sprints because of the failure to “box out”.
- Similar to the above, a team won by taking an offensive rebound and scoring on the last play of the game. The defensive team were playing zone defence and the player that took the offensive rebound had been in an “overload” situation (i.e. there was more than one offensive player in the area they were guarding).

In these examples the penalties may be less effective because players may feel that it is unfair that they be penalized when they did the correct thing and that only the athletes that didn't box out should be penalised.

In the second example, players may feel that the situation was out of their control. The defensive player with the overload may have boxed out a player, but simply could not box out two players. Coaches should be careful to apply rewards/penalties to things that are under the “control” of players.

Applying the penalty at practice (which may be several days later) also means that the players will not have as strong a memory of what occurred. To overcome this, a coach may use video to demonstrate to players what went wrong.

It is better to use rewards to strengthen behaviour rather than penalties to eliminate behaviour, especially with younger players. Many coaches also encourage team mates to give a “reward”, for example acknowledging a teammate that has made a good pass.

USING REWARDS

Frequent reinforcement (or rewards) will help players obtain a high level of gratification, which strengthens their motivation and helps them “learn” the desired behaviour and repeat it. This is why it is so important for coaches to use reinforcement frequently.

There are two types of rewards (or reinforcers):

- Social reinforcers include respect, recognition, approval and the coach's attention. For example, the coach appreciates the effort made by a player to recover the ball, “Well done!”, “That's the way!”, “Good!”
- Material reinforcers are physical rewards that should be important to the players. For example, rest periods, being able to skip a difficult or boring drill, choosing the drill they want to do, winning a cup, etc.

Reinforcers should not be applied arbitrarily but rather they should be a consequence of the players' behaviour. In fact, the key to reinforcement is that the players perceive that they are obtaining something because of what they did, which then makes it likely that they will repeat that behaviour.

This effect that a reward will have is directly related to the feeling of "control" that players had in the situation. For example, if a player fumbles a ball and it happens to go to a teammate and then the coach (who didn't see a fumble) congratulates them on making a good pass - the player is unlikely to feel good.

During training sessions, social reinforcement is also very valuable because:

- it provides the player with information on their behaviour (feedback);
- it is very rewarding, because the player appreciates the coach's recognition;
- it contributes to the creation of a positive atmosphere within the training environment.

The coach should not constantly stop players in order to provide a "reward" or acknowledge a behaviour. Instead, in activities, points can be awarded for the particular behaviours the coach wishes to emphasize, with a "reward" given at the end. This will be most effective if explained at the start of the activity.

For example: the coach wants a team of 15-16-year-olds to pass the ball more often to the post from specific positions on the court. To practice this they organize a 4 on 4 half court game for this purpose. The rules of the activity are that every time a player passes the ball to the post from those positions, their team gets a point. At the end of the game, which lasts ten minutes, the team that has made a minimum of seven points will have a five-minute break.

To be successful, points need to be noted immediately, which the coach can do by calling "point". To make this technique work, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- the reward should be attractive. For example, it would be attractive for the players to be able to rest during an intense training session or play a game where they can pick their teammates;
- to make this strategy more valuable, the coach should take into account the age of the players and what they know about them. In general, an infrequent stimulus will be more attractive than a frequent one. For example, it will be more attractive for them to play a game with no rules, in which they choose their teammates, if they do not often do this;
- the total number of points needed to obtain the final award should be attainable in the time allowed and under the conditions of the drill;
- The precise behaviour and the rules necessary to obtain points should be made very clear.

In this example, the awarding of points can be in the overall context of the activity. For example, the teams may be looking to score baskets as well. Often, at the end the coach will be able to highlight that the team that achieved the most points (passing to the post) also scored the most baskets!

Most importantly, the reward is not dependent upon the overall outcome. A pass may be made into the post and then the shot is missed. In the game this is simply recorded as a missed field goal. There is no assist, there are no points scored and players may be discouraged from repeating the behaviour.

Coaches can use the "points game" during games by having an assistant coach keeping track and then providing feedback at time-outs.

USING PENALTIES

A coach working with young players should predominantly use rewards, but the use of “penalties” can be educational, as long as it:

- is proportionate in value and basically symbolic;
- defines as clearly as possible what it involves and why it is being applied (rather than having the coach decide arbitrarily);
- increases the players’ interest in challenging but achievable goals related to avoiding the punishment;
- at the same time, reinforcement should be applied to strengthen alternative behaviour.

For example: before starting a 3 on 3 game, the coach could establish that every time a player dribbles with the wrong hand they get a negative point and that, at the end of the game, the team with the most points will have to fill the water bottles for their opponents.

An alternative penalty could be to make dribbling with the wrong hand a violation and give the other team possession each time that violation occurs. However, this can result in the activity being very “stop and start”.

Accordingly, using a point penalty can let the activity be more game like, whilst also emphasizing the required behaviour.

Even though the penalty is symbolic it can increase the players’ motivation towards the goal of the drill and will help them to concentrate on not dribbling with the wrong hand. At the same time, the coach can use social reinforcement saying “Well done!” when players use the correct hand.

Most importantly, the purpose of using penalties is not to make the coach look tough or show that they are strict. Instead, just like a reward, any penalty must be designed to provoke a desire in the players to avoid the punishment by executing the desired behaviour.

In this way, the “penalty” hopefully can have a “positive” focus – having the players think about what they need to do to avoid the penalty. Coaches should always try to describe activities with positively action-oriented language such as “this is what I want you to do” rather than “don’t do this”.

FOLLOW-UP

COACHING TECHNIQUE

1. If possible, have a colleague film one of your sessions and wear a wireless microphone when your session is being recorded. When watching/listening consider:
 - a. how much of the time are you talking? How often do athletes speak?
 - b. are you having to repeat instructions? Were they clear the first time?
 - c. how much of the time are your comments:
 - i. positive – general encouragement (e.g. “great job”, “well done”)
 - ii. positive – specific feedback (e.g. “nice pass”, “good hedge on defence”);
 - iii. positive – correction (e.g. “next time, put “chin to shoulder” before pivoting”);
 - iv. negative – correction (e.g. “don’t turn without looking first”)
 - v. negative – specific feedback (e.g. “instead of driving for the lay-up you should have passed the ball”)
 - vi. negative – general (e.g. “it’s just not good enough guys”)
2. In planning for your next practice sessions consider some questions that you can ask players to:
 - a. test whether or not they understand your instruction;
 - b. see how well they can “apply” a particular playing rule;
 - c. help the player to identify what mistake they made and how they might avoid that mistake in the future.
3. How often during a practice do you speak for more than 1 minute?
Given that a timeout lasts for 1 minute, try at your next practice to limit all instructions to 1 minute!
4. Ask players for feedback at the end of a training session – what is one thing that they will take from that session and implement at games or focus on developing? Do they identify the things that you believed were key? It can also be useful to have a team captain facilitate this session and then report back to you.
5. Do you start every practice by saying hello to each athlete and asking how their day was?
Do you finish every practice saying goodbye to each athlete?
6. Explain a basketball concept to a colleague (they don’t need to be a basketball coach).
Then explain it to them a second time in a different way. Have your colleague stop you if you:
 - a. use the same words or diagram the second time that you did the first time;
 - b. use words or diagrams that they don’t understand (this is common when we use “technical terms” without explaining them);
 - c. raise your voice or show other signs of getting frustrated!

Could you explain the concept a third time? Discuss with your colleague how different approaches might work better, or worse, with different people.
9. Conduct a practice session without speaking!

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

1. Do you use “penalties” when you are coaching? What are the potential downfalls of doing this?
2. What is an activity that your team particularly likes to do at training? How could you use this activity as part of a reward? When would you use it in this way?
3. “Feedback is more about what is heard than what is said.” Do you agree with this statement?
Discuss with a colleague a situation where feedback was ineffective because of this.
4. Why are reinforcement strategies most effective with young players instead of penalties?
Discuss with a colleague when penalties may be effective with young players.

2.3.5 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - ORGANIZING PLAYERS INTO GROUPS

CONDUCTING THE SESSION

Having prepared for practice, the coach is ready to conduct the session!

ORGANIZING PLAYERS INTO GROUPS

The use of small groups in practice is often necessary, whether it is dividing into two teams for a scrimmage or using “stations”, where different groups undertake different activities. An advantage of using stations is that it can help to keep the athletes engaged and active rather than standing around, which often happens in one big group.

When arranging groups, coaches should:

- Create maximum participation opportunities (a planning principle);
- Encourage players to become responsible for their own efforts and performance (the coach will not be able to supervise all the groups at the once!);
- Allow social interaction to occur (the primary reason young children participate is to have fun!);
- Consider aspects of ability, gender and friendship (don't always put the best players in one group);
- Encourage cooperation between players as they work to achieve their goals.

To form the groups, the coach should use clear and consistent commands, to have the groups formed as quickly as possible. In planning the session, the coach may determine specifically who will be in which group and on other occasions, they will know what size groups they want and can form them with instructions like:

- “Form a pair with a person of about the same height”;
- “Stand with another pair and form groups of four”;
- “Get into groups of 3”;
- “Two to a ball”;
- “Into groups of 3, each group with one ball”;
- “Four lines on the baseline”;
- “Four groups of three in each corner of the half court”.

2.3.6 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Coaches should aim to speak as little as possible in a training session, making sure that what they say is clear to the players and gets to the point. The most important thing is to give the players a chance to act! Remember, a timeout only lasts for 60 seconds so coaches need to be quick and concise!

When starting a new activity the coach needs to:

- *Gain attention* - use a whistle, voice or a pre-arranged signal e.g. stepping to the middle of the floor;
- *Name the activity* – this makes it easier to use in subsequent sessions (e.g. “Shell Drill”);
- *Explain* the activity and its purpose to the players;
- *Establish working rules* of the activity (e.g. position and movement of players);
- *State one or two teaching points* – these are what is being emphasized in this activity. This is what the coach wants the athletes to learn and be able to repeat in a game;
- *Demonstrate* – if necessary, give a practical demonstration of what is to be done so that the players can watch and better understand the goal.

USING CUE WORDS

Using “cue words” can save a lot of time and is also an efficient method of providing concise feedback. A cue word may be the name of the activity or a particular teaching point (e.g. “lock and snap” to emphasize arm and wrist position when shooting).

Any cue words should be explained when introducing the activity and then used consistently during the activity. It is also important to keep them consistent from one practice to another as well as in games.

It is a common mistake for a coach to use a particular cue word (e.g. “get to the pinch post”) forgetting that they haven’t explained to the team what it means. This obviously leads to a lot of confusion and wasted time.

Players can also be confused because different coaches may use different cue words for the same thing. For example, “pinch post” and “elbow” refer to the same area of the court.

It can be effective at the start of the season for the coach to provide players with a page of notes, explaining various cue words that they will use. Alternatively, giving the players time at practice to write notes can also help them to remember the cue words.

REMOVING DISTRACTIONS

When introducing activities the coach needs to be conscious of how they are positioned relative to the group. Sometimes the coach will turn away from the group, to show a particular area on the court, or to instruct athletes doing the demonstration. The problem with this is that:

- it makes it harder for the coach to be heard;
- it becomes harder to concentrate on what is being said;
- the coach will miss visual cues that can help demonstrate if the players are understanding (e.g. nodding their head tends to indicate they understand whilst a quizzical look can show that they are unsure).

As far as possible, the coach should try when talking to stand in a position in which they are “open” to the group – i.e. the coach can see them, and they can see the coach. If the coach needs to move (e.g. to show where a player moves in the activity) they should speak to the group, move (while not speaking) and then turn to face the group and continue speaking once they are at the new position.

2.3.7 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - OBSERVE AND GIVE FEEDBACK

The coach should start the activity as quickly as possible, keeping talking to a minimum. Then comes the most important aspect of coaching – observation. What makes a great coach is not what they say, but what they see.

OBSERVE THE ACTIVITY

Once the activity is underway, the coach observes to see if the players understand what they are meant to do and how well they are executing the skills. Coaches should not be too quick to stop the activity, even if mistakes are being made. Where possible, speak to individual athletes without stopping the activity.

Commonly, some athletes will understand the activity or be able to perform the skills better than others. Encourage them to assist in team mates to make the activity work.

This can be something that a team captain can be given some responsibility to do. Too often, coaches stop an entire activity to correct some part of the structure of the activity (e.g. a player moved to an incorrect position).

Whenever possible, make the correction while the activity is happening, particularly by having the athletes communicate with each other about where someone is meant to pass or move.

If the activity needs to be stopped for correction, the coach's focus must be on telling the players what to do, rather than describing what they were doing incorrectly. This should refer back to the identified teaching points introduced at the start and then the coach should get the activity going again as quickly as possible.

Often a coach may observe something during an activity that was not a specific

teaching point, but that they believe needs correction. In this circumstance, it is often better to make a note of it and address it in another activity, rather than stop the activity.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK - "COACHING ON THE RUN"

During the activity, the coach should be quick to praise athletes, particularly where they have used the correct process even if the end objective was not achieved (e.g. good technique was used in shooting although the shot was missed).

When providing constructive feedback, the coach should refer to their teaching points, which is why the use of cue words is important: it enables the coach to quickly give the feedback.

For example, a coach may use "high elbow" or "elbow above the eye" as a teaching point when shooting – to emphasise the correct form for the shooting arm. These words can be relayed to a player, without stopping the drill, to remind them of the correct technique (e.g. "Jane, well done. Nice high elbow.").

When "coaching on the run" coaches should call to a player by using their name first, to ensure that they have the person's attention.

The coach should not act like a radio commentator, broadcasting minute-by-minute instructions to the players, as the more the coach speaks the more it

will become like “background noise”. Instead, the coach should give short praise or correction during the activity. This approach is described as “coaching on the run”, because the coach does not stop the activity in order to provide feedback. The coach can also provide more detailed feedback to an individual player at times when the player is not involved in the activity. For example, waiting until the player has completed a fast-break before correcting them.

HELPING PLAYERS TO DISCOVER THEIR OWN ANSWERS

Coaches should also use questions to guide the player to discover what they did wrong (and what they need to do), rather than the coach always telling them what was wrong.

For example, let’s take a lay-up learning activity for children playing mini-basketball. The coach wants them to step with their right foot when receiving the ball. A child does a lay-up and does not do this. Instead of pointing this out, the coach asks them:

- “Which foot did you step with?”
- “Which foot should you have used?”
- “Are you sure?”

These questions require the player to find the answer themselves, thus leading them to pay more attention the next time. Maybe the first time the coach asks the question, the player will not know the answer because they were not paying enough attention, but their concentration will increase from then on in, as will their teammates’, once they understand that the coach may ask them questions too.

The questions system can be complemented by reminding the player what they have to do immediately before they begin – using the key words or teaching points. (“Right foot on the catch.”)

Both strategies, questions and reminders, are especially useful when dealing with unconsolidated skills requiring more intense conscious attention, or at specific moments when the coach perceives attention deficits.

The questions should follow the player’s behaviour as soon as possible (immediately after the player acts), and pre-emptive reminders (with or without a question) should immediately precede the actions that follow them.

2.3.8 ADAPTIVE COACHING - CHANGING ACTIVITIES TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

When observing an activity, it may become obvious to the coach that the activity is either too hard or too easy for the players, in terms of their current skill level.

MAKING ACTIVITIES EASIER OR HARDER

In each activity there will be many variables that can be changed in order to provide a better learning environment for the teaching points.

For example, having an activity where a team scores points by successfully getting the ball into the keyway rather than by scoring baskets can focus the players' effort on moving the ball rather than on whether or not a shot is ultimately made or missed.

The coach may also want to challenge players who are more skilled, whilst allowing less skilled players to develop at their own pace. For example, requiring a more skilled player to dribble or pass with their non-preferred hand can make the activity more challenging for them, without making it too hard for other players.

The coach may also change the rules of an activity to make it harder or easier as required. For example, a rule such as not allowing a team to grab the ball out of the hands of a player will make it easier for less skilled players who may still be learning to pivot and pass.

The same rule change can also encourage the more skilled players to improve their defensive position and anticipation off the ball, as they can only steal the ball by intercepting a pass.

THERE ARE MANY ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVITY THAT CAN BE CHANGED AND IN CONSIDERING WHAT ASPECTS TO CHANGE, COACHES SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING APPROACH :⁴

C	Coaching style: use questions to particular players or the team to set challenges for particular aspects of a game. "When should you move to receive a pass?"
H	How to score/win: change the opportunities to score – e.g. allow passing to a player in a particular area to score, instead of shooting for goal. Vary the size/distance of a target.
A	Area: increase or decrease the game difficulty by changing the shape or size of the playing area.
N	Numbers: consider using different team numbers or varying the number of turns that a player/team receives. Decreasing team size can increase player involvement.
G	Game rules: change the rules of the activity. Restrict the number of dribbles in order to emphasize passing. Require that no shot can be taken outside the keyway unless the ball has been passed or dribbled into the keyway first.
E	Equipment: vary the size or type of equipment. Have players dribble two balls instead of one.
I	Inclusion: ask players to modify activities.
T	Time: reduce or extend time allowed to perform actions.

⁴ How to Change It – A guide to help coaches and teachers improve sport-related games, Australian Sports Commission, 2007, p3

2.3.9 ADAPTIVE COACHING - COACHING ATHLETES OF VARYING ABILITIES

“Adaptive Coaching” is simply conducting activities that are suitable to the skill of each player.

In any junior team there is likely to be a wide range of skills and athletic ability between the players, as well as differences in their understanding of the tactics of the game.

The role of the coach is to help each of those players to develop and for the team to improve. This requires the coach to be able to design and run activities that include all of the players and sufficiently challenge them so that they will develop.

DIFFERENCES IN SKILL LEVEL AND UNDERSTANDING

It is common in any activity that some athletes will find it easier to do than others. Broadly, there are two areas that will impact how hard an athlete finds an activity:

- Skill level – whether or not the player can perform the skills required in the activity;
- Understanding – whether or not the player understands the structure of the activity (e.g. the sequence of movements) or whether or not they understand the principles of play that are involved (e.g. “passing lane” – “driving lane” principles in 2v1).

Equally, players may find an activity easy and this can affect their motivation, particularly if the coach is stopping the activity a lot in order to correct players who are finding it challenging.

The coach needs to be able to engage both types of players.

Engaging athletes who find an activity easy

MAKE THEM COACHES

Rather than the coach stopping an activity and making corrections, they can have the players that have a better understanding of the structure or team principles make the corrections. This encourages the players to talk to each other and to find their own solutions.

When doing this, the structure of an activity may change slightly, but before stepping in, the coach should evaluate are the teaching points still being reinforced. If they are, then the coach should not stop the activity. Indeed, the coach could go on to give the activity (with its new structure) a name like “John’s drill” to emphasise the role the player had in creating the new activity.

CHANGE THE ACTIVITY

The coach may be able to change the activity so that it is more challenging for the better skilled player, for example:

- Add complexity – a more skilled player may have to use their non-preferred hand, whereas lesser skilled player may use their preferred hand, or perhaps a more skilled player may be allowed to use fewer dribbles than a less skilled player can;
- Change rules – for example, do not let skilled players steal the ball from the hands of less skilled players. Instead, state that any steal has to be from intercepting the pass;
- Force teamwork – a skilled player may not be allowed to shoot off the dribble, and may only shoot if they are in the key and receive a pass or if they rebound the ball.

CHANGE HOW A TEAM SCORES

In activities where the object is to score baskets, the more skilled athletes will often end up taking more shots. By changing how a team scores, the coach can make sure all players are getting involved. For example, awarding a point for a pass to a teammate who is open for a shot (whether or not the shot goes in) will emphasise moving the ball.

Engaging athletes who find an activity hard
PARTNERS

Many activities at training have a repetitive nature and if a player is finding it hard to understand the structure of the activity, it can help to partner them with another player and have them “follow” that player.

RULE LENIENCY

One of the most important elements to developing skills is the opportunity to practice them. Allowing a less skilled athlete to get away with a “travel” or “double dribble” violation can give them more opportunity to have the ball in their hands and play, particularly in a contested situation.

Obviously, they ultimately need to be able to perform skills in contested play and so the coach must also provide correction on the execution of the dribbles (often in other activities, not the contested activity). Alternatively, the coach may “call the travel” (so that the player is aware of what they did incorrectly) but give the ball back to them so that they have another opportunity to practice the skill.

TEACHING POINTS

The coach may need to give a less skilled player more detailed teaching points regarding the execution of a skill. They may even take them briefly out of an activity to specifically practice the skill and then return them to the activity.

MAXIMISE SKILL TRANSFER

In structuring practice, the coach should give players a chance to practice the skill immediately before including it in a contested activity. This can assist with the transfer of skills from one activity to another.

MAKING CHANGES AT PRACTICE

Often a coach will be able to incorporate into their practice plan variations to engage all athletes. However, sometimes they will design an activity and it then becomes evident that players are finding it difficult so the coach will need to make changes during the practice session.

To do this, the coach should first consider what the teaching points are for that activity, because whatever changes they make should still emphasise those teaching points.

THE CHANGE IT FRAMEWORK CAN ALSO ASSIST THE COACH TO MAKE CHANGES DURING THE PRACTICE SESSION:

C	Coaching style: use questions to particular players or the team to set challenges for particular aspects of a game. "When should you move to receive a pass?"
H	How to score/win: change the opportunities to score – e.g. allow passing to a player in a particular area to score, instead of shooting for goal. Vary the size/distance of a target.
A	Area: increase or decrease the game difficulty by changing the shape or size of the playing area.
N	Numbers: consider using different team numbers or varying the number of turns that a player/team receives. Decreasing team size can increase player involvement.
G	Game rules: change the rules of the activity. Restrict the number of dribbles in order to emphasize passing. Require that no shot can be taken outside the keyway unless the ball has been passed or dribbled into the keyway first.
E	Equipment: vary the size or type of equipment. Have players dribble two balls instead of one.
I	Inclusion: ask players to modify activities.
T	Time: reduce or extend time allowed to perform actions.

Particularly with young players, there will always be a wide range of abilities amongst the players in the team. This range of abilities is unrelated to any disability that a player may have.

For example, a player on a team may not be able to catch the ball. This could be because:

- they have a disability (e.g. cerebral palsy affecting their coordination);
- they have not previously had experience passing and catching a ball;
- they have had a bad experience (e.g. hurt their finger) trying to catch a ball previously.

Whatever the reason, the coach needs to be able to help the player to develop this skill.

2.3.10 ADAPTIVE COACHING - INCLUDING ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY

FOCUS ON THE OUTCOME

Where an athlete has a physical disability, the coach may feel unsure how to instruct the athlete. For example, how would you teach a player who has no hands to catch the ball and then pass the ball?

Sometimes it will be effective to instruct the athlete what you want done and then let them explore how to do it. In the example above, the athlete may be able to catch the ball with their arms (or even stop it with their chest) and then kick it to the next person.

Whilst this is not permissible in basketball (a player cannot deliberately kick the ball), it could be effective in letting an activity continue and the player being able to engage in the activity. They may also be able to find another way to “throw” the ball – but if they are not given the chance to practice, they are unlikely to find a way to do it.

ASK WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED?

Whenever a coach has an athlete with a disability in their team, they should speak with the parents about any changes or modifications that may be necessary to include the child. The parents will often be able to give the coach practical advice on how to best work with the player.

CHANGING HOW YOU COACH

To include a player with a disability may require a coach to make some changes in their coaching, however these are no different to changes they may need to make for any of their athletes.

In coaching an athlete with a hearing impairment, the coach may provide written instructions or explanations. They may need to make sure that they are facing the player when they speak and they may need to establish a training rule that when they stop an activity, other players are responsible for ensuring that the athlete with a hearing impairment also knows that it has been stopped. These changes are not difficult.

An athlete with an intellectual disability may need the opportunity for physical demonstration – “walking them through” movements on the court, showing them where to put their feet or hands. Again, these are not difficult changes and are the same as the coach may need to do for an athlete without a disability.

ASSUME THAT THEY CAN, NOT THAT THEY CAN'T

Often the biggest barrier to participation in sport by a person with a disability is the perception that they will not be able to participate or that they will not be able to participate at all alongside athletes without that disability.

Perhaps the most powerful thing that a coach can do is to adopt an attitude that they can include the athlete rather than assuming that they cannot do so.

SEEK ADVICE

There are a number of organisations providing opportunities for athletes with disabilities and they may be able to provide assistance or advice to a coach who is working with an athlete with a disability.

PATHWAYS FOR ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES

There are many international pathways for athletes with disabilities:

- Wheelchair basketball is a Paralympic sport for both men and women. World Championships are also conducted at junior and senior level;
- Athletes with an intellectual disability are able to participate in activities conducted by Special Olympics and at World Championships conducted by INAS (an organization that is a member of the International Olympic Committee);
- Athletes with a hearing impairment are able to participate in World Championships conducted under the auspices of the ICSD (International Committee of Sports for the Deaf).

The specific opportunities available in each country will vary. In some countries the national basketball federation is also involved in sports for athletes with a disability, although this is not the case in all countries.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Answer each question below as quickly as possible. Record your answer and then listen to your answers.

What instruction would you give at practice to:

- a. divide the team into 3 lines on the baseline, with one line at each intersection with the 3 point line and the third line under the basket;
 - b. have players in groups of 2 with each group having one basketball;
 - c. get the group to divide into two teams, with the 5 players that started the last game in one team and the substitutes at the start of the last game in the other team;
 - d. stop the activity and have players assemble in the corner of the court where one of your assistant coaches is standing.
2. Do you have names for each activity that you use? Ask five separate athletes to describe how a particular activity works, but only give them the name you have for that activity. Are they correct?
3. Write down a description of the skill level of your most skilled player and least skilled player. Reflect upon your last practice – were both athletes challenged in each of the activities? Discuss with a coaching colleague how could you have varied activities to better cater for both athletes.

2.4 ADMINISTRATION

2.4.1 KEEPING RECORDS

Some records that coaches should keep are:

- a list of players that have trialled for the team;
- any assessment that the coach made of players relative to the selection criteria;
- a record of attendance at practice and games;
- any incidents that have occurred at practice or in a game (e.g. a player hurting their ankle in a rebounding situation, a confrontation between two players);
- practice plans, with any notes or reflections about the practice;
- any correspondence between the coach and players or their parents;
- notes on the performance of players and their development during the season;
- pre-game objectives and goals and notes made during the game.

Often the simplest way to keep these records is in a diary. Coaches may also choose to keep the records electronically and there are a number of programs that can assist with such record keeping.

2.4.2 COMPUTER SKILLS

Using spreadsheets, email and word processing are common tasks for a coach and can make the administration and management of a team more efficient. Access to the internet will provide a coach with an avenue to:

- find information to scout upcoming opponents – statistics, game reports, game video;
- find information to help with their own development – coaching clinics and articles, “X’s and O’s” analysis of trends in basketball or what specific teams are running;
- make contact with colleagues and other networks.

There are also a range of programs designed for coaches to carry out tasks such as:

- creating a playbook – enabling the coach to diagram plays. Some also enable the coach to animate the players to produce a video showing the movement in the play;
- team management – enabling the coach to communicate with players;
- practice planning – preparing practice plans and keeping a record of performance at practice;
- communication tools – enabling the coach to speak with players wherever they are in the world;
- management – assistance in booking flights, hotels or ground transport and a range of other management tasks.

2.5 COMMUNICATION

2.5.1 CONTACT WITH JUNIOR ATHLETES

CONTACT WITH ATHLETES

A coach must communicate with the athletes in the team about many things and with junior athletes this communication should include the parents.

Many young players will have their own phones, and communicate regularly via social media channels (such as Facebook), messaging tools (such as WhatsApp), SMS or other electronic communication methods (such as Email). Coaches should be careful in how they relate with young players.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTACT WITH JUNIOR ATHLETES

Coaches should follow the following guidelines when making contact with junior athletes:

- Keep communication relevant to basketball;
- Do not “Friend” junior athletes on social media platforms such as Facebook. If you wish to use social media, set up a specific account for the team;
- Let parents know how you will communicate with the players and ask them to be included (some parents may insist that a coach’s communication is with the parent and not the player);
- Use social media or text to communicate to all athletes (e.g. advising them of a change in training venue). Do not communicate individually with athletes;
- Avoid commenting upon the performance of other players when communicating with players. Keep comments related to their own performance;
- Do not make negative comments about officials or other teams;
- When meeting with athletes, have another adult present (whether that is a manager or parents) or conduct the meeting in a public venue.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague whether or not they use social media (e.g. Facebook) for keeping in contact with athletes. If possible, discuss with a school teacher whether or not they use social media.
2. How would you contact your athletes with an urgent message (e.g. the location of practice changes only a couple of hours before practice).

LEVEL 1



COACH

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT

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3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE GAME

3.1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE GAME FROM A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Coaches watch games differently to how fans do.

The coach is focused on “why” things happen (e.g. how did the player get open to receive a pass) and how to influence what will happen next (e.g. how do we stop the player getting open), whilst the fan is generally more focused on “what” happened (i.e. who scored).

Some players or coaches instinctively have a better “feel” for the game than others, however anyone can develop their understanding of the game. Watching games and discussing them with other coaches or players is the best way to develop an understanding of the game.

Unfortunately, TV coverage of games tends to focus very much on the ball which reduces the ability to see how the play develops overall, and it is often better (where possible) to watch games at the court. Taking notes during the game can help, although this will often result in the coach missing parts of the game whilst they are writing. If the coach wants to make notes, doing so during breaks of play is best.

When watching games, coaches may pick particular players to watch, focusing on their movement without the ball (which for most players represents the majority of their time on court). At times, players will influence the play even though they did not receive the ball (e.g. a player cutting may attract a help defender which leaves a teammate open).

The particular tactics that a team is using will be of interest for a coach, however they may be more interested in how (and when) those tactics are changed and what effect that has on the tempo and momentum in the game. Discussing this with colleagues will also develop the coach's understanding as they will get an insight into how other coaches “read” the game and attempt to influence what is happening.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What activities have you done in the last six months to develop your understanding of basketball?
2. Discuss with a coaching colleague what activities they do to develop their understanding of basketball.
3. From where do you prefer to watch a basketball game? Discuss with other coaches where they prefer to watch from.

3.2 COACHING STYLE AND PHILOSOPHY

3.2.1 PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE APPROACHES TO COACHING

Coaches watch games differently to fans.

“REPRODUCTIVE” APPROACH TO COACHING

The reproductive approach to coaching is where the coach adopts an “authoritarian” style, specifically directing the athletes and requiring them to make few decisions in the learning process. This approach is most suited to the early stages of skill learning and even then should be used sparingly. Examples of this approach are:

- **Command** - a skill is demonstrated and athletes perform that skill receiving direct feedback from the coach.
- **Reciprocal** - players work in pairs. Whilst one performs the designated skill their partner provides feedback. The coach gives specific criteria for the partner to provide feedback.
- **Self-Check** - players work independently on a task, comparing their execution with a “checklist” prepared by the coach (which may include diagrams or photos). This may be most effective if it is filmed.
- **Inclusion** - the coach designs a task that has several levels of difficulty, catering for varying levels of ability, and athletes choose to work at the level at which they feel challenged.

A coach may use a reproductive approach in parts of a training session, particularly if dividing athletes into “skill stations”, where different activities are performed in different areas of the court.

“Skill stations” can be particularly effective (and necessary) if there is a relatively large number of athletes on one court.

“PRODUCTIVE APPROACH” TO COACHING

The productive approach to coaching is designed to engage the athletes in the learning process and is the one that coaches are recommended to utilize most often, even with young athletes.

Examples of a productive approach are:

- **Guided Discovery** - the coach guides athletes toward identifying the appropriate “solution” through using structured questions (e.g. for concepts of play) or focusing on an outcome but allowing the player to discover how to best achieve that (e.g. skill learning – make the ball spin backwards as you shoot).
- **Problem Solving** - similar to guided discovery, in this approach there might be a number of potential solutions and athletes either work by themselves or as a group. This is most suited to complex tasks, such as improving the defensive pattern in a particular situation.

With guided discovery, it may be helpful if the coach explains why the outcome they have asked for is preferred.

For example:

- make the ball spin backwards when you shoot so that if it hits the ring it will bounce upwards and may still go in;
- shoot the ball with a high arc because it increases the mathematical chance of the ball going in,
- pass the ball in front of a moving player so they can run onto it (the player experiments with how far in front it needs to be);

Questioning the athletes is an important aspect of the productive approach to coaching, such as:

- What are three ways your opponent may guard your cut off a down screen? What do you do in response to each method?
- We discussed some key offensive concepts to beat a "man to man" defence. As a defender, how would you respond to those strategies?

3.2.2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES ACCORDING TO AGE OF ATHLETE

Coaches must understand that some children improve faster than others, and must try to adapt to this.

Coaches should treat each child as an individual, like a “tailor” who is sewing “tailor-made” suits.

Coaches must follow a general working plan with all players on their team, which respects the individuality of each player, making demands according to their characteristics, and helping each of them to develop their own talents.

Some general considerations in relation to the age of players must also be kept in mind.

UNDER 12 PLAYERS

At this age, perfecting basketball fundamentals is not the most important aspect. It is enough for the players to know the most basic skills and to start to develop them. Making practice fun so that the players want to practice is the most important consideration.

The players should be introduced to good techniques for the basic skills. Bad habits (e.g. only using their preferred hand, shooting off balance) should be discouraged.

It is important, though, that coaches allow players to explore how to perform a skill rather than dictating specifically how it must be done. For example, asking players to shoot with a “high arc” because it increases the chances of going in and then allowing them to explore how to do that.

The coach’s role is to guide the player’s exploration of how to perform the skill, making changes only when necessary. It is also important that players accept responsibility for their part of being on a team. They have made a commitment to be on the team and accordingly should come to training, should train

hard and should not disrupt the training. The role of being a player on a team is an important lesson at this age group. It is not about whether they are a “guard” or a “centre” because all players should play all positions. However, being a good team member is also a skill that can be learnt.

Players need to develop confidence that they can perform the skills which are needed when playing the game. They must develop the initiative of using basketball fundamentals even if they make mistakes. And they should have a reasonable number of positive experiences that will make them want to keep on playing.

Daily fun and the personal initiative of players are very important aspects to take into account when coaching mini-basketball.

13-14-YEAR-OLDS

A coach of players aged between 13 and 14 must realise that even if some of the players appear to be physically bigger, they are still young teenagers. At this age they are going through a stage of great emotional vulnerability in which they need to vindicate themselves (for example: they would be inclined to abandon the game if they feel like they are not in control).

Furthermore, many of these players are getting used to playing basketball, which might make them feel insecure and less competent than in previous years.

It is also likely that teams will include players who have been playing for a number of years as well as players who are just starting. This can affect both the confidence of the less experienced (as they see other players able to do things and feel that they have “failed” because they can’t) and the interest level of the more experienced, who may not be adequately challenged playing against significantly less skilled team mates.

Coaches of these players must help the less skilled players to adapt themselves progressively to this higher level of requirements. Coaches must go into more depth concerning the development of technical fundamentals and individual tactical decisions (the decisions taken on the 1x1, 2x2, 3x3, etc.).

However, they should try not to go too fast, because the players need to assimilate what they are learning, and they need to feel safe obtaining the reward of being in control.

At the same time, the coach needs to ensure that the more skilled players are also being challenged, which is important to keep them interested.

One way to do this is to place different demands upon players in an activity. For example, less experienced players may be able to dribble and pass with whichever hand they want but more experienced players must use their non-preferred hand. At these ages, it is important not to limit the players. On the contrary, coaches should improve the possibility of obtaining better results in the future by allowing players to do any kind of task (for example: they should all be able to fast break in any position). All players need to be introduced to perimeter and post skills.

The players will probably make many mistakes while they are still learning. The coach must try to combine working on areas of weakness with giving the players the opportunity to perform skills and techniques that they are already proficient at, to ensure that they can get some satisfaction out of it.

While working with children of these ages, coaches must set up multiple situations that players can control and that will improve their self-confidence.

It can be particularly effective for the coach to define “success” not just by scoring points, but by using the right process. Indeed, many activities can be used where there is no shooting. For example, passing games, where the objective is to reach a certain number of passes, get the ball to a certain position on the court or have all players touch the ball a certain number of times.

15-16-YEAR-OLDS

When working with teams of 15-16-year-olds coaches should maintain an overall perspective of the formative process of the players, but they should measure with a greater detail the particular needs of each player: what are they missing? What aspects should we work on to improve their resources?

USING DIFFERENT COACHING STYLES

Within a team there will be many different personalities and the coach must work with each of them, striving to get the best outcome for each of them. This means:

*“Employing a variety of coaching approaches is important because different types of content requires different approaches to instruction... In deciding what approach to adopt the coach should consider the intended learning outcomes of the training session or part of a session”.*⁵

Broadly, there are two approaches to teaching and coaching, namely reproductive and productive.⁶

⁵ Dr Cliff Mallet, How do you coach?, Sports Coach (ASC), Vol 28, Number 2

⁶ Mosston, M, 1966, Teaching Physical Education: from command to discovery, Charles E Merrill Books, Columbus, Ohio

3.2.3 LTAD - MAKING FUN A FOCUS

The overwhelming reason why children play sport is to have fun and equally the main reason that they stop playing sport is because they are no longer having fun.

However, there are also developmental reasons why it is better for the long-term development of players to have a broad range of fun-focussed activities when initially involved in sport.

The most effective sport development and training programs around the world discourage year-round specialization in a single organized sport and, generally, use cross-training methods to develop a full range of skills to prepare young people for specialization at age 15 and older.⁷

During the ages of 6-13, children should be encouraged to “sample” and explore a range of different sports, hopefully developing a love of being physically active as well as enjoying the individual sports. Specialising in one sport at this stage of development is not recommended, with “sampling” leading both to a longer engagement with sport (throughout the child’s life) and is also being a consistent factor in creating successful professional players.

“Talent Development” is often used to justify the need for players to specialize from an early stage, although research has concluded that:

Initial proficiency in a motor skill has little relation to later performance. Early mastery pays a dividend for a while, but then others catch up.⁸

During this first stage of athletic development, children are learning movement fundamentals as well as the skills associated with particular sports and are also developing their sense of sportsmanship and ethics as well as learning to work as part of a team. Having fun is what engages them with sport and a coach’s focus should be on fostering that enjoyment.

⁷ National Association for Sport and Physical Education. Guidelines for Participation in Youth Sport .Programs: Specialization Versus Multi-Sport Participation [Position statement]. Reston, VA: Author; 2010.

⁸ United States Anti-Doping Agency, True Sport: What We Stand to Lose in Our Obsession to Win, 2012, p46

3.2.4 GAMES-BASED APPROACH TO COACHING

A “games-based” approach to coaching uses activities that teach the “nature” of the sport and includes skills from the sport at a pace dictated by the learning of the participants.

For example, rather than having two players simply pass the ball back and forth, a coach may play a game where teams race to make a certain number of passes. The game could involve passing standing still or on the move, depending upon the skills of the players.

In the “games-based” approach the coaches also ask questions to stimulate the players to think about the game and to discover how and when to use the skills when playing that game and, more importantly, when playing the sport itself. For example, the coach may ask:

- What do you have to do with your body to catch the ball? (Possible answers: hands up, keep watching the ball, move toward the ball);
- How do you make sure that a pass gets to the person you are throwing to and doesn't hit the ground? (Possible answers: pass to someone close, step forward when passing, pass with two hands).

The technical detail on how to perform skills is still important in a games-based approach, the difference is in how and when that information is presented to the players. In a traditional approach, but the coach describes the skill, giving instruction on aspects of the skill, and then has the players perform the skill in a “closed” setting. Under a games-based approach, the coach sets up an activity, explains the outcome (i.e. first team to make 10 passes wins) and then the players start trying.

Some athletes will need more detailed instruction than others, and this can be done during and after the activity.

The coach can then vary the activity (to either make it easier or harder), with a focus on the kids being active for as much time as possible.

An example of this approach is:

PASSING GAME ACTIVITY

- Two teams with the same number of players have one ball each.
- Players must stand within a set area of the court (e.g. within the 3 point line, half court etc) – the more players there are, the bigger the space needs to be.
- Players cannot pass to the person that passed to them.
- Teams count each pass to see which team gets to the set target first (e.g. 20 passes).
- If the ball touches the ground, the team lose one point.

After 3 or 4 minutes, the coach stops the activity to ask:

- What do you have to do with your body to catch the ball? (Possible answers: hands up, keep watching the ball, let the ball come into your hands);
- How do you make sure that your pass reaches the person and does not touch the ground? (Possible answers: not try to pass too far, step forward when passing, pass from chest not above the head).

The coach then varies the rules of the activity as follows:

- Players must now move and catch the ball;
- Players must stop when they catch the ball.

After a further period of playing, the coach asks other questions (and during this questioning is when the coach may provide some technical instruction):

- What do you need to look at to make a successful pass? (Possible answer: position of all players on court)
- Where do you throw the ball? (Possible answer: in front of the teammate)
- What do you need to get the ball? (Possible answers: move to the ball, hands up, call for the ball)

They could then make a further variation to the activity:

- Only one ball and the team without the ball attempts to intercept passes (they cannot take the ball from a player's hands).
- If the ball hits the floor, or is intercepted, the other team immediately make passes to attempt to reach the target.

At the conclusion of the activity the coach asks further questions:

- What can you do to avoid someone that is putting pressure on the person with the ball? (Possible answers: pivot, pass fake, move toward the teammate or even behind them)
- What is the best position to try and intercept the pass? (Possible answers: distance from opponent, staying between them and the ball)

Another advantage of the games-based approach is that skills are not learnt in isolation or a "closed" context but are usually learnt under game-like conditions.

3.2.5 DIFFERING COACHING STYLES

There are many things that will impact a coach's style. Some of these factors are intrinsic and part of the coach's personality whilst other factors are extrinsic (e.g. teachers or coaches that they have had).

What is most important is that a coach uses a style that is authentic for them, not simply adopting or "acting" what they have seen other coaches do.

COACHING STYLES

Just as each athlete is an individual, each coach is an individual too. And whilst coaches may use different approaches in different situations, they will most likely have a particular style that characterizes their personality.

There are many descriptions used for the various coaching styles that exist – no one style is right or wrong, they are merely different. Each style has advantages and disadvantages and it is important that coaches are aware of these.

COACHING STYLE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Authoritarian coach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong unwavering disciplinarian • Demand maximum effort from everyone all the time • Little input from players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well organized • Good team spirit when winning • Clear expectations and goals set and understanding of the "big picture" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissension when losing • May be feared or disliked • Athletes may feel "dis-empowered"
Businesslike coach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused with a logical and well planned approach • Up to date with trends in the game • Seeks input from players but makes final decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets clear performance indicators • Reviews and evaluates performance – willing to change • Asks players questions and asks for input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May set goals that are too high for some team members • May be seen as distant or aloof
"Nice Guy" coach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well liked • Thoughtful and personable • Involves players in determining team decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets on well with players, particular those with the same temperament • Players "buy into" the team plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players may take advantage of coach's cooperative nature • Difficulty in making decisions unpopular with players
Intense coach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong emphasis on winning • Driven and focused on what needs to be achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused game plan • Sets high expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High anxiety often transmitted to players • Often has "outcome" focused goals, but lacks detail of the "process"
Easy-going coach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very casual • May give impression of not taking game seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-liked • Empowers players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not prepare well for training / games • Teams may lack preparation to deal with adversity

Coaches are often depicted in movies and the media as being authoritarian – yelling directions, issuing penalties and making decisions in isolation. This style of coaching can also be seen every weekend, with coaches walking along the sidelines, yelling at teams and often the coach adopts this demeanour because they believe that is how coaching is supposed to be done!

It is a common trap for coaches to adopt the style of another coach or mentor when they are coaching, rather than being themselves. The style a coach uses will reflect their personality, but must also reflect the athletes that they are coaching.

For example, an authoritarian coach is renowned for being strict. With older athletes, they may enforce this by yelling at players and quickly taking them out of the game if they do not follow a team rule. But with younger players, they may speak more gently and use a timeout to remind them of team rules, rather than taking them out of the game.

WHAT IS YOUR COACHING STYLE?

Coaching style is closely linked to the coach's personality and it is often more accurate to describe that a coach discovers, rather than chooses, their natural coaching style. In addition to their personality, a coach's preferred style will also be influenced by coaches or teachers that they have had or worked with or athletes that they have coached.

It is not uncommon for a coach to change their style as they become more experienced as a coach, although this is often down to them being able to use different styles in different situations rather than changing their "natural" style.

No coaching style is considered better or more effective than any other but this does not mean it is unimportant for a coach to understand their natural or preferred style. Having an awareness of preferred coaching style (which is generally the behaviour that a coach will default to) is important in developing a rapport with players.

For example, if a coach has an assertive and authoritarian style and is coaching very experienced athletes the athletes may have an expectation of having their opinion heard and having the opportunity to discuss tactical situations. If the coach is aware of the potential conflict in styles they can devise an appropriate strategy. For example, with experienced athletes an authoritarian coach may:

- designate times where there will not be discussion and the coach is responsible for whether or not correct technical decisions are made (e.g. timeouts, pre-game meetings);
- seek input from the experienced players following games (as part of the review process);
- allow some decisions to be made by the players (e.g. point guard determines offensive set unless the coach specifically instructs what to do).

In reflecting upon their preferred coaching style a coach may ask people that know them well (e.g. family, players they have previously coached or work colleagues). However, they should not ask "what do you think is my coaching style?" and instead should ask them to consider:

- How do I tend to make decisions?
- How do I react when people disagree with me?
- How do I prepare for activities (e.g. meetings, holidays)?
- Who generally makes plans for activities between me and my friends?

Considering such factors will give a coach insight into their style.

3.2.6 COMMUNICATION STYLES

USING DIFFERENT APPROACHES WHEN COMMUNICATING

Communication is a fundamental part of coaching and there are a number of different communication styles. Which style a coach uses will largely depend upon their overall coaching style, but will also depend upon the context in which they are communicating.

These styles can be described utilizing the framework of the DISC personal assessment model originally developed by Dr William Marston:

- **Dominance** - this is direct and decisive communication. It is typically suited to technical instruction, particularly in a time-sensitive situation (e.g. adjusting team tactics in a game);
- **Steady** - this is two-way communication, where the coach asks the athlete questions to guide them, rather than providing direct instructions. This is suitable where there is more time (e.g. developing team rules);
- **Influence** - this is energetic, highly interactive and provides motivation to athletes. It is most suited to “non-technical” communication but where a situation calls for high motivation (e.g. half time team talk);
- **Conscientious** - this is detailed and well planned and is most suitable where athletes are confident in their ability to execute what is asked of them (e.g. season planning).

Most of all, the coach should respect each athlete. Coaches may feel frustrated when they believe they have explained something several times only to have a player ask a question about that very thing! Perhaps the athlete wasn't listening, but it is also possible that the coach's explanation was unclear.

Instead of being frustrated, the coach should be thankful that the athlete has asked the question as the alternative is that the player is unsure but says nothing, which is much more likely to result in something going wrong!

Particularly where the coach feels they have already answered a question, they may use other athletes to answer – asking a teammate “what would you do in that situation?” can result in the team learning from each other.

Or, if the teammate also doesn't know, it may be further evidence that the coach has not communicated their message effectively.

3.2.7 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - "ATHLETE-CENTRED" APPROACH

"The welfare of athletes is the foremost concern to coaches in designing, implementing and evaluating appropriate practices and competitions." ⁹

Coaches should not see their players as chessmen that they can move as they please. Young players are not the coach's pawns to simply be moved and directed by the coach. They are people that have, and know, their rights. No coach will be respected if they do not, in turn, respect their athletes.

An athlete-centred approach recognizes that through sport coaches play a central role in the development of children that will impact in all areas of their lives, and that it is through their expertise that the coach makes a contribution to the achievement of outcomes by the athletes. Coaching is no longer, if indeed it ever really was, about the achievement of the coach. The achievements of the coach are merely a reflection of the achievement of the athlete.

PLAYER'S RIGHTS

It is now widely accepted and acknowledged that players, and particularly junior athletes, have the following rights:

- The right to participate in sports competitions.
- The right to participate in competitions whose level is suitable to the abilities of each child.
- The right to have a qualified coach.
- The right to play as a child or teenager and not as an adult.
- The right to take part in making decisions about their sports activity.
- The right to practice their activity in a safe and healthy environment.
- The right to receive appropriate preparation in order to be able to compete.
- The right to be treated with dignity.
- The right to have fun while practicing sports.

From these rights we recognize four guiding principles which coaches must embrace and that when followed will lead to appropriate behaviours in sport.

Coaches should also hold parents and athletes accountable to also abide by these behaviours:

- Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Safety

Fairness does not imply, for example, that all players have exactly equal playing time – although that might be an approach which a coach takes, particularly with very young players. However, fairness does require that the coach is open and "transparent" about how they make decisions.

It would not be fair to stop a player from playing because they missed training, unless the coach has first set the expectation that all players must attend training and that missing training would mean that they would not play.

These guiding principles apply equally outside of a sporting context and are important lessons for athletes to learn.

⁹ International Sport Coaching Framework, Version 1.2, Human Kinetics, p9

3.2.8 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - TEACHING NON-BASKETBALL SKILLS

TEACHING NON-BASKETBALL SKILLS

A coach of young people is in an almost unique position to influence each child's overall development, not just their athletic development. A coach of young people teaches:

1. Sport competences:

Technical, tactical and physical requirements for participation at various levels. These competencies form the traditional core of sport and are the specific skills needed to play the game – both individual and team skills;

2. Personal competences:

Capabilities that relate to the development of the whole person and may be supported and developed through participation in sport. These have been further grouped into social, cognitive and emotional outcomes;

3. Life course competences:

The combination of sport and personal competences and experiences that positively contribute to the individual life course. For example, the ability to apply effort to undertake practice and achieve a goal can also be applied to study at school.¹⁰

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

A person's health is perhaps one of the more obvious aspects that may be enhanced through participating in basketball. This includes:

- Physical development of the players, including coordination.
- Healthy life habits related to the practice of sports, such as nutrition, hygiene and self-care habits.

However, coaches must also be aware that participation in inappropriate activities could pose serious and significant risks to athletes:

- Risk to the physical development of players (for instance, a training strategy based on lifting weights as a means of developing strength would be damaging for players of mini-basketball).
- Risk of major or chronic injuries that in some cases may affect the long term physical development of young players.
- If the activity is very stressful or discouraging, it is very probable that the players will not enjoy it and therefore will not develop a "habit" of enjoyment from participation in physical activity.
- Risk that in order to improve their performance and control the pain of their injuries, the players could end up taking doping substances, thus seriously harming their health. This behaviour could give rise to an addiction to drugs, given the high vulnerability of people at this young age.

Accordingly, coaches must prepare their plans taking into account the particular athletes they are working with. Activities must be suitable to each athlete and any complaint by an athlete that "something hurts" should be treated seriously.

Coaches should not hesitate to inform parents of feedback that an activity "hurts" and the parents may then seek a medical opinion.

Particularly at various stages of growth, young children may be susceptible to problems from an activity that otherwise would not be problematic.

But first we look at some of the personal competences that participation in sport, and in particular a team sport like basketball, can develop. Each of these competences will have a much wider application in the lives of a player than simply their playing basketball.

¹⁰ International Sport Coaching Framework, Version 1.2, Human Kinetics, p35

COMMITMENT

Coaches should be clear on the commitment they require from players and hold athletes accountable for fulfilling this commitment to the team.

Making a commitment requires that sometimes the player will have to give up certain personal wishes or make certain sacrifices for the group. This requires players to think about others and not just about themselves, and it takes some personal discipline to be able to do this.

The coach must emphasize the importance of the commitment the players are making. If a player does not attend practice sessions, their court time in games may be reduced. Even though there will often be good reason why a player cannot attend a practice (such as family or school commitments), the coach should reward those players that make the commitment and attend training.

It is important that the coach communicate their expectations (and the consequences if they are not met) at the beginning of the season.

It may be that the coach decides not to impose a penalty when a player has a good reason to miss training. However, the coach should still have rules about how the player communicates their absence.

Young people are at a stage of their personal development where focusing on their own needs is often the highest priority – typically they act based on what they want or feel at that particular time. They may prefer to go to the movies with friends rather than attend team practice. By clearly stating the expected commitment and then requiring players to abide by that commitment, the coach will assist players to develop this important skill.

PERSEVERANCE

Young people are often characterized as following short-term wishes - when they do not like something, or it turns out to be uncomfortable for them, they give it up and if something is too complex or requires a continuous effort, they do not do it.

This characterization of teenagers is perhaps even more applicable than when it was originally written 20 years ago with the modern generation that have grown up in a computer age where communication is instant and the pace of life is quicker than ever before.

Skill development takes time. Whether an individual or team-based skill, players will (and must) fail many times while attempting a skill before they develop the confidence and ability to execute it. Perseverance is especially important when the players go through hard times: for example, if they make mistakes, play poorly or try things but do not immediately obtain the results they wanted.

Coaches must give the players the confidence to persevere by identifying their improvement and not just praise the outcome or berate the failure to achieve the outcome.

Each player develops at their own rate and some will pick up skills quicker than others, and this can be a source of frustration for players if they are not progressing as quickly as their team mates.

The coach must be careful not to compare the progress of one player to another (e.g. "Jane can do this, why can't you?").

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 call a timeout 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.

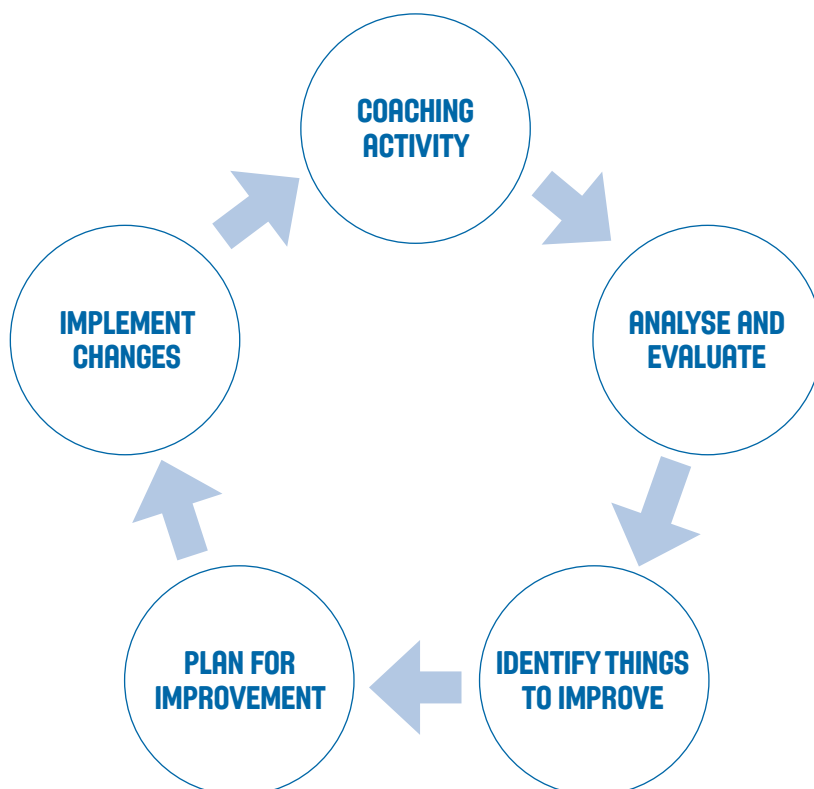
The role of the coach is to guide and assist the player to develop their skills and providing constructive feedback to the player is particularly important to achieve this.

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

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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

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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.

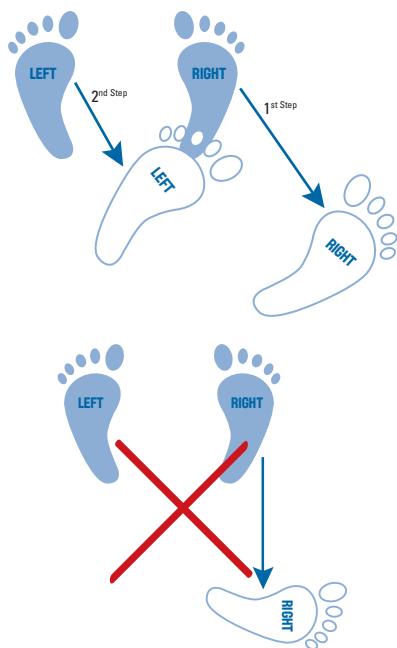


LATERAL MOVEMENT (“BIG TO BIGGER”)

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

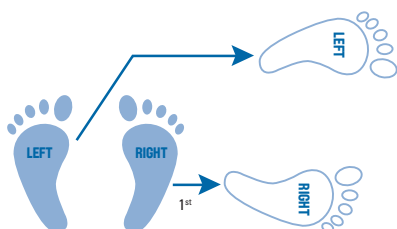


CHANGING DIRECTION

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:

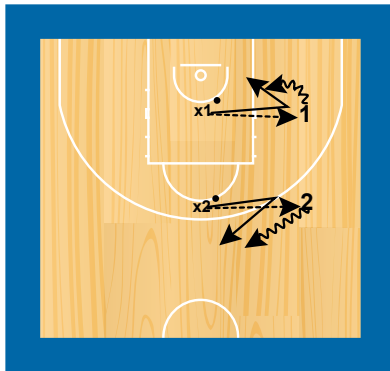
- “Fly with the ball” – the defender needs to move as the ball is passed, not waiting until their opponent has caught it
- Move efficiently – if the defender moves to their left, they should step with their left foot first
- Sprint – the defender needs to move as quickly as possible, particularly if 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



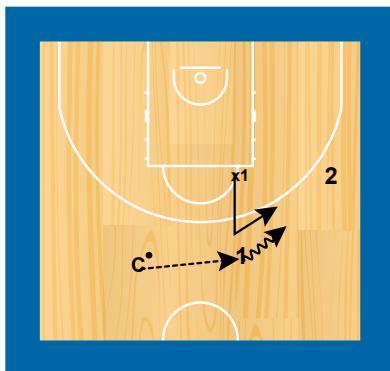
1X1 CLOSE-OUT

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.

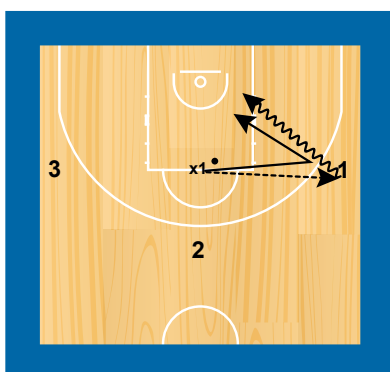


2X1 CLOSE-OUT

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.

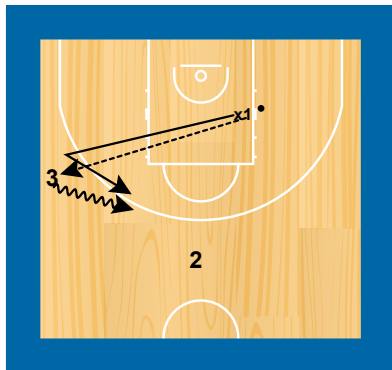


CLOSE-OUT 3

x1 passes to one of the perimeter players, closes out and defends them.

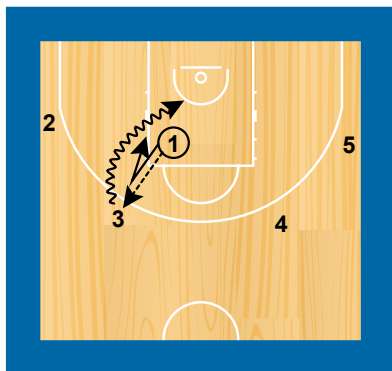
The offensive player has no more than 3 dribbles as they attempt to penetrate into the key, to emphasize attacking the basket.

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.

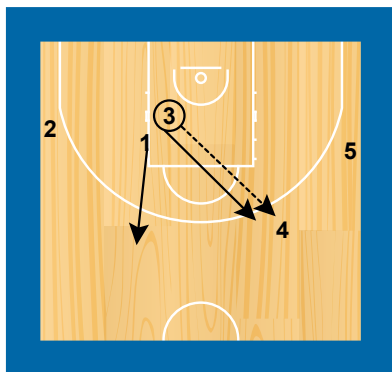
Once x1 has defended each perimeter player they will have a score out of 3. Rotate another player into defence.



CLOSE-OUT 4

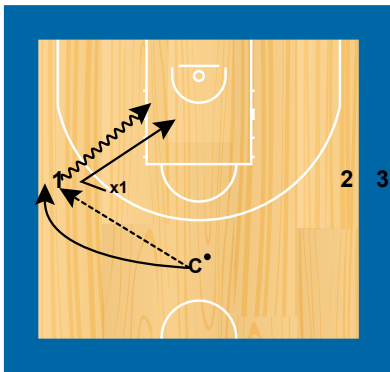
1 passes to a perimeter player, closes out and defends. The perimeter player has a maximum of 3 dribbles to penetrate into the key.

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.

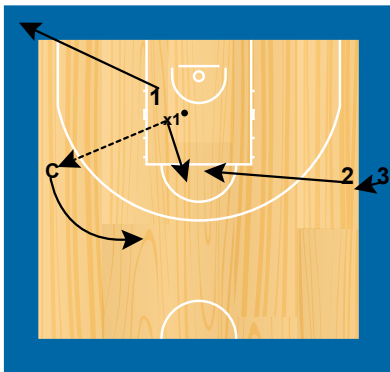
Continue for a set time (e.g. 3-5 minutes), with the player scoring the most points being the winner. Points are only earned on defence and players only get to play defence if they can penetrate into the key as an offensive player.



DEFEND 3

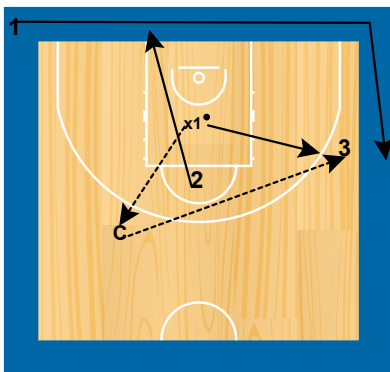
x1 starts in a denial position, defending 1. The coach passes to 1 and x1 closes out and defends.

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



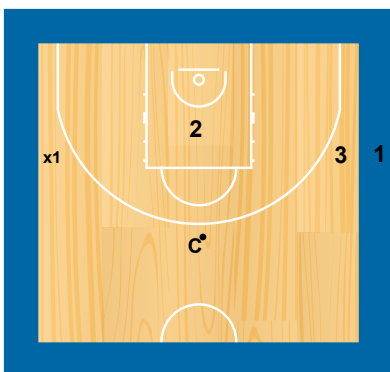
Once x1 has the ball they pass to the coach (who is now on the wing) and defend 2 who will "flash cut" into the key.

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.

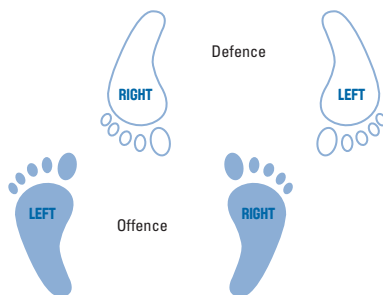
In this position there are three techniques which in particular must be developed:

- 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.



ON BALL DEFENCE - CONTAINMENT

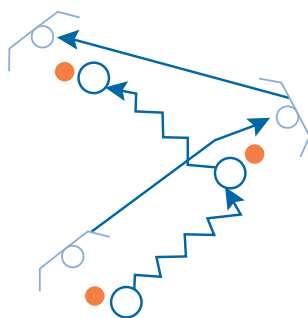
When an opponent has the ball, the defender must stop them from dribbling into the key. The defender must be balanced and ready to move into their opponent's path, moving laterally to stop the offence moving forward.

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.

In this example, the defender is forcing the offence to the offence's left.

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.

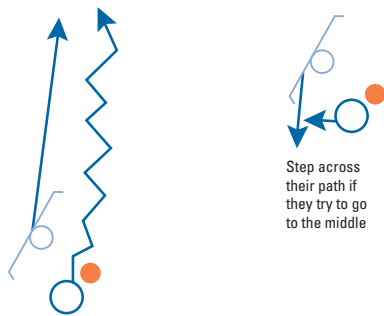
If the defender only moves one foot, they will quickly be off balance. Similarly, if they reach for the ball without moving their feet, the offensive player will easily get past them.



ON BALL DEFENCE - TURNING THE DRIBBLER

"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.

This position forces the offensive player to move in another direction because they cannot move in their original direction.

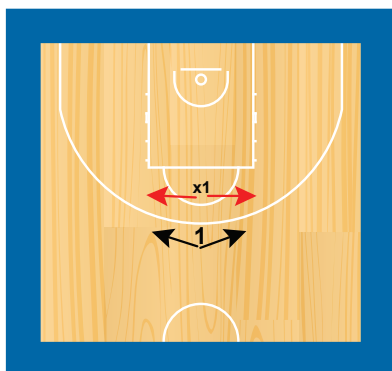


ON BALL DEFENCE – CHANNELLING THE DRIBBLER

“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.

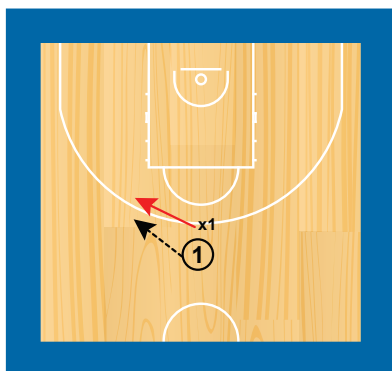
The defender stays in front of the dribbler with the foot closest to the dribbler approximately at the dribbler’s shoulder and the defender’s chest opposite the ball. The hand closest to the dribbler should be low (to stop a cross-over dribble) and the other hand should be shoulder height (to stop a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

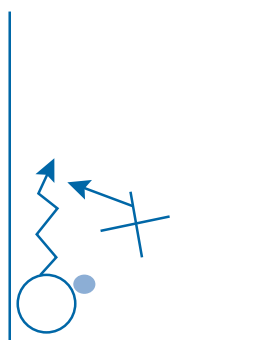
Players are in pairs, without a ball. One player is designated offence and they take one step (to whichever side they wish). Defender uses lateral footwork to maintain position.



“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.

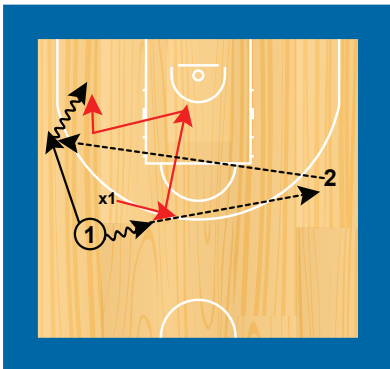


“GUARD THE CORNER”

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.

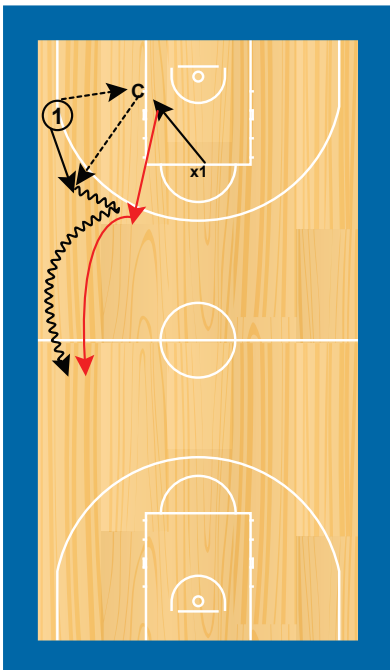


“CLOSE-OUT & GUARD”

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”

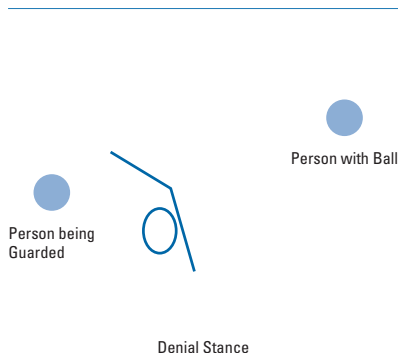
Offence starts in the corner and defence starts at the foul line. Offence pass to the coach (under the basket) or in the post and the defender closes out to the coach.

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.



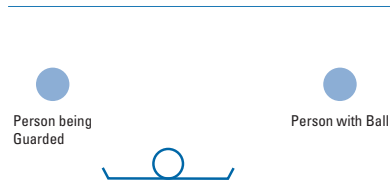
OFF BALL DEFENCE – DENIAL STANCE

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".

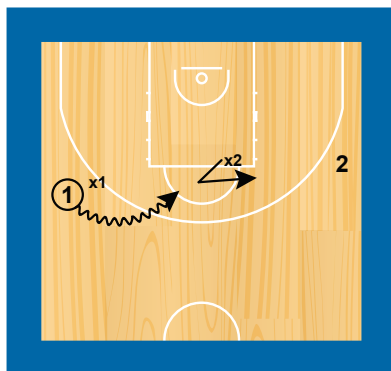
The closer the defender is to the "passing lane" (imaginary line between the person with the ball and the person being defended), the more aggressive the defence is.

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.

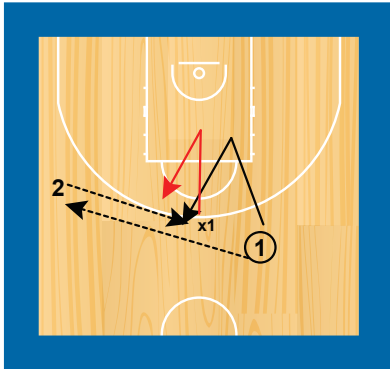


OFF BALL DEFENCE – HEDGE & RECOVER

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.

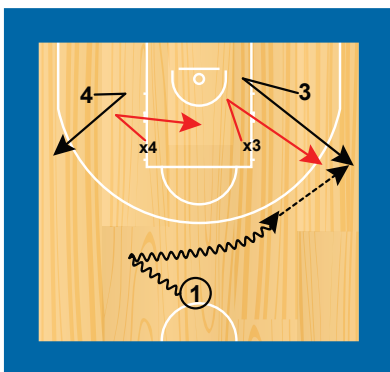
BELOW ARE A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED TO PRACTICE GUARDING OFF THE BALL.



“GUARD THE LEAD”

Players are in groups of 3, with 1 ball.

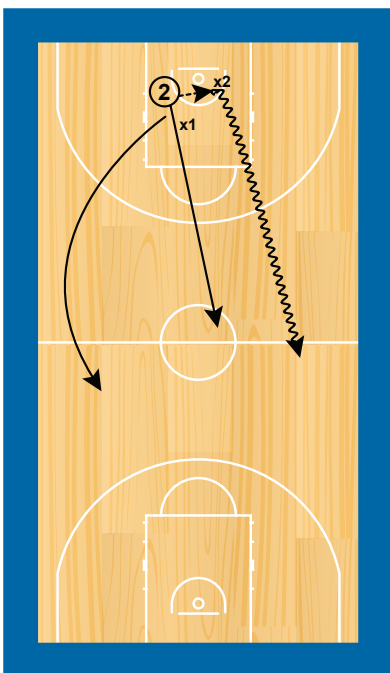
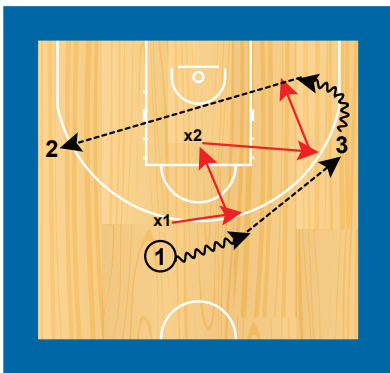
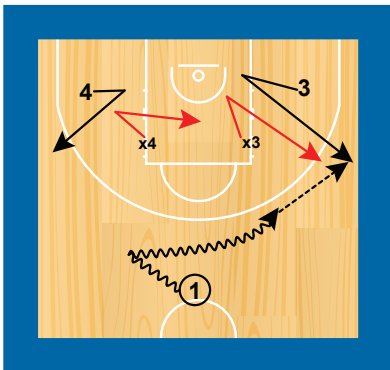
The player with the ball passes to their team mate and then makes a “v-cut” lead to receive a pass back. The third player defends this lead.



“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.

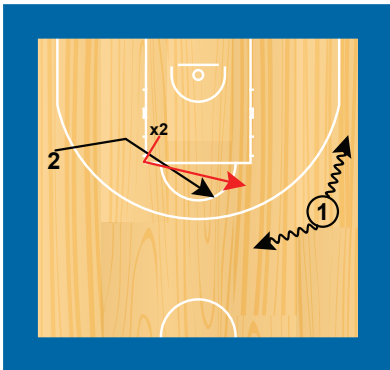


"3X2 HALF COURT"

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.

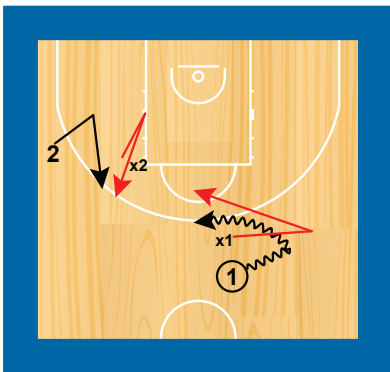
The defenders should aim to have one person defending the ball at all times and the other defender in a "help" position in the key.

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 they 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.



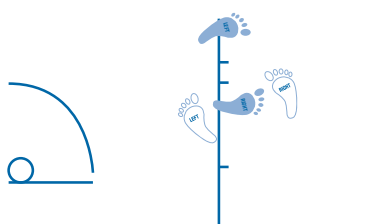
"2X2"

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.

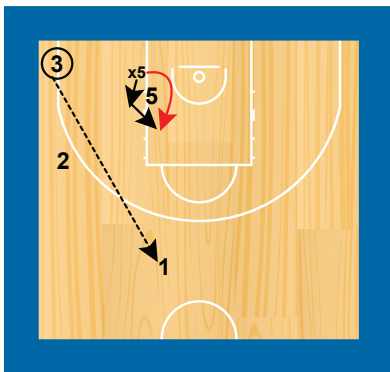
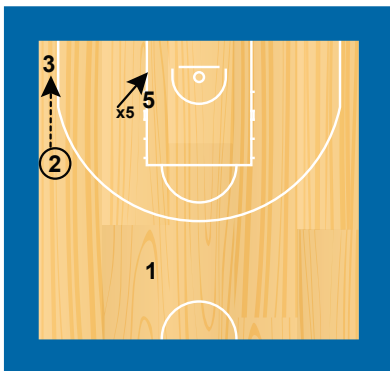
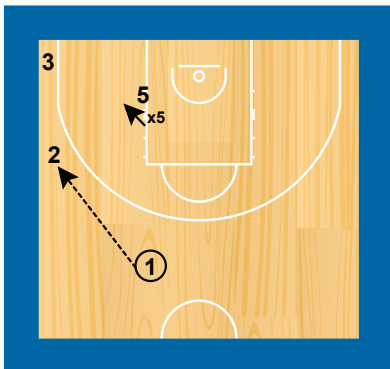
The defender may step their front foot in front of the post player, although the more that this is done, the more the defender exposes themselves to being “sealed inside” by the post player (i.e. the post player is closer to the basket). Keeping one foot behind the post player makes this less likely.

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.

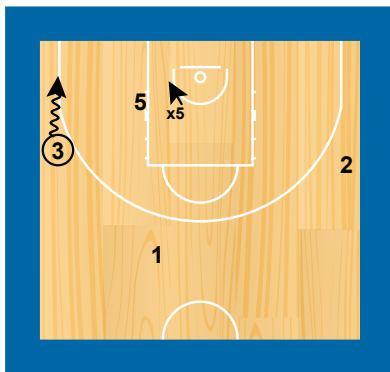
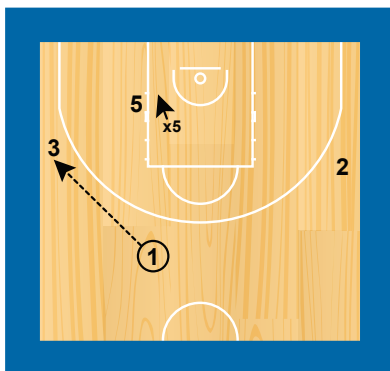
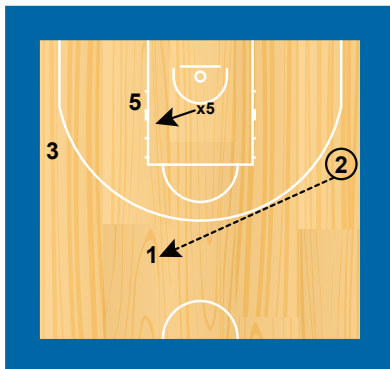
As the ball is passed to the corner, x5 moves to a denial stance on the baseline side.

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.

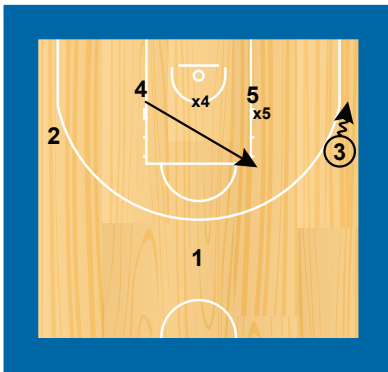
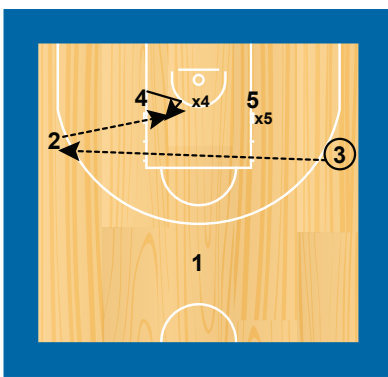
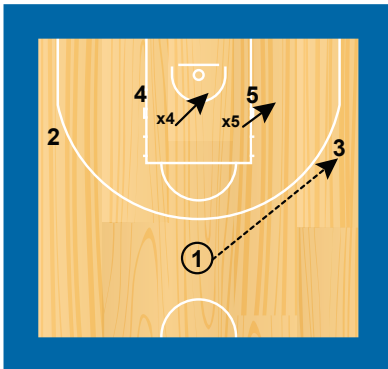
If the ball is passed from the corner to 1, x5 may find it easier to establish their new position by going behind the post player (shown in red), rather moving in front of 5.



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:

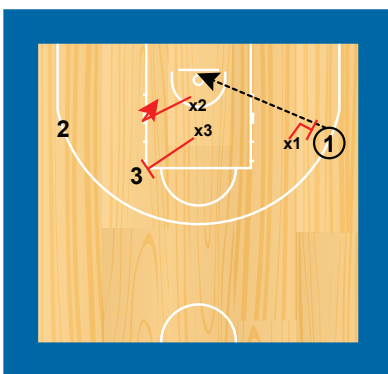
1. **See your opponent.** When a shot is taken, many players simply turn towards the basket, thus losing vision of their opponent.
2. **Balance.** Players must have good balance with knees bent.
3. **Contact with your opponent.** Next, the player must move to establish contact with their opponent. This 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.



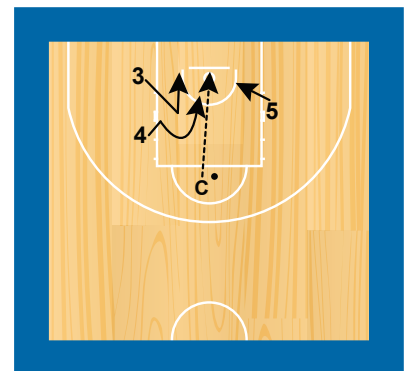
1 shoots the ball and their defender contests the shot and then "blocks out".

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

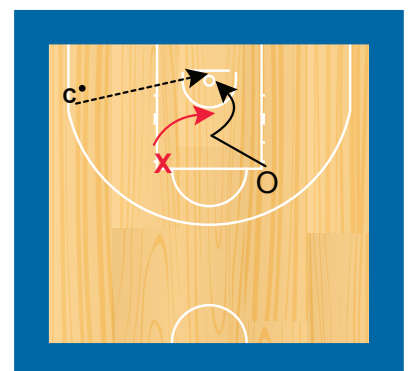
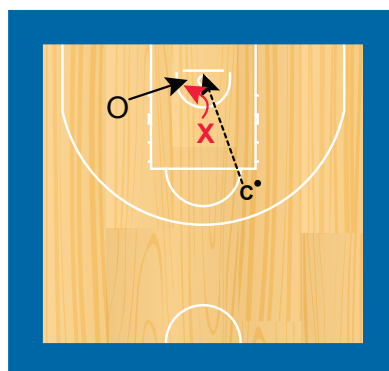
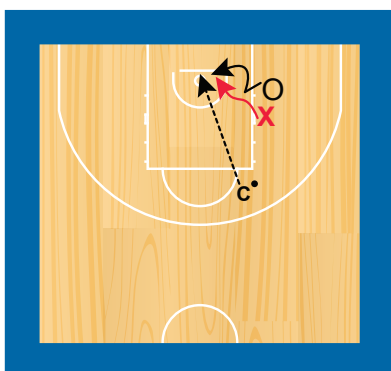
X2 (whose opponent is outside the key), watches their opponent and steps to the side of the key. They will "block out" if 2 comes to rebound the ball.

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



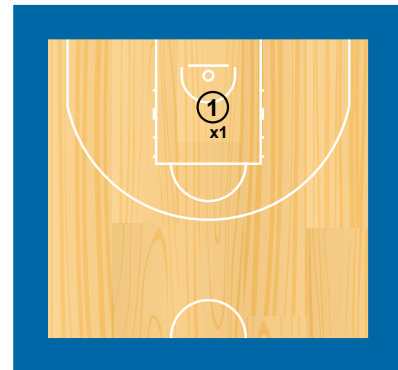
“1x1 Rebounds”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach shoots the ball and the offensive player attempts to get the rebound • Defensive player “blocks out” • Work from different positions • On defensive rebound, outlet to coach. On offensive rebound, shoot and continue until there is a score or defensive rebound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence – establish contact • Offence – don’t accept being “boxed out”
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“Disadvantage Rebound”

- 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.

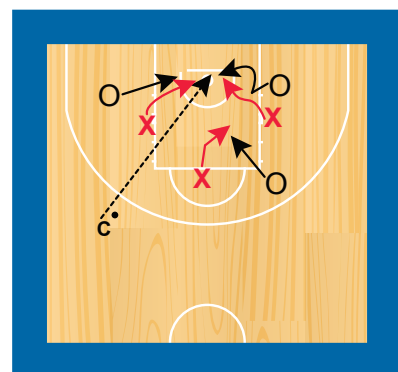
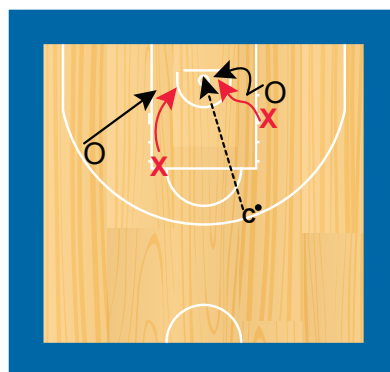
- Offence should make contact with defender before shooting
- Defence should move to at least the side of the offence player in an attempt to claim the rebounding position.



“2x2 Rebounds” & “3x3 Rebounds”

- 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.

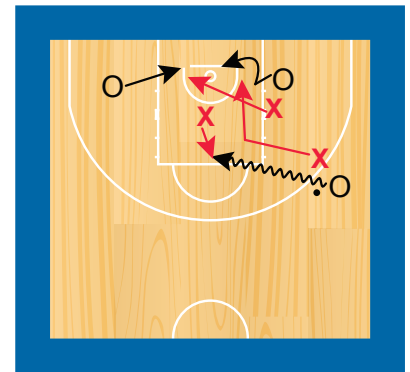
- Anticipate the shot and move to the rebounding spot as early as possible
- Defenders establish contact



“Penetrate & Rebound”

- 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:
 - Made shot;
 - Dribbler gets into keyway;
 - Offence rebound.
- Defenders in the keyway help to prevent penetration.

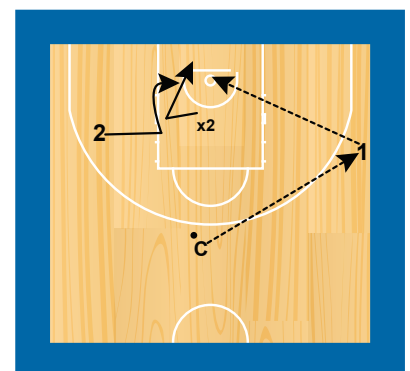
- Offensive rebounders look to take advantage when their defender moves to help guard penetration



“Split Line Box Out”

- 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)

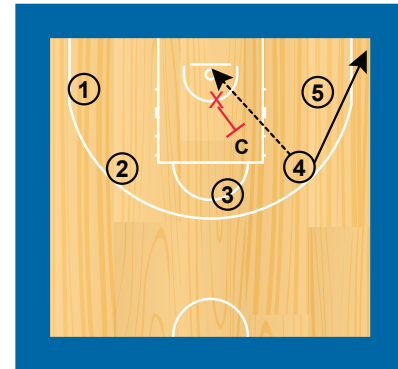
- Defence must move toward offensive player – do not stay on split line
- Offence use change of pace and direction to avoid box out



“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.

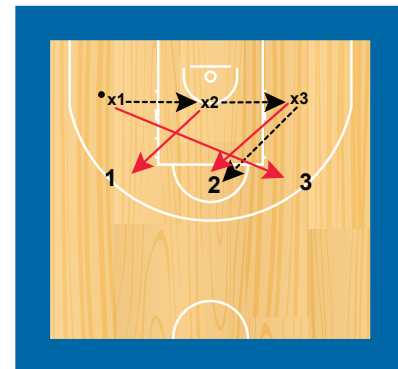
- Defence must see the coach first, then move to get box out.



“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.

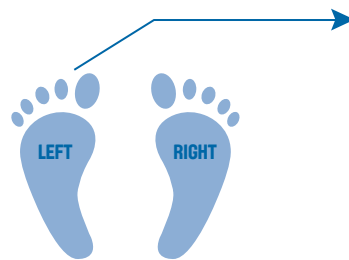
2.1.6 EFFICIENTLY CHANGING DIRECTION

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.

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.

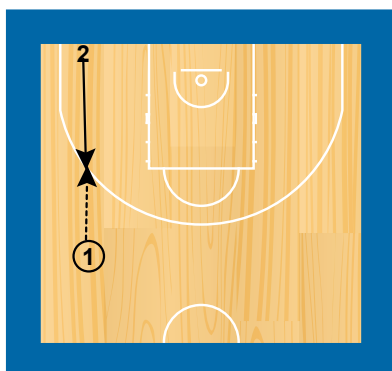
The following guidelines will also help:

- 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!

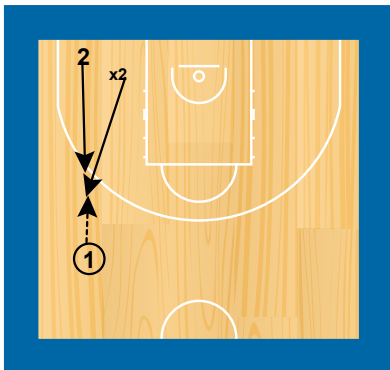
- Always give a target with your hands for where you want the ball to be passed – have your hands ready to catch the ball.

STRAIGHT CUT

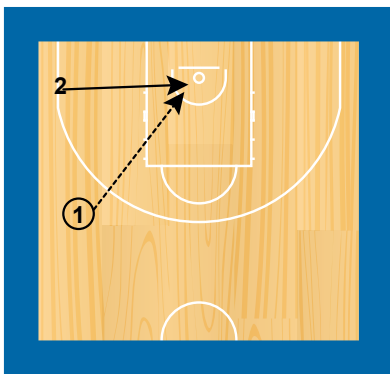
Players will usually be taught to pass and catch while standing still because this allows them to focus on those particular skills, however, basketball is a dynamic game and players must quickly be introduced to passing while on the move and passing to a team mate that is moving.



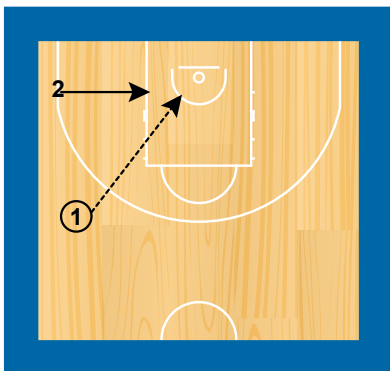
Players can quickly progress to “leading” for the ball, simply by having them run towards the player that will pass the ball to them. This is a “straight cut”.



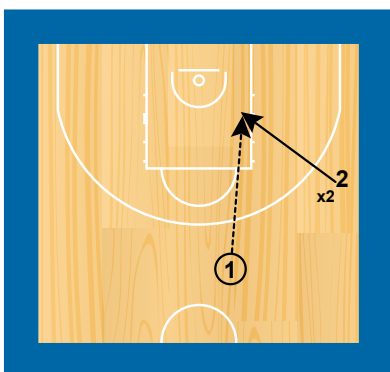
Young players will often stop their cut before catching the ball, which gives a defender the opportunity to run past and catch the ball. Players should be encouraged to keep running until they have caught the ball – a small jump in the air as they catch the ball will help them to stop.



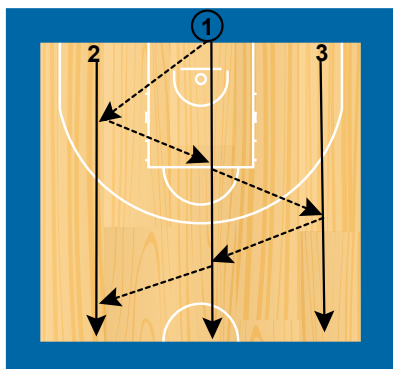
Next, players need to learn to pass the ball to someone who is moving, but not directly towards them. There are many examples of when this will happen in a game, and it can be practiced anywhere on the court.



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.

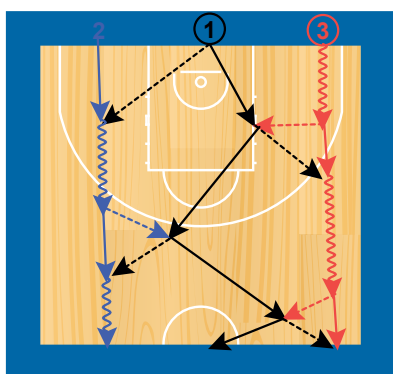


One of the most common examples of a straight lead that moves away from the passer is a “back door” cut toward the basket, when the defender is denying the pass.



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.

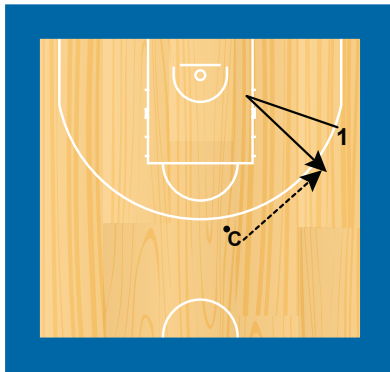


Obviously a player that is running with the ball must be dribbling it (otherwise it would be a travelling violation) and players need to learn to pass “off the dribble”.

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

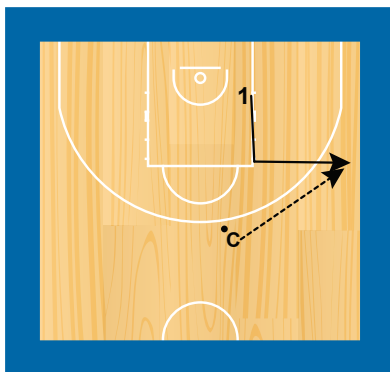
2.2.2 SKILL CATEGORY: GETTING OPEN



"V CUT"

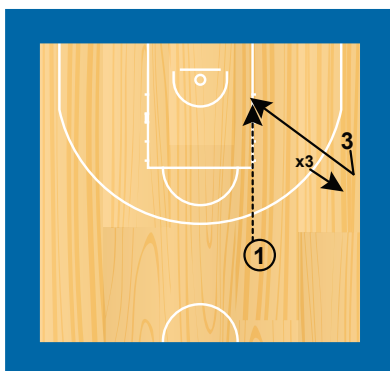
- After cutting towards the basket, change angle to get into the path of the defender
- "Front foot" advantage is important for creating a passing lane
- After cutting into the key, the player may stop before cutting to the perimeter.

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.



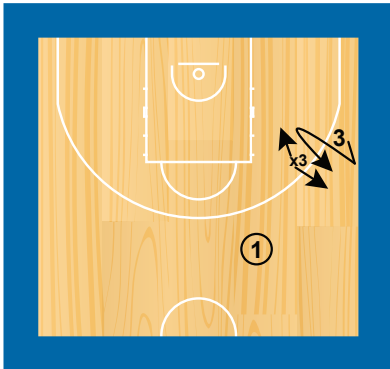
"L CUT"

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

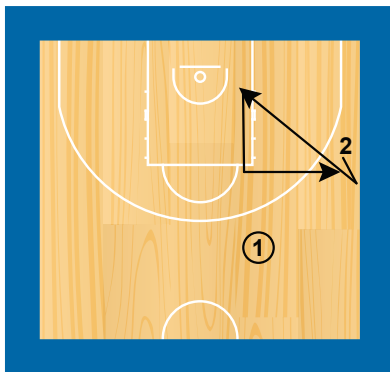


"BACKDOOR CUT"

- 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	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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:

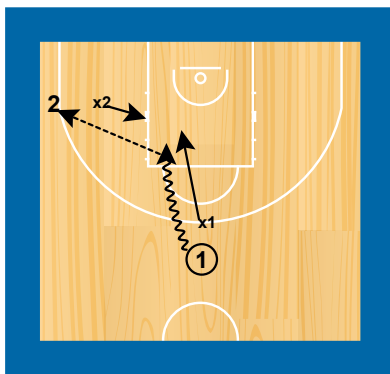
- Move behind the ball – sometimes the easiest position to make and receive a pass is behind the player that has the ball.

- 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.

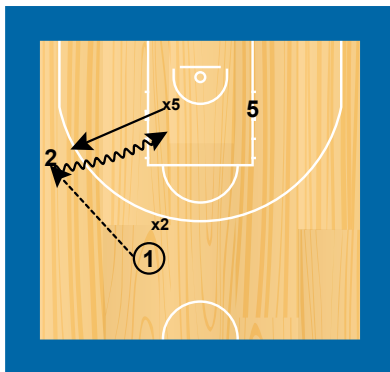
2.4.2 BEING READY TO PLAY – TRIPLE THREAT POSITION

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:

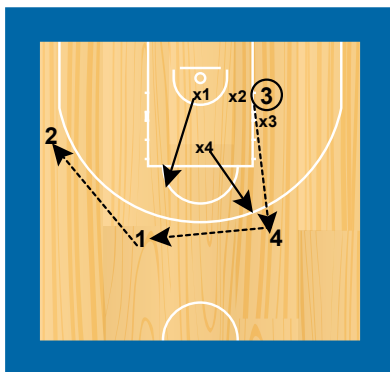


After a team mate has penetrated into the key and then passes out to the perimeter, this may be a situation where 2 should “catch and shoot”



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

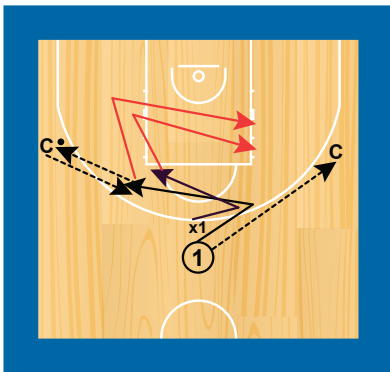
2.5.1 BASIC PASSING

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

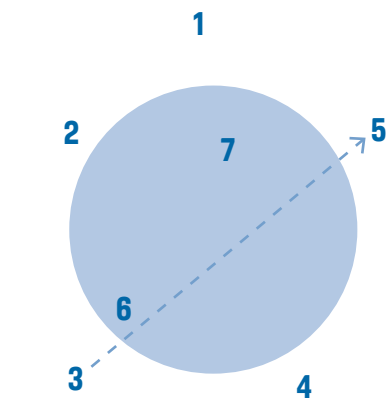
Nominate 3 to 5 “taggers”. “Taggers” must pass the ball to each other and try to tag other players with the ball. “Taggers” cannot travel when they have the ball, but they should pivot in an attempt to tag opponents.

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.

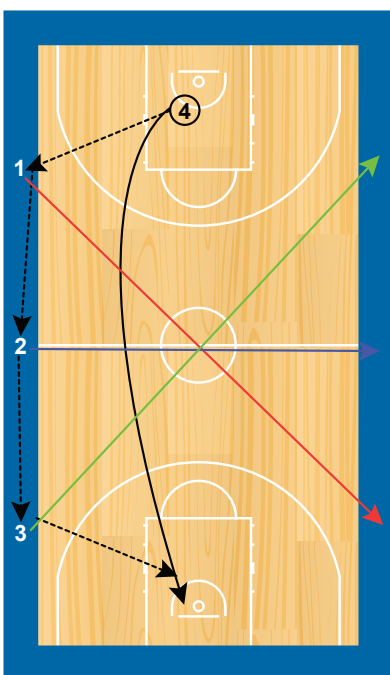


CIRCLE KEEP AWAY

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.

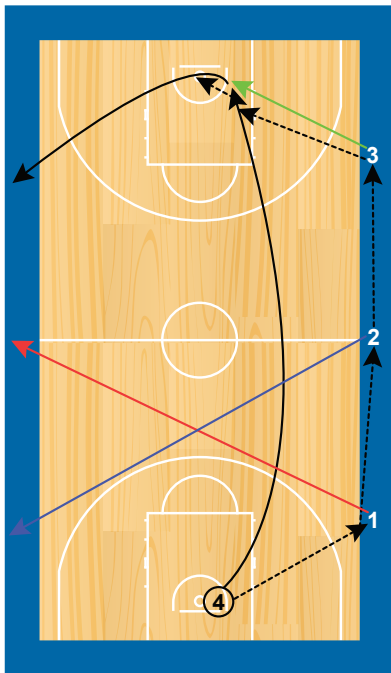


PARTISAN LAY-UP DRILL

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.

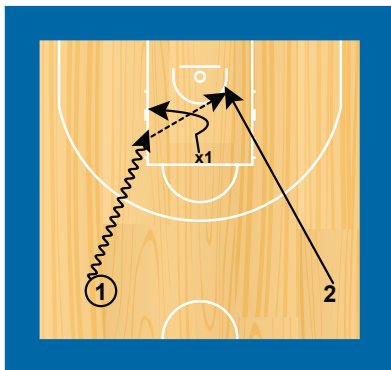
1 passes to 2 and moves to passing line at half way. 2 passes to 3 and moves to 3rd passing line. 3 passes to 4 for lay-up, and then rebounds shot (before it hits the floor). 3 then starts the drill again.

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.

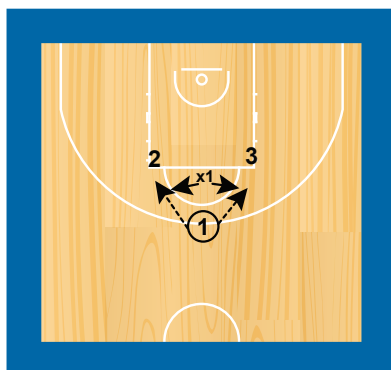
In a competitive activity, players can select which shot to shoot (lay-up, 2pts or 3pts), although they only get one shot.



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.



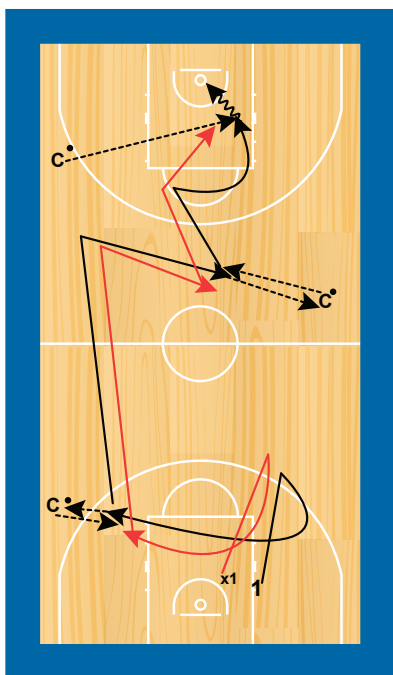
TRIANGLE PASSING

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!).

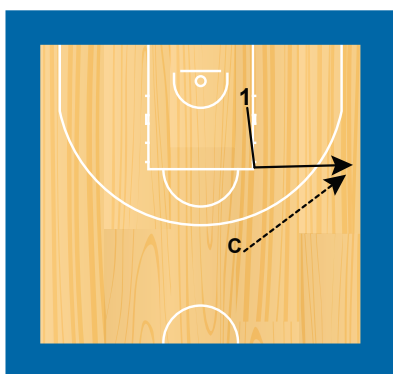
The defender should have active hands and hedge to try to deflect the pass.

2.5.2 FUN ACTIVITIES TO TEACH MOVING, PASSING AND GETTING OPEN



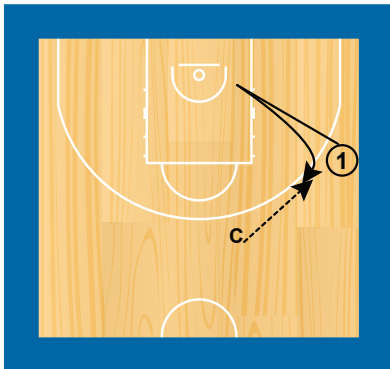
3 PASSES CONTESTED

- 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



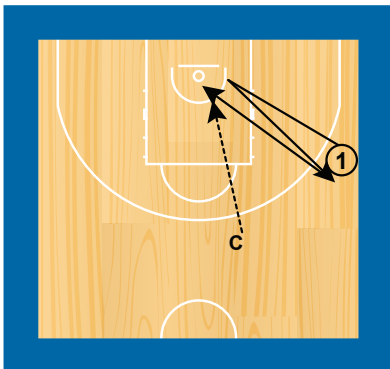
3 LEADS

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.



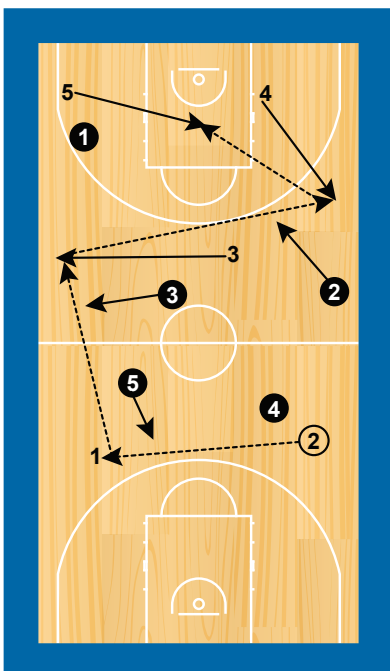
3 LEADS CONT...

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".



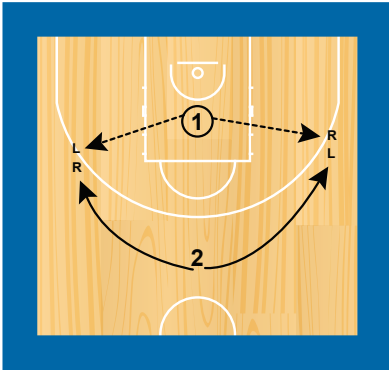
TALLYBALL TOUCHDOWN

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.

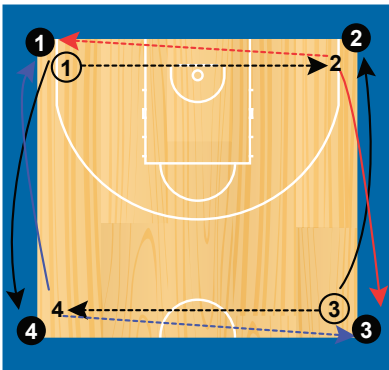
A new count starts each time there is a fumble, or interception. No dribbling, no travelling, no fouling. If violation occurs, possession is taken from the side line.

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.

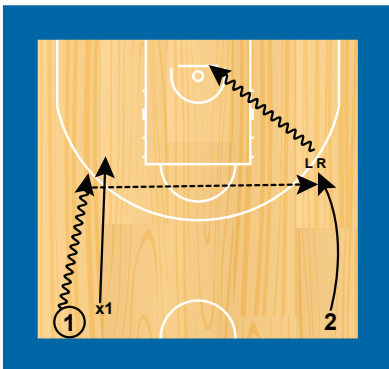


CORNER PASSING

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.

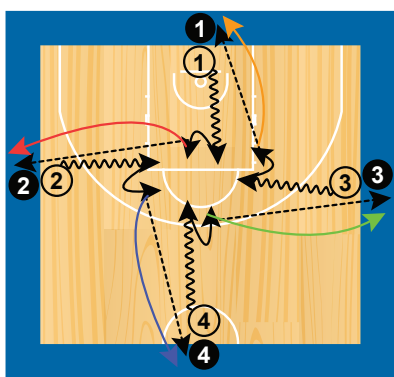
Coaches of junior athletes, at all ages, should focus on each skill category. Importantly though, the level of detail that is taught depends upon the age and relative skill level of the players.

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”

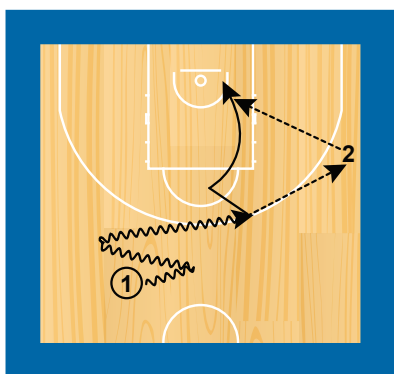
Attacking the Legs	Emphasise using dribble moves to beat (get past) the defender, not just look fancy!	"Gauntlet"
Key Teaching Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread fingers around the ball – don't have the ball touch the palm of your hand • Push the ball with force • Don't look at the ball – "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



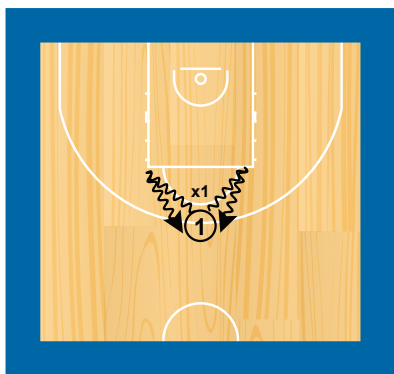
DRIBBLE, PIVOT, PASS

- 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.



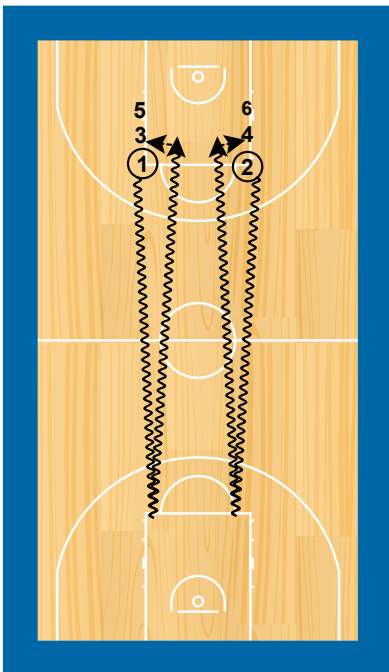
ZIG ZAG LAY-UP

- 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.



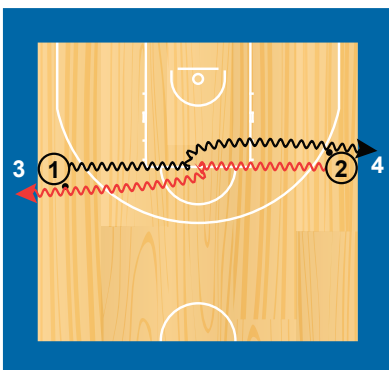
RELAY RACE

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.

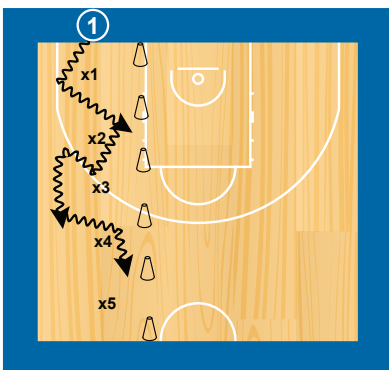
Similarly, the coach can walk in front of dribblers which will reinforce them needing to look up! The coach can even have another two groups going across the court, instructing players to stop (but to keep dribbling) to avoid any collision.



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	There are probably as many different shooting techniques as there are basketball players! Key aspects for shooting are: <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)

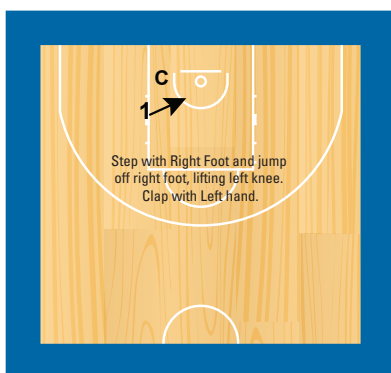
2.7.2 BASIC SHOOTING - TEACHING LAY-UP FOOTWORK

TEACHING LAY-UP FOOTWORK

With very young players simply having the players stop, get balanced and shoot is a good starting point.

When progressing to moving lay-ups, coaches should emphasize correct footwork and the ability to shoot with either hand. Spend a short amount of time on technique in each training session, and then give the players plenty of chance to practice.

ONE SEQUENCE TO TEACH THE CORRECT FOOTWORK FOR LAY-UPS IS:

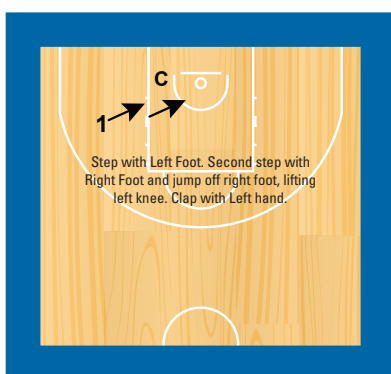


The player starts at the low “block” position facing the basket, the coach stands under the backboard, facing the player. The player takes one step and jumps to “high 5” the coach (they clap hands).

The step is with the foot furthest from the baseline (i.e. right foot when on the left hand side) and the player “high 5’s” with the hand closest to the baseline.

When the jump they lift the knee and hand on the same side of their body.

After a few tries, the player has a ball, stands in the block, takes one step, jumps and shoots.



Next, the players start one step from the block. They take one step (landing in the block), a second step and then jump to “high 5” the coach’s hand.

The first step is with the foot closest to baseline, the second step is the same as in the first stage above! After a few tries, give them a ball and let them shoot!

THE TEACHING POINTS THAT THIS SEQUENCE EMPHASISES ARE:

- Land a foot in the “block” (left foot on the left hand side, right foot on the right hand side). The foot that lands in the block is the one closest to the baseline, and the player should shoot with the hand of the same side (i.e. left foot in the block, left hand shot);
- Pick the ball up just before the foot lands in the block (i.e. when their feet are still in the air);
- Take one more step, jump and shoot.

To continue with the teaching sequence, the players now need to dribble the ball! Have them start one step away from the block, dribbling the ball, whilst standing still. When the coach says go, the player takes two steps to the basket. The footwork is the same as stage 2 above – the first step landing in the block!

Next, players start two steps from the block, standing still and dribbling the ball. Taking their first step while dribbling and then taking a second step, which lands in the block. They pick the ball up at this time. After the third step, jump and shoot.

Finally, players start at the three-point line, dribbling the ball while standing still. They move towards the basket, focusing on landing with one foot in the block (baseline foot), taking a final step, jumping and shooting. They should catch the ball while their feet are in the air, landing in the block.

Another progression is to have players run toward the basket, catching a short pass from the coach. They catch the ball with their feet in the air. They land with one foot in the block (left foot on the left hand side, right foot on the right hand side), land their second foot and then jump and shoot.

2.7.3 BASIC SHOOTING - FOUNDATION FOR THE SHOT – BALANCED STANCE

TEACHING POINTS FOR SHOOTING

There is a large number of resources available to help coaches to teach shooting. The key elements are:

- Foundation of the Shot – Balanced Stance
- Grip on the ball;
- “Top of the shot” – Releasing the Ball

THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD SHOT

The “power” in a shot comes from the legs – whether it is a jump shot, or set shot (e.g. foul shot), the athlete pushes up from their legs to project the ball. It is particularly common with young athletes that they will use their upper body to try and generate the force to shoot. This can lead to exaggerated movements.

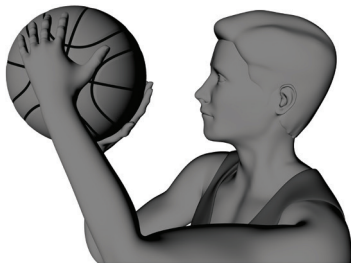
A good shooting technique should be a relatively simple and uncomplicated motion.

2.7.4 BASIC SHOOTING - GRIP ON THE BALL



GRIP ON THE BALL

The shooting hand should be behind or under the ball. The other hand is on the side of the ball. Fingers should be spread comfortably and the grip on the ball should feel "natural".



The elbow moves to a position underneath the ball, and the non-shooting hand remains at the side of the ball. The shooting "action" is now to push up.

2.7.5 BASIC SHOOTING - "TOP OF THE SHOT" – RELEASING THE BALL



"TOP OF THE SHOT" – RELEASING THE BALL

The higher the arc of the ball, the higher the probability that it will go into the basket. This is facilitated by having a "high release" point – elbow above eyes.

The shooting hand is underneath the ball, as is the elbow.



In the course of shooting, the player should look underneath the ball, not over the top of it, to sight the target.



The arc of the shot is enhanced by the ball spinning backwards in flight. As the ball is released, the player should flick their wrist, putting spin on the ball.

This flick is a relaxed movement. The fingers of the shooting hand should remain spread and not squeezed together. The only movement is in the wrist.

The other hand simply releases from the ball – it should not push the shot at all.

TEACHING A "FLUID" SHOOTING STYLE

Whether a shot is taken after dribbling or after catching the ball, the shot will usually start at approximately hip height. Many players have a habit of pausing in their shot technique at their forehead, which is often the result of practicing the "form" of their shot from that point.

This type of "concept" shooting can be valuable as the player learns to push up to a high release point, however, equally important is having a "fluid" shot technique without a pause. Any pause will both slow the release of the shot (which makes it harder to shoot under defensive pressure) and may also reduce the power that comes from the legs.

A simple method to practice a fluid shot technique is:

1. The player stands on the "no charge" circle, facing "side-on" to the basket.
2. If the player shoots right-handed, their left shoulder should be closest to the basket. The opposite applies for a left-handed shooter.
3. The player starts with the ball in the "shooting pocket", as if they have picked it after dribbling. Their shooting hand should be behind the ball, with elbow pointing behind them. Their non-shooting hand is on the side of the ball.
4. The player makes a 90° forward pivot, which will have them facing the basket.
5. A right-handed shooter will step with their right foot and a left-handed shooter steps with their left foot.
6. As their stepping foot lands, they push up with their legs and lift the ball as high as possible, finishing standing with their heels off the ground. The shooting hand should be underneath the ball and the non-shooting hand on the side of the ball. This "release point" should be as high as possible.
7. After a few repetitions without releasing the ball, the player then shoots the ball – jumping into the air if they wish.

2.7.6 BASIC SHOOTING - SHOOTING OFF THE DRIBBLE

Most players are taught (or teach themselves) to shoot from a stationary position, however often in a game they will need to shoot immediately after dribbling, which needs to be practiced.

One of the difficulties that players face is to establish their balance as they go from moving forward (as they dribble) to stopping (and perhaps jumping) to shoot the ball.

Some key things to consider are:

- **Footwork** – It is recommended that young players be instructed to use a “stride stop” as they catch the ball as it is easier to establish balance. After the last dribble, the player should catch the ball with both feet in the air, and then land one foot followed by the other. Preferably, the “inside foot” (closest to the basket) will be the pivot foot (land first). As the second foot lands, the player begins shooting.

Some coaches prefer a jump stop as preparation for shooting which can also be used at the end of a dribble.

- **Short steps** – After catching the ball, (with feet in the air), the player lands one foot after the other (a “stride stop”), keeping the feet close together (taking small steps). If their feet are too far apart it makes shooting difficult as it will affect both their balance and power.
- **Pick up ball** – if the player is dribbling with their left hand, they should move their right hand across their body to pick up the ball (and vice versa when dribbling right-handed). Instead, many players move the ball across their body, which gives an opportunity for the defence to deflect the ball;

- **Practice the last dribble** – When learning to shoot at the end of their dribble, a player starts shooting off one dribble and should shoot inside the key. The player stands in the key (e.g. at the free throw line), takes one dribble and then steps forward (catching the ball in the air) shooting off a stride stop.

The player should focus on dribbling the ball hard (with one hand) and shooting with rhythm (1-2-3). They can then move further out to shoot off two dribbles or three dribbles. The coach should start under the basket and then step forward (as if a help defender) so that the player gets used to “pulling up” before a defender.

- **Fluid pick up** – Once the player has two hands on the ball, they start their shooting action and there should not be any “stopping point” or hesitation in the shot.

2.7.7 BASIC SHOOTING - JUMP SHOT

A player should not be taught to jump shoot unless they have a consistent shooting action with a high release.

It is also important that players stay “within range” when developing jump shooting technique, although many players will immediately want to move out to the three point line!

The advantage of a jump shot is that it enables an offensive player both to get additional strength in the shot and to shoot over a taller defender. However, when first developing the technique, players should begin with a small jump. Players may lose balance when jumping (particularly when they jump high), which can affect their shot even if it is only a moderate loss of balance.

A good way to improve balance when jumping is to have the player jump on a trampoline (a mini trampoline is best if possible). The player should jump only high enough so that they can point their toes to the ground while in the air. Have the player keep their arms still and concentrate on trying to land on the same spot on the trampoline. This will focus on them using their core strength and head position to remain balanced (often they will use their arms to balance).

A trampoline can also be used to practice shooting (again a mini trampoline is preferred).

A jump shot is exactly that - jumping to shoot and to gain an athletic advantage and power when shooting the ball. Everything else about the player’s shot technique must remain the same, including landing after the jump with feet in the same position as when they started (or slightly forward if shooting from long range).

Some players will jump back slightly, which is often caused by looking at the ball in flight (and moving their head back) rather than maintaining focus on their target (e.g. spot on the backboard, front of rim or whatever).

The hardest thing when shooting a jump shot is co-ordinating the timing of the jump and ensuring your shooting action works in motion with your jump.

Some important teaching points:

- Prepare to shoot the ball before catching it, be low and ready;
- Catch the ball in the air to develop rhythm, land and then jump into the shot;
- Lock your feet (pointing at the basket) and head (focusing on the target);
- Be balanced in a strong athletic stance;
- Keep your feet apart throughout the shot and attempt to land in the same spot (or slightly forward). It can be good to start standing on a line on the court as this will easily enable the player to identify if they jump forward or backward;
- Release the ball at the top of your jump, or just before the top of the jump, for maximum power. If the player shoots whilst they are on the way down, the power from their legs will have dissipated.

FOLLOW-UP

1. How do you teach shooting to Beginner players?
2. There are many different shooting techniques amongst the world's best scorers.
Discuss with a coaching colleague when you would attempt to change a player's shooting technique.
3. How well does your team shoot contested lay-ups?
Discuss with a coaching colleague how you could improve this.

2.8 OFFENSIVE MOVES

2.8.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST STEP

Coaches should pay close attention to an athlete's footwork, particularly the first step they take when beginning to move. The adage "the quicker the start, the earlier the finish" certainly applies when a player is attempting to beat an opponent.

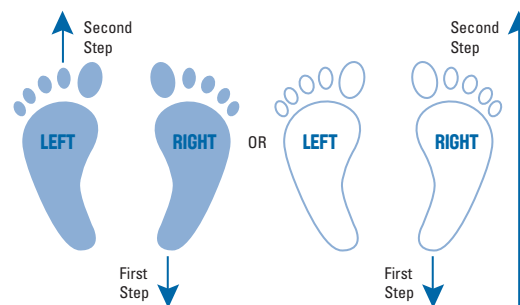
Athletes should aim to make the first step as "explosive" and as quick as possible, and this is helped by first being in a low and balanced stance.

One of the most common mistakes that players make is that their first step actually goes nowhere or moves them in the direction opposite to the one intended.

A simple way to identify whether or not a player is doing this is to have the players start by standing next to the baseline (or any line). On the coach's command the players start running (i.e. when the coach says "go"). The coach should pay close attention to their footwork, and in particular must look at:

- Which foot moves first (the coach may designate this if they wish);
- In what direction that foot moves.

Surprisingly, the first step is often backwards (or straight up and down) and it is only the second step that moves forwards. Having the athletes next to the baseline makes it easier to identify the footwork.



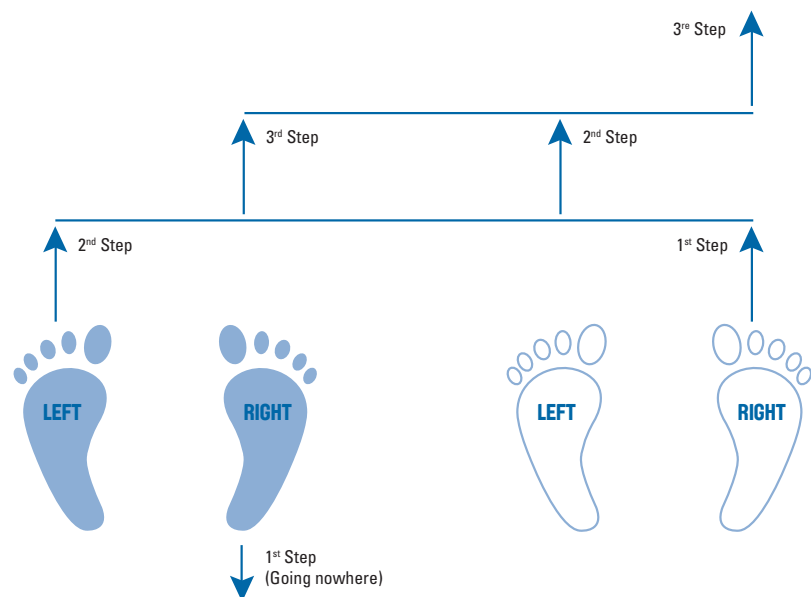
Similarly, when athletes move sideways, the first step should be with the foot of the direction they are moving (i.e. if they are moving to their right, they should step with their right foot). Often though, the footwork is incorrect:



Less commonly, the player may even cross their feet when moving to the side (e.g. the first step with the left foot is so big that it goes past the right foot). Clearly, this is not moving as quickly as possible.

Whilst the effect of this may seem trivial, this type of movement makes it highly likely that a player will be beaten by an opponent that has the correct footwork – essentially, the player will always at least be one step behind.

This is illustrated in the following graphic:



The cause of stepping backwards (when moving forwards) is often the player's stance. Particularly if they are standing with straight legs and need to move a leg so that they can push off it.

Most players will not realize that they are doing this – they are “unconsciously incompetent” and the first step to improving the footwork is for them to become aware of what they are doing. Once, this is done, they can start to move through the stages of learning until reaching “unconscious competence”.

2.8.2 GETTING POST POSITION

All players should learn the fundamentals of playing “back to the basket” from the low post.

BASIC LOW POST MOVES

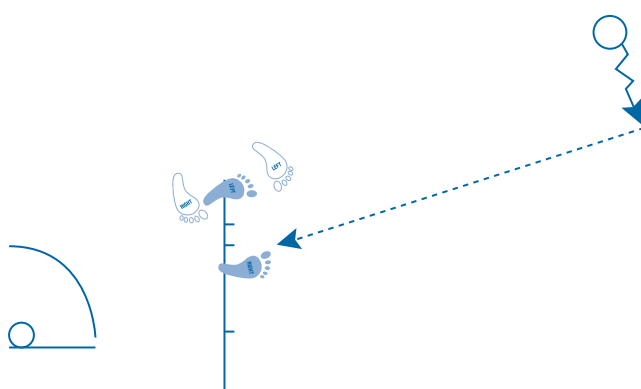
It may seem obvious that tall players need to develop these fundamentals, but forwards and guards may also find themselves playing in a position that needs these skills. Indeed, one of the most valuable team strategies is to have a player that can take advantage of a mismatch (regardless of position) by moving to the low post.

BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL

The first task of a low post player is to be able to receive the ball in the low post position. This is not easy as the defence is often actively denying a pass to the post. Using fakes, changing direction and changing speed are very important aspects in establishing a good position in the post, as is having a balanced body stance.

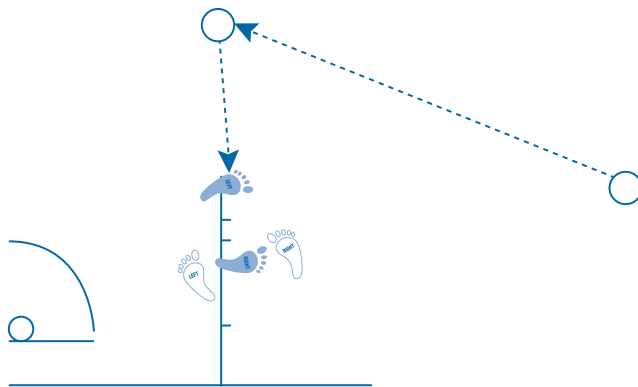
The post player focuses not on where the ball is, but on their opponent, getting a position of advantage. That position may have an immediate “passing angle” or it may be that the ball needs to be passed to a team mate who has a “passing angle”. It is the post player’s responsibility to get open. It is the responsibility of their team mates to then get the ball to them! When a post player is not free, they should not follow the movement of the ball.

In the diagrams following, the shaded feet are those of the offensive post player.

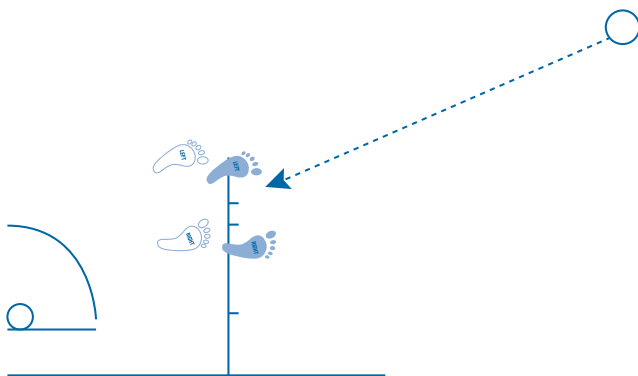


Here the defender is on the “high side” of the post player, blocking an initial pass. If the perimeter player dribbles toward the baseline, it can create a passing angle.

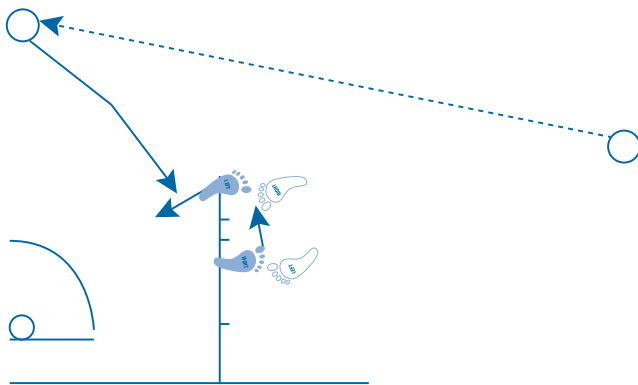
The post player should use their elbow, shoulder and hips to “hold” the defender in the high position.



Here the defender is on the low side of the post player, again blocking an initial pass. By passing the ball to a team at the top of the key, it creates a passing angle into the post player.



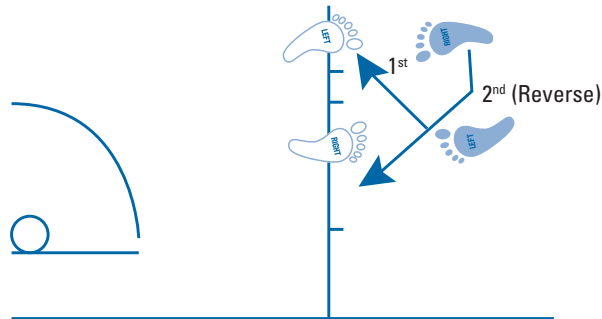
Where the defender stands behind the post player, a pass from the perimeter is relatively straightforward. However the post player must have their elbows out and present a target hand, ensuring that the defender cannot step around and deflect the pass.



Where the defender "fronts" the post player, it blocks the initial pass being made from the wing. If the post player can hold the defender in this position, the offensive team may be able to move the ball to the top of the key and then pass to the post player.

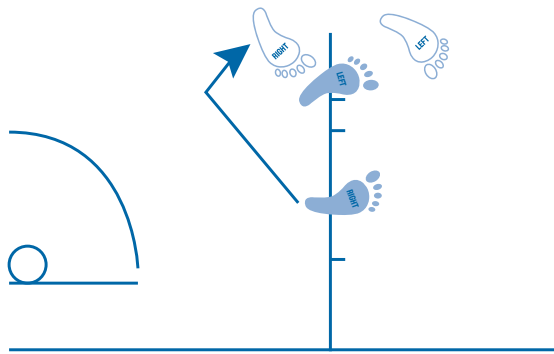
The post player steps into their defender and then reverse pivots so that the defender is behind them.

The wing player may also be able to make a lob pass to the post player. This is most successful when there is no help defender at the basket. The post player must keep contact with the defender until the ball has gone past the defender.



A post player needs to use their feet to get position – two steps is usually enough. Here the first step is into the defender, and then the post reverse pivots to establish position.

Again, using shoulder, elbow and hips to “hold” the defender, and keeping good balance to ensure the defender cannot move them out of position.



Using a reverse pivot can be a very effective method to get open. It is then up to the post player’s team mates to get the ball to them!

HOLDING THE “SEAL”

It is a common mistake for young players to hold the defender only until they see their team mate passing the ball, and then they move their body to catch the ball. However, this also leaves the defender free to move and attempt to intercept the pass.

Instead, the post player should keep a good, balanced, stance with knees well bent and holding the defender with the shoulder, arm and elbow. The post player then presents a “target” hand (away from the defender), which is where team mates should pass the ball. Catch the ball with both feet on the floor – so either can be the pivot foot.

2.8.3 DROP STEP

PLAYING WITH THE BALL

Once the low post has the ball, there are two options:

- If they have a free pathway to the basket – move quickly and shoot!;
- If there is no free pathway to the basket, put “chin to shoulder” and take the time to LOOK.

The two biggest mistakes made by young post players are dribbling as soon as they receive the ball and putting their heads down, losing perspective of what is going on.

By taking time to look (quickly), the post can observe:

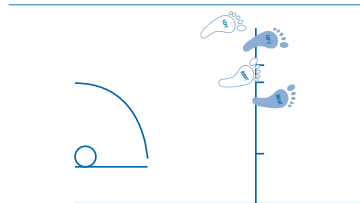
- The position of their defender (with a particular focus on their feet);
- The position and moves of other defenders;
- The position of their team mates.

Passing is an important skill from the low post and all players should develop a specific passing ability from the low post:

- Short one-hand passes to players cutting to the basket (including bounce passes);
- One or two-handed passes to players on the perimeter. These passes will typically be thrown from shoulder height and should be hard and flat;
- Pass fakes – to move defenders and potentially create an open pass.

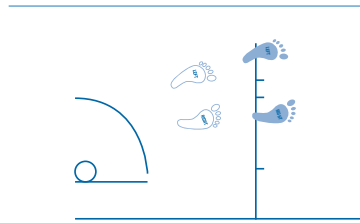
Most importantly, players must be able to pass with either hand.

SPECIFIC POST MOVES



The position of the defender's feet will give a low post player an indication of what to do:

If the defender's feet are higher than the post player (as shown) – go baseline!



Similarly, if the defender's feet are low – go to the middle!

If the post player is standing back, so that the post player could not step past (with a reverse pivot), the post player should simply face the basket!

Fake to one side, with chin on shoulder (to get vision of the defender), turn slightly at the waist and turn the shoulder slightly. Keep the head inside the foot, to remain balanced. Whether the post goes to the middle (defender is low) or to the baseline (defender is high), there are two methods:

1. **Forward Pivot** – this is an explosive step and is most effective where there are no other defenders in the keyway. If moving to the left, the left foot is the pivot foot, and a quick step is taken with the right foot. The ball is dribbled and the dribble should hit the ground as the right foot does. Typically, post players use this move to go straight to the basket.
2. **Drop Step** – this is a reverse pivot. For example, if moving to right, the post uses their left foot as the pivot foot. Stepping past the defender, the post player takes a quick dribble between their legs and then jumps towards the basket. The dribble is thrown by both hands, as hard as possible and is caught whilst in the air, landing in a jump stop (“one count”).

If using a drop step to move towards the baseline, the post player should end up facing the baseline – protecting the ball from any help defenders. If moving toward the middle, they should face the opposite sideline – again protecting the ball, with elbows out.

The move is then finished by looking at the basket, jumping and shooting the ball. It may be possible to shoot a lay-up (particularly if the post player moved to the baseline), or they may need to jump and shoot a “jump hook” shot. The jump hook is performed by bringing the ball straight up the shooting side, with both hands, and making full extension directly over the ear.

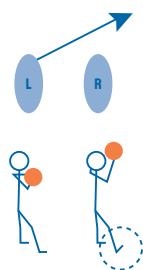
2.8.4 DROP STEP - COUNTER MOVE

COUNTER MOVES

After a drop step move, the post player may face a help defender, or their own defender may have managed to move into position. It is important that all players have a “counter move” to use – however it can also be used on any penetration in the key, whether on receiving a pass, or dribbling from the perimeter.

First, the use of a shot fake can be extremely effective to get the defender to jump (in an effort to block the shot). An effective shot fake should lift the ball to at least the forehead, and should lift the shoulders and upper body. The lower body must stay balanced and ready to move.

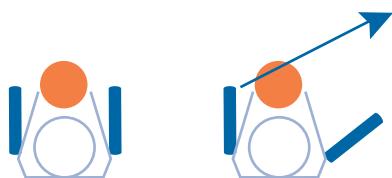
After the fake, either a reverse pivot, forward pivot or cross-over step may be the most effective way to step towards the basket, and players should be able to do all three. Forward and reverse pivots have already been discussed in this chapter.



CROSS-OVER STEP (“STEP THROUGH”)

With a cross-over step, the player moves to their right, stepping with their left foot or vice versa.

In this instance it can help to pivot on the heel of the foot, rather than on the toes. By pivoting on the heel and turning the pivot foot in the direction they wish to head, it is made easier to move in that direction.



‘BIRDSEYE’ VIEW

The player’s feet are shown by the thick lines. The second diagram shows the turning of the right foot, before stepping with the left foot (shown by the arrow).

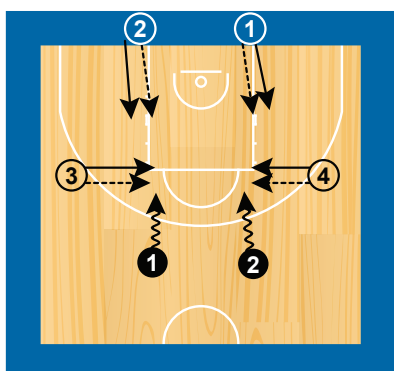
2.8.5 BASICS OF PERIMETER OFFENCE

All young players should be taught basic perimeter skills – getting open, facing the basket, passing, dribbling and shooting. The use of fakes is also very important on the perimeter, both drive fakes and shot fakes.

In using the various perimeter moves, the focus must be on “beating” their opponent. Many young players will dribble the ball extremely well – between their legs or behind their back, for example, and yet not be able to penetrate into the keyway.

Once they have received the ball, players on the perimeter must be able to:

- “Square up” – face the basket, with both a forward and reverse pivot;
- “Onside step” – beginning their dribble, stepping with the foot in the direction they are moving (i.e. right foot step to move right, with right hand dribble);
- “Crossover step” – beginning their dribble, stepping with the opposite foot to the direction they are moving (i.e. right foot step to move to their left, with left hand dribble);
- “Shot fake” – faking a shot, and then:
 - Shooting – if the defender does not react and leaves them open
 - Onside dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their right
 - Crossover dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their left
- “Drive fake” – faking a drive, and then:
 - Shooting – if the defender does, steps back
 - Onside dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their right
 - Crossover dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their left



“SPOT DRILL”

Players on the baseline spin the ball to the block, and then move after the ball to catch it. Change between:

- Landing in a stride stop (2 count), facing basket and shooting
- Landing in a jump stop (1 count), forward pivot and shot
- Landing in a jump stop (1 count), reverse pivot and shot

Players in the wing position spin the ball to the elbow, move after the ball and catch it, with feet in the air. They land in either a stride stop (2 count) or jump stop (1 count), face the basket and shoot.

Players from the top start with either a shot fake or a drive fake, and then take 1-2 dribbles to the elbow for a shot. Players should use both onside and cross-over footwork.

2.8.6 DRIVE FAKE MOVES

DRIVE FAKE (“JAB STEP”)

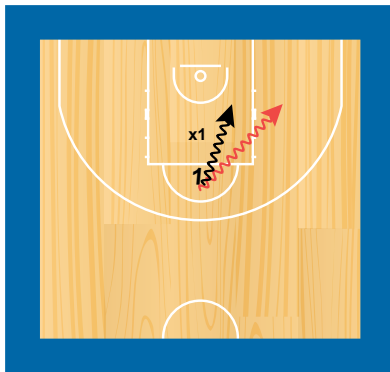
A drive fake (also called a “jab step”) is when an offensive player with the ball fakes that they will move in a particular direction by taking a small step in that direction. The move is done before they have dribbled.

If the defender reacts to the fake, the player can move in the opposite direction or may be able to shoot or pass. If the defender does not react, then the player can move in that direction. As with any fake, the offensive player must remain balanced (so that they can move in either direction) and they should allow time for the defender to react before taking their next move.

The coach should not “over teach” the drive fake and instead should have players practice in contested situations frequently to improve. The following considerations will assist the coach to provide feedback to athletes:

1. Balance – keep the head centred, not leaning too far forwards (keep the “nose behind the toes”)
2. Fake with the whole body – the more realistic the fake is, the more likely it will deceive the defender. The player should:
 - a. Look in the direction of the fake
 - b. Turn the shoulders toward the direction of the fake
3. Threaten – the drive fake should be in a direction that the defender is likely to want to stop them (i.e. toward the basket). Players will often fake stepping sideways, which is not threatening
4. Ball position – with the development of skills such as the “throw down” dribble, skilled athletes will often not move the ball. Players should be initially told to move the ball outside the leg that they are stepping (or jabbing with), ready to dribble in that direction.
5. Don’t Overstep – the fake step should be a small step so that they player can quickly move in either direction with a longer step. If the fake step is too long it can lead to losing balance and also may mean the player has to step backwards before being able to change direction.
6. Take advantage – many young players will perform a fake but then not take advantage of a reaction by the defender and often pre-determine what they want to do. Players should “read” what the defender does and then react, for example:
 - a. If the defender steps backward, the player may be able to shoot
 - b. If the defender moves to defend the drive, the player may be able to drive in the opposite direction
 - c. If the defender loses balance (e.g. their weight shifts to the back or to one side), the player may be able to drive (the defender will need to re-balance before they can move)

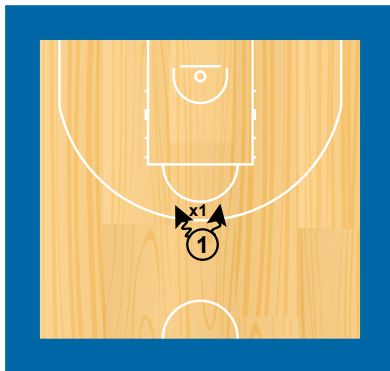
Practicing in contested situations will help the players to improve their ability to fake. Some activities are:



FOUL LINE 1V1

The defender starts with the ball and hands it to 1, and they play 1v1 with 1 restricted to a maximum of two dribbles.

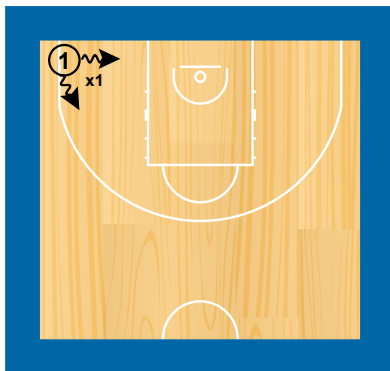
A common mistake made by 1 is to drive away from the basket (shown in red). Instead, 1 should “attack the hips” of the defender and go towards the basket. It is important that this is played at a distance where 1 can comfortably shoot.



ATTACK THE ELBOW

1 starts with the ball and scores a point if they can dribble the ball on either elbow. Limit the number of dribbles that the offensive player can use.

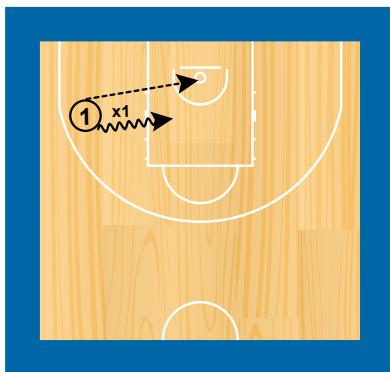
The offensive player should be encouraged to use a retreat dribble, if the defender initially stops them getting to the elbow.



GUARD THE CORNER

This activity can be done anywhere a corner is marked.

The offensive player is in the corner and must attempt to dribble out. The defender tries to stop them, moving laterally into their path. If the offensive player puts a foot on the line they are out of bounds.



PENETRATE OR SHOOT

This activity is done from a position where the offensive player is comfortable shooting – this will vary depending upon the skill and age of the players.

The offensive player gets 1 point if they are able to shoot (whether or not it goes in) and gets 2 points if they are able to dribble into the key. The offensive player has a maximum of 3 dribbles.

2.8.7 SHOT FAKE MOVES

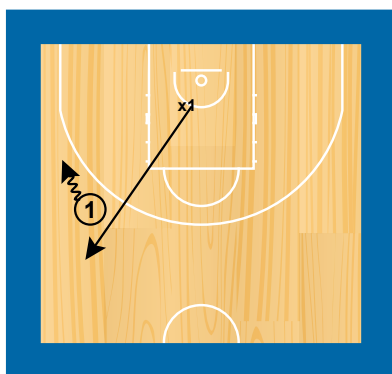
A shot fake is simply that – pretending to shoot in an attempt to have the defender move out of their position, which may enable the offensive player to shoot and may also cause the defender to foul the shooter.

As with any fake, to be effective a shot fake needs to be realistic. Otherwise, it is unlikely to get a response from the defender. Key teaching points are:

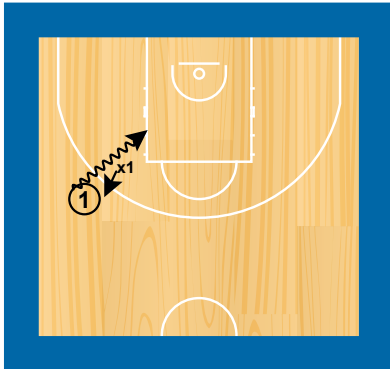
- Bring the ball above the eyes (and continue to look at the target underneath the ball). Some players will also lift their head and upper body, which can help to get a response from the defender;
- Keep the shooting hand underneath the ball, as if shooting. If the player simply lifts the ball above their head with hands on the side (for example) it may not cause the defender to react;
- The movement of the ball up should be quick – at the pace that would be used when shooting. However the player should not immediately bring it down because if the movement is too quick, it will not give the defender time to react to the shot;

- Both feet should stay on the floor (and it is imperative that the pivot foot stays on the floor otherwise the player is likely to travel) and with knees flexed. The offensive player needs to be ready to move explosively if the defender does react;
- After raising the ball, the player should bring it down to their hip, so that they can dribble or shoot depending upon the reaction of the defender.

If the defender reacts to the fake, the offensive player must be ready to dribble while taking a step. The ball should hit the floor (on the dribble) at the same time as the foot they step with hits the floor.



If the defender moves past the offensive player or lunges forward, the offensive player may wish to move sideways. This is particularly important, for example, if the player wants to shoot a 3point and accordingly does not want to move forward.

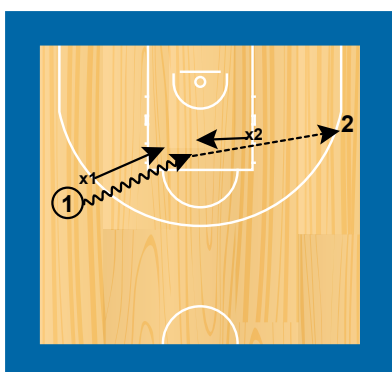


If the defender jumps or lifts, the offensive player may wish to step past them – attacking the defender’s hips. If the offensive player moves directly behind the defender it is almost impossible for them to turn around to block the shot.

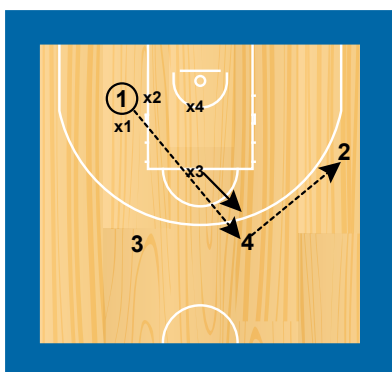
If the offensive player moves sideways the defender may be able to recover position.

2.8.8 CATCH AND SHOOT

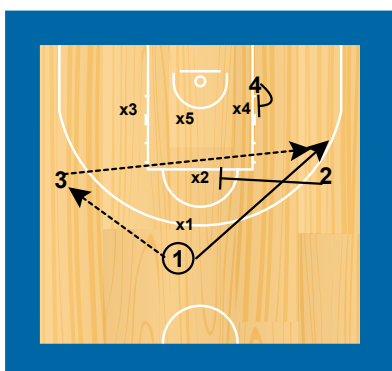
There will be many occasions when a player receives a pass, knowing that they will be open to take a shot:



When x2 moves to help stop 1's dribble penetration, it will give 2 the opportunity to shoot as they catch the ball.



Here, x2 rotated to stop the drive by 1 and x4 and x3 also rotated to "help the helper". x3 is able to defend 4 as they receive the first pass but a second pass to 2 creates an opportunity to shoot.



2 and 4 both screen the outside of the zone defence, and 1 will be open for a shot as they move to perimeter.

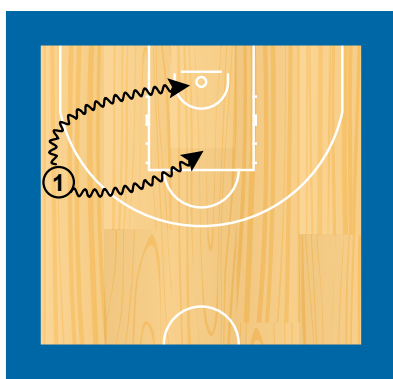
Although they are open to shoot when they receive the ball, the offensive player must be ready to shoot quickly as the defence will no doubt rotate to defend them. Below are some key instruction points:

- Being on the move as they receive the pass will help the shooter get their “rhythm”. This can be done by catching the ball with feet in the air as they take a small jump or step forward;
- The player should have their hands ready to catch, with their shooting hand behind the ball. An accurate pass is also important to the player being able to shoot;
- If the player is going to shoot they should not hesitate (unless they shot fake) or it will break their rhythm;
- The passer should tell their team mate to “shoot”, giving them the confidence to take that shot.

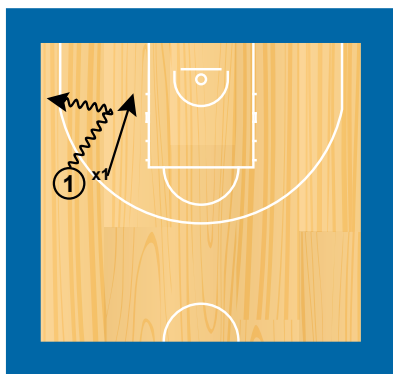
2.8.9 PENETRATING OFF THE DRIBBLE

The dribble can be used very effectively to distort the “shape” of any defence and create opportunities to score, although if dribbling is “over used” it can frustrate team mates and lead to reduced effectiveness in offence.

The dribble should be used to “attack”, and players should attempt to get into the key, either for a lay-up, jump stop or to stop and pass.



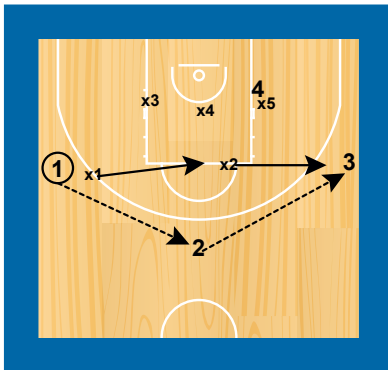
From the wing, offensive players can attack through the elbow or baseline. They should aim to cover this distance in one or two dribbles.



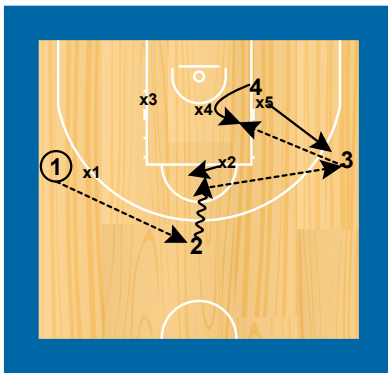
If the defence is able to stop the dribbler, the offensive player should keep their dribble “alive” and retreat to the perimeter, rather than stop in the area between the 3 point line and the key.

Players should be instructed to attack the “hips” of a defender, attempting to move past them rather than move “laterally” which gives the defender the opportunity to recover.

If the offensive player is able to dribble past their defender it will force the defence to rotate and help (otherwise the dribbler has a lay-up).



This offence (against a zone defence) “reverses” the ball from one side to the other, however, the defence is able to move to defend it.



However, the use of dribble by 2 to get a commitment from x2, provides an opportunity either for 3 to shoot (if x5 remains at the key to defend 4) or for them to pass to 4 in a good position in the key.

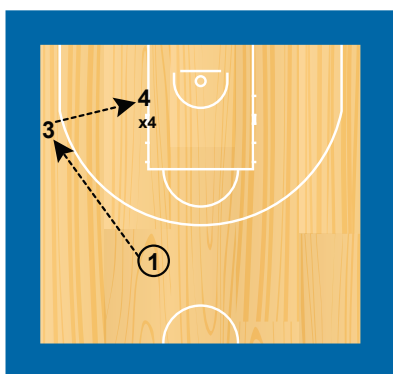
2.8.10 ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE OFFENCE IN LOW POST

When coaching junior players, every player must get the opportunity to practice and play in a “post” position and on the perimeter. Often with young teams, a “5 Out” offence may be preferred, which allows for a player to cut to the basket, “post” for 2 or 3 seconds and then move back to the perimeter if they do not receive the ball.

Many activities can be organised to practice low post moves. Initially, activities should be limited to practising separately each of the three aspects mentioned earlier:

- Moves before receiving the ball (“sealing the defender”);
- Passing;
- Playing with the ball to score.

However, do not spend too long on such isolated activities. It is better to move to activities that utilise two or three of these aspects relatively quickly.



“FIND THE ANGLE”

Have offence and defence in the low post and 2-5 players in perimeter positions.

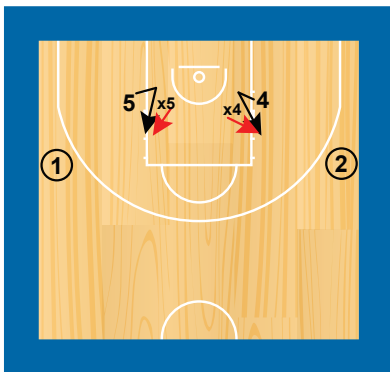
The defence takes an initial position, and the post player establishes a “seal” and holds it. The perimeter players must move the ball to whoever has the best passing angle.

Initially the defender may be relatively passive, but can build to full 1x1 contest.

"1X0"

Each player has a ball and passes to the coach, moves into the low post and receives a pass from the coach. The player performs a designated move.

Initially, have no defender, however move quickly to using a defender in position so that the post player's move must be realistic.

**"CATCH AND SCORE"**

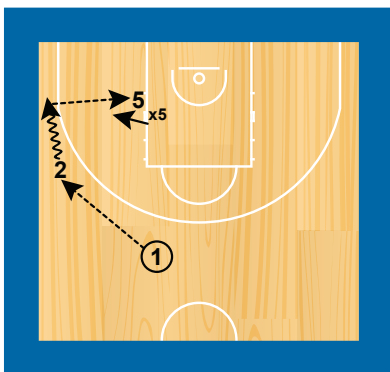
A team mate passes the ball to the post player. Initially there is no defender, and then a defender is introduced but is "passive" (i.e. they stand in position but do not attempt to guard). Passive defence enables the post player to recognise cues such as foot position and hip position.

Finally, introduce defence for 1x1.

"CATCH THE BALL"

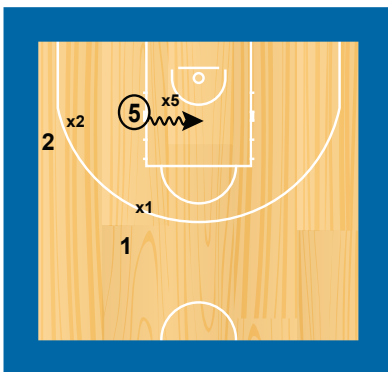
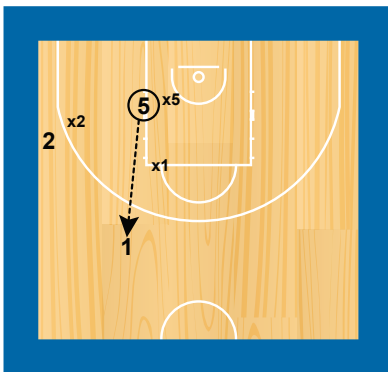
Use two perimeter players (each with a ball) and one post player. The low post catches a pass, landing in good balanced stance, and then passes back.

Introduce a passive defender to give cues such as foot and arm position. Finally introduce defence for contested 1x1.

**"PASSING LANE"**

One low post, with defender and two perimeter players. The low post tries to establish position, and the perimeter players pass the ball (or dribble on the perimeter) to identify a passing lane, and then pass into post.

This can then be played to score/defensive possession. For added complexity, add one and then two perimeter defenders.



“POST DECISIONS”

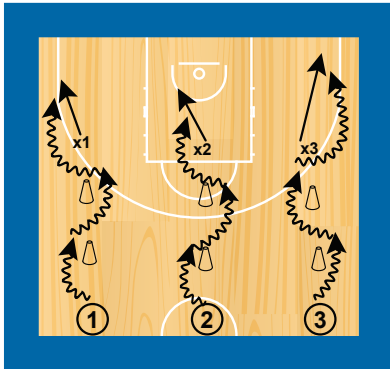
This activity is played either 2x2 or 3x3. The low post receives the ball (defenders cannot intercept the pass) and then has to decide between passing back to perimeter players and playing to score.

Initially, have defenders decide whether to “crowd” the post player or stay out on a perimeter player. Then introduce that any shot taken by a perimeter player will count for a score (to make the defence more realistic).

“2X2” & “3X3”

This activity can be restricted by playing on one side of the court or allowing perimeter players free movement on the perimeter.

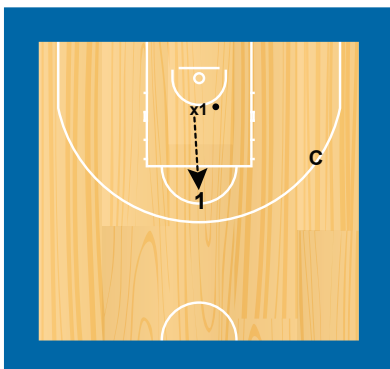
2.8.11 ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE PERIMETER OFFENCE



"3 FAKES"

Offensive players start with either a shot fake or drive fake, and then take one dribble to move past the cone or chair (having a team mate stand in front of them is even better - the defender moves to the next position after the offensive player has moved). They should then pick up the ball (feet in the air) and land in a jump stop.

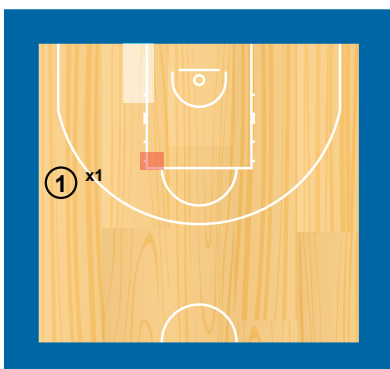
They use a different move to progress past the second cone, and again end in a jump stop. Then play 1x1 against the defender. The middle player tries to score. The outside players try to beat the defender to the baseline.



"1X1 WITH COACH"

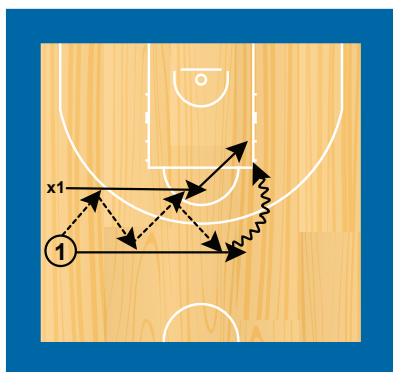
Offence and defence play 1x1, with the offence limited to two dribbles. To avoid them taking bad option shots, they may pass to the coach and reset.

Vary where the offence and defence start, sometimes being close to each other, sometimes requiring the defence to Close-out.

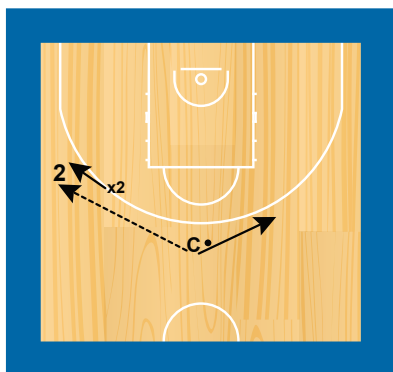


"GUARD THE GATE"

Offence and defence start at the perimeter. Offence must penetrate into the keyway, coming to a jump stop (2 count). Designate "gates" that they must use to get to the keyway (shaded areas), of which there can be one or more.

**“GO”**

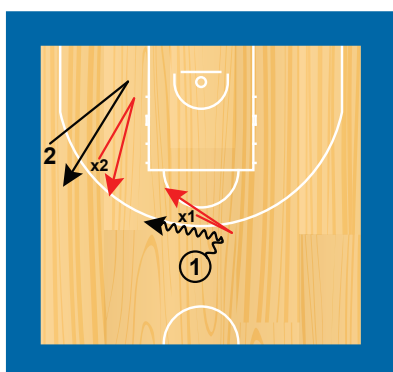
Offence and defence move across the court, passing the ball between each other. The offensive player may elect to drive to the basket at any time.

**“5 PASS GO”**

The coach starts with the ball and the offence is at the perimeter. The defender adopts a position relative to where the ball is (as they would in a game). coach passes to the offence who can elect to attempt to score or can return the pass to the coach.

On a return pass, the defender must return to the correct position, relative to where the ball is. The coach moves around, so that the defender's position will vary.

The offence has 5 opportunities to go. If they score, they return to offence. If they don't score, or don't “go” within the five passes, offence and defence swap.

**“2X2”**

Players play 2x2, emphasising timing of leads. Offence may cut to the basket but must then return to a perimeter position.

Players may take a lay-up at any time. After 3 passes (if there is no lay-up) the players may also take an outside shot.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Arrange to have someone video one of your practice sessions (and/or have a coaching colleague observe a session). In planning practice, how much time do you want your players to practice offensive skills in (a) uncontested situations and (b) contested situations.

On review of the video, (or have your colleague) record how many times each athlete practices post or perimeter offence in a contested situation.

2. Have your players identified the key elements for performing offensive skills on both the perimeter and in the post. Are you happy that they understand how to perform the skills? Compare this assessment with how well they are able to execute the skills in a game.

LEVEL 1



PLAYER

CHAPTER 3

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

CHAPTER 3

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

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3.1 STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

3.1.1 BEING FIT FOR BASKETBALL

Basketball is a fast paced sport, played on a relatively small court with all players involved in the action. In any game players will jump, sprint, run and even walk or stand still at times. It is generally regarded that basketball participants do need a reasonable level of “fitness”.

WHAT IS FITNESS FOR BASKETBALL?

Fitness is a generic term that simply means the ability of a person to complete a particular task. In the case of basketball players, this means the ability to perform in the final quarter of a game at, or near, the same level they performed at the start of the game.

Basketball is played on a relatively small court (28m x 15m) and is now played in 10 minute quarters. A game takes approximately 1½ hours.

Five players play on the court (per team) at any one time and unlimited substitutions are allowed, providing that a player does not have five fouls or have been otherwise disqualified.

Teams are allowed a certain number of timeouts, which allow a 1 minute break in play. There is also considerable opportunity during the game for active rest as well as passive rest during breaks in play (which are often very short; for example, when a foul is called etc.), time-outs, substitutions and during breaks between quarters.

The game of basketball consists of a series of explosive movements (e.g. jumping for a rebound, sprinting the length of the court, making a quick step to get past a defender or to stop a person getting past). Each of these “maximal effort” activities typically takes 5-10 seconds. General play consists of almost constant activity – although often at a less than maximal effort. Play phases (in between breaks) would rarely last more than 3 minutes, although the break may only be a short time (e.g. a player may get a 10 second break while a foul is signalled to the bench).

Although there are different playing positions, each have similar energy demands. All players must be able to “get up and down the floor” and equally must be able to defend a player, beat their player to the ball and rebound the ball.

Accordingly, basketball players do need a good “aerobic” conditioning, however, this should not be developed at the expense of being able to move quickly and explosively.

BASIC TIPS TO IMPROVE BASKETBALL FITNESS

- Coaches of young players should incorporate activities that will help their athletes improve their level of fitness. Coaches should keep in mind that:
- Long, equal paced, runs are not particularly useful for basketball athletes. Instead, aerobic fitness should be developed using “interval” training, where maximal efforts are combined within longer duration workouts.
- Use on court activities that replicate game conditions or movements to develop “fitness” for basketball, such as full court lay-up activities, offence / defence activities that require 2-3 minutes of effort without a break.
- Include rebounding and other explosive movements in every training session.
- Use breaks in practice that replicate the type of breaks in a game – 1 minute for a time out, 2 minutes at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters or whatever the local rules are.

To develop fitness, coaches may need to conduct a separate practice session (focussed on fitness) or give athletes activities to do on their own.

Many coaches recommend that players do fitness work “off their feet”, for example riding a bike or swimming in order to rest the player’s legs.

Such activities will benefit basketball (even though they do not include any basketball movements) provided that the player is working at the correct level of intensity.

A good way for players to check this is to take their heart rate during the activity, which can be done by counting their pulse for 10 seconds and then multiplying by 6 to get their “per minute” heart rate.

The player should aim to have their heart rate at 65-86% of their maximum heart rate, which for teenagers will be approximately between 140-180 beats per minute.¹⁴

Checking the heart rate is important, particularly when doing activities such as cycling where the player continues to move even though making no effort (gliding).

¹⁴ Maximum heartrate can be approximated as 220 minus the player’s age.

3.2 NUTRITION

3.2.1 HYDRATION

Injuries are a part of basketball and players should seek appropriate advice and expertise in treating any injuries that they may sustain. Given the number of players in a small space, injuries are somewhat inevitable, however, there are also a number of things that coaches may do in order to help keep their athletes on the court and performing to their capabilities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION

Between 50-75% of the human body is water, which means that there can be drastic consequences if a player loses water.

Dehydration occurs when the body loses fluid, which during exercise is mainly caused by sweating. The extent of fluid loss can be easily measured by weighing athletes before they start training then once they have finished. Each kilogram of weight loss indicates a loss of 1 litre of fluid. Athletes should be weighed in their underwear, as singlets and shorts will retain sweat.

In order to minimize dehydration, athletes need to drink enough during exercise to match the loss of sweat. Any amount of dehydration will impair the performance of the athlete, with some estimates suggesting that 2% dehydration can lead to a 10% decrease in performance.

Another test for hydration is the colour of an athlete's urine – athletes should aim for it to be consistently colourless or light yellow. Dark yellow or amber coloured urine are signs of dehydration.

The level of dehydration can range from mild to severe, as can the symptoms that an athlete may experience, which include:

- Dizziness or light-headedness;
- Nausea or vomiting;
- Muscle cramps;
- Increased heart rate;
- Increased rate of fatigue;
- Reduced skill level.

Scheduling regular drink breaks during practice and ensuring that athletes have been informed of the importance of hydration are important steps for a coach to take. The coach should not simply call "drinks break", but should ensure that every athlete does take a drink. Having a team rule that every player must have their own drink bottle at every training can help reinforce the importance of drinking.

Fluids that should be avoided are:

- Carbonated drinks;
- Drinks containing caffeine or other diuretic substances (which cause fluid loss).

Where exercise is of high intensity or lasts for an hour or more, the fluids consumed should ideally meet the following criteria:

- Have a flavour palatable to the athlete (as this will encourage greater fluid intake);
- Contain 6-8% carbohydrate;
- Contain electrolytes such as sodium and potassium.

3.3 PHYSICAL RECOVERY

3.3.1 WARM UP AND COOL DOWN

Warm up and cool down activities should be incorporated into all training sessions. The coach may designate training rules so that players warm up appropriately before the training session commences, or the coach may include them at the start of the training sessions.

The purpose of “warming up” is to:

- Prepare the player’s mind and body for physical activity;
- Increase heart and breathe rate;
- Increase the body’s core temperature.

The warm-up does not need to be lengthy – a period of 5-10 minutes is usually enough although in cold weather a slightly longer period may be undertaken. The warm-up should include the muscle groups and physical movements that are part of the sport.

Stretching is also commonly included in warm-up although it is probably best if the stretching is done dynamically and focuses on taking muscle groups through the full range of movement that is needed for basketball.

During cool down, longer (static) stretching may be done to assist with improving flexibility although this can also be done in separate sessions. The cool down should similarly take approximately 5-10 minutes and gives the body time to “slow down”.

There is often high demand for courts and coaches may have limited access for practice. Having players do a warm up and cool down at the side of the court after the allocated time for practice will maximise the on court time.

However, coaches should not simply tell junior players to “warm up” or “cool down” and should make sure that they know what activities to do.

3.4 INJURY MANAGEMENT

3.4.1 INJURY TREATMENT

There are two kinds of sports injuries – acute and chronic. An acute injury is one that happens suddenly such as “twisting” an ankle by landing awkwardly or being hit in the face by an opponent’s elbow during a rebounding contest.

Chronic injuries are caused by repeated strain on muscle groups or joints and can be contributed to by a player’s technique, a structural abnormality or when a player is experiencing significant growth.

Some common injuries in basketball are:

- Ankle sprain – symptoms include pain, swelling and stiffness
- Bruises – bleeding into the skin, caused by a blow. Particularly prevalent in post play;
- Nose Injuries – a direct blow (e.g. by an elbow in a rebounding contest) may cause a bloody nose or broken nose (or other facial injury)
- Knee Joint Injuries – symptoms include pain, swelling and stiffness. The ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) is typically damaged by a twisting force, whilst PCL (posterior cruciate ligament) is often an impact on the knee (such as falling and landing on the knee). ACL injuries are more common in basketball.
- Dental Damage – a blow to the jaw can crack, break or dislodge teeth (which may occur when going for a rebound) or teeth can be directly broken if the player hits the floor.

Every coach should have a basic understanding of first aid. Any time a coach is unsure of what to do, it is best to not move the athlete and to seek assistance.

The recommended regime for sprains, strains and joint injuries is **RICER** and **NO HARM**:

- **Rest**
- **Ice** – apply ice for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48-72 hours
- **Compression** – apply a firm elastic bandage to compress the injured area
- **Elevation** – keep the injured area above heart level at all times
- **Referral** – see an appropriate practitioner as soon as possible.

- **No Heat** – heat increases bleeding
- **No Alcohol** – alcohol also increases bleeding and swelling
- **No Running** – running or exercise will increase blood flow, which will delay healing
- **No Massage** – massage increases swelling and bleeding.

When an athlete suffers a nose bleed they should stop activity and sit down with their head leaning forward. While pinching the nostrils together, they should breath through their mouth, and the nose should stop bleeding within 10 minutes – hold the nose throughout this time.

If bleeding continues or if there was a direct blow to the nose, the player should seek medical advice.

Where a tooth is knocked out it should be rinsed in milk if possible (or water if there is no milk) and the athlete should seek dental treatment immediately.

Athletes can further reduce the risk of injury by:

- Wearing appropriately fitting footwear;
- Strapping joints as necessary (e.g. ankle);
- Wear a mouth guard;
- Seek advice to rehabilitate injuries and follow the regime recommended fully.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Ask your players whether or not they think they are “fit” in regards to basketball.
Do you agree with their assessment?
2. Discuss with a coaching colleague what activities can be used to develop fitness for basketball within the context of a training session (i.e. not separate fitness sessions).
3. Reflect upon your last five practice sessions. Did they reflect the type of physical exertion that players are likely to undergo in a game?
4. Have your players weigh themselves immediately before and after training. This should be done in private, as the players should be in their underwear. Have them tell you whether they lost weight during the session? If they did, it is an indication that they did not drink enough water!
5. Do your player’s warm up and warm down adequately? What could you do to improve what they do?
6. Ask someone to attend one of your practices specifically to fill up water bottles for each player. Get them to record how much each player drinks – is it enough?

LEVEL 1



TEAM

CHAPTER 1

**DEFENSIVE TACTICS
AND STRATEGIES**

CHAPTER 1

DEFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

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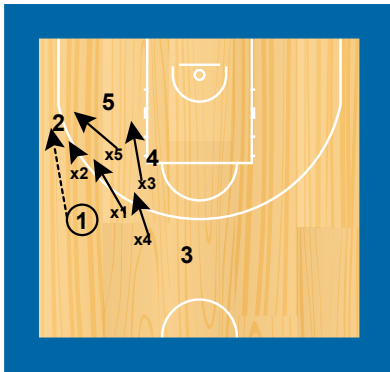
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1.1. MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

1.1.1 MATCHING UP - BASIC PRINCIPLE OF MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

Watch a game of basketball with young, beginning players and you will usually see a "scrum" of players (both offensive and defensive) following the ball:

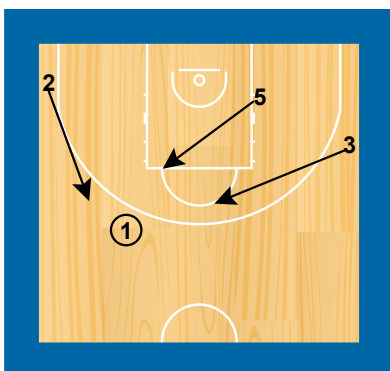


There are a number of reasons that contribute to this, and it commonly occurs in other sports as well (e.g. soccer, hockey etc):

- The offensive player with the ball is often looking down (as they are not as skillful with the ball) so may miss the opportunity to pass to an open team mate;
- When young offensive players do not receive the ball they often stand still or even keep moving towards the ball;
- Young players often lack the strength to pass the ball accurately more than a couple of metres, so team mates often move closer in an effort to get the ball;

- Young players have not understood the importance of "moving to where the ball is going to be, not where it is"¹⁵ and simply follow the ball, hoping to receive a pass;

For the reasons above, and because young players tend to dribble before they pass, on most possessions few players actually touch the ball. Hence, the defenders are often focused on trying to get the ball as that is the easiest way to gain possession on offence.



Typically, offence with young players results in offensive players moving towards the ball (and staying there). They will tend to move very close as many team mates struggle to pass the ball more than a couple of metres.

At the same time, defensive players are often all trying to get the ball, which further increases the "scrum" around the ball.

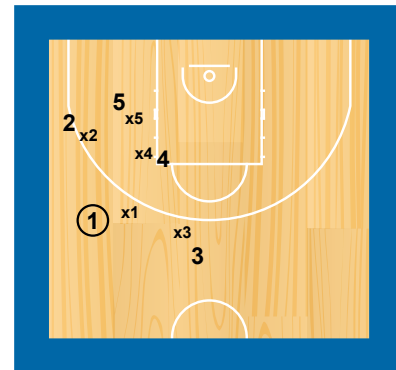
¹⁵ Wayne Gretzky is one of the best ice hockey players in the world and famously attributed much of his success to "being where the puck is going to be, not where it is"

Accordingly, the first step for the coach is to get defensive players to understand the concept of defending a particular player whether or not they have the ball.

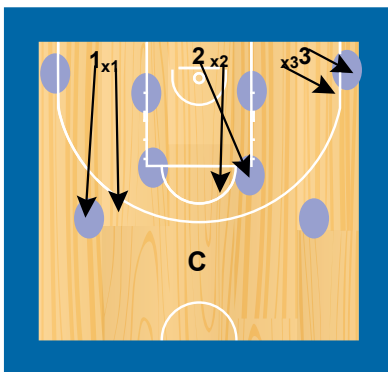
The spacing will often still be quite crowded (as the offensive players move close to the ball).

The following simple rules will help defenders understand their responsibility in defence:

- You are to defend the same player all the time (no "switching");
- You are to be closer to the ball than the player you are defending; and
- You must stay within 3 or 4 steps of the player you are defending.



Following is an activity that will help defenders develop their ability to defend "one player" and will also help offensive players develop their passing and movement.

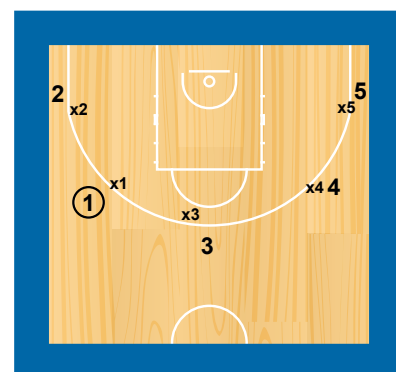


The coach designates various areas where a player may catch the ball. These areas may be designated by cones, hoops or markings on the court.

The rules of the game are simple:

- The offensive team score a point every time the ball is passed to a team mate in one of the designated areas;
- Players cannot pass to the person that passed them the ball;
- Players cannot stand in a designated area for more than 3 seconds;
- The defence cannot take the ball out of the hands of a player, however they can intercept a pass;
- A player can pass to the Coach at any time and this cannot be intercepted;
- Play for a set time or until a team reaches a certain score.

As offensive players develop their spacing, the defenders will become less focused on the ball and more focused on defending a particular player. At this stage, defenders have no "help" responsibility and so if an offensive player can beat their opponent, they should have an open lay-up!



1.1.2 DISTANCE FROM OPPONENT

Young players tend to be very “ball focused” and the initial defensive teaching point may be as simple as “guard your player” rather than everyone chasing the ball.

Building team play is very important and will be a progressive process over a number of years. Building team play should be closely linked to improving individual fundamentals and developing tactical decision-making, so that players learn to interact using the appropriate individual resources.

Team play development combines both defence and offence and both aspects should be built up simultaneously.

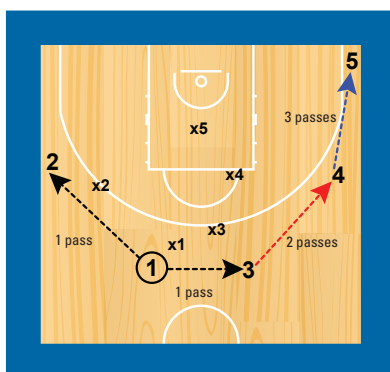
DISTANCE FROM AN OPPONENT

The first defensive concept that players must understand when introducing team defence is the distance that they should be from the person that they are defending.

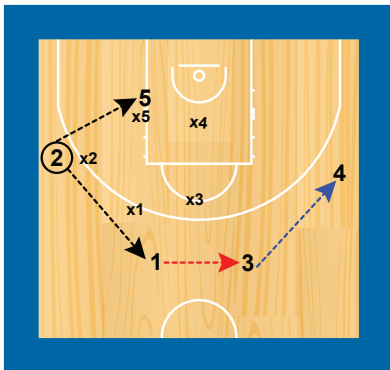
The player guarding the ball should be close enough to their player that they can touch the ball. If their player has a “dead ball” (i.e. they have already dribbled) then the defender may step closer.

The position of a defender guarding someone that does not have the ball, depends upon where their opponent is relative to the ball – the further away from the ball the opponent is, the further away from the opponent the defender is!

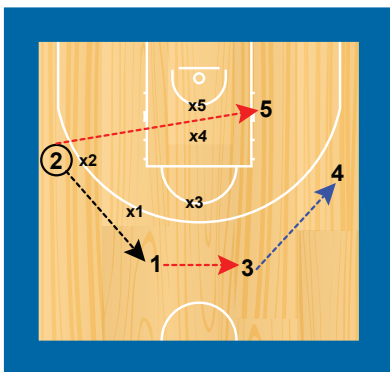
This is often described in terms of how many passes away the opponent is from the ball. Many players will be able to throw the ball from one side of the court to the other, reaching any player in 1 pass. However, in determining defensive position, we use the number of short passes:



- Player 1 has the ball.
- Players 2 and 3 are one pass away
- Player 4 is two passes away
- Player 5 is three passes away



- Player 2 has the ball
- Players 1 and 5 are one pass away
- Player 3 is two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away



- Player 2 has the ball
- Player 1 is one pass away
- Players 3 and 5 are two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away

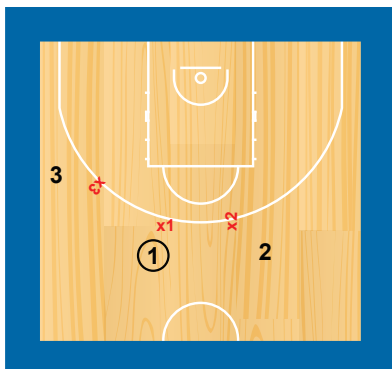
1.1.3 DEFENDING ONE PASS AWAY

STANCE – DENIAL OR OPEN

Players need to be instructed in the two types of stance that may be utilized in defence. A “denial” stance is where the defender’s back is to the ball and they are very actively stopping a pass being made to their opponent. A “floating” or “open” stance is where the defender’s back generally faces the baseline. Players must be able to play both techniques.

DEFENDING ONE PASS AWAY

Coaches need to make a decision as to which technique they wish to use and in what circumstances. Players must be able to both deny an opponent and to play from a more open stance.



DENIAL – 1 PASS AWAY

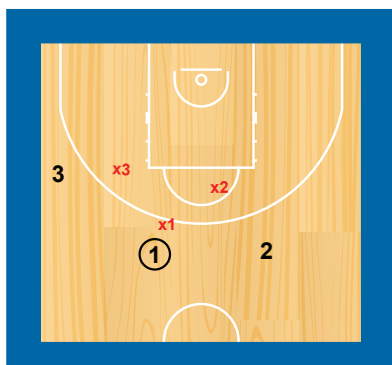
Adopting a denial stance defenders X3 and X2 are close to their opponents and would have their backs to Player 1.

Both defenders would have the arm closest to the ball extended, so that they can knock away any pass.

In this diagram, x2 would extend their right arm, x3 would extend their left arm.

If the defender has their thumb pointing to the ground, they will have the palm of their hand facing the passer. This will provide them with better control if they can get a hand on the pass.

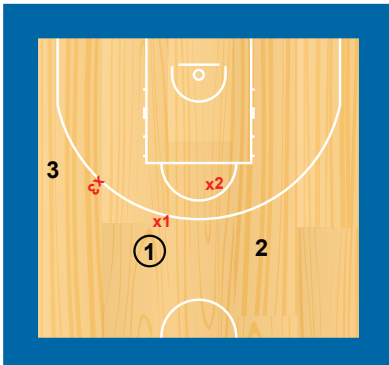
The defender looks down at their arm, which enables them to see both their add “direct opponent and the player that has the ball.” opponent and the player with the ball within their peripheral vision.



FLOATING (OR SAGGING) – 1 PASS AWAY

Here defenders X3 and X2 step away from their opponents and have their backs facing the baseline. This “floating” or “sagging” defence allows Player 1 to pass, but allows the defender to place more pressure on the dribble.

On any defensive possession, it is likely that some defenders will be in a denial stance while others use an open stance.



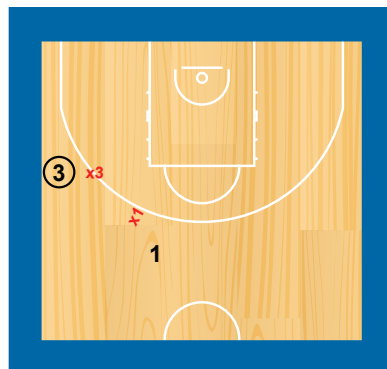
DENIAL – ON STRONG SIDE

X3 is guarding a player that is on the same side of the floor as the player with the ball – accordingly X3 uses the denial technique. X2 is guarding an opponent on the opposite side of the floor so may adopt a floating or sagging technique.

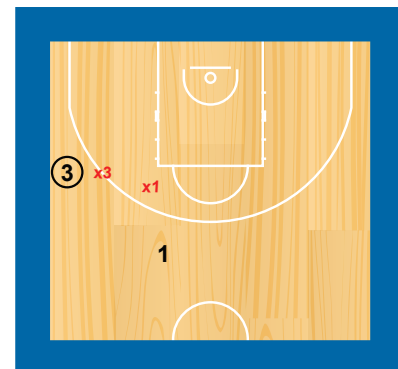
This is one tactic that a coach may employ and one that players should be given the opportunity to adopt at practice, using both techniques in contested situations.

DENYING THE PASS BACK TO THE GUARD

When the ball is below the extended free throw line, coaches may choose to either deny the pass back to the guard or to allow it, by adopting a floating or sagging technique. By adopting an “open stance”, the team creates more pressure on the offensive player dribbling.



Denying the Return Pass



Sagging / Floating Defence

When first introducing team defence, coaches should be careful not to confuse the players by introducing too many options. The players do need to know both denial and open techniques but it is recommended that initially one technique is used for “one pass away” (e.g. denial) and the other technique is used when opponents are further away from the ball.

1.1.4 "FLAT TRIANGLE" POSITION

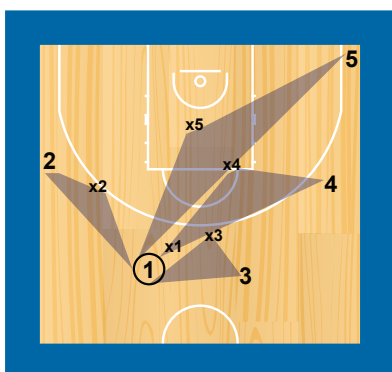
"FLAT TRIANGLE" POSITION

Regardless of whether a denial or open stance is being used, defenders must always be able to see both the player they are guarding and the player with the ball. In a denial stance, this requires the defender to have their chin on the defender's shoulder rather than looking directly at them.

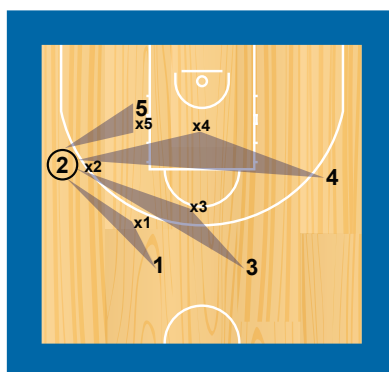
In an open stance it is a little easier to do, but again requires the defender not to turn their head to look directly at their opponent but rather see them in their peripheral vision.

To improve this type of vision, players should be introduced to the "flat triangle" position, which summarises their position relative to their own player and the player with the ball.

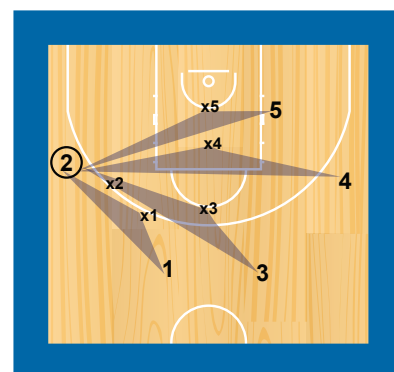
In the diagrams below, each defender adopts a position, based upon how close their opponent is to the ball. The triangles represent the defender's vision – being able to see both the player with the ball and their direct opponent. This can be further improved by having players that are in an open or floating stance point at both the player with the ball and the ball and their direct opponent.



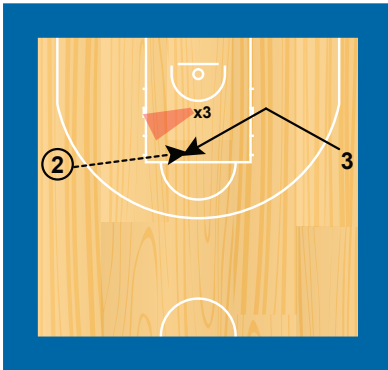
- Player 1 has the ball
- Players 2 and 3 are one pass away
- Player 4 is two passes away
- Player 5 is three passes away



- Player 2 has the ball
- Players 1 and 5 are one pass away
- Player 3 is two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away



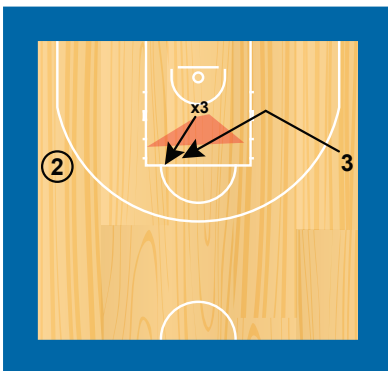
- Player 2 has the ball
- Player 1 is one pass away
- Players 3 and 5 are two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away



KEEPING VISION

The importance of keeping vision of both the player being defended and the player that has the ball cannot be over emphasized. If a defender is not watching the player they are guarding, they are susceptible to being beaten on a cut.

Here X3 is looking directly at the ball, and is not aware of the cut made by their opponent.



If X3 instead keeps vision of their opponent, they can react to ensure that they do not get open to receive a pass.

1.1.5 STANCE - DENIAL OR OPEN

Players need to be instructed in the two types of stance that may be utilized in defence. A "denial" stance is where the defender's back is to the ball and they are very actively stopping a pass being made to their opponent.

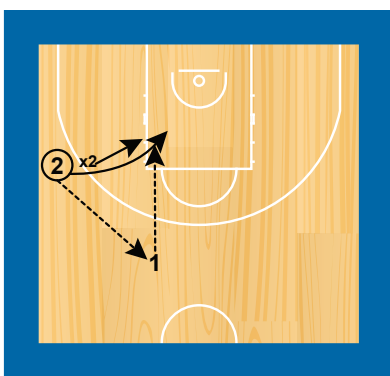
A "floating" or "open" stance is where the defender's back generally faces the baseline. Players must be able to play both techniques.

1.1.6 MOVING ON THE PASS

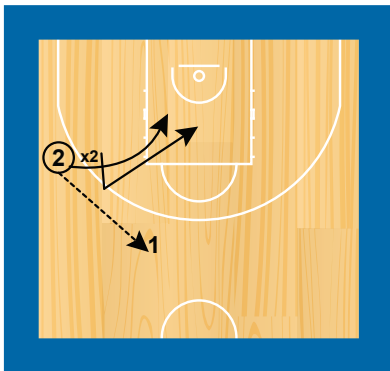
“MOVING ON THE PASS”

A common mistake made by defenders of all ages is being slow to move in response to the offensive play, or not moving to the correct position. Every time the ball is passed, all defenders

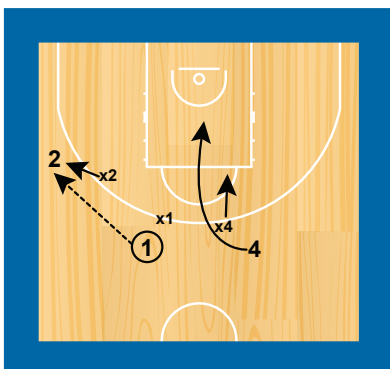
must move, even if only a subtle adjustment of position (e.g. in post play). Defenders should reach their “new” position, by the time the pass is caught – it is too late to wait until it is caught before moving.



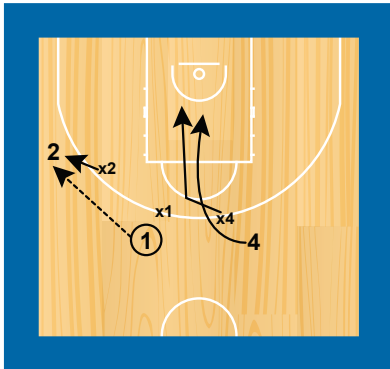
When an offensive player passes the ball, young defenders will often move backwards (or stand still) which enables the offensive player to “face cut” the defender – simply, this means the offensive player gets between the defender and the ball.



As the ball is passed, x2 should move towards the ball (often called “jumping to the ball”) so that they are in position to guard any cut made by Player 2.



Similarly, if x4 doesn’t move, or simply steps backwards, it enables Player 4 to “face cut” them and to receive the ball.



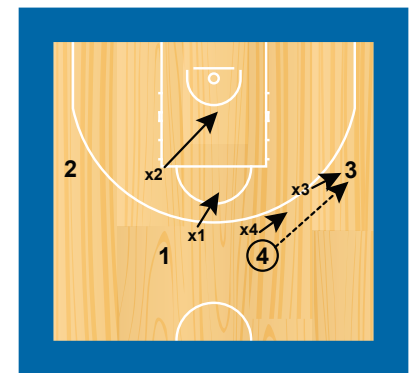
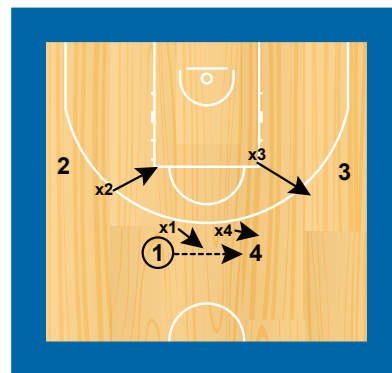
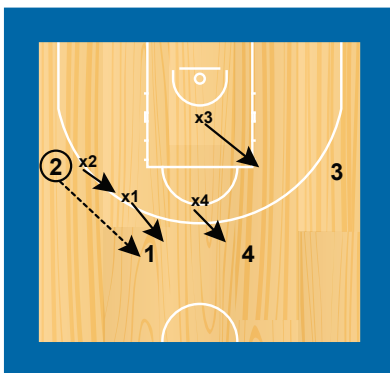
If x4 initially moves toward the ball (moving to the “split line”), they are then in a position to guard Player 4’s cut to the basket.

SHELL DRILL

Using 4x4 activities is recommended as an effective method for developing player’s understanding and execution of basic team defensive positioning.

With 4x4, coaches can include each of the defensive positions (on ball, one pass away, two or more passes away) that may be encountered during a game.

An activity widely used is “shell drill”, which is simply 4x4 in the half court. Initially, offence may simply pass the ball between themselves, with each defender adjusting their position each time a pass is made.



Whilst this defensive movement may initially be practiced with passive offence, it should be quickly progressed to a contested situation. Repetitive drilling in an “artificial” environment is unlikely to translate into game situations. The activity could be progressed as follows:

STAGE 1 - “5 BALL REVERSALS”

Activity is 4x4 in the half court, with offence making 5 ball reversals (passing the ball from one side of the court to the other). Focus is on the defenders moving to the correct positions as the offence plays with restrictions (offence does not shoot, examples are below).

- offence stationary;
- offence cutting but no dribbling;
- offence score a point for getting the ball into the keyway (by either passing or dribbling), defence score a point for any interception or when dribble penetration has been stopped.

STAGE 2 – “3 POSSESSIONS”

Offence has 3 possessions and score with any successful shot. The offence plays with restrictions:

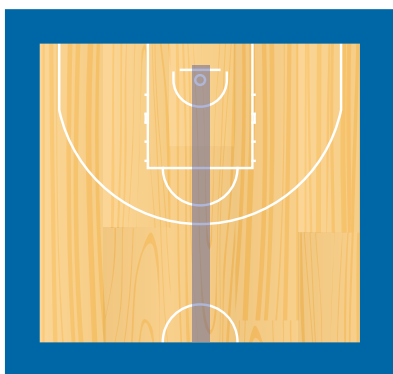
- offence cutting but not dribbling;
- offence must reverse the ball twice before attempting a shot;
- offence must penetrate the ball into the key (by either passing or dribbling) before they can take a shot,

If the offensive team get an offensive rebound, they may continue with the same possession.

STAGE 3 – “CONTESTED”

Teams play 4x4 for a set time or up to a set score. Points may be deducted (or awarded to the opponents) where defensive position is incorrect. However, rather than stopping the activity constantly, this should be done “on the run”.

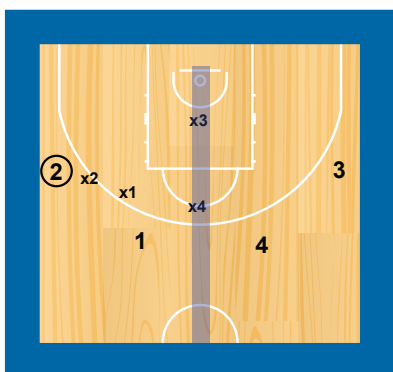
1.1.7 HELP DEFENCE - SPLIT LINE DEFENCE



“THE SPLIT LINE”

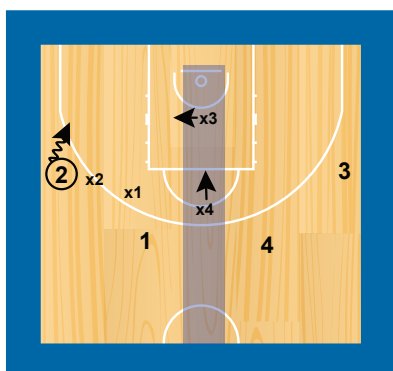
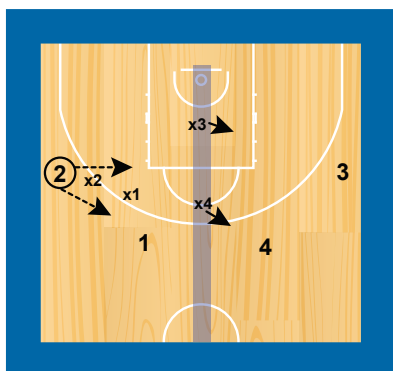
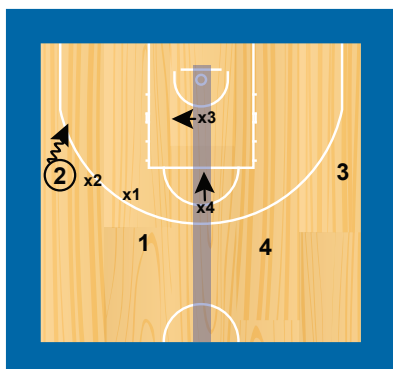
The next defensive team concept that players must be taught is the “split line”, which is an imaginary line that runs down the middle of the court – from basket to basket.

This is also called the “help line” and is an important concept when putting together a team’s overall defensive scheme. However, it can be introduced initially without reference to the overall scheme:



When the ball is on one side of the court, players that are guarding an opponent who is on the opposite side to the ball (x3 and x4) can be instructed to move to the “split line”
This can be simply introduced as an example of the rule that the further an opponent is away from the ball, the further the defender can be from the opponent.

Once players have established a habit of moving to the split line, coaches must ensure that those defenders are active on the split line – and they should regard it not as a specific spot, but as a “thick line”.



Defenders on the split line should move in anticipation of what is about to happen.

For example, if they anticipate that the player with the ball (2) may drive baseline:

- x3 takes a step towards Player 2;
- x4 takes a step towards the foul line

The players are moving in the direction that they would move to if the player were to drive.

If the defenders anticipate that Player 2 will pass, they should both take a step towards their player, maintaining vision of the ball.

As a visual cue, players can be instructed to regard the split line as being the width of the backboard, and they may move in anticipation from one side to the other.

The movements suggested, very much fit within an overall defensive scheme.

ANTICIPATING THE OFFENCE

Some cues to look for to anticipate what a player with the ball may do are:

- The position of the player's defender:
 - If the defender has their nose on the player's right shoulder, the player is likely to pass / dribble to their left (and vice versa);
 - If the defender is aggressive, with active hands placing direct pressure on the ball, the player is more likely to pass;

- If the player has the ball at waist level, they are likely to drive;
- If the player has the ball above their waist, they are likely to pass (or shoot);
- If the player has the ball above their shoulders, they are likely to pass;
- If the player has the ball on their left hand side, they are likely to move / pass to their left (and vice versa).

The team's defensive rules also help anticipate what the offence will do.

1.1.8 HELP DEFENCE - HELP TO DEFEND DRIBBLE PENETRATION

“Help” is an essential aspect of team defence, particularly as the individual offensive skills that players possess improve.

Players should be instructed on how to help in the following situations:

- dribble penetration into the keyway;
- passes inside the keyway;
- post players.

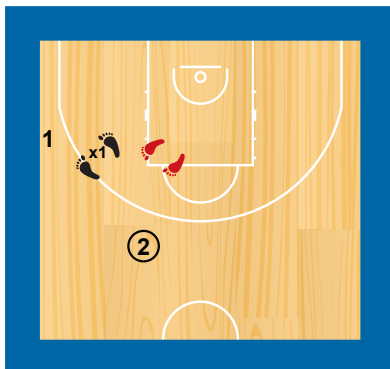
HELP TO DEFEND DRIBBLE PENETRATION

HELP AND RECOVER

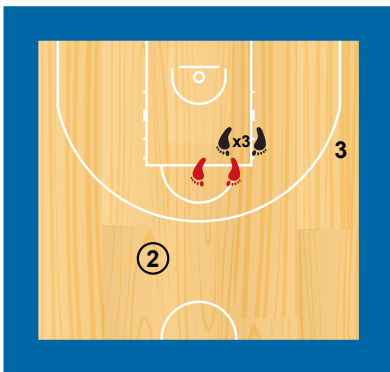
“Help and recover” (also called “hedge and recover”) is a technique that all players must be able to perform, from both the post and on the perimeter. Simply, “help and recover” is where a defender moves toward the person dribbling (but does not lose sight of their own player) and then moves back (“recovers”) to guard their direct opponent when the dribbler:

- picks the ball up;
- retreats;
- is covered by their own defender.

“Help and recover” should be practiced from both a denial and a floating (open) stance. By its nature, it is easier to perform from a floating stance, because from a denial stance, the defender must turn around before being able to move towards the defender. Help and recover is a skill used in both half court and full court defence.



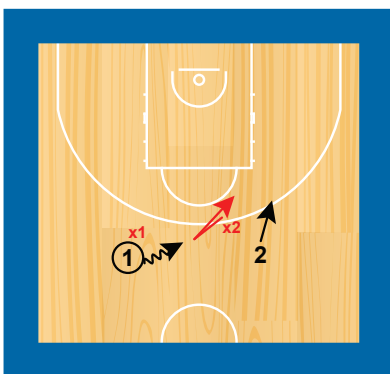
When in a denial stance, the defender’s feet are pointing towards their opponent. They must reverse pivot to move into an open stance, before they are able to “help and recover”



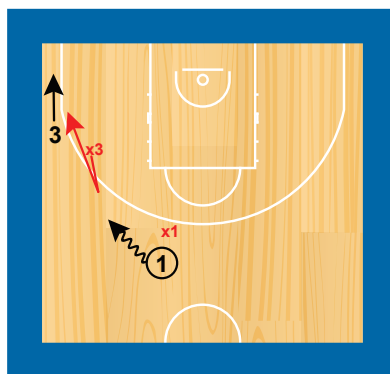
From a floating stance, the defender must step with BOTH feet towards the dribbler. They should take one or two steps, remaining balanced. They should not reach as this will affect their balance. They should also be careful to keep their head in between their feet, not leaning to one side.

The defender's movement toward the dribbler should be fast and is designed to stop the defender from continuing along their path. The defender then moves just as quickly back to a position to guard their own player.

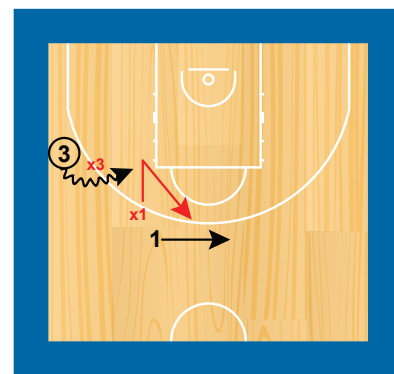
“HELP AND RECOVER” – FROM DENIAL STANCE



x2 is in a good position to stop 1 from getting into the key.

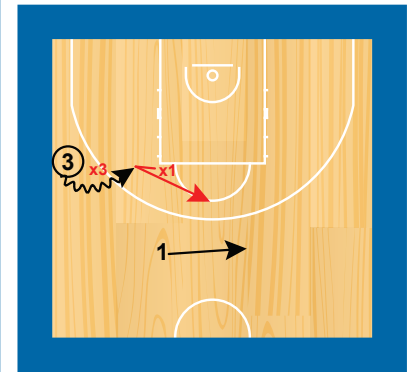
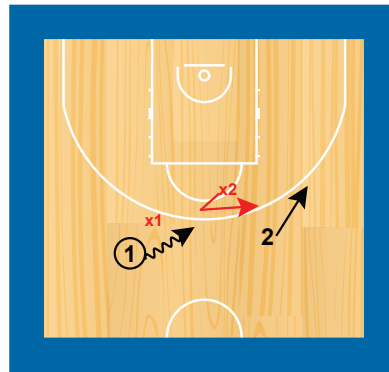


x3 is in a position to stop 1 dribbling to the wing. They are not in a position to stop 1 getting to the basket.



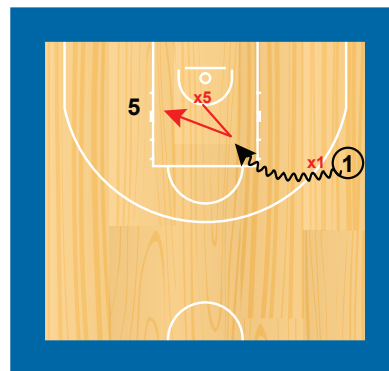
x1 is not in a good position to help because they are above the line of the ball.

“HELP AND RECOVER” – FROM FLOATING / OPEN STANCE

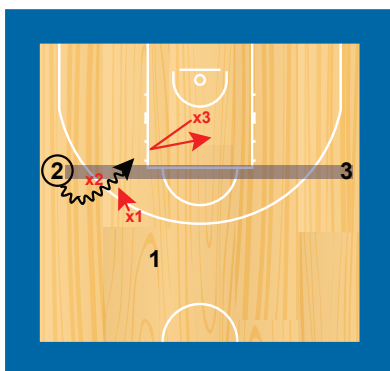
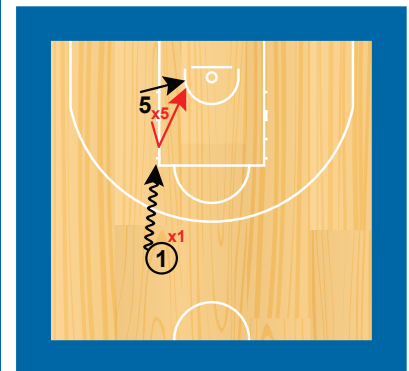


“HELP AND RECOVER” – POST DEFENDER

FROM FLOATING / OPEN STANCE



FROM DENIAL STANCE

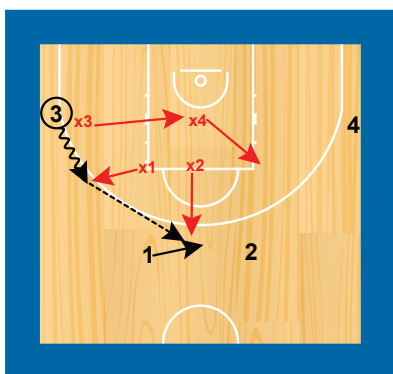


“Help” will be most effective when it comes from below the “line of ball” (the ‘line’ is a horizontal position on the court at the level of the person with the ball).
 x1 is above the “line of ball” and is coming from the side of the dribbler, this is less likely to stop the dribbler than x3 who is coming from below the “line of ball” and is between the dribbler and the basket.

1.1.9 HELP DEFENCE - HELPING THE HELPER / DEFENSIVE ROTATION

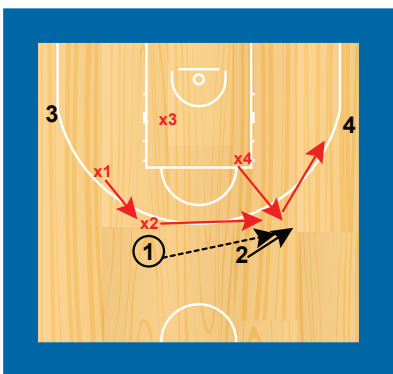
HELPING THE HELPER

Players also need to understand when, and how, to "help the helper". This means being alert to help a teammate that is helping to stop a dribbling penetration. The task of the second helper is to stop their teammate's player until the teammate has recovered. This second help is also performed without losing sight of their own offensive player, as they will recover to guard them.



A 4x4 framework is a very good way to practice "help the helper". It is important to remember that this is not a "switching" defence. Each defender ultimately will continue to guard their own player.

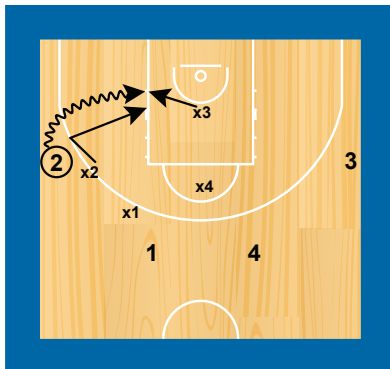
Player 3 dribbles to force the nearest defender (x1) to "help and recover". The dribbler passes, forcing the next defender (x2) to "help the helper" and so on.



The "help" defender (e.g. x2) stays with the offensive player until their team mate recovers. When a defender moves to "help and recover" their direct opponent should move, so that it is harder for the defender to "recover". If the offence simply stays in the same position, it is easier for the defender to recover back to their initial position.

DEFENSIVE ROTATION

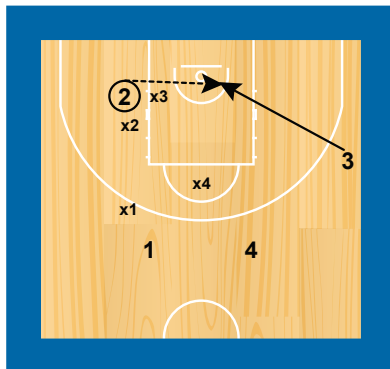
On occasions it may be necessary not to "help and recover" but to rotate to stop the dribble penetration because the dribbler has beaten their defender. The principles of "help the helper" apply, however defenders will change who they are guarding.



"INITIAL ROTATION"

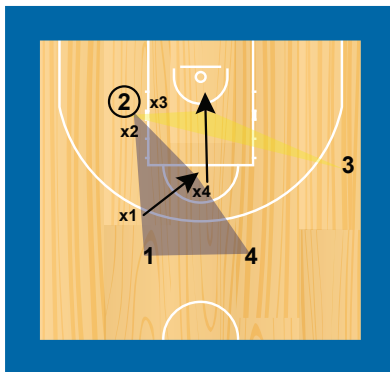
If x2 is beaten, x3 rotates to stop the dribbler. Their role is to stop 2 from getting into the keyway. Accordingly, x3, must take 2 or 3 steps from the "split line" to meet 2 at the side of the key.

Once x3 sees that their team mate has been beaten, x3 no longer needs to keep vision of 3 – their focus is on now guarding 2. x2 stays "on the hip" of 2, trying to force them toward x3.



However, if this is the only movement that happens, 3 will be open to receive a pass and get a lay-up!

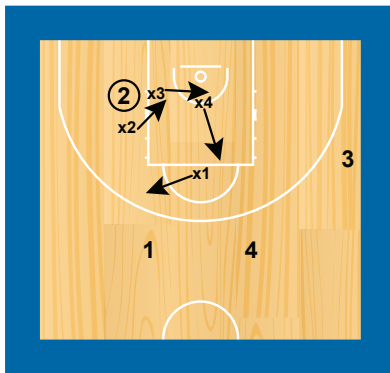
Accordingly, the team needs to have a "secondary" rotation, which provides "help" to the "helper".



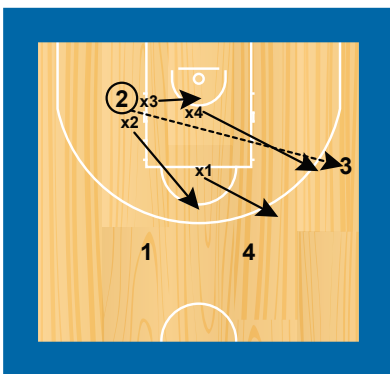
"SECONDARY ROTATION"

As x3 rotates, x4 must also rotate to protect the basket. They are now responsible for guarding Player 3. This is again an example of "help the helper" as x4 is now guarding Player 3.

x1 must rotate to the top of the keyway, to guard any pass and here they are responsible for, and must keep vision of, both Players 1 & 4. They must also keep vision of the player with the ball.



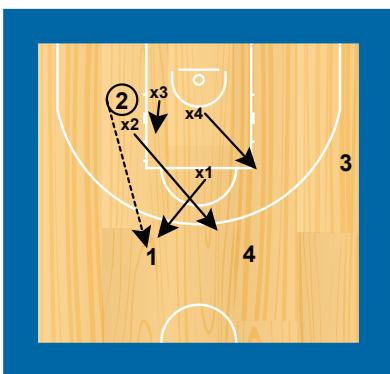
Once Player 2 has been stopped from penetrating into the key, x3 and x2 can double team or players could rotate back to their initial defensive match-ups.



"ROTATION ON THE PASS"

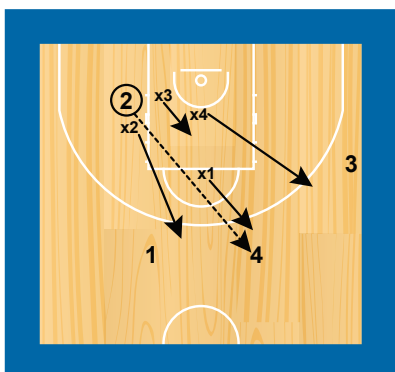
On Player 2's pass to Player 3:

- x4 guards Player 3;
- x3 moves to the split line and is guarding Player 2;
- x1 guards Player 4; (as they are closer to the ball than Player 1)
- x2 moves to the split line and is guarding Player 1.



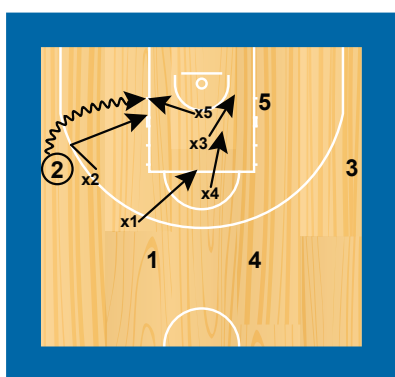
On Player 2's pass to Player 1:

- x1 guards Player 1; (as they have the ball)
- x3 guards Player 2;
- x4 guards Player 3;
- x2 moves to guard Player 4.



On Player 2's pass to Player 4:

- x1 guards Player 4; (as they have the ball)
- x3 guards Player 2;
- x4 guards Player 3;
- x2 guards Player 1.



"ROTATION BY POST DEFENDER"

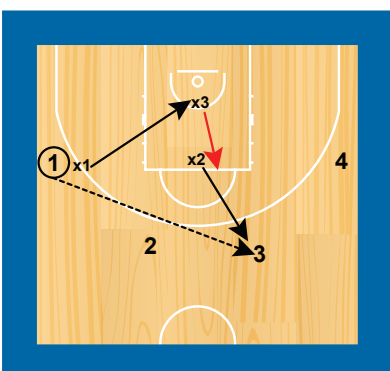
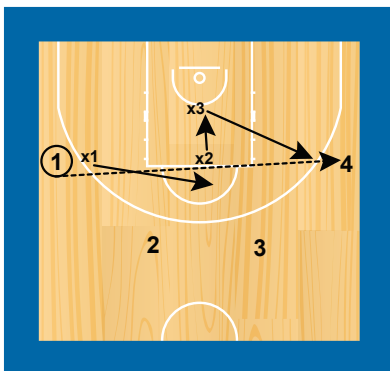
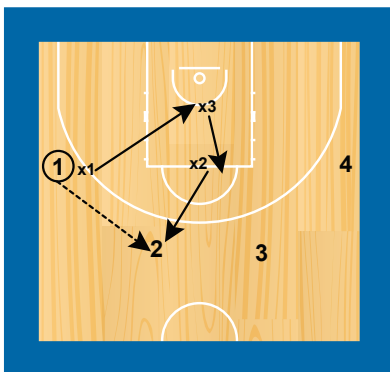
The addition of a post defender does not need to change the rotation – the principle remains the same. The closest player rotates to stop the dribble penetration. Other players then make secondary rotation to "help the helper".

Alternatively, the coach may stipulate that the post defender does not get involved in the rotation. In that case, x3 in this diagram would rotate to stop 2's dribble. x4 and x1 would rotate as shown.

TEACHING DEFENSIVE ROTATION

4x4 provides an excellent framework to teach Defensive Rotation and by awarding the offence a point for any dribble penetration into the key (in addition to any baskets that are scored), the coach can create many opportunities to practice the rotation.

Two other activities that can be used are:



"BASKET-HIGH-BALL"

3 defenders guard 4 – 6 perimeter offensive players. The defenders must always occupy the 3 positions:

- "Basket" – low split line;
- "High" – high split line;
- "Ball" – the Player that has the ball.

Initially, the offensive players pass the ball – defenders must "fly with the ball"¹⁶ and reach their next defensive position as the ball is caught.

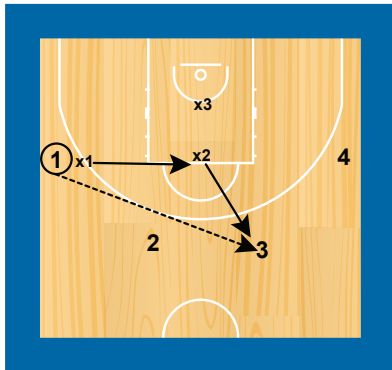
The activity can be progressed to where the offence may shoot (if unguarded) or can dribble to attempt to penetrate the keyway.

Rather than strictly dictate what rotation the defenders are to use, the coach should focus on the outcome (defenders occupying the three positions) and let them "explore" the most efficient rotations to achieve that. The coach can guide players on what might be more efficient. Generally, the player closest to the ball moves to defend the ball!

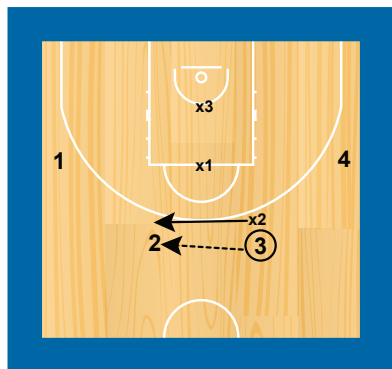
In this rotation, x2 moves to the ball, x3 moves away from the basket to go high and x1 moves to the basket. Coaches may instruct x3 to delay moving until x1 has returned to the basket.

In a game, coaches will often prefer players to defend the basket first and may prefer for x1 to move to the high split line position at the free throw line, leaving x3 at the basket.

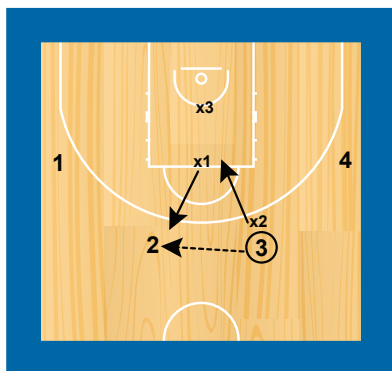
¹⁶ A term used by former Italian national coach Mario Blasone, amongst others.



This alternate rotation is shown for x2 who rotates to the ball (as they are closest) and x1 rotates directly to the free throw line.

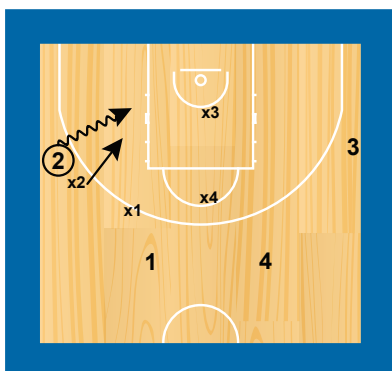


Another situation that can have more than one solution is where the ball is passed across the top of the key.



Often the defender on the ball will be able to move across and follow the pass. Coaches may prefer not to do this, as it can lead to the other defenders not moving at all.

Accordingly, coaches may prefer in this situation for x1 to rotate to the ball and for x2 to rotate to the free throw line.



"DISADVANTAGE SHELL DRILL"

The activity commences with x2 next to the player with the ball, giving Player 2 an open drive and forcing defensive rotation. x2 hands the ball to Player 2, and attempts to get into position, but the likelihood is that the team defence will need to rotate. x3 may become focused on Player 2, and lose vision of their own player, even before the activity starts. Player 3 can be encouraged to cut into the keyway to receive a pass when this happens.

1.1.10 DEFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

“The best defensive technique will fail if a team does not communicate effectively. A team with no defensive technique, but playing with heart, can still succeed if the team communicates effectively. Successful defence is an attitude more than a technique.”

MICHAEL HAYNES

“Communication does not always come naturally, even among a tight-knit group of individuals. Communication must be taught and practiced in order to bring everyone together as one.”

COACH MIKE KRZYEWSKI

“Effective teamwork begins and ends with communication.”

COACH MIKE KRZYEWSKI

Communication is a very important aspect of building team defence. Unfortunately, whilst most coaches recognize this is so, many do not work on developing this aspect.

Talking (and listening) in Defence is essential for defenders to communicate concerning relevant points, such as screens, cuts, being in a help position etc. However, it is not enough for coaches to simply tell players that they must talk. The coach must specify the situation where communication should take place, decide the precise words to be said, and specify which player should be speaking.

Given the fast paced nature of basketball, players cannot use long sentences, instead they need short key words, the meaning of which is understood by everyone on the team. Coaches can facilitate this by using those same key words at practice.

Each coach will have their own words that they want players to use. Key words that have the following characteristics are more likely to be effective:

- Descriptive – describing what the action is (e.g. “Ball” to indicate guarding the ball);
- Analogous – using an analogy to describe what to do (e.g. “Gap” to indicate taking a position that is in the “gap” between two opponents);
- Action Oriented – positive stated action (e.g. “Over” to indicate to a team mate go over the top of a screen);
- Mono-Syllabic – as short a word as possible (e.g. “Box” may be more effective than “Box Out” simply because it can be said quicker).

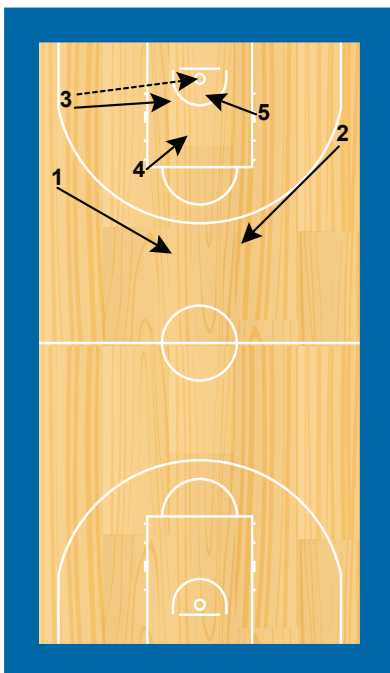
1.1.11 TRANSITION DEFENCE

One of the best ways to stop an opponent from getting easy baskets from fast breaks is good offensive execution! Turnovers or “poor option” shots will “trigger” fast breaks, and the offence is not in a good position to counter the fast break.

Defensive transition occurs when the other team get possession of the ball and move the ball quickly toward their basket without an opportunity for the defence to establish the defensive positions discussed earlier.

There are three other principles for good defensive transition.

EARLY PREPARATION – DEFENCE STARTS WITH A SHOT



A team must prepare to play defence the moment that they shoot the ball. It may be a mistake for all players to pursue the rebound as that can leave a fast break open.

Accordingly, players should move to one of two positions:

- Into the keyway to contest the rebound;
- To the top of the key to be ready to defend any fast break.

Coaches may designate specific roles for players or may simply require players to make a judgment of where they should go. This can be best practiced by not having activities stop with a shot being taken, but have it move to the next stage – transition.

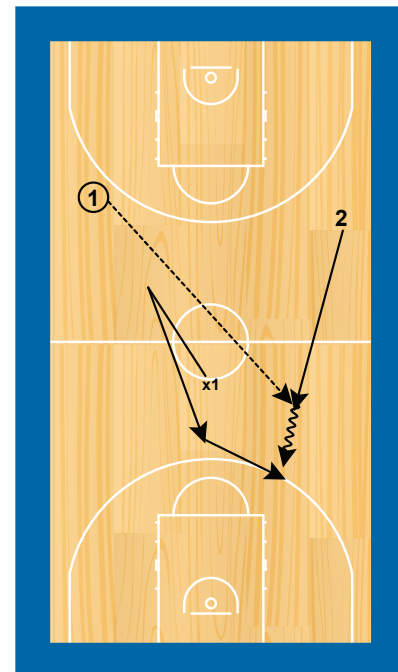
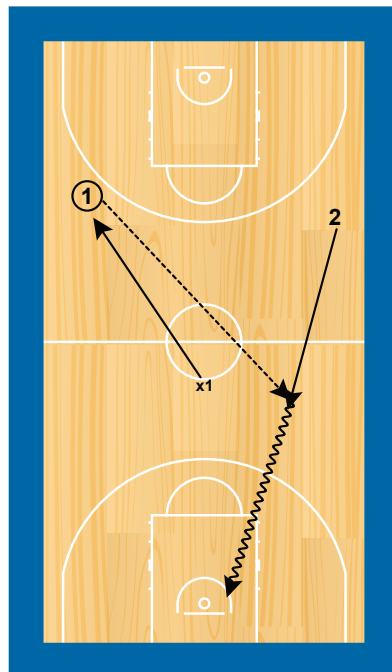
THE PRINCIPLE OF "BASKET" AND "BALL"

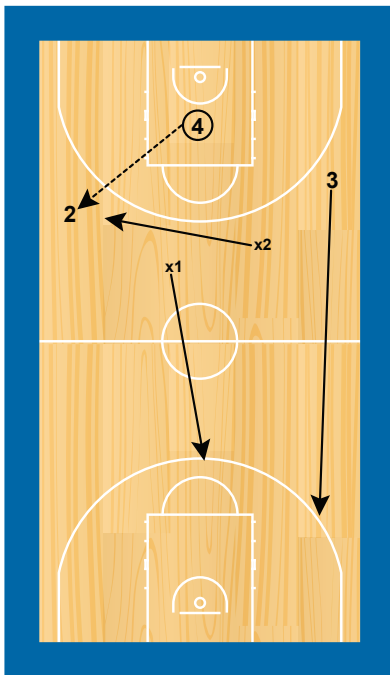
Whenever a team loses possession (whether from a turnover, a score or the other team rebound their missed shot) They are now on defence and must first defend the basket.

As is shown in the diagrams below, if the last defender simply runs toward the person that has the ball, this will allow a simple pass over their head to an opponent to score a lay-up.

Accordingly, a player should not commit to guarding the player with the ball, until someone is guarding the basket.

It can be effective though for them to hedge towards the ball, forcing them to think they have committed, and then retreating to the basket to possibly intercept the pass or to defend the lay-up.

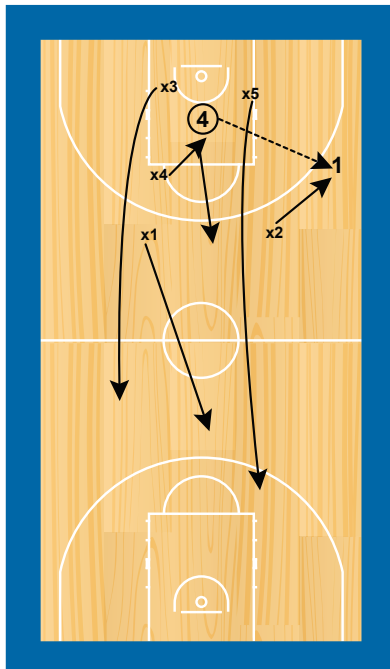




By x1 and x2 first moving to a “safety” position when the shot is taken, they are then in a position to move to the basket.

The person guarding the basket (x1) then has the opportunity of seeing the floor and can direct the movement of other players. Because the basket is defended, x2 may move to defend Player 2.

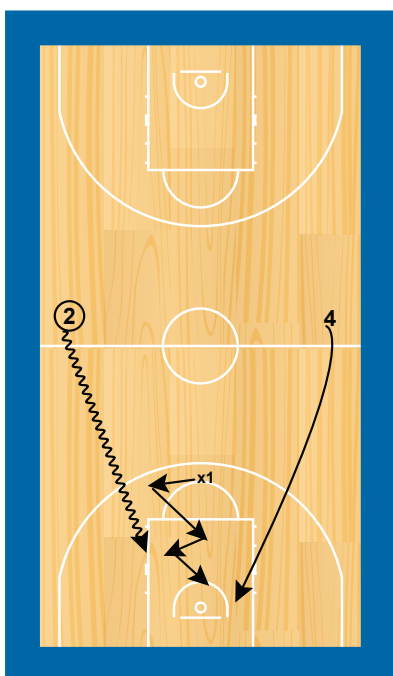
CONTEST THE OUTLET PASS



One player who contested the rebound, should “jam” the rebounder, stepping close to them, with arms outstretched. The goal is to slow the pass, rather than steal the ball. The player should resist the temptation to reach for the ball as this often results in a foul being called.

If the basket is guarded, perimeter players may also contest the outlet pass and then place pressure on the ball handler.

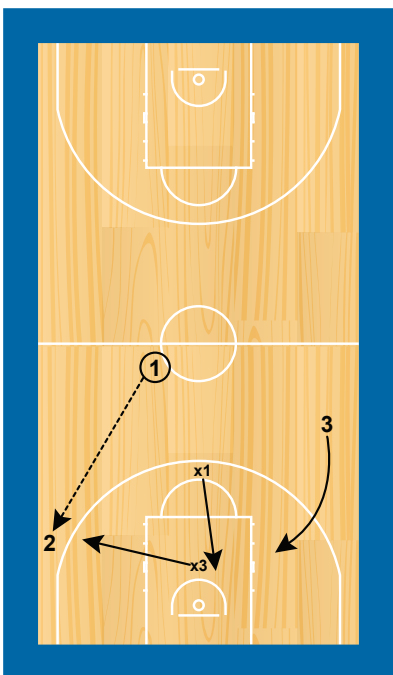
1 DEFENDER AGAINST 2



When faced against two offensive players, the defender should move back to the basket as quickly as possible. From there they must try to put doubt into the minds of the offensive players – are they guarding the dribbler or are they guarding the player without the ball?

To do this the defender must be active – moving their feet into the “driving lane” and then back toward the basket. Having active hands can also help. The offence has the advantage and should score - if the defender can slow them down it gives time for another defender to arrive.

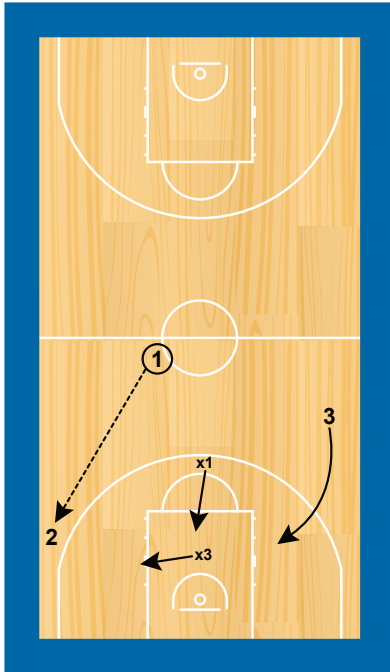
2 DEFENDERS AGAINST 3



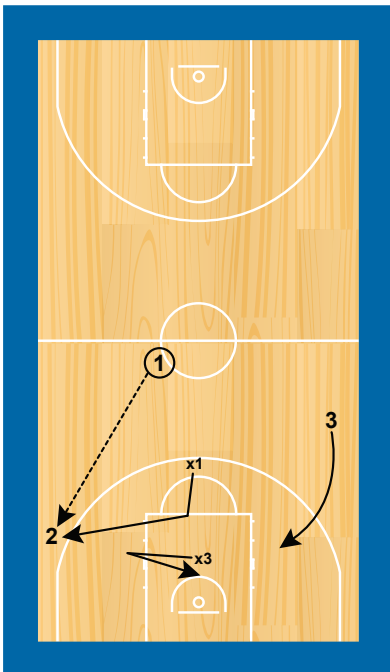
Two defenders should adopt a tandem or “I” formation, the first defender at the inside the 3 point line, the second defender at the basket. This defender must be outside the “no charge” circle.

Their primary goal should be to not allow any lay-up, forcing an outside shot or delaying the offence until more defenders recover.

Generally, as the ball is passed to the wing, the basket defender will move out to guard that player and the top defender will rotate down to guard the basket. The defender moving to the perimeter may initially “hedge”, particularly if they do not believe the player is capable of shooting from that position.



If the basket defender “hedges” or fakes moving to the perimeter, this can give time for the other defender to move to the basket while the defender moves to the perimeter. Alternatively they may continue guarding inside the key. Whilst this can give up an outside shot, that is preferable to giving up a lay-up.



The basket defender “hedging” can also give an opportunity for the top defender to move to defend the ball on the perimeter.

1.1.12 FULL COURT MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

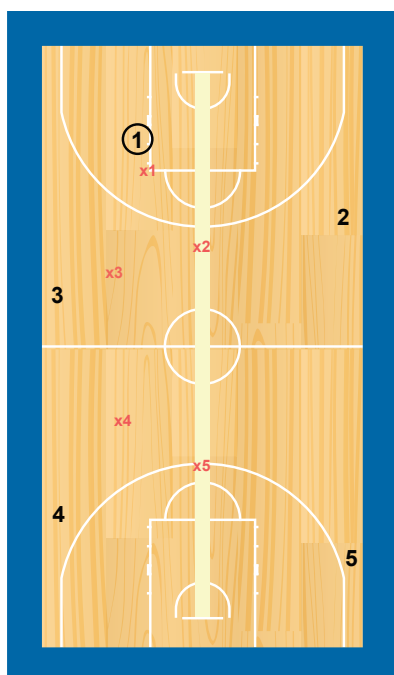
The basic team concepts used in half-court defence, also apply in full court defence (e.g. help and recover, rotation etc.).

POSITION RELATIVE TO THE BALL

The increased space on the full court is an obvious difference to defending on the half court however the principle remains the same - the closer the opponent is to the ball, the closer the defender is to the opponent.

And the further an opponent is from the ball, the further the defender is from the opponent.

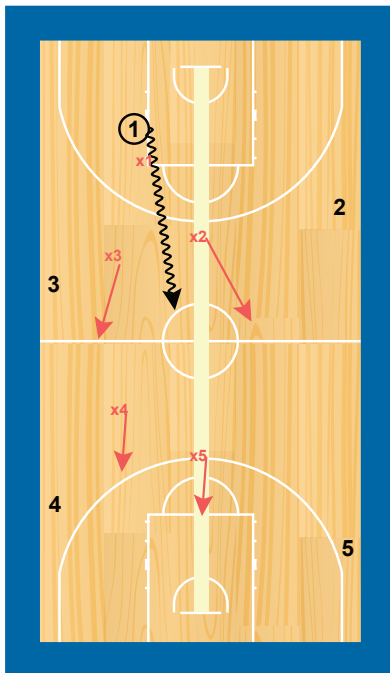
Coaches may use activities to improve positioning and moving of the players in the full court context.



Defenders that are more than one pass away from the ball should be oriented so that their back faces the "base line" enabling them to see both the ball and their immediate opponent.

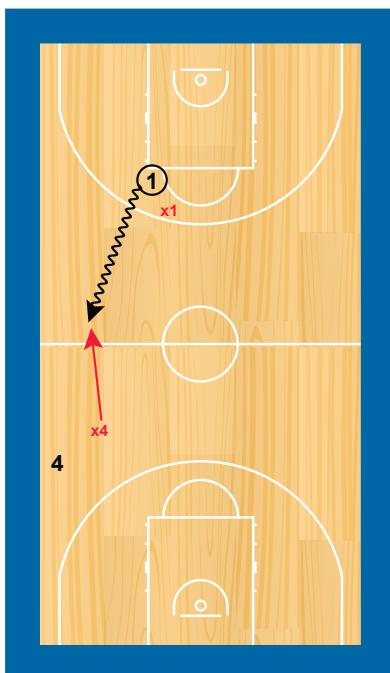
If the player they are guarding is on the same side of the court as the ball (x3 and x4), the defender may need to turn their back towards the "split line" to maintain vision of both the ball and their opponent. The key concept is that all defenders are able to see the ball and their opponent.

Similarly, the further away the offensive player is from the ball, the further away from the defender can be.



As the ball gets closer, defenders should move closer to the player that they are guarding. Defenders should also move with the "line of the ball" where their opponent is behind the ball (e.g. x2 keeps moving with the ball even though their opponent is behind the ball). This is simply applying the rule that "help defence comes from below the ball".

This positioning is important because if x2 is at the "line of the ball" they can put pressure on the dribbler. However, if they remain above the "line of the ball" (which is where their opponent is) they are not in position to "help and recover".



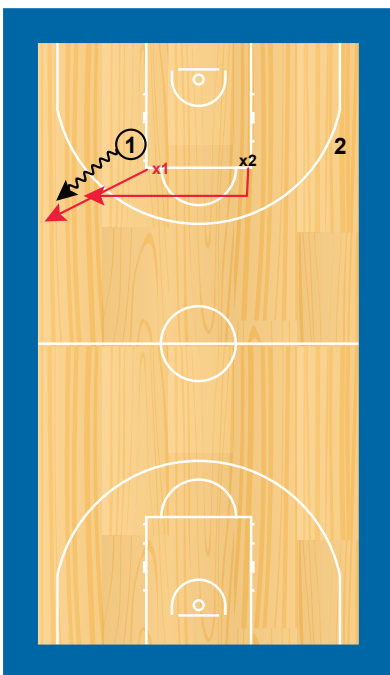
If the ball is moving slowly, the defender may be able to "jump" onto the player dribbling the ball to place the dribbler under more pressure. This can either trigger a double team with x1 and x4 or x4 switching with x1.

Players that are defending an opponent that is more than one pass away from the ball must:

- Be ready to react to a long pass, and be in a position to intercept the pass or, at the very least, "fly with the ball" so that they are in position to guard their opponent as they catch the ball;
- Adjust position every time that the ball is passed;
- Move into the path of their opponent if they are cutting in an attempt to receive a pass;
- Be ready to help and rotate to ensure team defensive pressure.

DOUBLE TEAMING THE BALL

Often teams play full court defence in an attempt to create turnovers by double teaming the ball handler.

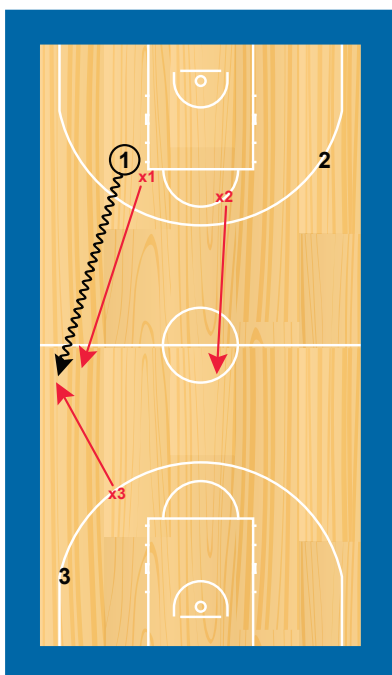


"TURNING THE DRIBBLER" INTO DOUBLE TEAM

If X1 is able to "turn" the dribbler (get in front of them and force them to change direction), this may present X2 the opportunity to double team.

This will be particularly effective if the dribbler turns "blind" by performing a reverse pivot.

The double team may also be possible if the dribbler picks up their dribble. It is important that if X2 decides to double team that they do not hesitate and instead sprint to position. Even if it is not the "perfect" decision, by being decisive their team mates can adjust as necessary.



“CHANNELING THE DRIBBLER” INTO A DOUBLE TEAM

Alternatively, if x1 is channeling the dribbler (keeping them moving in one direction), the double team must come from ahead of the dribbler. Again, if they are to double team x3 needs to be decisive and x1 needs to keep up with their opponent so that they cannot dribble toward the middle to avoid x3.

When double-teaming, players must be taught:

- To make sure that the dribbler cannot pass through the middle – they must not leave a gap between the two defenders;
- To keep their hands high to avoid fouling – they do not reach for the ball, they are simply trying to trap the ball handler;
- That their role is not to steal the ball. A successful double team may cause a turnover by:
 - Forcing a bad pass, intercepted by another team mate;
 - 8 second violation (where the double team is in the back court);
 - 5 second violation.

And even if the double team does not create a turnover, it can still be successful by reducing the time that the opponent has to establish their offence and get a shot.

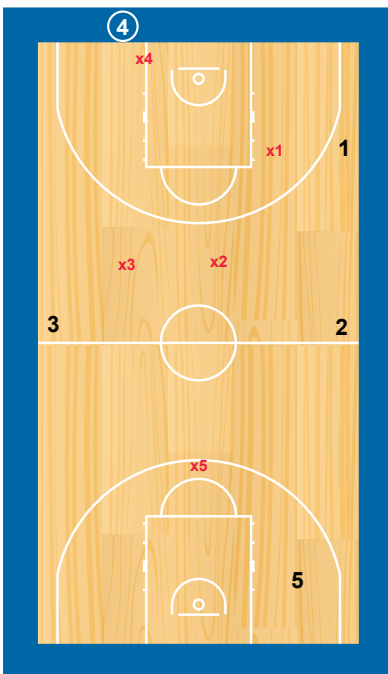
ROLES IN FULL COURT "MAN TO MAN" DEFENCE

After scoring, or when the opposition are to throw the ball in, the defence have an opportunity to establish position to apply full court pressure. When a team is shooting a free throw it is also another opportunity to establish position, even if the free throw is actually missed.

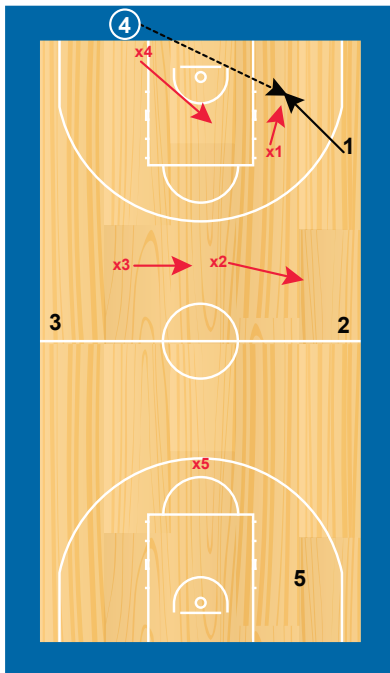
Commonly, the roles in full court defence are:

1. "Point" - defends the player with the ball
2. "Safety" (does not contest offensive rebound) – will deny pass being made up court. Can also be involved in "double teaming"
3. "Rebounding Wing" – contests the offensive rebound and then denies pass being made up the court. Like the defensive safety, can also be involved in "double teaming"
4. "Pluggger" – pressures the inbound pass and then can deny a pass back to the inbounder, or apply pressure on the dribbler.
5. "Basket" – retreats to defend the basket.

Each player has a "man to man" responsibility although may defend different players if the offence change roles.



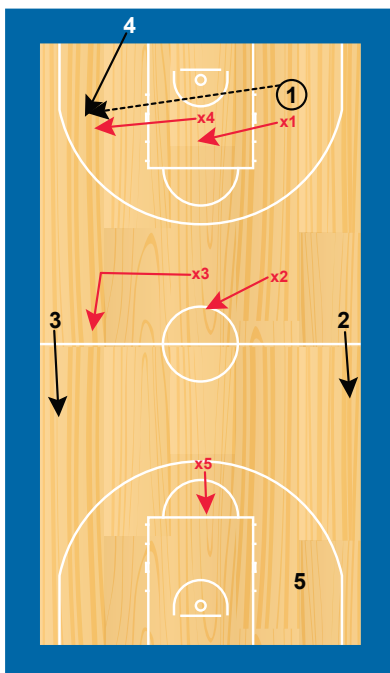
1. "Point"
2. "Safety"
3. "Rebounding Wing"
4. "Pluggger"
5. "Basket"



X4 must step to the sideline quickly to deny the inbound pass. They should stand at an angle, in order to influence the pass to one side of the court.

As the pass is made, x1, x2 and x3 adopt a position consistent with normal man to man defensive principles:

- x1 guarding the ball and either channeling or turning the dribbler as per team rules;
- x2 is in a position to deny the pass down the line to 2. They are also in position to double team if 1 is channelled down the sideline. x3 moves to a split line position in the middle of the court. These positions are reversed if the ball was passed to the other side.
- x4 moves to a position that is below the line of the ball – from here they can apply pressure on the dribbler. They are responsible for defending x4.



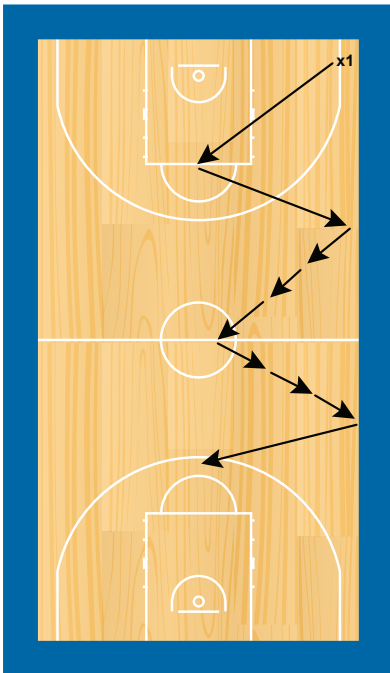
If the ball is passed, defenders continue to adjust in accordance with normal man to man defensive principles. Whilst the relative distances are different, the principles are the same:

- keep vision of both the player you are guarding and the player with the ball;
- be between your player and the ball, remaining close enough that you can get to your player if the ball is passed to them.

TEACHING FULL COURT MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

Following are some "breakdown" activities that practice the type of movement required by each defender. All players should be familiar with each role.

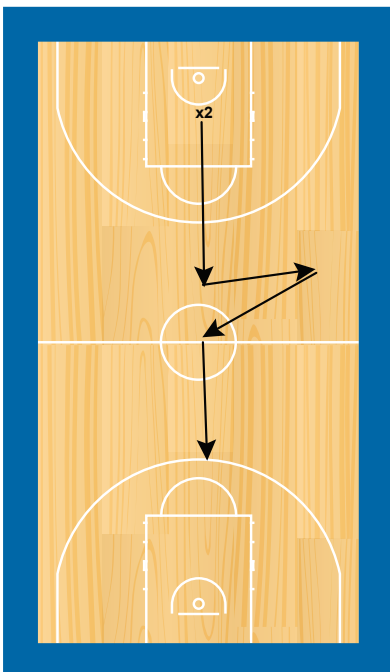
These activities can be excellent Warm-up activities and then the players should progress to contested situations. A main point of emphasis must be moving quickly – it is not the fastest person that is necessarily the most effective defender, moving early is just as important to being an effective defender.



"POINT"

Defender starts in the corner and:

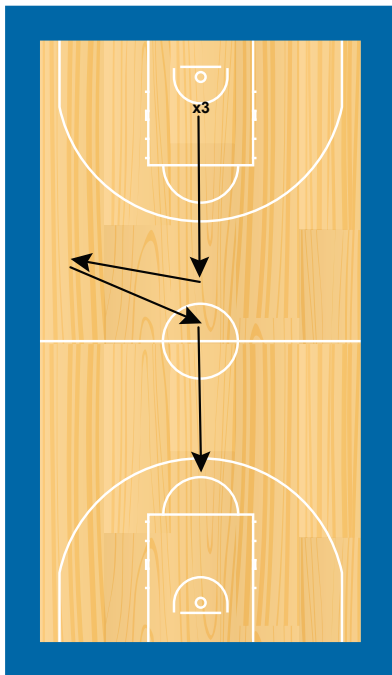
- sprints to the foul line and the baseline;
- sprint to the sideline (can incorporate "closing out" technique)
- defensive footwork to the split line and back to the sideline (as if guarding the ball)
- sprint to the 3 point line ending in defensive stance



"SAFETY"

Defender starts in key and:

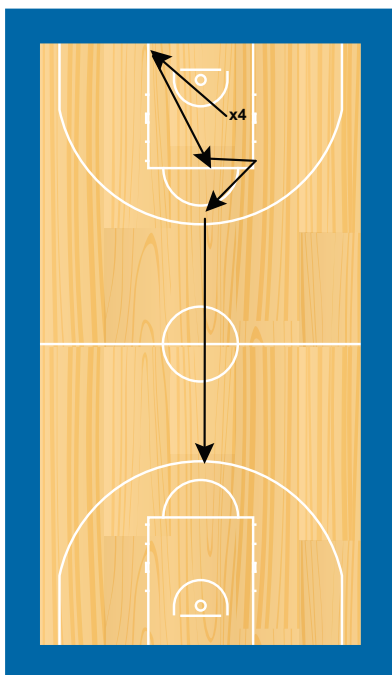
- sprints to the half way circle and turns to face the basket ("safety" position)
- sprints to sideline, into denial stance;
- sprints back to the circle, in open stance
- sprint to the 3 point line and get into defensive stance.



"REBOUNDING WING"

Defender jumps to touch the ring (backboard or net, as appropriate) and:

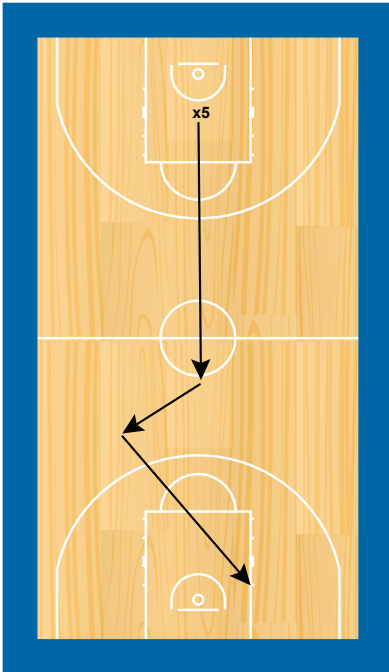
- sprints to the half way, turns to face the basket ("safety" position)
- sprint to sideline, into denial stance;
- sprint back to the circle - open stance
- sprint to 3 point line and get into defensive stance.



"PLUGGER"

Defender tips the ring (or backboard or net) and:

- pressures inbound pass;
- sprints to the free throw line – open stance
- "hedge" (two steps) towards the ball and return
- sprints back to the 3 point circle

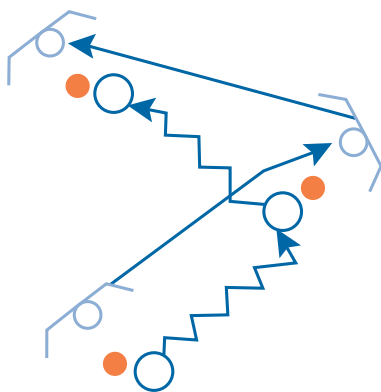


"BASKET"

Defender tips the ring (or backboard or net) and:

- pressures inbound pass;
- sprints to middle lane to the top of the key
- moves to the opposite elbow
- moves to the "block"

Much of the teaching of full court man to man is simply giving players the opportunity to develop the skills they have previously used in the half court and applying them to the different space experienced in the full court. It is important to incorporate contested activities from an early stage.



1X1 - "TURNING THE DRIBBLER"

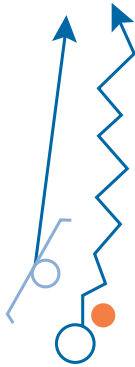
The defender must keep their "head on the ball" and sprint to get in front of the dribbler so that they must change direction. Commonly, the defenders "turn" the dribbler in the back court.

A common mistake that defenders make is to make contact and push into the defender.

This has two disadvantages:

- first it will often be called a foul;
- secondly, it is difficult to get to a position in front of the dribbler.

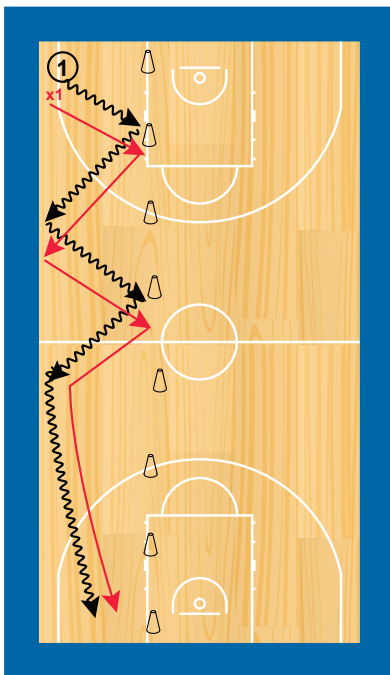
The defender does need to be close enough to put the dribbler under pressure (an arm's length approximately).



1X1 – "CHANNELING THE DRIBBLER"

When "channeling" the dribbler, the defender has their shoulder on the dribbler's shoulder to ensure that they cannot move into the middle of the court. In this activity, the defender the dribbler along the sideline.

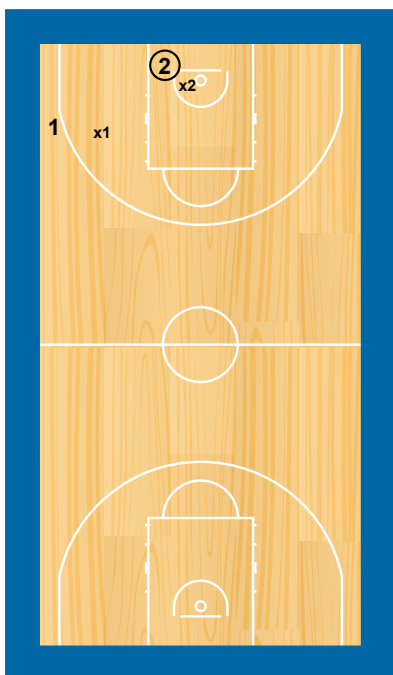
If the dribbler stops or does a retreat dribble, the defender may be in front of the dribbler. They must quickly move backwards to establish a position to stop the dribbler changing direction.



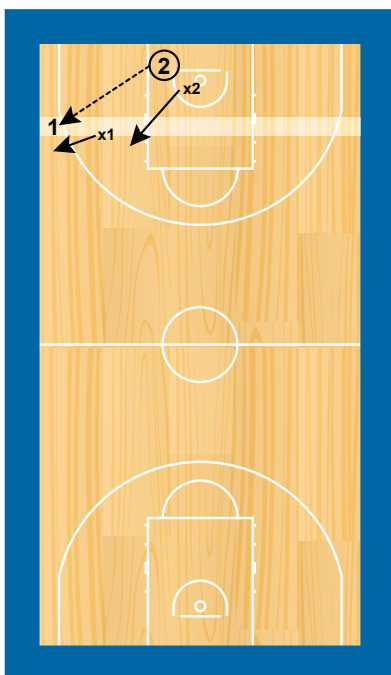
"2X2" – HALF WIDTH OF COURT

x1 attempt to "turn" the dribbler as many times as possible in the back court and then channel them along the sideline (to keep them away from the basket).

It is important that the dribbler attempts to beat the defender and only change direction if they are forced to. They should also use a change of pace and retreat dribbles as necessary.

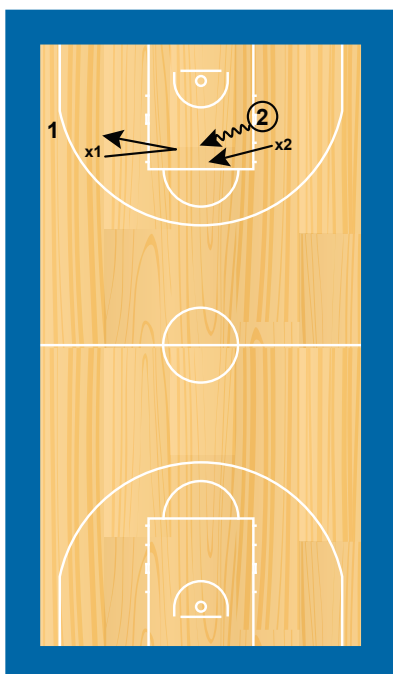


DIAG 1

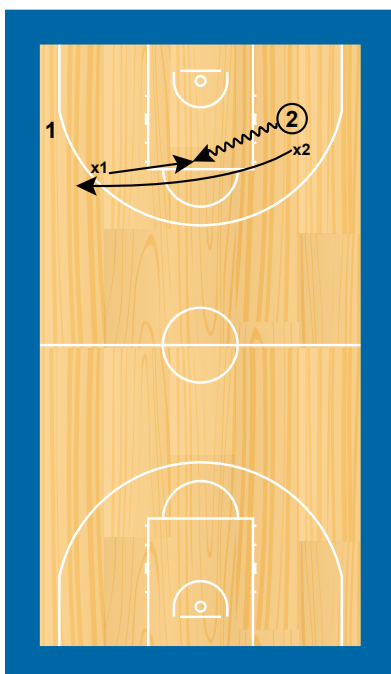


DIAG 2

2x2 in a half width of the court. "Line of Ball" principle is very important in defence. Simply, even where an offensive player remains behind the ball (as in Diag 2), their defender must get to the line of the ball, which puts them in a position to pressure the ball handler.



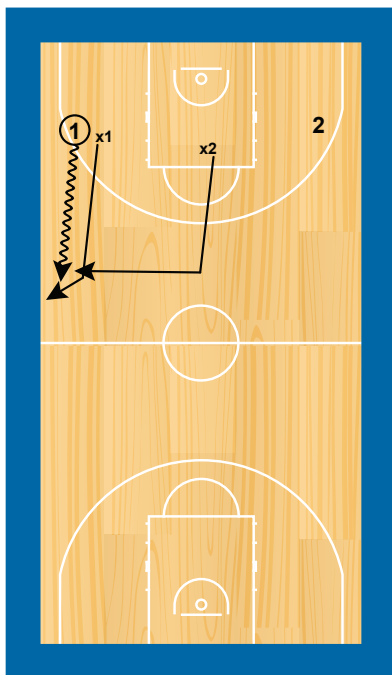
DIAG 3



DIAG 4

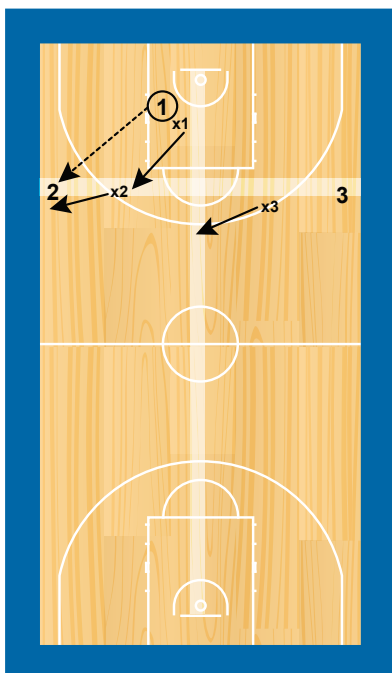
In Diag 3, x1 takes one or two steps toward the dribbler and then returns to their player. This is an example of "hedge and recover" as used in half court.

In Diag 4, x1 switches and takes over guarding the dribbler and x2 moves to guard the other player. x1 communicates this by calling "Jump" or "Switch".



In addition to using "help and recover" and "run and jump" (switching), the defence may also double team the ball – which requires the defender to get to the "line of the ball".

In this activity, the offence are initially not allowed to move ahead of the ball.

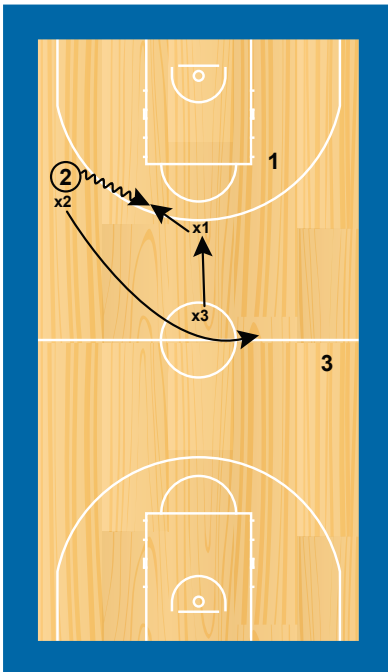


"3X3 FULL COURT"

The two important principles here, also apply in half-court defence:

- "line of ball" (shaded horizontal line) – defenders must be at or below the line of the ball;
- "split line" (shaded vertical line) – defenders guarding a player on the opposite side of the court, must get to the split, maintaining vision of both the player they are guarding and the player with the ball.

The Defenders use "help and recover", "run and jump" (switch) and double team where possible. Again, restrict the offence from moving too far ahead of the ball.

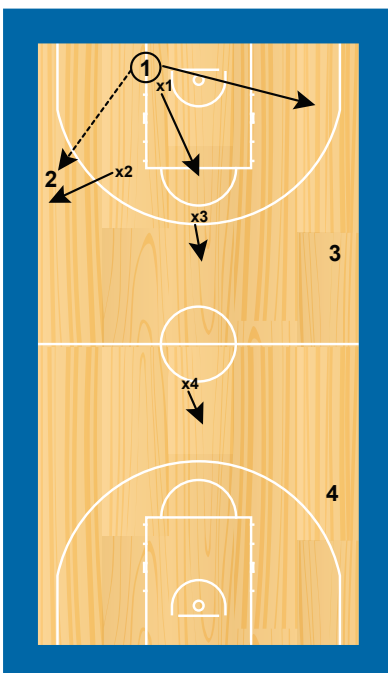


The defenders should also practice the principle of "help the helper":

- x1 has "jumped" or switched to start guarding 2;
- x3 helps the helper and moves to guard 1, x3 may slightly delay moving, to give X2 a chance to move closer to their new position;
- x2 rotates to take responsibility for 3.

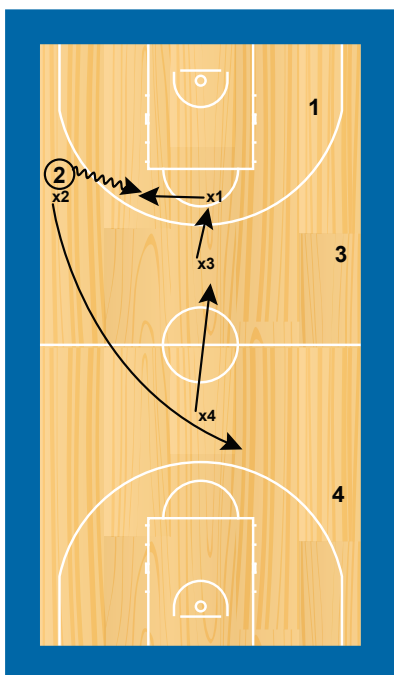
Important principles to emphasize are:

- Sprinting to get to the split line and line of ball;
- Communicate – if there is a clear understanding of what each defender must do then there is no gamble. It's only a gamble if defenders are guessing what team mates are doing;

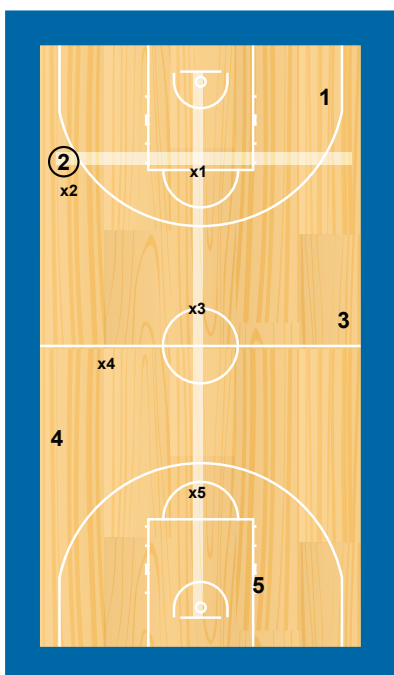


4X4 FULL COURT

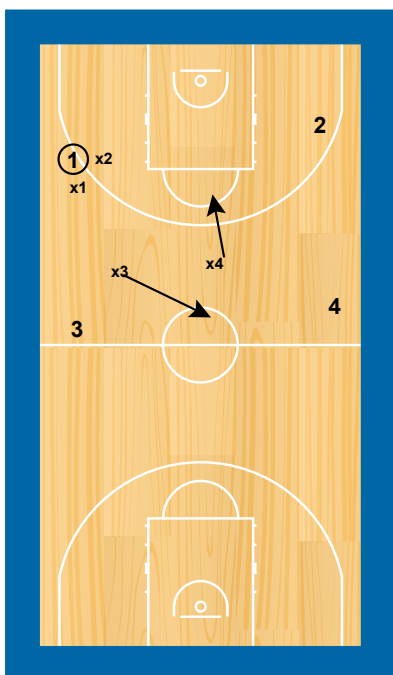
4x4 is simply a further extension of the principles used in the earlier activities. Most importantly, all players must move together and "fly with the ball" on every pass, to make sure they get to the next spot, by the time the ball is caught.



The rotation is simple, with the nearest player helping the helper.



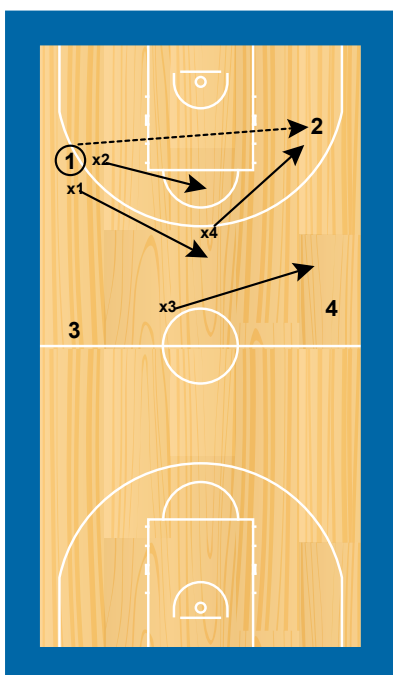
Similarly, with 5x5 the principles remain the same but require dynamic practice to hone. Players down the court must anticipate where passes may go and "shoot the gap" – prepared to intercept the pass.



PRACTICING FULL COURT DOUBLE TEAM

Teams should also practice double teams in the full court, which can initially be done 4x4.

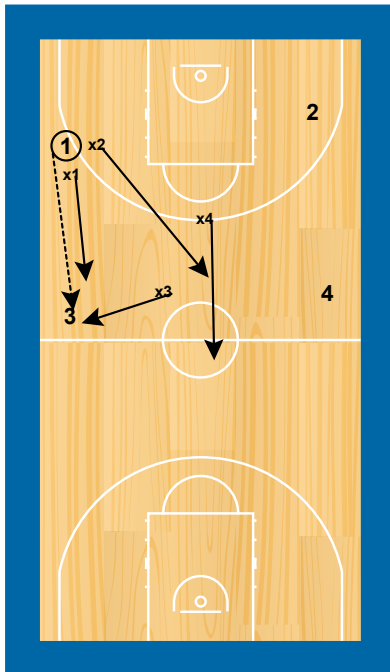
With x2 and x1 double teaming the player with the ball, x4 and x3 are "interceptors" and must read what the offensive player might do. If they believe the pass may go to either 2 or 4, both defenders adjust their position (x4 moving up toward 2, x3 moving toward 4).



If the ball is passed to 2, x4 moves to defend them and x3 moves to defend 4, who is on the same side of the floor.

Whichever of x1 and x2 can see the pass, moves away from the double team. The pass went over x2's head, so x1 will move.

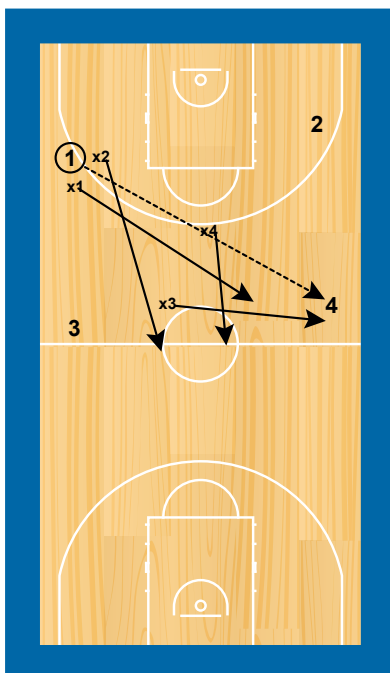
Accordingly, x2 remains defending 1 (and moves to the split line) and x1 moves to defend the open player (3).



If the pass goes to Player 3, 3 defends the ball and x4 rotates to defend 4 (and moves to the split line).

Both x2 and x1 must move toward the line of ball. x2 can "see" the pass (as it went over the head of x1) so they will defend 2, but must move to the split line at the line of ball.

x1 will defend 1 but again moves to the line of the ball. They may be able to double team 3.



A cross court pass to 4 is very hard to pass, and would hopefully be intercepted by either x4 or x3.

However, if the pass is successful, x3 rotates to defend 4. Even though x4 may be closer, they are not in position to stop 4 from move down the court.

x4 rotates to defend 3.

x1 can see the pass so will be responsible to defend 2. They move to the line of the ball and may be able to double team (given 2 is so far behind the ball).

x2 is responsible for defending 1 and again moves to the line of the ball.

ADDING THE 5TH DEFENDER

With a 5th defender, they would guard the basket and so would not be involved in the double team rotations.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Organise a short scrimmage during practice. Have two players stand with you, one looking at the offence and one at the defence. Have them provide feedback to the team (or to you), which can help to see their understanding of the team concepts. Do another scrimmage and have a different two athletes standing with you.
2. Conduct shell drill where 4 of your players are the defenders and 4 coaches/parents are the offensive players – passing the ball around the perimeter. Have 4 players on the baseline with their eyes closed and allocate each of them to one defender. After 30-45 seconds of passing (during which the baseline players have kept their eyes closed) and have the baseline players identify where their player was on the court (e.g. defending the ball, high split, low split). They will only be able to do this if the team has good defensive communication.
3. Have each player in your team assess how well they think they understand the help rotation principles in half court defence. In a contested scrimmage activity, what is the correlation between how well players assessed their understanding and their actual performance?

1.2 DEFENDING SCREENS

1.2.1 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "LOCK AND TRAIL"

A screen is simply an attempt by an offensive player to block the path of a defender in order to free their team mate. Screens may be set on ball (to free the dribbler) or "off ball" (to free a cutter).

In this chapter, we describe the action of the two defenders involved in the screen and in Levels 2 and 3 we explore the team's defensive schemes for guarding screens.

Regardless of the type of screen, communication is critical to effectively guarding it. The defender guarding the player setting the screen must:

- Gain the attention of the team mate (who is going to be screened) – "Name";
- Advise that a screen is coming – "Screen";
- Confirm how their team mate is to guard the screen – e.g. "Through", "Under", "Over"

A team may have in place set rules for how a screening situation is to be guarded or it may be at the discretion of the players. In either event, it is the defender of the screener who is responsible for communicating how to guard the situation as depending upon the method used, the actions of the screener's defender will change.

DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS

There are four primary methods for guarding off ball screens:

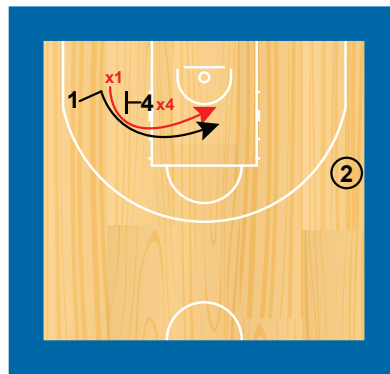
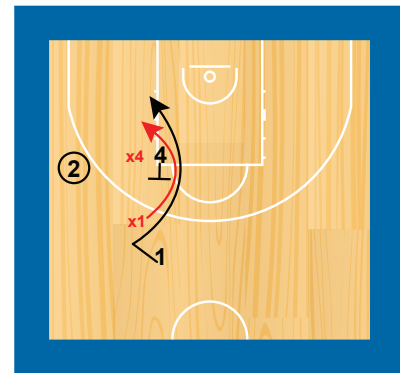
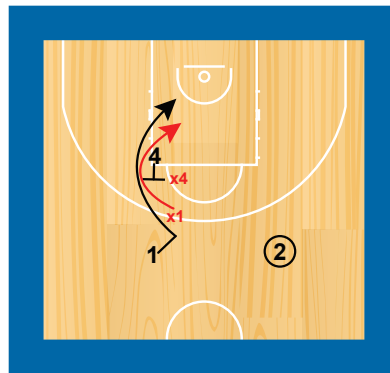
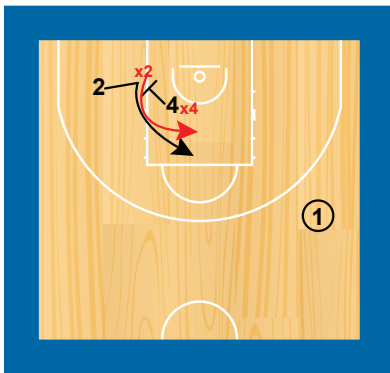
- "Lock and Trail"
- "Through"
- "Under"
- "Switch"

DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS - "LOCK AND TRAIL"

The defender of the cutter establishes "arm bar" contact with cutter forcing the cutter to use the screen and giving room to the defender to be beside or trail immediately behind.

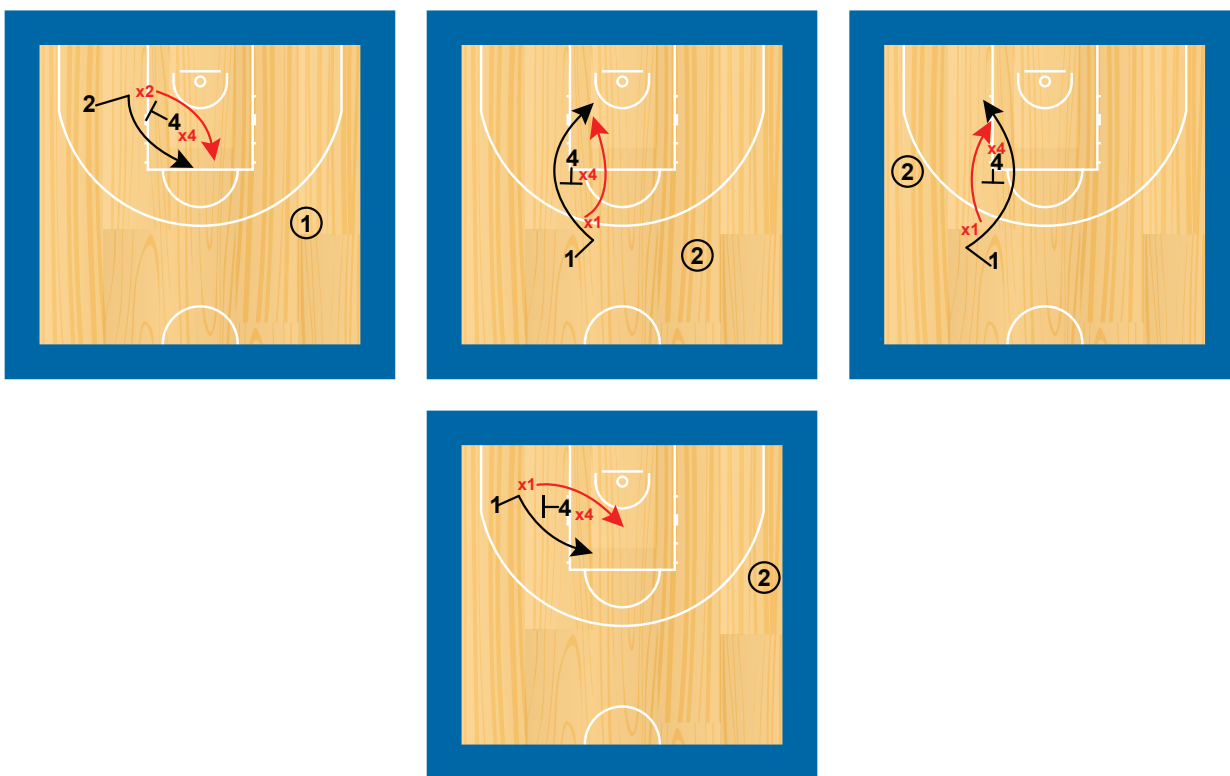
As an offensive technique, players are instructed to "curl" cut if the defender "locks and trail". Accordingly, the screener's defender must step into the path of the cutter to force them wide (enabling the defender to recover position) and not allowing them to curl.

In order to do this, the defender on the cutter must get their hips past the screen. If they lean forward (getting the top part of their body past), they will get caught on the screen and the cutter is likely to get open.



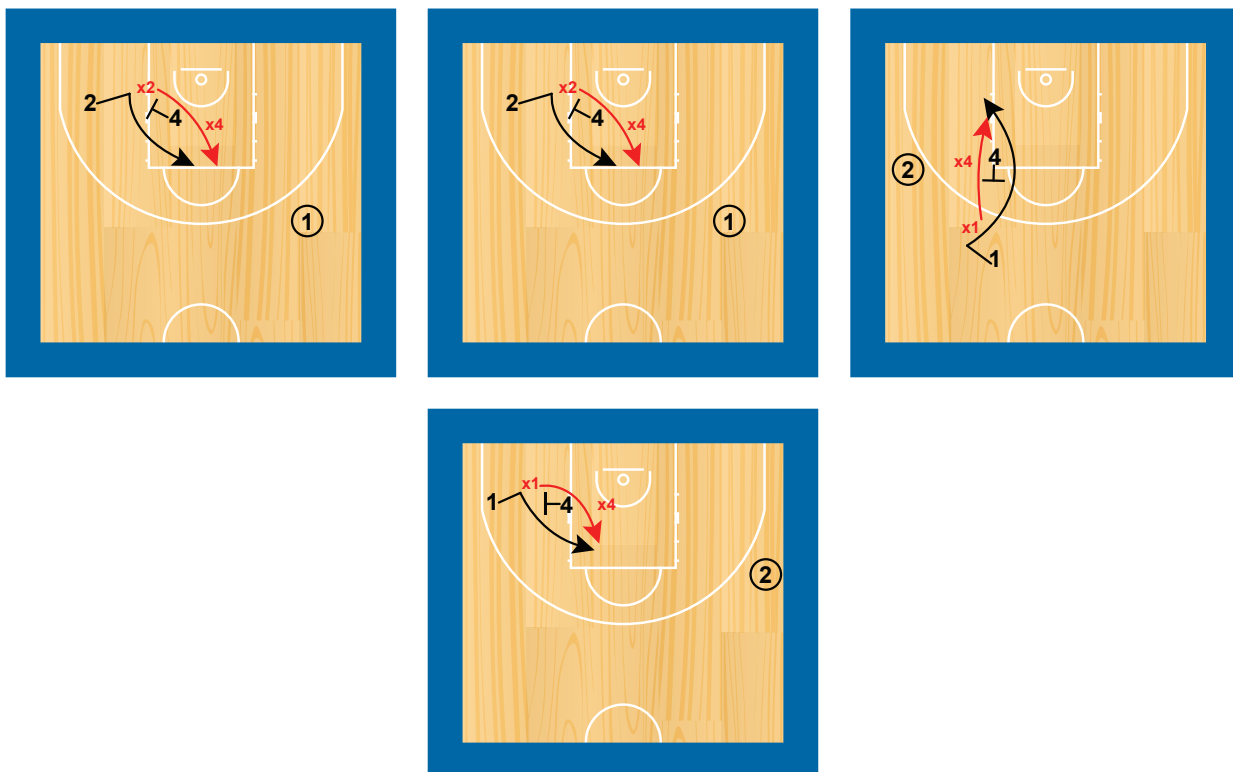
1.2.2 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS - "UNDER"

Again, the defender of the cutter starts low, forcing the cutter to use the screen. The defender then goes on the other side of the screen, moving quickly to intercept the cutter. The defender of the screener has stepped into the screener, so that their team mate will cut behind them in moving to intercept the cutter.



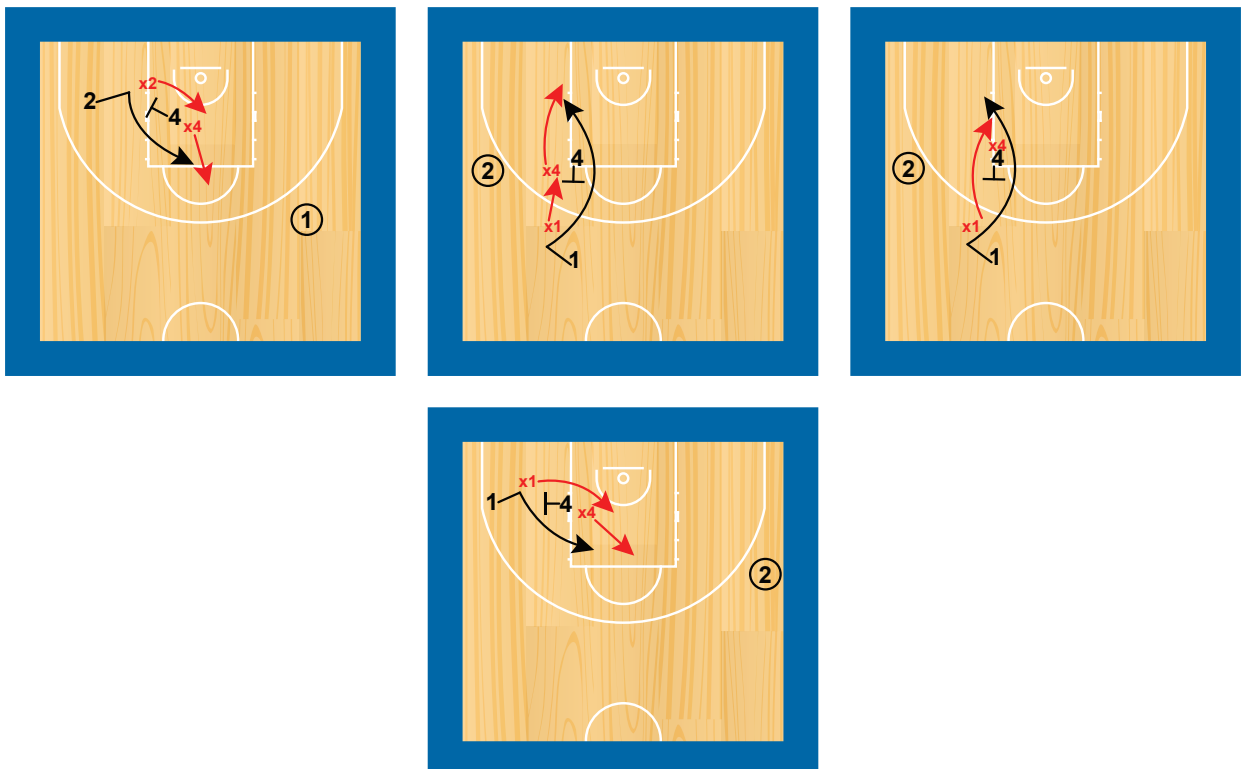
1.2.3 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS - "THROUGH"

The defender of the screener steps to the ball, creating a gap between them and the screener, which their team mate can move through. The defender of the cutter starts low, forcing the cutter to use the screen and then goes on the other side of the screen, moving quickly to intercept the cutter.



1.2.4 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "SWITCH"

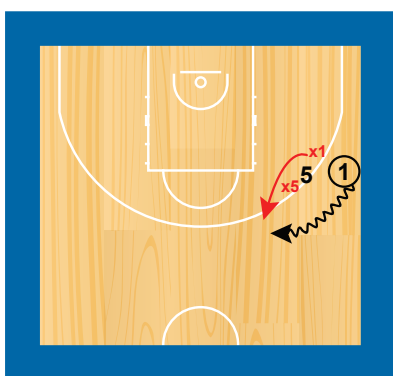
In "switch" the two defenders swap responsibility for guarding the offensive players. This is most commonly used where the two offensive players are similar (e.g. a "guard to guard" screen or a "big to big" screen), although particularly late in the shot clock a team may switch all screens. In switching, the defender initially guarding the screener must move aggressively to deny the cutter the ball. The other defender must similarly move quickly to establish a position to defend the screener.



1.2.5 DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS - "UNDER"

Similarly, when defending an on ball screen there are 5 techniques that can be used to defend:

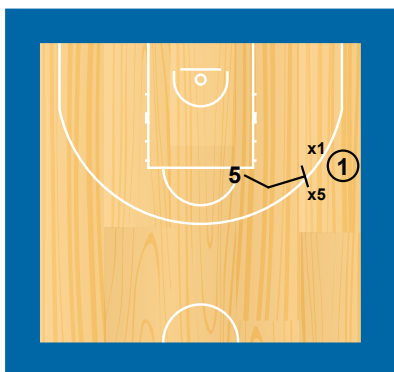
- under
- over
- through
- switch
- double



GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN – UNDER

x5 plays tight on the screener so that x1 can go underneath the screen intercepting the dribbler before that they can move closer to the basket. Whilst the dribbler should be looking to attack the elbow, x1 must stop the dribbler getting to the keyway.

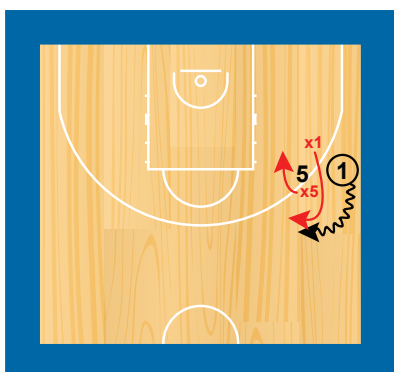
1.2.6 DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS - "OVER"



GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN - OVER

As 5 sets the screen for 1, x1 must move to take away the base line drive, forcing Player 1 to move in the direction of the screen.

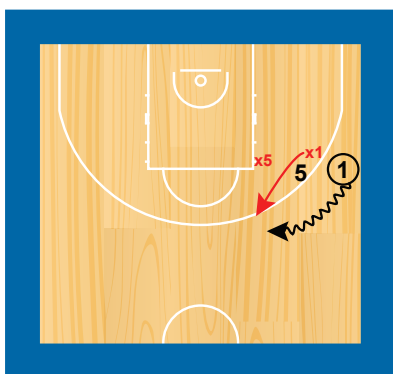
x5 has their toes pointing to the sideline and steps out from the behind the screener to "show their number" and force the dribbler wide.



As 1 dribbles, x1 also goes over the top of the screen. They must get their hips past the screen and not simply lean the top part of their body. x5 steps out to ensure that the dribbler must go wide, giving x1 room to recover.

x5 then recovers to guard 5, ensuring that they are on the ball side of that player.

1.2.7 DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS - "THROUGH"

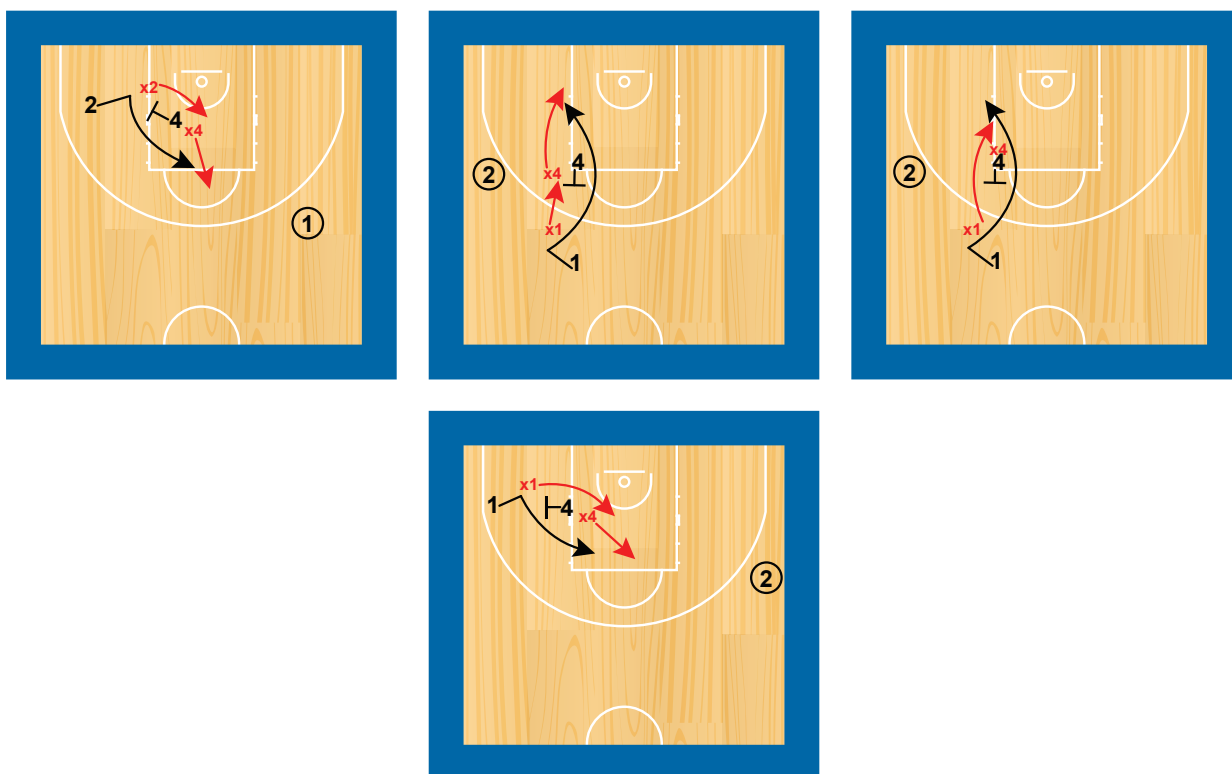


GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN - THROUGH

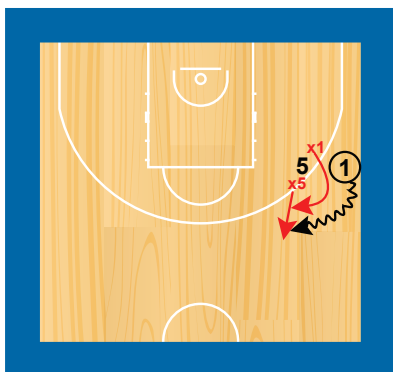
x5 steps back from the screener, so that there is a path that x1 can use to go under the screen to intercept the dribbler before they can make any penetration to the keyway.

1.2.8 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS - "SWITCH"

In "switch" the two defenders swap responsibility for guarding the offensive players. This is most commonly used where the two offensive players are similar, although particularly late in the "shot clock" a team may switch all screens. In switching, the defender initially guarding the screener must move aggressively to deny the cutter the ball. The other defender must similarly move quickly to establish a position to defend the screener.



1.2.9 DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS – "DOUBLE"



GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN – DOUBLE

x1 takes away the baseline drive and forces the dribbler to use the screen. x5 steps out, toes to the sideline, to "show their number".

As the dribbler moves, x5 steps out to guard the ball and x1 follows the dribbler hard to form a double team with x5. x1 must get into position quickly to ensure the dribbler cannot split the two defenders by dribbling between them.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague how they prefer to defend off ball screens – do you agree?
Discuss any difference in philosophy
2. Have an assistant coach record how many times an opponent uses an on ball screen and how your players defended it each time. Do they defend it as you prefer?
3. Discuss with a coaching colleague how they improve the ability of their players to defend screens.

1.3 ZONE DEFENCES

1.3.1 WHY ZONE IS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PLAYERS UNDER 15

Any defence played in the half court which does not incorporate normal man to man defensive principles (which include help defence) can be considered to be a zone. For this purpose, trapping defences which rotate back to man to man defensive principles are acceptable.

There are a number of reasons why playing zone defence is not recommended with players under the age of 15. And some competitions specifically prohibit zone defences being played and will penalise teams (by technical foul on the coach) if they do so.¹⁷

The defensive principles of rotation, "help and recover", containment, vision of the entire court and positioning relative to both your player and the ball are important fundamentals that underpin most, if not all, defensive philosophies.

The rationale for the introduction of the "no zone" (in the half court) rule is that zone defences with young players can limit the development of individual and team skills.

The reason for this is that the zone defence (particularly with young players) tends to:

- limit opportunities to drive to the basket (as there are 2 or 3 defenders in position at the keyway);
- limit opportunities to pass to players cutting into the key (as there are 2 or 3 defenders in the keyway, young players often struggle to "see" the pass or to make the pass);
- force players to shoot from outside before they have developed the strength and technique to do so;
- players often lack the strength to throw a "skip" pass (from one side of the court to the other).

By having teams play man to man defence provides greater opportunity for offensive players as there will often be less defenders in position directly near the basket. This reduces the need for defensive skills such as closing out and positioning. Accordingly, both offensive and defensive players will miss out on valuable learning and development.

¹⁷ For example, Basketball Australia introduced a "no zone defence" at its U14 Club Championships in 1996 (and continues to do so)

Whilst the “no zone” rule focuses on the defence, it was introduced to enhance the development of both offensive and defensive skills. Indeed, it is up to the offence, through ball and player movement, to prove that it is a zone defence.

It is important to remember that the “no zone” rule applies only in the half court and zone presses and trapping defences are allowed, if they fall back to man to man principles in the quarter court.

Where a “no zone” rule is applied it is recommended that it is not for referees to adjudicate whether or not a zone defence is being played. Instead, an independent official (or “zone buster”) is appointed to each game. This person needs a reasonably high level of knowledge as it can at times be difficult to determine whether or not a team is playing zone defence.

1.4 DEFENDING SITUATIONS OF DISADVANTAGE

1.4.1 2v1 AND 3v2

There are many situations that will occur during a game where the defence is outnumbered, for example:

- Defending in “transition” (whether after a turnover, score or a missed shot);
- After the defence has double teamed a player and the ball has been passed;
- After a defender has rotated to help a team mate.

The first rule to defending situations of disadvantage is for all players to hustle and move quickly so that the situation of numeric disadvantage exists for only a short period of time. Regardless of whether a player has made a mistake, missed a shot they must quickly move to defend the next play.

The outnumbered defender should attempt to “steal time” from the opponents (to give their team mates sufficient time to recover) and this is best done by putting doubt into the mind of the offensive players. In a situation of numeric disadvantage, one offensive player may be undefended. If the outnumbered defenders can put doubt into the mind of the offensive player about what they are going to do (and who they will defend) that can be sufficient to win the contest.

To put doubt in the mind of the offensive players, an outnumbered defender can:

- Be active – “hedge” in one direction and then move in another. Keep arms and hands high and moving;
- Adopt a position on the court (e.g. stand in the passing lane) but be ready to move quickly to another position (e.g. move into the driving lane);
- Defend the easiest basket – for example, a defender may stay in the key to stop a layup, even if this does allow an open outside shot;
- Attack the person with the ball – this is often unexpected of the defender, but rather than “hedging” and “retreating” move quickly to defend the person with the ball being as aggressive as possible. If the person passes the ball the opponent may get an open shot, however such pressure can be effective as the player may not make an effective pass;
- If there are two defenders (e.g. defending 2 against 3 offensive players) one defender may defend the basket while the other pressures the ball.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What do you believe are the key principles defenders should adhere to when they are in a situation of disadvantage (e.g. 1 v 2 or 2 v 3)? Ask your players their opinion – do they agree with you?

LEVEL 1



TEAM

CHAPTER 2

**OFFENSIVE TACTICS
AND STRATEGIES**

CHAPTER 2

OFFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

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2.1. OFFENSIVE MOVEMENT

2.1.1 BASIC FLOOR SPACING - PASS AND CUT / GIVE AND GO

Coach Marv Harshman¹⁸ reminds us of the challenge of putting a team together – “players know how to dribble, shoot and pass. The challenge is to teach them why they should do it a certain way, and when they should do it”.

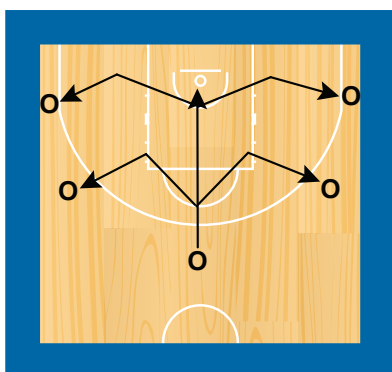
Before teaching the intricacies of an offensive system, players must be taught how to work together, including:

- Basic Floor Spacing;
 - Ball Reversal
 - Pass & Cut
 - Pass, Cut & Replace
- Basic Motion Offence
- Introducing Post Players
- Basic Screening Principles
- Motion Offence with Screens
- Basic Fast Break Principles
- Press Offence

Young players will often tend to follow the ball, which can result in them crowding around the ball. This can be exacerbated when young players lack the strength to throw passes across the court so their team mates move closer to the ball.

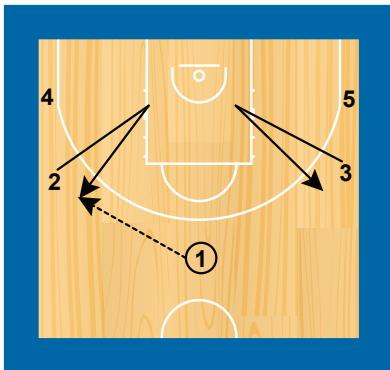
¹⁸ Harshman was head coach at Pacific Lutheran (1945-58), Washington State (1958-1971) and Washington (1971-1985) and was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1985

A METHOD OF TEACHING COURT SPACING IS TO START WITH THE “HEAD-HANDS-FEET” METHOD:

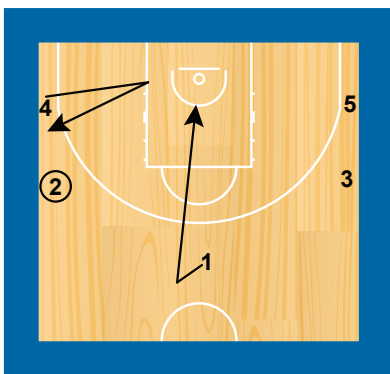


This spaces players around the perimeter and, if you join them up, they look a little like a “stick” figure, with a head, two hands and two feet. Mark these spots on the floor with cones and tell your players that they must be at either the head, hand or feet position and only one person at each position.

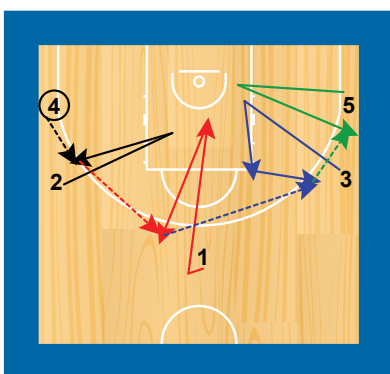
Any cut must go into the “heart” (the key) but then come out to one of those positions.



Initially have only the players closest to the ball leading.



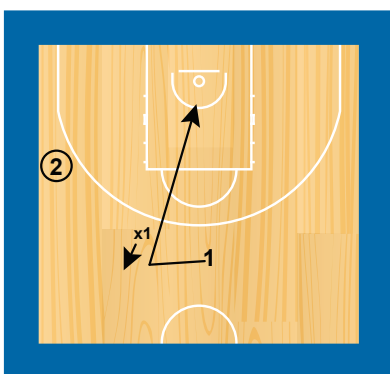
Players can use varying leading techniques. Here 4 uses a v-cut and 1 uses a back cut.



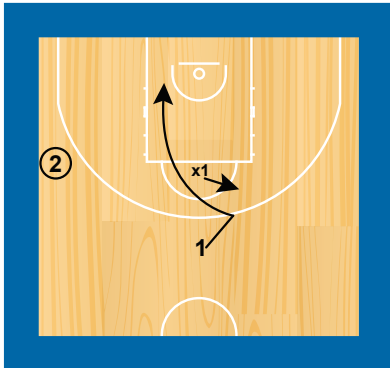
Emphasise the concept of “ball reversal” – moving the ball from one side of the court to the other.

Particularly with young players it is better to make short passes, rather than passing across the court.

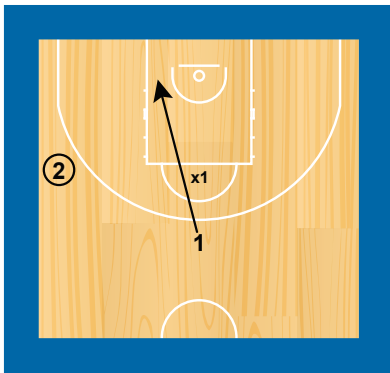
The cuts (shown in various colours) are not done all at the one time. Players cut, when the person next to them has the ball.



Add defenders so that players now must react to the defender in making a cut. Here, the defender is in the “passing lane”, so that the offensive player steps high, shows their hands and then back cuts.

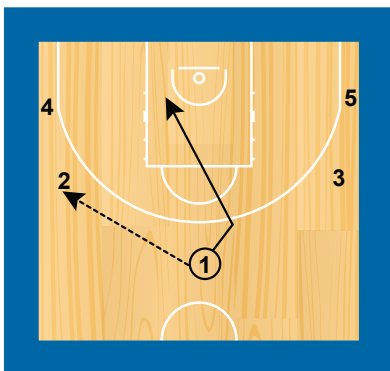


If the defender stands back, the offensive player cuts to the basket. They may move in one direction first (to get the defender to move) and then cut.



Or they may perform a straight cut, which will be most effective if the defender is looking at the ball and has lost sight of the offensive player.

Defenders only guard the one offensive player (no help defence at this stage) and focus is on the 1x1 contests.



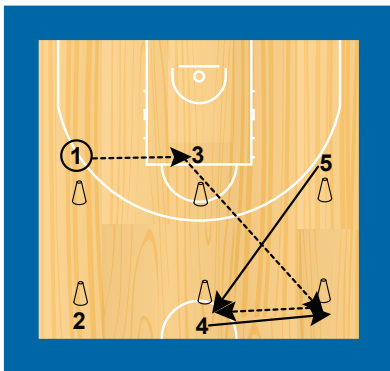
“PASS AND CUT” / “GIVE AND GO”

Perhaps the simplest play in basket is “pass and cut” or “give and go”. The player passing the ball, then cuts to the basket looking to receive a pass back.

“THE PUZZLE GAME”

In the earlier examples, individual players moved but there was little cohesion between players.

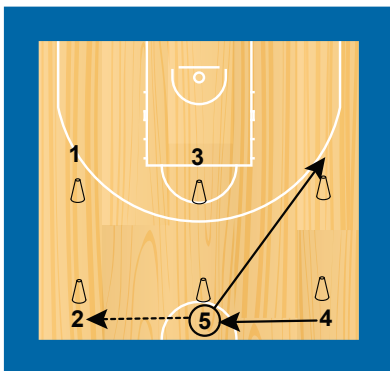
The Puzzle Game is a simple passing activity that can be used to help players to learn the importance of moving rather than standing still. And, in particular, how making a cut can be effective even if the player does not receive the ball because the player creates a space that another teammate can move into.



With 5 players, set up six cones and each player stands behind one cone, leaving one cone free. The rules of the game are:

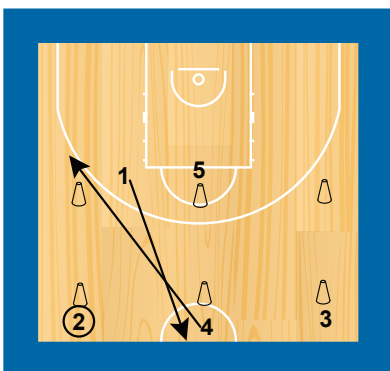
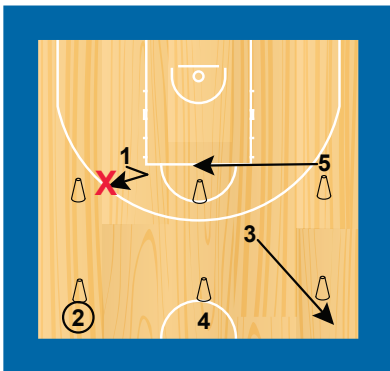
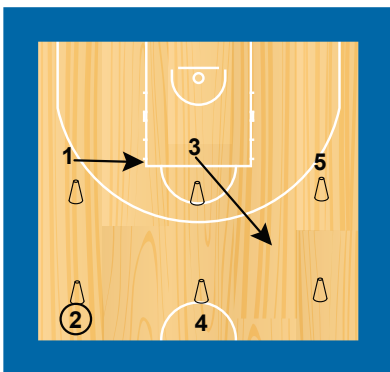
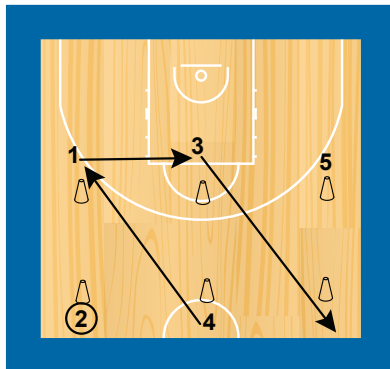
- The ball can only be passed to a person standing at a cone;
- Only one person at each cone;
- A player cannot move past a cone where someone is standing to get to the vacant cone (e.g. Player 2 cannot move past Player 4 to get to the open cone).
- The ball can only be passed to someone next to the person with the ball.
For example, Player 1 cannot pass to Player 5 but can pass to Players 2, 3 and 4.

In the two diagrams show the game being played according to the rules, with Players 3, 4 and 5 involved in cutting and passing.



The diagram above shows the game being played according to the rules, with Players 3, 4 and 5 involved in cutting and passing.

However, Players 1 and 2 were unable to cut, because they were never next to the vacant cone. The last rule to introduce is that no player should be at the same cone for more than a certain period of time. Initially, make it relatively long such as 5 or 6 seconds and then reduce the time.



The last rule will emphasise the importance of moving to create a space for a teammate. Here Player 3 cuts to the vacant cone, moving away from the ball. In this position they cannot receive the ball.

However, by them moving, Player 1 can now cut, as can Player 4. The cut by Player 3 also creates an opportunity for Player 5 to cut. They could cut to replace Player 3 (which means Player 1 would have to remain). Or they could replace Player 4.

Once players understand this last rule, allow passes to any player so long as they are at a cone.

As players get better they may start to move from their cone at the same time as another player. For example, Player 3 leaves their cone and Player 1 starts to move towards it.

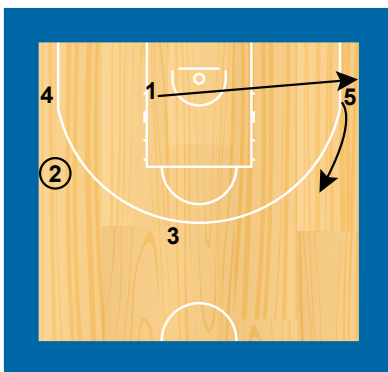
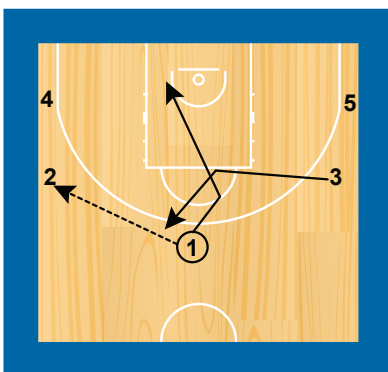
Introduce a rule that a player cannot return to their cone once they leave it. For example, if Player 5 replaced Player 3 before Player 1 got to the cone, Player 1 cannot return to their cone. Nor can Player 5 move back.

In this situation, another player must move to create a space for Player 1. There are many ways that a gap can be created, for example:

- Player 4 replaces Player 1 (shown)
- Player 2 passes to Player 4 and then moves to replace Player 1
- Player 3 moves and then Player 4 moves to their space.
- Player 4 cuts to the cone where Player 5 started and then Player 1 can replace Player 4.

2.1.2 MOTION OFFENCE - 5 OUT - REPLACING THE CUTTER

The “Pass and Cut” is a fundamental of many “invasion” sports like basketball. After introducing that, teams need to be introduced to movement of other players to maintain good floor spacing.



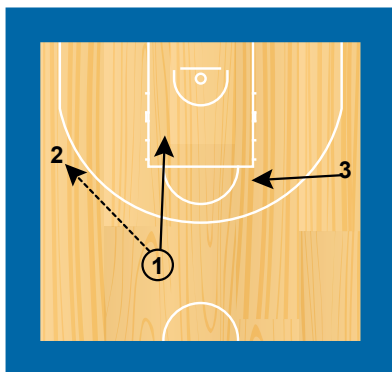
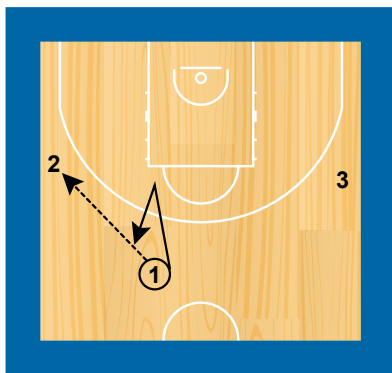
REPLACING THE CUTTER

After cutting to the basket, the player nearest to the gap cuts toward the ball and then fills the space on the perimeter. Player 3 does not simply follow the 3 point line, but cuts into a threatening position in the key and then moves out.

The other players then balance to fill the positions on the perimeter. This follows the simple rules established in the puzzle game previously discussed.

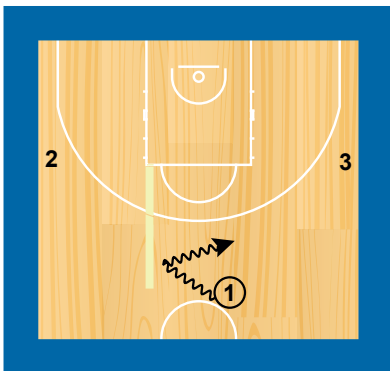
2.1.3 MOTION OFFENCE - 5 OUT - PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT - TIMING AND SPACING

A key element of a motion style offence is to read the movement and actions of defenders and offensive team mates and then moving appropriately. When a team is first learning this offence the coach may wish to specify some rules that will assist them to read each other.

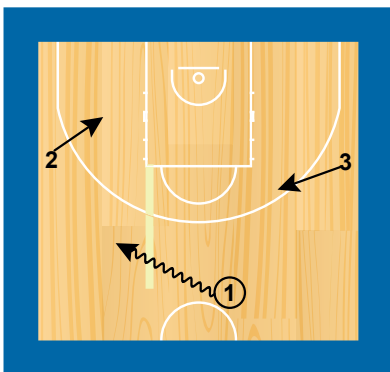


“Pass and Cut” is one of the basic movements in basketball. When 1 cuts from the top of the key, they may replace one another provided that they have not gone past the free throw line.

Once 1 has cut past the free throw line they must continue to move towards the basket. This rule, assists 3 to get the timing of their cut correct. They start to replace 1, after 1 cuts past the free throw line.

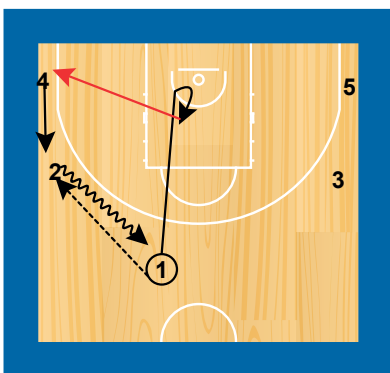


Similarly, 1 may dribble at the top of the key, changing direction from time to time.



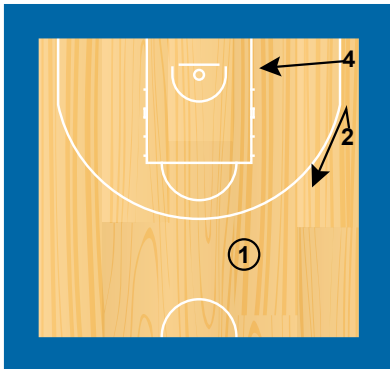
Once 1 dribbles past the "elbow extended" they must continue to move away from the top of the key and continue to dribble to the wing.

This rule, enables both 2 and 3 to time their cuts – 2 cutting towards the basket and 3 replacing 1.

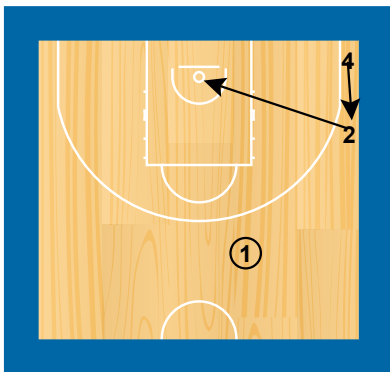


Whenever a player does cut into the key, coaches may introduce a rule that they must stop and face the ball, to allow other perimeter players to move.

After 2 or 3 seconds the player that cut to the key may cut to the vacant area on the perimeter.

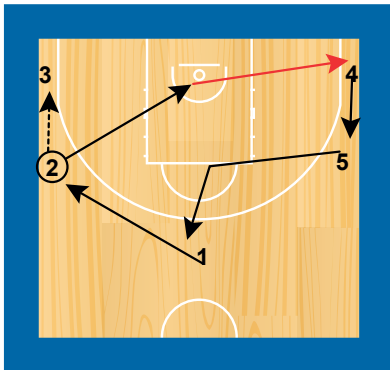


If 2 moves toward 4, 4 may cut to the basket immediately.

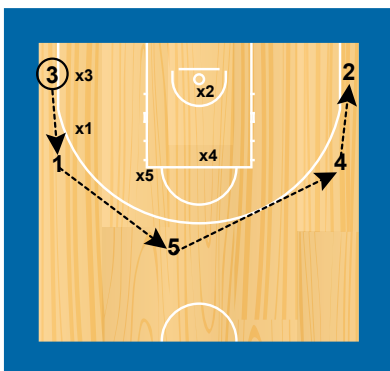


If 2 cuts across the 3 point line, they must continue to the basket, and 4 may then replace them at the wing.

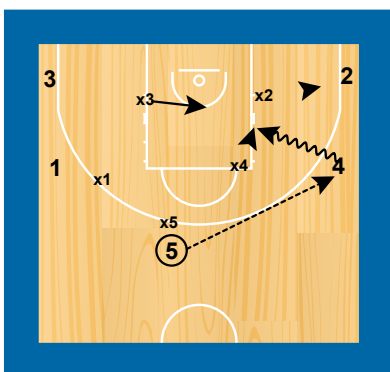
2.1.4 MOTION OFFENCE - 5 OUT - BALL REVERSAL



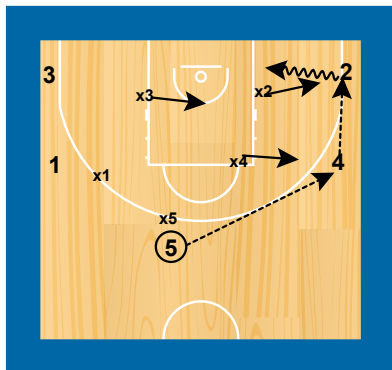
Initially, "Motion Offence" emphasizes the movement of players, with players needing to be able to play in all positions on the court.



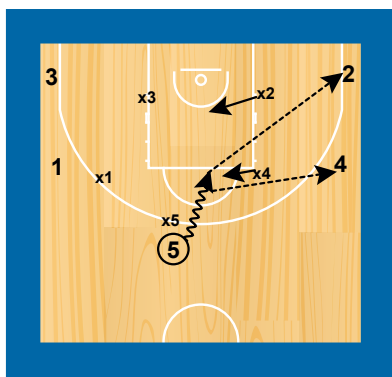
Moving the ball requires defenders to move significantly, often in a short period of time.



As defenders are moving to a new position, this may create opportunities to dribble. Here x4 is in a poor position to defend 4's drive to the basket and x3 is not yet in a help position.



“Ball Reversal” can also create the situation where a defender needs to close-out over a long distance (e.g. from the split line to the perimeter), which places the offensive player in an advantageous situation.



Often the defence will move assuming that the offence is going to reverse the ball and pass it to the other side of the court. This can provide an opportunity for a player at the top of the key to penetrate.

2.1.5 MOTION OFFENCE - 5 OUT - DRIBBLE PENETRATION - RECEIVERS' PRINCIPLES

“Motion Offence” utilizes the concepts of floor spacing and player movement to allow players to develop an understanding of the game that can be transferred to any system of offence.

A common mistake made by coaches of junior players is to introduce a series of set offenses that the players learn as automatons. This results in the players moving in a set pattern (regardless of whether or not that move makes sense having regard to what the defence is doing) with little understanding of why that movement is correct or incorrect in the circumstances.

They do not master the tactical decisions and technical fundamentals that are required in these moves and this often results in a poorly executed offence.

Instead, young players should be introduced to a motion offence that is based upon technical and tactical fundamentals. In addition to the concepts of floor spacing and player movement, we need to add to the concepts of ball reversal and player movement and principles when and how, dribble should be used.

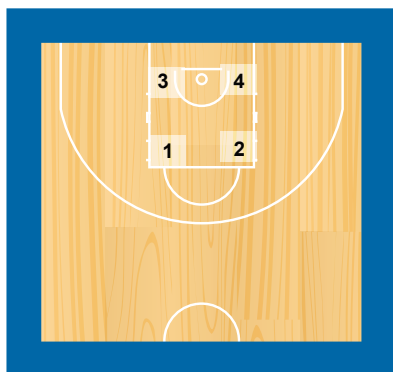
PRINCIPLES FOR DRIBBLE PENETRATION

On dribble penetration the dribbler should:

- Go at the defender's hips/shoulders;
- Be a scorer first;
- Get both feet inside the key on penetration;
- Come to a jump stop (one count) in the key;
- Use of shot and foot fakes to create penetration opportunities.

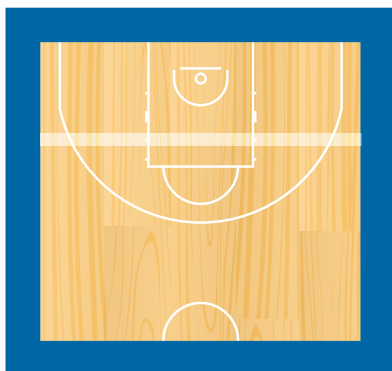
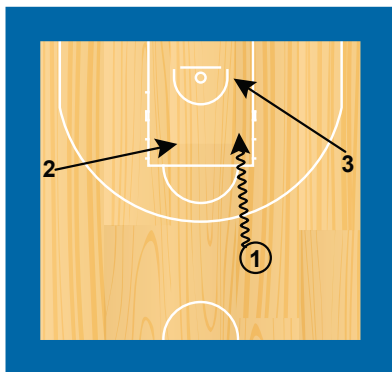
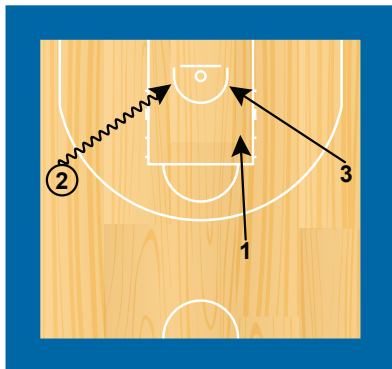
RECEIVERS' PRINCIPLE

The receivers' principles dictate the movement of the team mates after dribble penetration:



RECEIVER SPOTS

There are four receiver spots in the keyway, and two of these can be filled on dribble penetration.



INTRODUCING RECEIVER SPOTS 3x0

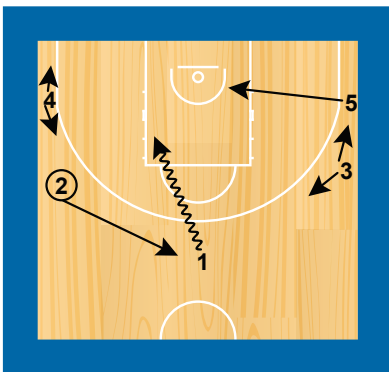
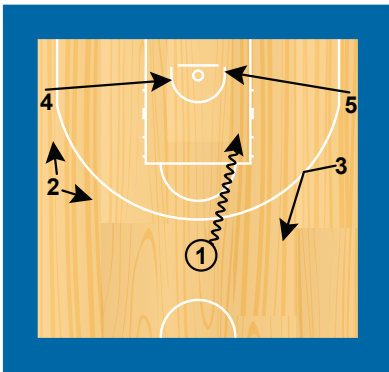
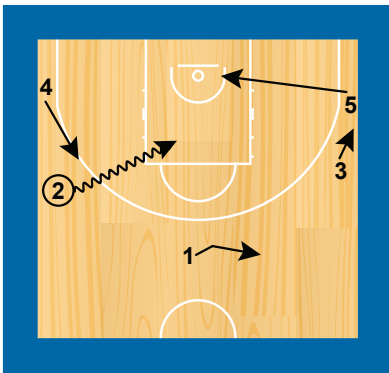
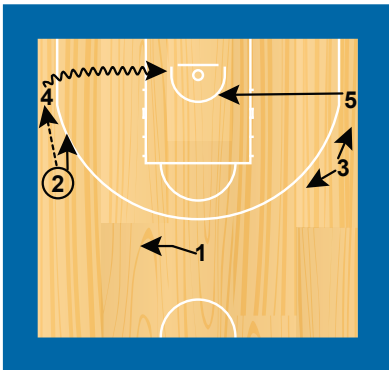
Receiver Spots can be introduced 3x0, with one player moving to a spot near the basket and the other teammate moving opposite the dribbler

5 OUT RECEIVERS

To introduce the principle for 5x0, a line above the block (about half way to the free throw line) dictates that anyone on or below the line gets to a Receiver spot at the basket

Increasingly in basketball, teams look to score from outside shots, particularly after first driving into the key. This can equally be effective for junior athletes, however their shooting is not usually as accurate and consistent from the perimeter.

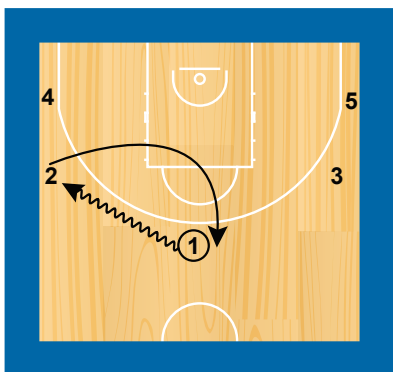
Accordingly, once 5 players are introduced, having players "spot up" on the perimeter is important as well as having players inside the keyway.



In "5 out" (no post players) the receivers' principles are:

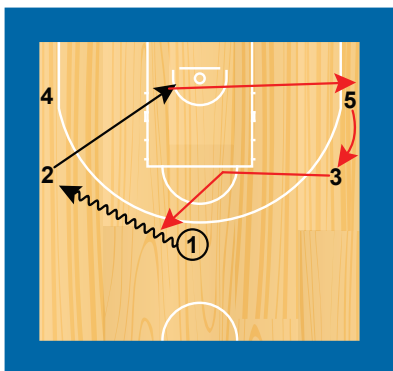
- At least two players inside the key (including the dribbler)
- Player opposite the dribbler flares for the perimeter shot
- Player on the same side as the dribbler moves behind the dribbler, as an outlet pass. They should not get too close though as they do not want their defender to put pressure on Player 4.
- Player at the top of the key remains back on defensive balance

2.1.6 MOTION OFFENCE - 5 OUT - DRIBBLE ENTRY



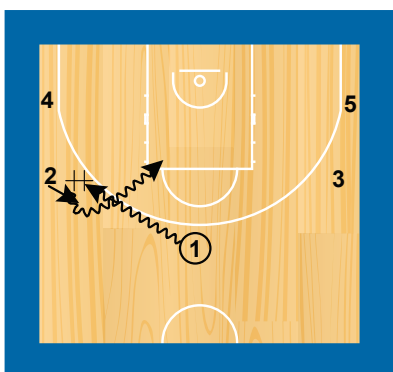
SHALLOW CUT

Rather than passing the ball, a “dribble entry” can be used, where the ball is dribbled to the wing. The player that is dribbled at moves. They can simply replace the dribbler – a shallow cut.



BASKET CUT

The player dribbled at can also cut to the basket and other players move to fill the spaces on the perimeter.



HAND-OFF

Players can also interchange with a dribble hand-off. The dribbler, should come to a jump stop (one count) and hold the ball in two hands – on top and underneath the ball.

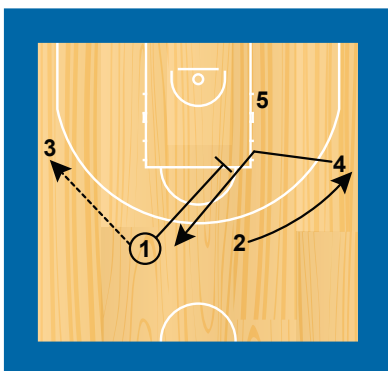
The wing player runs past to take the ball and immediately starts to dribble. They should aim to penetrate to the elbow.

2.1.7 INTRODUCING SCREENS - 5 OUT - PASS AND SCREEN AWAY

It is easy to integrate screens into motion offence either by allowing players to set screens when they wish or by having a rule of when a screen may be used (e.g. on a guard to guard pass, down screen for the perimeter player).

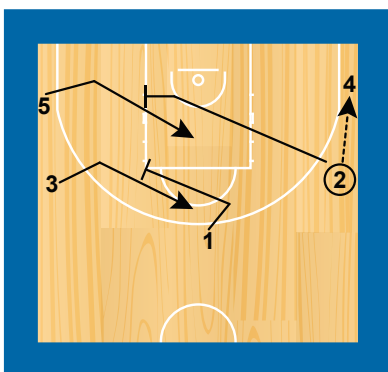
The movement of players that is the foundation of motion offence remains the foundation when screens are introduced.

Some examples of screens being used are:

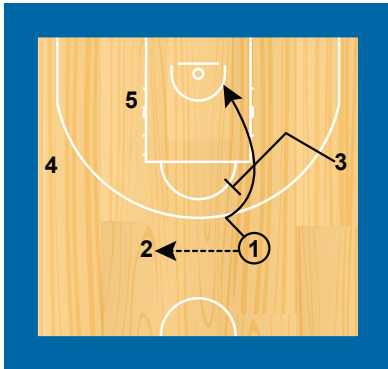


PASS AND SCREEN AWAY

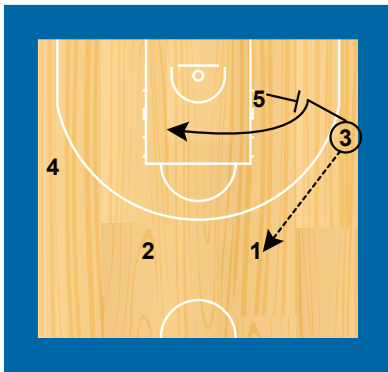
Pass to the wing and down screen for either the perimeter wing player or the low post.



Pass and cut to the basket and then set a screen for the baseline player. The point player can also "exchange" with the wing perimeter player, either by simply swapping positions, or through a screen.

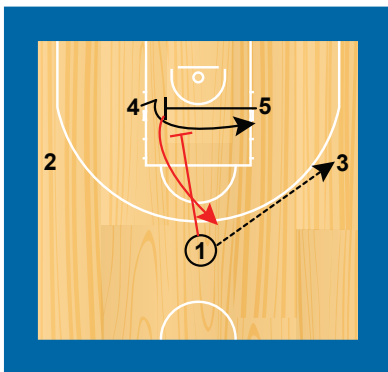


Another example of the guard and perimeter wing player exchanging, this time through the use of an up screen. After the screen, 3 would pop to the guard position and 1 would move out to the perimeter if they did not receive a pass on the cut to the basket.



POST SCREENS

Post players (either high or low) can also set a back screen for a perimeter player.



Screens between post players can be integrated with screens between perimeter players and post players.

2.1.8 SCRIMMAGE ACTIVITY

“TWO HALVES SCRIMMAGE”

Designate two teams (3x3, 4x4 or 5x5) who will play against each other for two halves. They play in the half court and the coach can stipulate any particular rules in order to change the emphasize of the drill (e.g. no dribble, must pass to post before can take an outside shot) , allow only off ball screens or simply play normal rules.

After the defence gets the ball, either through a steal, rebound or an offensive score, they go to the other end to score unguarded. They can shoot a two point shot or a three point shot and continue shooting until they get a score.

Defence then return the ball to the offence and play contested in the half court.

At half time of the scrimmage, the defence should have a lead – as they scored on every possession! Offence and defence then swap for the second half. So that the new offence who have a lead, must keep that lead by scoring, as they know that the new defence will score every time that they have possession.

2.1.9 ALLOWING CREATIVITY IN DECISION MAKING

Having rules or parameters will help players to initially learn a motion style offence to reduce the number of decisions that they must make.

Although the offence encourages movement, young teams will often have players standing still as they take time to make a decision.

Coaches must be careful not to lose the focus of the motion style offence, which is to react to whatever the defence is doing, rather than using pre-determined movement. Therefore, the coach must adopt a “reads not rules” attitude, allowing players to deviate from the set rules. Implicit in this (particularly with young teams) the coach must also accept that at times players will make the wrong decision.

To assist the players to develop, coaches must:

- Ask an athlete why they made the decision they did rather than immediately tell them that they did wrong. Remembering that the coach has a different perspective of the court than players do, the player may literally have seen the situation differently and accordingly taken a different decision to the coach.
- Focus players on continuing to play – the more rigid the rules for offensive movement are, the more likely that if one player makes an incorrect movement that other players will stop, not knowing how to now react;
- Give a lot of opportunities at practice for the team to play in contested situations with aggressive defence. The more the coach stops activities in practice the less able the players will be able to react to what happens during a game;
- Reinforce to athletes that it is OK to make a mistake As coach Dean Smith¹⁹ reminds us “what to do with a mistake – admit it, learn from it, forget it”.

¹⁹ Coach Smith was the Head Coach of the Men's program at the University of North Carolina for 36 years, where his teams won 2 NCAA championships and overall had a win-loss ratio of 77.6% (879 wins – 254 losses)

FOLLOW-UP

1. Have someone film one of your games. At the end of the game write notes on how well you think the team implemented your basic offensive team tactics. Review the video – did you see anything different?
2. Often a team can play well and not score and vice versa (play poorly but still score). How else can you measure the effectiveness of your team's offensive movement?
3. How do you define a good shot for your team? Have an assistant coach assess in a game whether or not shots were good or bad. Is your team primarily taking good shots?

2.2. SCREENING

2.2.1 OFF BALL SCREENS - ROLE OF SCREENER - SETTING THE SCREEN

A “screen” is where one offensive player attempts to block the path of a teammate’s defender.

The basketball rules specify that:

Screening is an attempt to delay or prevent an opponent without the ball from reaching a desired position on the playing court.

Legal screening is when the player who is screening an opponent:

- *Was stationary (inside their cylinder) when contact occurs.*
- *Had both feet on the floor when contact occurs.*

Illegal screening is when the player who is screening an opponent:

- *Was moving when contact occurred.*
- *Did not give sufficient distance in setting a screen outside the field of vision of a stationary opponent when contact occurred.*
- *Did not respect the elements of time and distance of an opponent in motion when contact occurred.*

If the screen is set within the field of vision of a stationary opponent (front or lateral), the screener may establish the screen as close to them as they desire, provided there is no contact.

If the screen is set outside the field of vision of a stationary opponent, the screener must permit the opponent to take 1 normal step towards the screen without making contact.

If the opponent is in motion, the elements of time and distance shall apply. The screener must leave enough space so that the player who is being screened is able to avoid the screen by stopping or changing direction.

The distance required is never less than 1 and never more than 2 normal steps.

A player who is legally screened is responsible for any contact with the player who has set the screen.²⁰

SETTING THE SCREEN

A player setting a screen should use a jump stop (one count) to ensure that they are stationary prior to any contact with the defender – remembering that the intended purpose of the screen is that there will be contact. The screener should also be in a low, balanced stance to ensure that they can hold their position when there is contact.

Sometimes in a team offence, they will designate that a particular screen is set at a certain time. Even in this case though, the screener should communicate to their teammate that they are screening. The screen should have both a visual cue (often a raised fist is used) as well as verbal.

The screener should also use a verbal cue to communicate to the cutter when to move, such as “wait, wait, GO”.

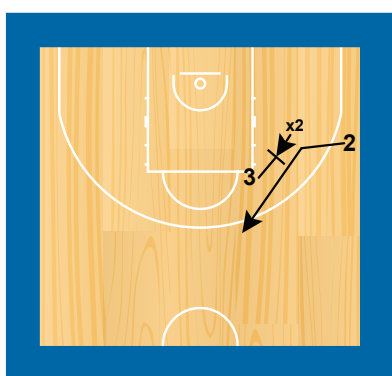
2.2.2 OFF BALL SCREENS - BASIC CUTS OF SCREEN - STRAIGHT CUT

OFF BALL SCREENS- CUTTING OFF AN OFF-BALL SCREEN

The player who will cut off the screen should set up their cut, which they can do by:

- moving slowly to determine the position the defender is taking relative to the screen;
- showing a “target hand” to receive a pass, as the defender may react;
- when cutting off the screen, cut close to the screener “shoulder to hip” ensuring that there is no room for the defender to move past the screener;
- “lock off” the screen with their arm on the hip of the screener;
- communicate to the screener what cut that they are making either by naming the cut (e.g. “straight”, “curl”) or by identifying to where they are cutting (e.g. “basket”, “top”, “flare”).

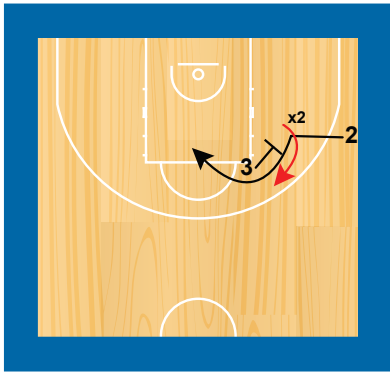
There are four basic types of cuts that can be used with an off-ball screen. The “key signal stimulus” or “cue” is the action the defender takes to defend the cutter.



“STRAIGHT CUT”

The cutter moves toward their defender and then cuts over the top of the screen. If the defender steps into the screener makes a straight cut.

2.2.3 OFF BALL SCREENS - BASIC CUTS OF SCREEN - CURL CUT

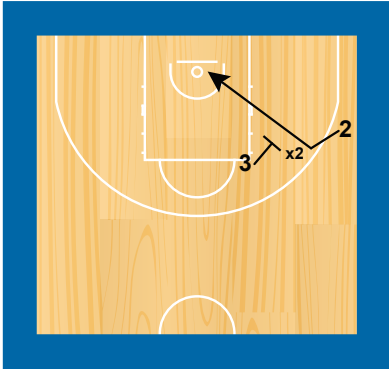


“CURL CUT”

If the defender stays below the screen (to stop a “back cut”) the cutter steps toward them and then cuts off the top of the screen.

If the defender “locks” to the cutter to run behind them, the cutter curls to cut to the basket. As the defender is behind them, if they made a straight cut, the defender may be able to get to a position to interfere with the pass.

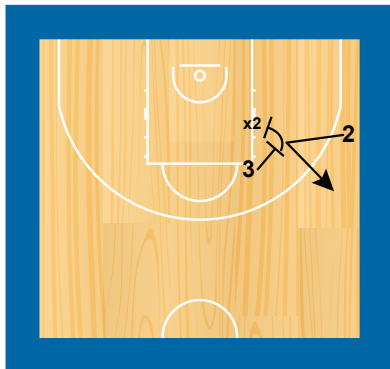
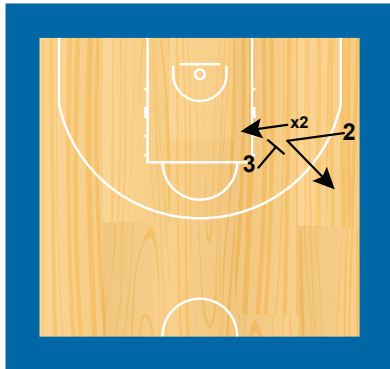
2.2.4 OFF BALL SCREENS - BASIC CUTS OF SCREEN - BACK CUT



“BACK CUT”

The defender may step in the path of the cutter so that they cannot go over the top of the screen. The cutter steps into their defender (as if cutting over the top of the screen) and then changes direction to “back cut” toward the basket.

2.2.5 OFF BALL SCREENS - BASIC CUTS OF SCREEN - FLARE CUT



“FLARE CUT”

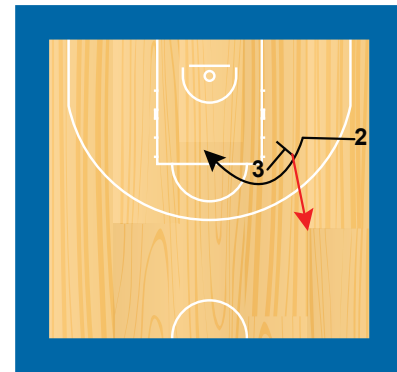
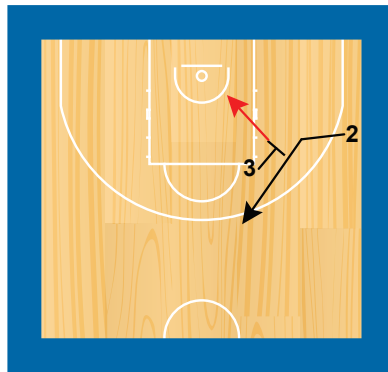
If the defender moves under the screen, in order to beat the cutter to the “other side” of the screen, the cutter should move toward the screen and then move away from the screen, so that the screener is between them and their defender.

The screener may also turn to face the defender and “re-screen”

2.2.6 OFF BALL SCREENS - ROLE OF SCREENER – POP OR ROLL

SCREENER MOVEMENT

After the cut, the screener should also move. The general principle is “one high, one low”. So that if the cutter makes a straight cut, the screener would roll to the basket. Similarly, if the cutter made a curl cut, the screener would “pop” high.



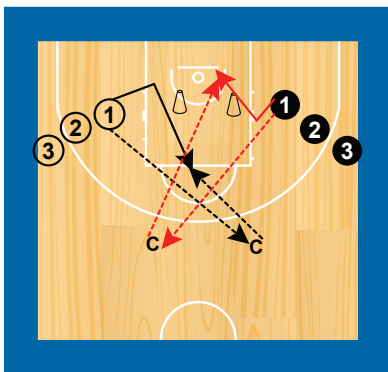
2.2.7 OFF BALL SCREENS - DOWN SCREENS

TEACHING OFF BALL SCREENING AND CUTTING DOWN SCREENS

A down screen is set by a player moving toward the baseline, for example:

- high post player setting a screen for a low post player;
- guard at the top of the court ("point position") setting a screen for a wing perimeter player.

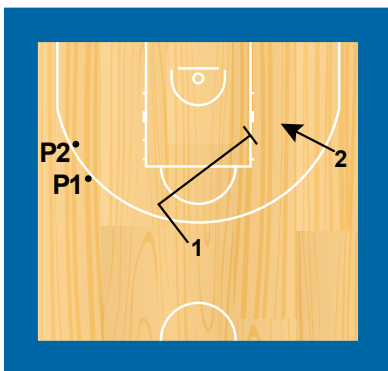
Typically, when setting a down screen, the screener's back will be facing the ball.



"DOWN SCREEN CUTS"

The player passes the ball to the coach and will then cut off a "screen":

- A cone or preferably a chair is placed inside each block replicating the screener
- Players cut off each chair to receive pass from the coach.
- Initially Coaches calls the required cut, straight, back, curl and flare
- Players make the required cut, calling out the cut ("e.g. "straight", "flare" etc) and where on the court they will be.
- Players rebound their own shot and pass back to the coach and move to other side

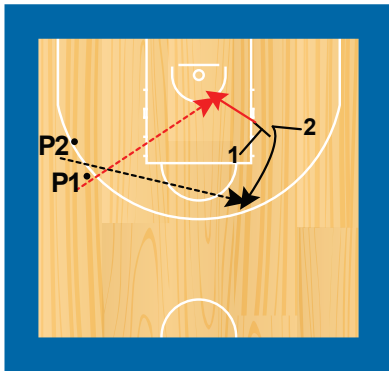


"2X0 DOWN SCREEN"

Two passers have a ball each. One player sets a down screen for the other. The cutter practices all four cuts, calling out the cut they make (this can also be chosen by the coach).

Teaching Points

- Screener uses visual signal ("clenched fist")
- Screener comes to a jump stop (one count)
- Screener calls wait, wait and then "go" when they are in position
- Cutter calls the type of cut, straight, curl, back, flare
- Cutter cuts late, locking off with arm shoulder to hip



OFFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

On a Straight Cut:

Cutter- "straight" Screener – "basket"

On a Back Cut

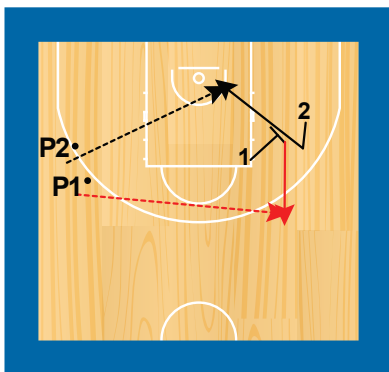
Cutter- "back" Screener – "pop"

On a Curl Cut

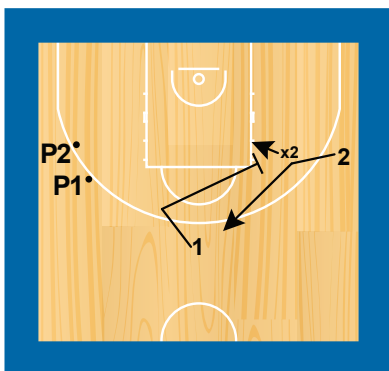
Cutter- "curl" Screener – "pop"

On a Flare Cut

Cutter- "flare" Screener – "post"



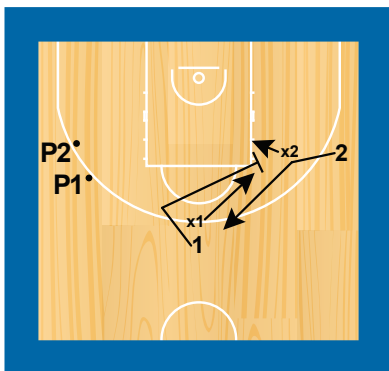
With a flare cut, the screener may "re-screen" before moving to the post.



"2X1 DOWN SCREEN"

Defence plays on the cutter and can choose how they wish to play. Cutter must read their defender and make correct. This can be done with one passer, who passes to the cutter if they get open and to the post player if the defender is able to guard the cutter.

The coach should emphasise to the passer to be patient - it is a 2v1 situation so eventually one offensive player will be open.

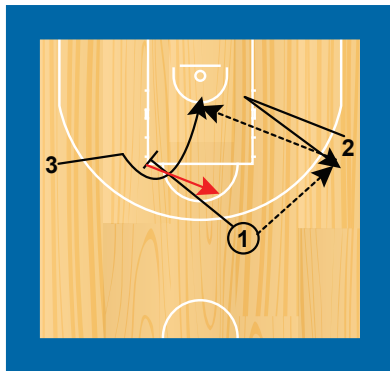


"2X2 DOWN SCREENS"

2x2 contested drill, with 2 passers. The coach may instruct defenders how to defend or may leave it up to them.

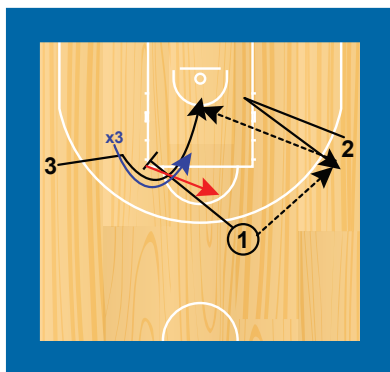
PRACTICING MOTION OFFENCE WITH SCREENS

There are many activities that can be used to practice motion offence and a number of different activities are set out below. Coaches are encouraged to use activities that include both offence and defence, to assist in the players' decision making and not to constantly stop the play or instruct players.



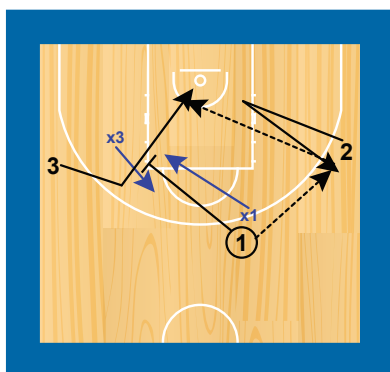
"3X0 DOWN SCREEN"

Guard passes then ball and then sets down screen.



"3X1 DOWN SCREEN"

Introduce a defender to the cutter.



Introduce defender to the screener

“TWO HALVES SCRIMMAGE”

Designate two teams (3x3, 4x4 or 5x5) who will play against each other for two halves. They play in the half court and the coach can stipulate any particular rules in order to change the emphasize of the drill (e.g. no dribble, must pass to post before can take an outside shot) , allow only “off ball” screens or simply play normal rules.

After the defence gets the ball, either through a steal, rebound or an offensive score, they go to the other end to score unguarded. They can shoot a two point shot or a three point shot and continue shooting until they get a score.

Defence then returns the ball to the offence and play contested in the half court.

At half time of the scrimmage, the defence should have a lead – as they scored on every possession! Offence and defence then swap for the second half. So that the new offence, who have a lead, must keep that lead by scoring, as they know that the new defence will score every time that they have possession.

This activity places a focus on the concept of “points per possession”.

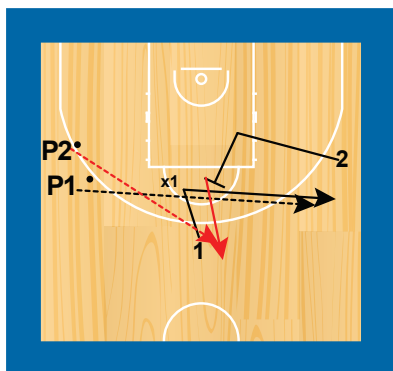
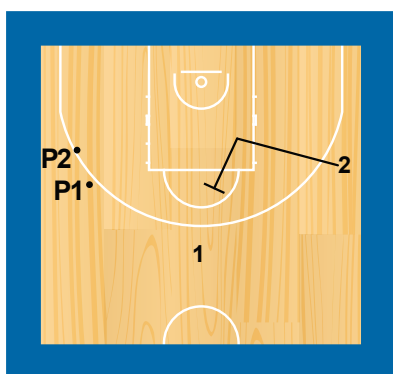
2.2.8 OFF BALL SCREENS - UP SCREENS

UP SCREENS

An up screen is set by a player moving away from the baseline, for example:

- Wing perimeter player setting a screen for a guard;
- High Post player setting a screen for a perimeter player.

Generally, the screener has their back facing the baseline or the baseline/sideline corner.



“2X0 UP SCREEN DRILL”

Wing player moves toward the basket and then sets screen for the guard, with back facing the baseline corner.

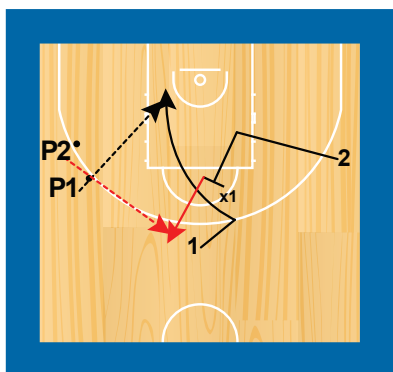
Guard steps toward the ball and toward their defender, and then cuts off the screen.

“FLARE CUT”

Where a defender remains between cutter and the player with the ball, the cutter makes a flare cut to the wing and the screen can pop.

COMMUNICATION

- Screener calls “wait, wait, go”
- Cutter calls “flare”, Screener calls “pop”



"STRAIGHT CUT"

Where a defender moves in anticipation of a flare cut, the cutter steps away from the ball (to commit the defender) and then cuts hard to the basket.

COMMUNICATION

- Screener calls "wait, wait, go"
- Cutter calls "straight", Screener calls "pop"

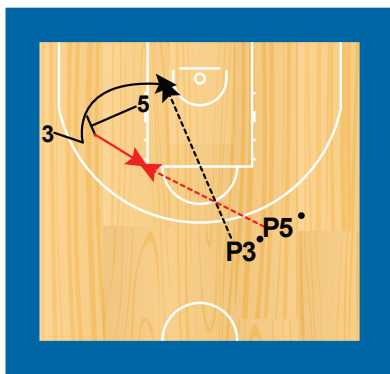
Progress activity to introduce 1 and then 2 defenders

2.2.9 OFF BALL SCREENS - BACK SCREENS

BACK SCREENS

A back screen is set by a player who is stepping away from the basket. An up screen and a back screen are similar. A back screen typically has the screener's back facing the basket.

The most common example of a back screen is the screener stepping out from the low post to set a screen for the perimeter player.



"2X0 BACK SCREEN"

- 3 starts with the ball and passes to P3.
- 5 sets a back screen for 3 with 5's back to the basket
- 3 steps towards the ball then cuts off 5, along the baseline
- 3 cuts to the edge of the backboard then stops
- 5 "shapes up" to the ball with a forward pivot and hands up to receive the pass

OFFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

- 5 calls "wait, wait, go"
- 3 calls "basket" and 5 calls "pop"

2.2.10 ON BALL SCREENS - DRIBBLER OPTIONS

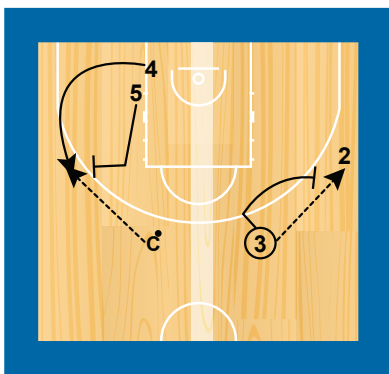
ON BALL SCREENS

Setting a screen for the player that has the ball is very common, often with a “big” setting the screen for a guard. The screen is set in the same way as for an off ball screen (i.e. visual and verbal communication and coming to a jump stop).

Options that all players must be able to execute are:

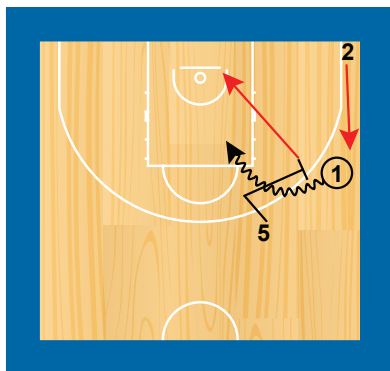
- Dribbler:
 - “turn the corner” and penetrate to the keyway (not just dribble around the 3pt line). They should aim to have both feet in the keyway and be ready to shoot or pass
 - “split” between the two defenders, using a cross-over dribble to quickly change direction
 - “runner” – on penetration be able to shoot a shot at the top of the keyway whilst on the move – using lay-up footwork
 - “step back” – if the defender guarding the dribbler goes under the screen, the dribbler must be able to step back and shoot a perimeter shot. A “step back” is also used if the defender is close to the dribbler to create the space to shoot.

- Screener:
 - “slip the screen” – if the defender guarding the screener steps high to put pressure on the ball, the screener must be able to “slip” and cut to the basket before setting the screen
 - “roll” – after the dribbler uses the screen, the screener must be able to reverse pivot (“belly to the ball”) and cut to the basket. The “Pick and Roll” is a fundamental play, similar to “Give and Go”
 - “flare” or “pop” – after the dribbler uses the screen, the screener must be able to flare to the perimeter to receive a pass from the dribbler. The screener must then be able to shoot a perimeter shot, pass or drive.



As an initial activity, players can set ball screens on either side of the floor.

A coach can guard the dribbler



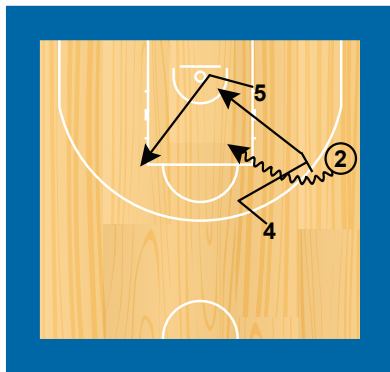
“PICK & ROLL SCREEN – CORNER”

Dribbler: Drive hard to the elbow (separation)

Screener: Roll “belly to the ball”²¹ to move to the basket

Corner: Lift out of corner and fill where the ball started

If dribbler can't score or hit the roller look back to the corner player lifting to the wing who may be able to pass to the post player



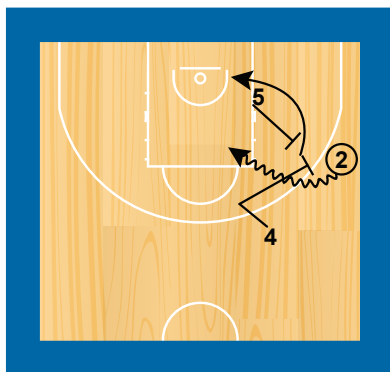
“PICK & ROLL – WITH POST (EMPTY OUT)”

Dribbler: Drive hard to the elbow (separation)

Screener: Roll “belly to the ball” to the basket

Post: Empty out of the post and get to the opposite elbow

If dribbler can't score or hit the screener rolling, look to the post at opposite elbow



“PICK & ROLL – SCREEN THE SCREENER”

Dribbler:

- Drive hard to the elbow (separation)
- Look to pass to the screener on the roll

Screener:

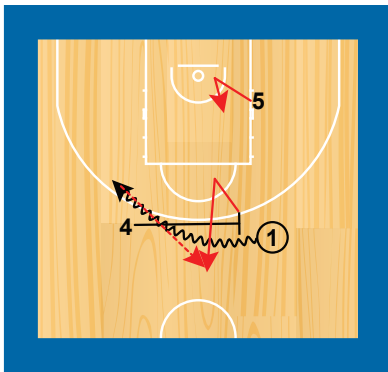
- Wait after the dribbler has driven off your shoulder
- Use the screen to get to the basket

Post:

- Back screen the screeners defender

If dribbler can't score or hit the roller look to pass to either wing

21 “Belly to the ball” means that has the dribbler moves past the screener, the screener reverse pivots (so that their “belly” continues to face the ball). The alternative technique is to “step through” where the screener does a forward pivot, stepping with the foot that was closest to the dribbler.



“PICK & ROLL – POP”

Dribbler:

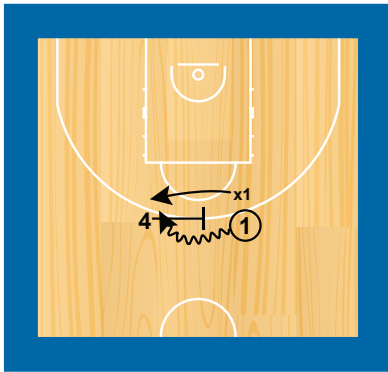
- Drive hard off the screen (separation)
- Look back at the screener who “pops” to the 3 point line

Screener:

- Step to the foul line and “pop” back to the 3 point line

Low Post:

- Step to the basket and “duck in” (as the screener catches, attack defenders high foot)
- If fronted look to seal for lob



“PICK & ROLL – SCREEN / RE-SCREEN”

Dribbler:

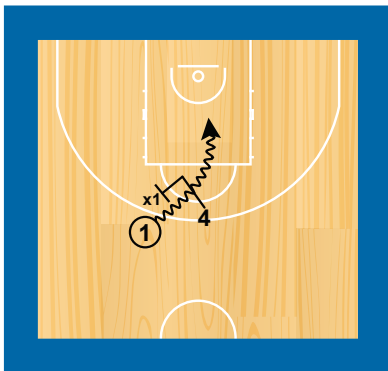
- Drive hard off the screen (separation)
- Ball defender goes under the screen

Screener:

- Screen
- Belly to ball and re screen – roll on top of the defence

Dribbler:

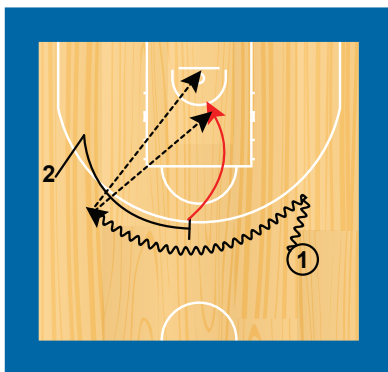
- Drive hard off the re screen



“2X0 PICK & ROLL”

Dribbler moves across the key to receive a ball screen from teammate.

Teammate rolls to the basket to receive pass or rebound shot.



“2X1 PICK AND ROLL”

Introduce a defender, so that dribbler must choose correct action.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What is your preferred contested activity for developing offensive skills in screening? Discuss with a coaching colleague their preferred activity.
2. Conduct a contested activity in practice that includes screens. During the activity instruct the defenders how to defend the screening situations (both on and off ball). Record whether or not the offence correctly react to how the opponent is defending screens.

Record how well your players react to how defenders are defending screens in a game. Is there any difference between performances during practice and during games?

2.3. TRANSITION

2.3.1 BASIC FAST BREAK - STARTING THE BREAK

Basketball is a dynamic game with teams moving immediately from defence into offence. The “fast break” is simply moving from defence to offence as quickly as possible. Basketball players should play fast break from the moment they start playing. Coaches should not prevent young players from fast breaking, since this is fun for the players and helps them to develop important basketball fundamentals.

Important principles for the fast break are:

- Starting the Break:
 - Outlet Pass;
 - Dribbling Out;
 - Stealing the ball
- “Running wide lanes”;
- Passing the ball ahead;
- Advantage/Disadvantage – 2x1
- Advantage/Disadvantage – 3x2
- Moving into offence - “Be Quick but Don’t Hurry”

STARTING THE BREAK

There are a number of important aspects to starting the break:

OUTLET PASS - THE DEFENSIVE REBOUNDER

The defensive rebounder must land with the ball at least at shoulder height – moving it away from any offensive rebounders. The defensive rebounder must turn to the nearest sideline, facing the baseline corner on that side. They may turn slightly in the air or pivot quickly after landing.

OUTLET PASS - THE POINT GUARD

The guard should move to the sideline that is closest to the rebounder, and should turn their back to that sideline so that they are facing the defensive rebounder. Receiving the ball near the free throw line extended. If they are defended, they should move either to the baseline or the middle of the court.

The point guard should not catch the ball while standing still, but should be on the move as they receive the pass. After catching the ball, the guard must look (putting their “chin to shoulder”) in the direction they wish to move, before moving or bouncing the ball.

If the guard does elect to dribble the ball, they must be able to use a long bounce to begin with and then dribbling with the ball in front of their body, using alternate hands when there are no nearby defenders. Many young players will only use their preferred hand and this needs to be discouraged.

STARTING THE BREAK – DRIBBLING OUT

Particularly when a “long rebound” is taken (i.e. the ball has bounced well away from the basket), the rebounder may see their opportunity to dribble the ball rapidly. Whilst young players will no doubt make some mistakes, coaches need patience to allow this skill to develop.

STARTING THE BREAK – STEALING THE BALL

Many fast breaks begin with a steal of the ball. If the player that stole the ball is in an advantageous position then they should dribble quickly. Other team mates should sprint down the court to get into position to receive a pass or rebound a missed shot.

2.3.2 BASIC FAST BREAK - RUNNING WIDE LANES

RUNNING WIDE LANES

Once the rebound has been secured, the second guard and forward must sprint, getting to half way, without watching the ball. A common mistake is that players do not start running until the outlet pass has been made, however the result of this is that the point guard does not then have anyone to pass ahead to.

In general, players must run towards the nearest sideline, however if there is a teammate ahead of them, they should cross to the other sideline. Once they have reached the half way line, they should turn their head (“chin to shoulder”) so that they can see any pass that is thrown to them, or if help is needed they can move back towards

2.3.3 BASIC FAST BREAK - PASS THE BALL AHEAD

PASS THE BALL AHEAD

To effectively run the fast break, players must develop a mentality of passing the ball ahead to a player that is open. They must also develop the ability to throw the pass and this can be challenging for young players. Rather than throw the pass whilst stationary, players should be encouraged to develop the ability to throw a chest pass, whilst on the run.

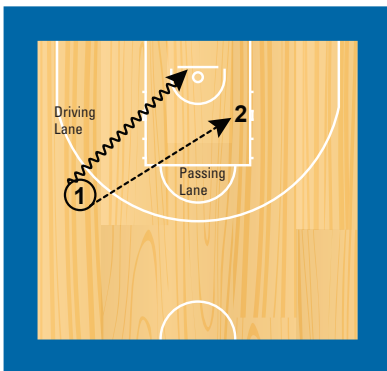
Coaches should not stop activities to berate players for missing a pass, instead coaches should accept that as the mentality and skills of fast break basketball are developed, there will be mistakes made. These mistakes are an important part of development.

2.3.4 BASIC FAST BREAK - 2v1 FAST BREAK

ADVANTAGE / DISADVANTAGE – 2X1

A key aspect of fast break basketball is looking to create opportunities for the relatively easy score of a lay-up, hopefully without defence! However, fast break basketball can also create an opportunity of out-numbering the defence.

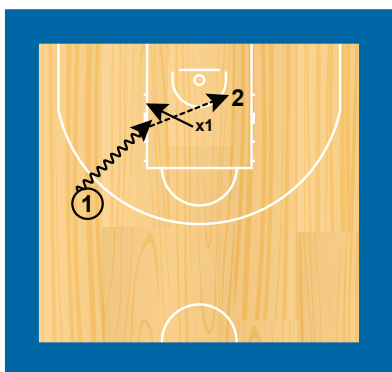
They key to scoring in a 2x1 situation is understanding the concepts of the “passing lane” and the “driving lane”:



“DRIVING LANE” / “PASSING LANE”

The “driving lane” is the path directly between a player with the ball and the basket. The “passing lane” is the direct path between the player with the ball and a teammate that they may pass to.

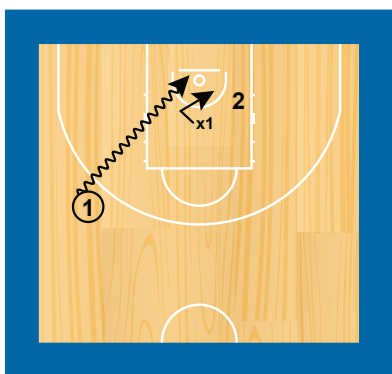
The player with the ball should attack the basket and then the defender will tell them what to do!



“IF THE DRIVING LANE IS DEFENDED – PASS”

If the defender commits to guarding the dribbler, the dribbler should pass to their open teammate. The teammate should run to the basket, not the side of the backboard.

Players need to be able to pass with both their left and right hands in order to make this pass. In this diagram, 1 would probably be dribbling left hand, but passing with their right hand has a better angle to get the ball to 2.



“IF THE DRIVING LANE IS NOT DEFENDED – DRIVE”

If the defender does not commit to guarding the dribbler, the dribbler should attack the basket.

The role of the defender is to make the dribbler believe that the defender has committed to one action but to then do the other.

For example, if the dribbler thinks the defender has committed to the driving lane then the dribbler should pass the ball. If the defender pretends to commit, they may then be able to move into the passing lane to intercept the pass.

The biggest mistakes that young players make are:

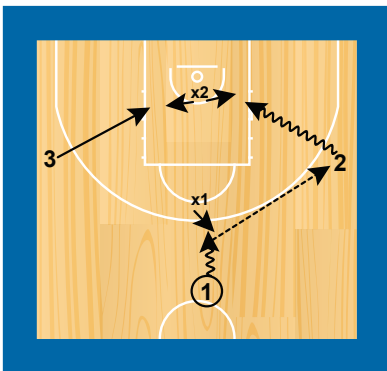
- Deciding what to do at the start of the play, instead of reading the defender and then making a decision;
- Not attacking the basket, but dribbling or running to the side of the keyway.

Young players may also make a mistake in reading the defender. The coach should ask the player what they saw and then discuss what action should have been taken.

2.3.5 BASIC FAST BREAK - 3v2 FAST BREAK

ADVANTAGE / DISADVANTAGE – 3X2

Another common advantage / disadvantage situation in fast break basketball is 3 offensive players against 2 defensive players. The goal of the offence is to get one of the defenders to commit to guarding the ball, and then passing the ball to a 2x1 situation.

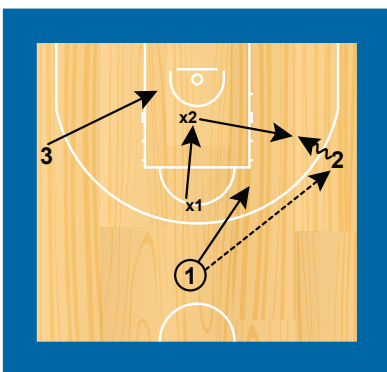


MAKE 3X2 INTO 2X1

Most defences will adopt an “1” formation in this situation – in the middle of the court, with one defender above the free throw line and one in front of the basket.

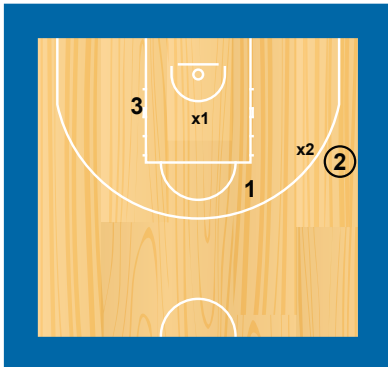
If the first defender commits to guarding the dribbler, a quick pass to the wing creates a 2x1 situation with offensive players 2 and 3.

To take advantage of this situation, 2 must attack quickly – before x1 can recover into a defensive position.

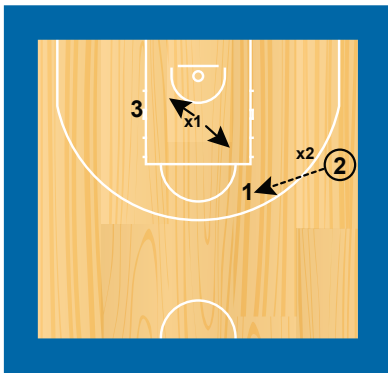


PASS TO THE WING

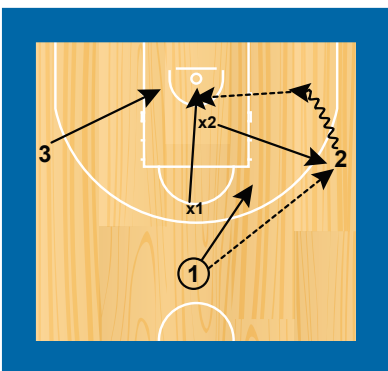
If x1 does not commit to guarding the ball, passing it to a wing perimeter player can force a defender to move out of the key to defend the wing. In this situation, the other perimeter player (3) should attack the basket, and the guard (1) should move to the ball side elbow.



With x2 defending on the wing, there is now a 2x1 situation with 3 and 1 against x1.



If the ball is passed back to 1, x1 must decide whether to guard 1 or remain with 3. 1 must be a scoring option, either a jump shot or driving to the basket. This must be done before x2 can recover.



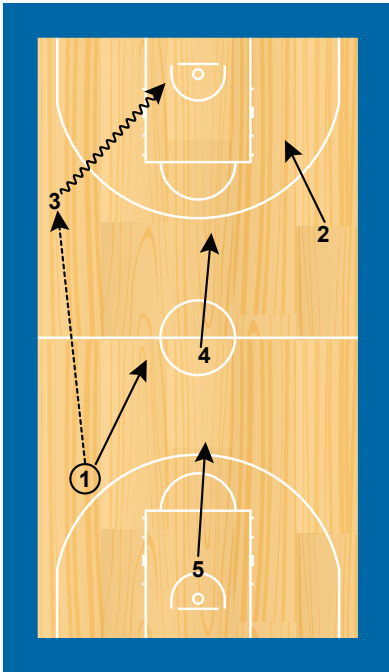
3X2 – THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE

The most common mistake made by young players, is that they do not look to pass the ball back to the guard.

When the ball is initially passed to the wing (2), 3 will be initially open, however most defenders in x1's position will move back to the basket – often intercepting a pass to 3, but leaving 1 wide open.

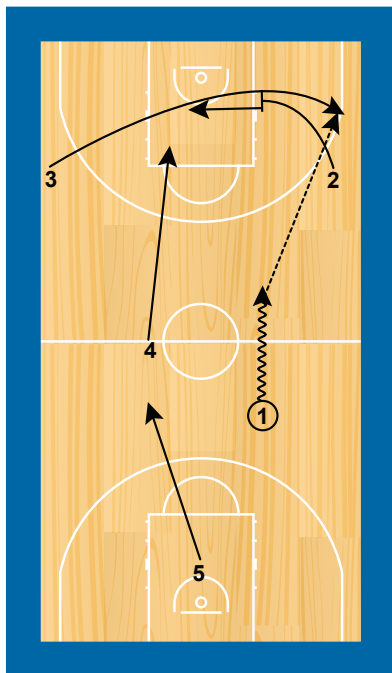
Whilst coaches can tell players this, it is better that they let the players "learn" this through playing. Asking directed questions such as "what was defender x1 doing" can help players realize the best option.

2.3.6 BASIC FAST BREAK - MOVING INTO OFFENCE



MOVING INTO OFFENCE – BE QUICK BUT DON'T HURRY³

A fast break team should aim to get the ball as quickly as possible into offence, and if there is no lay-up opportunity, the team moves into half-court offence – this does not need to be complex.

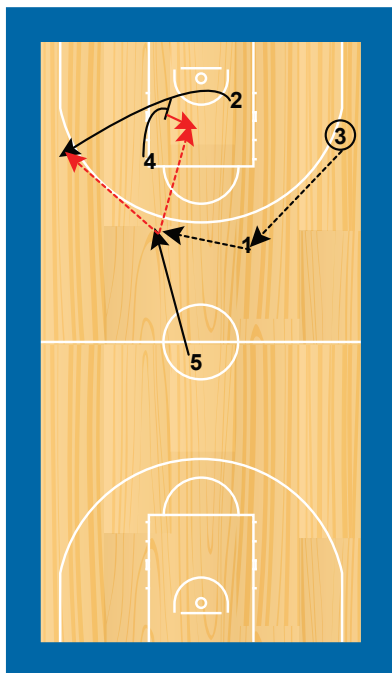


Players may simply run to positions on the floor or they can use some simple screening action as is shown here.

The main focus is to get the ball to below the free throw line extended as quickly as possible – as this will force the defence to extend to the basket quickly (if they don't do this, the wing perimeter player will have a lay-up).

After the ball has reached the wing perimeter position, most teams will then look to:

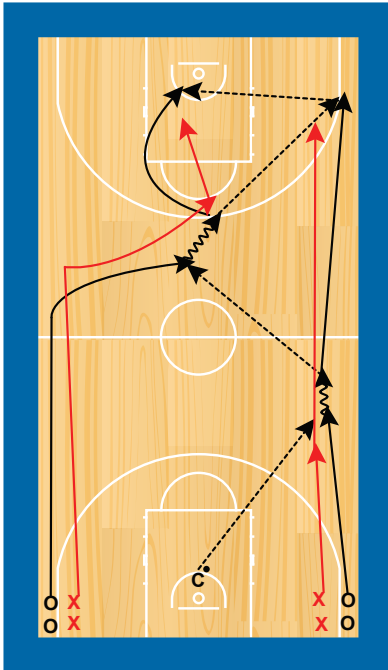
- Feed a post player; or
- Reverse the ball.



Screens can be utilized, however it is important that coaches of young players do not forsake teaching players the fundamentals of play including screening.

A common mistake that coaches make is teaching players a particular set of moves (e.g. 4 screens for 2) without teaching them how to set the screen, cut off it nor the post and perimeter skills once they receive the ball.

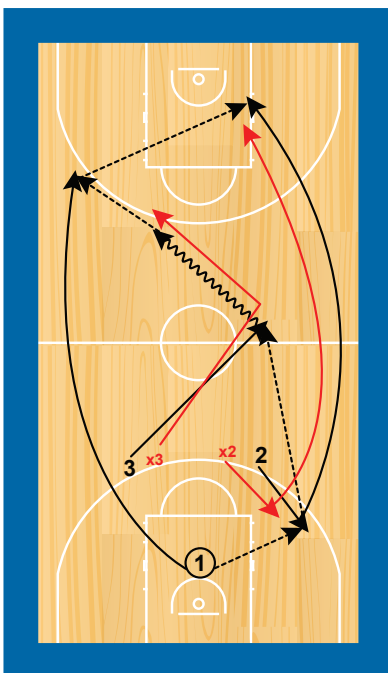
2.3.7 ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE FAST BREAK PRINCIPLES



PRACTICING FAST BREAK FUNDAMENTALS

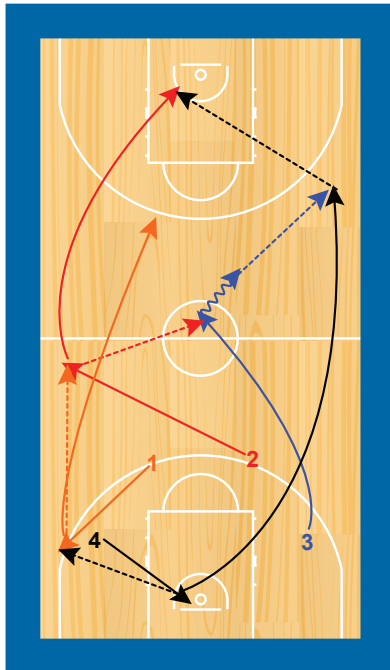
"2X2 FAST BREAK"

Rebounder outlets the ball to one of the offensive players who move to play 2x2. The players contest "up and back" and then new players join the activity.



"1+2 ON 2"

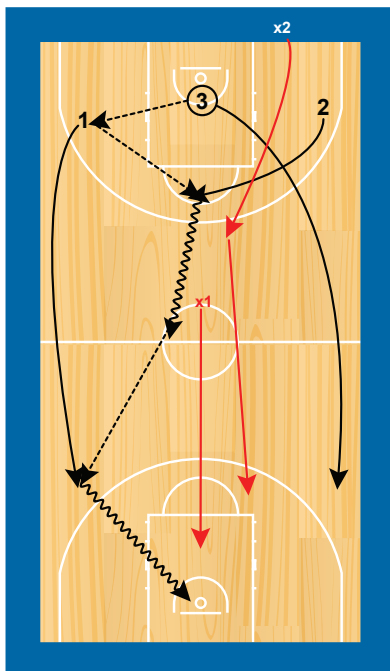
The players on the first and second pass are closely guarded.



“4X0”

A pre-determined movement of players that emphasizes passing the ball ahead and also moving up the floor quickly.

Player 4 starts the activity by rebounding the ball. They can either throw the ball against the backboard or preferably have the previous 4 players go “up and back” so that they shoot a lay-up which Player 4 will rebound.

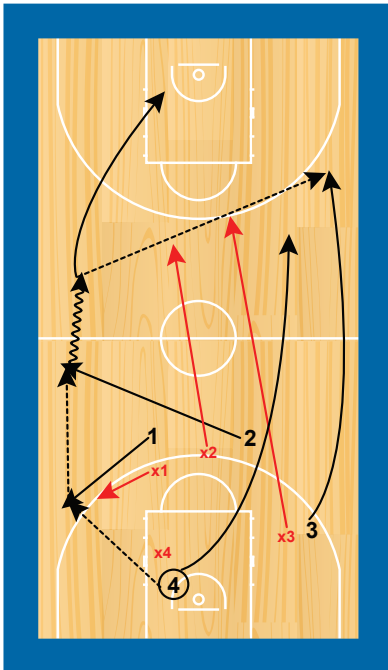


“3X2 STARTING THE BREAK”

One defender starts from a position of disadvantage (on the baseline). Offence must move quickly up the court and take advantage of only one defender being in their initial position.

Instead of Player 3 starting with the ball, you can have x2 pass the ball to whichever offensive player they choose.

As an alternative, have two defenders start on the baseline, so that it will become 3x3 if the offence don't move the ball quickly to get a shot.

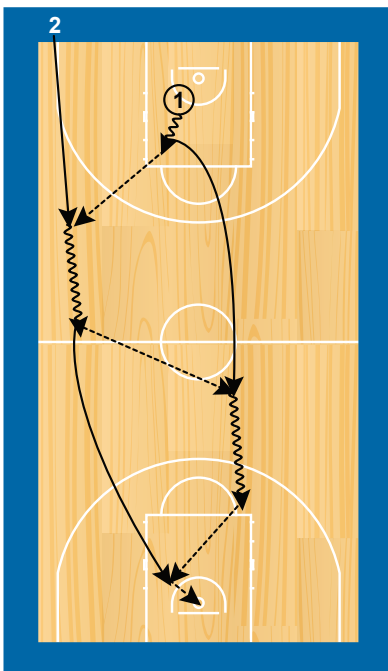


“4X4 FAST BREAK ACTIVITY”

Initially run the drill with a passive defence, moving down the floor but not looking to steal the ball.

Restrict the number of dribbles that the offence can take.

Progress activity 4x4



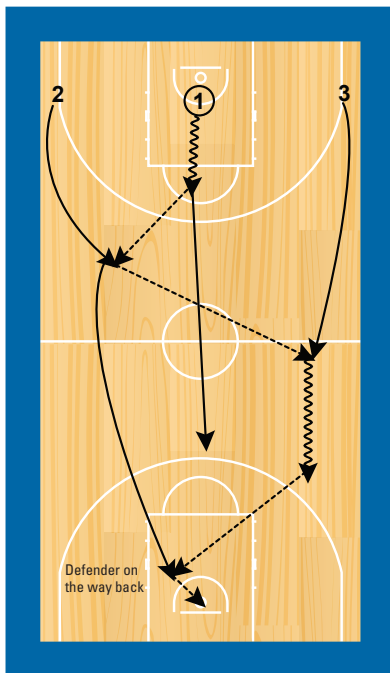
“RUNNING THE FLOOR”

“2X0 / 1X1”

2x0 fast break situation, with players passing to their teammate if they are ahead.

If a player can catch up and get ahead, they get it back!

Play 1x1 back, with whoever took the shot being on defence.

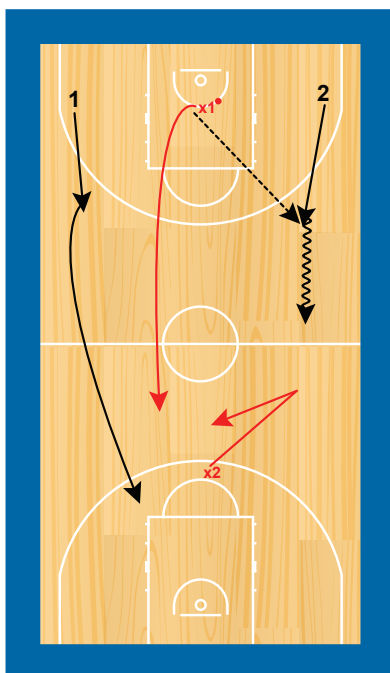


"3X0" / "2X1"

3x0 fast break, with shooter playing defence against the other two players on the way back.

On initial break, players may go for a lay-up or shoot a jump shot. If the shot is made, the offence must pass in from the baseline and the defender may deny this pass if they wish.

If the defender steals the ball, they must go for another lay-up (or jump shot) without being defended.



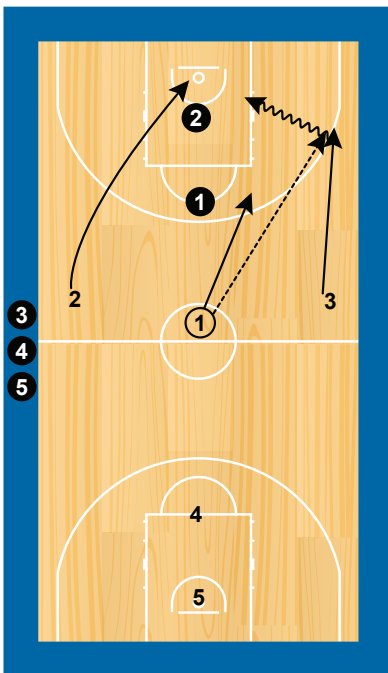
"2X1 PLUS 1"

One defender starts in position to guard their basket. The other defender starts with the ball at the other end of the floor and passes to the offence.

Offence advance the ball as quickly as possible, looking for 2x1 possibility. The second defender sprints down the floor in an effort to make it 2x2.

Can have players return to the other end of the floor playing contested 2x2, or have them step off and another group start.

Can also use with "3x2 plus 1" and "4x3 plus 1"



“3X2 CONTINUOUS”

Divide players into two groups with at least 5 players in each group.

Each team defends one basket and attacks one basket. Play 3x2 and when defence get the ball (either the offence scored, the defenders stole the ball or there was another violation by the offence), a third player steps in from the sideline to play 3x2 at the other end.

Given the advantage that the offence has, the coach may limit the offences:

- Number of attempted shots;
- Time in which to take a shot; and/or
- Number of passes.

“3X3”

Play full court 3x3, with first team to make 5 baskets win. To emphasize the fast break mentality, the coach may designate that an open lay-up is worth 2 points.

“PASS AHEAD RUSH”

Player with the ball starts at the free throw line, facing the nearest baseline.

At least 2 (no more than 4) players stand on baseline. The player with the ball dribbles to touch the baseline and other players start to sprint down the floor.

After touching the baseline, the ball carrier passes as quickly as possible to whichever player is closest to the basket for a lay-up. The dribbler must get to the other free throw line, and all players must get to the baseline and play resumes.

As variations, coaches may:

- If dribbler cannot pass the ball to the furthest player, they should pass as far as they can and call that player to pass to the furthest player.
- Add defence on some or all of the running players, so that the dribbler must determine who is open.

“WAKE FOREST”

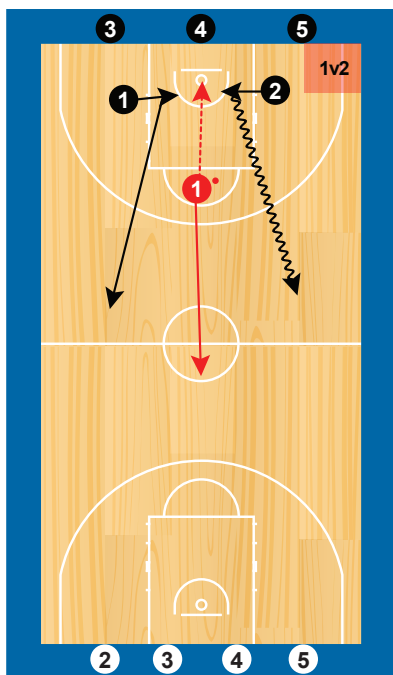
This activity requires at least 10 players, divided into two teams. It is a fast paced, competitive activity that has a number of “advantage / disadvantage” situations and it also places an emphasis on the importance of free throws.

The activity may be done with all successful baskets scoring 1 point (regardless of where the shot was taken) or with normal scoring or the coach may designate that an open lay-up is worth 2 points and other shots are worth 1 point.

The activity proceeds like a game. When the defence secure the ball at one end (either defensive rebound, steal, offensive turnover or offensive score) they proceed on offence to the other end. If the offence get a rebound they take another shot.

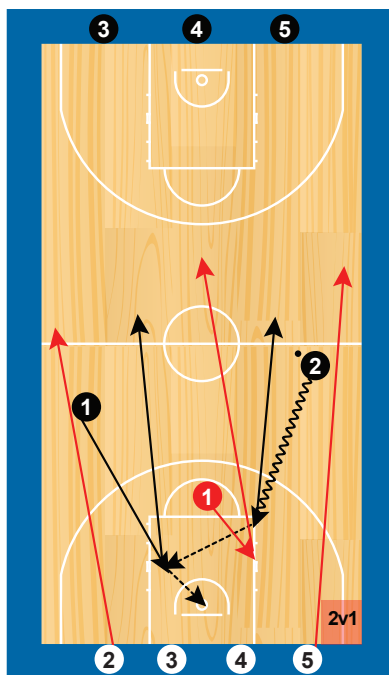
STAGE 1 – 1V2 / 2X1

1 player takes a foul shot. 2 players from the other team line up to rebound. Once the defence secures ball, they proceed 2v1 to the other end.



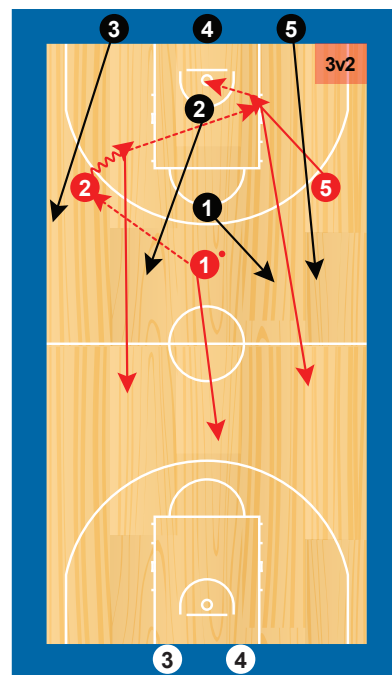
STAGE 2 – 2V1 / 3V2

In 2v1, once the defence secures the ball, two additional players step in, and proceed 3v2 to other the end.



STAGE 3 – 3V2 / 4V3

In 3v2, once the defence secures the ball, two additional players step in and proceed 4v3 to the other end.



STAGE 4 - 4V3 / 5V4

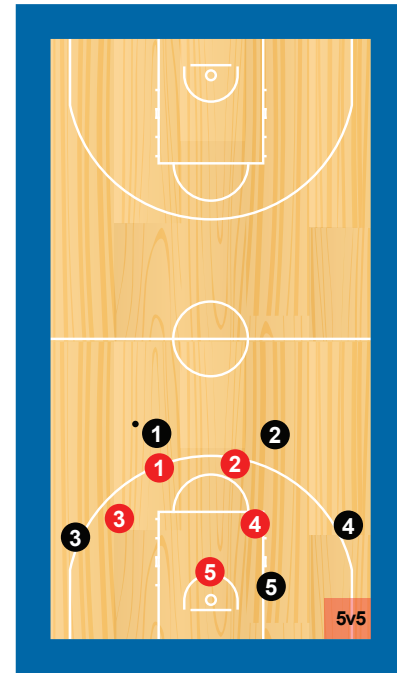
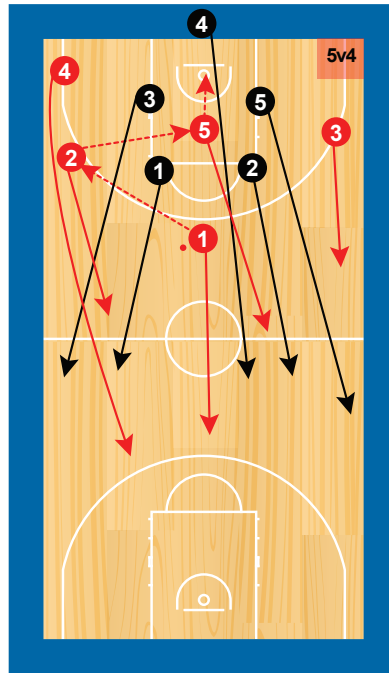
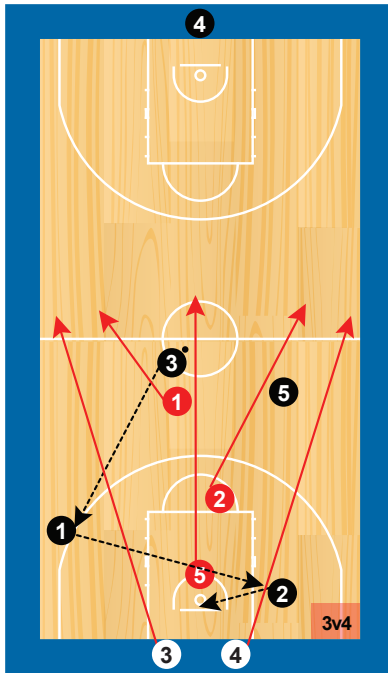
In 4v3, once the defence secures the ball, two additional players step in to proceed 5x4 to the other end.

STAGE 5 - 5V4 / 5V5

In 5v4, once defence secures the ball, the last player steps in to proceed 5v5 to the other end.

STAGE 6 - 5V5 / FREE THROW

Teams play 5v5 and once the defence secure a ball the activity stops. The other team now take a free throw, and the activity starts again with players returning to the baselines.



FOLLOW-UP

1. Have an assistant coach record during a game:

- a. How quickly your team inbound the ball after the opponent scores;
- b. How long it takes your team to progress the ball into a half court offence;
- c. How many times your team gets a "fast break" shot and whether it was 1v0, 2v1 or 3v2.

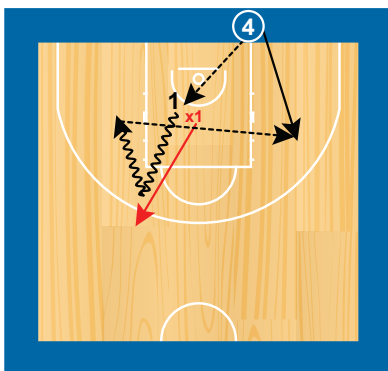
Are you happy with these results?

2. What is your preferred activity to practice transition offence? How often do you practice 1v0, 2v1 and 3v2 at practice. Compare that to how often your team gets those opportunities in a game. Are you happy with the "transfer" from practice to games?

2.4. OFFENCE AGAINST FULL COURT PRESSURE

2.4.1 ATTACKING FULL COURT ZONE PRESSURE - GENERAL PRINCIPLES

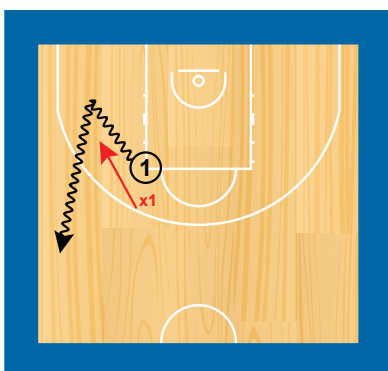
Teams may play full court defence using either “man to man” defence or a “trap” (defence) where defenders are not guarding a particular player but defend an assigned area of the court.



RETREAT DRIBBLE

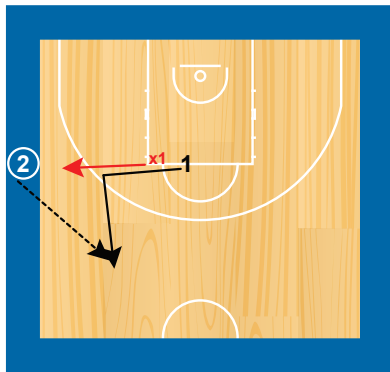
One of the most effective tools that an offensive player can use to beat any pressure is to use a retreat dribble (i.e. go backwards).

This can give the dribbler space to see an open teammate. It also gives the player the opportunity to see the pass.



Retreating also creates the situation where the defender must now “close out” – moving forward to get to the player. This is a difficult skill, and often creates the opportunity for the dribbler to get past them.

Particular if the dribbler goes backwards at an angle, rather than straight back, it means the defender is now on their side, which can also be an advantage to the dribbler.



BEATING “MAN-TO-MAN” DEFENCE

Full court defence often starts when the offence are passing the ball in from out of court, either after a basket or foul / violation by their opponent.

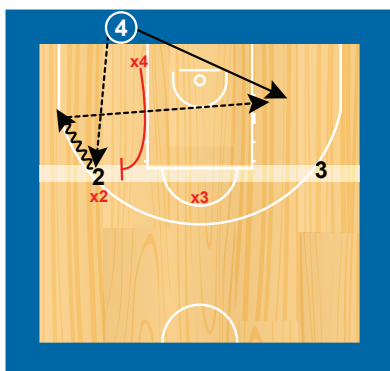
When denied in this situation, it can be effective to move towards the sideline or baseline (forcing the denying defender to move backwards) and to then quickly change direction (either sideways or backwards).

If the full court defence is “man to man”, it can be effective to have other offensive players move down court, so that the player with the ball now plays 1x1, without the prospect of any double teaming. If additional help is required, it is often the centre or forward who will cut back to receive a pass – as their defender may be less able to place pressure on the dribbler.

BEATING A TRAPPING ZONE DEFENCE

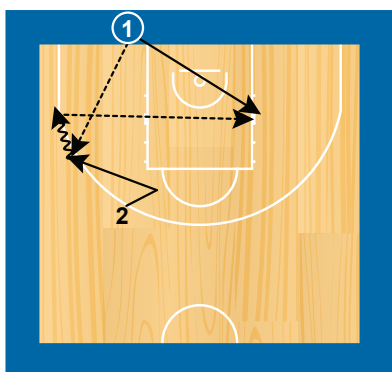
Coaches may wish to implement a particular structure for playing against a full court “trap” (or “zone press”). Below is a basic framework that can be utilized that focuses on ensuring that:

- The player with the ball has three passing options;
- Purposeful movement by players to ensure that players do not simply “stand around”.



RETREAT WHEN THE 2ND DEFENDER COMMITS

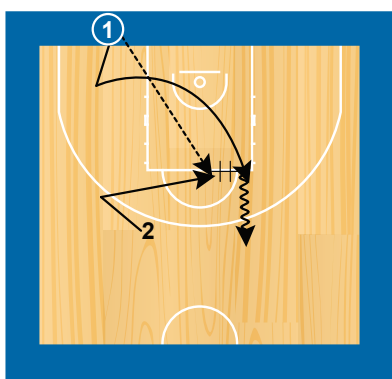
A retreat dribble can be very effective to releasing pressure. Keeping the dribble alive, the dribbler wants to attract a trapping defender, once that defender starts to commit, a retreat dribble can create space to pass to an open teammate. To make this most effective, the ball should be caught no closer to the baseline than the free throw line, in order to ensure that there is room to retreat.



POINT GUARD INBOUND

Having the point guard inbound the ball, can disrupt the defence, particularly when the defence is designed to immediately trap the player receiving the pass (usually the point guard).

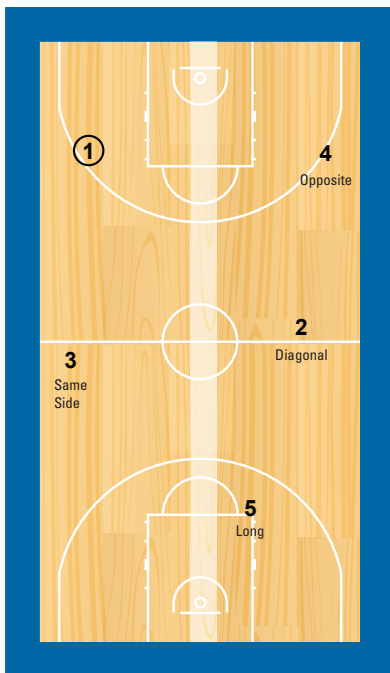
The point guard may step into court to receive a pass or may cut past the receiver to receive a hand off.



PASS OVER HALF WAY

Many trapping defences are designed to double team the ball at, or near, the half way line. Accordingly, having players look to pass the ball across the half way line rather than dribble it across can avoid this double team being effective.

2.4.2 ATTACKING FULL COURT ZONE PRESSURE - PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT



PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT

In playing against full court pressure, the offensive players can adopt the following positions:

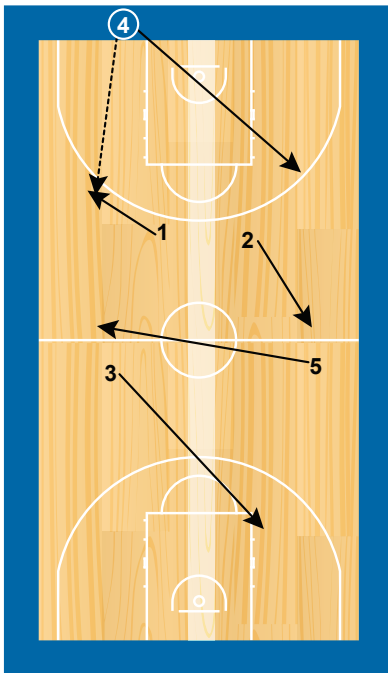
Opposite: level with the ball, on the other side of the court

Diagonal: ahead of the ball (1 pass away) on the other side of the court

Same Side: one pass away from the ball on the same side of the court

Long: ahead of the ball, approximately two passes away, generally on the opposite side of the court.

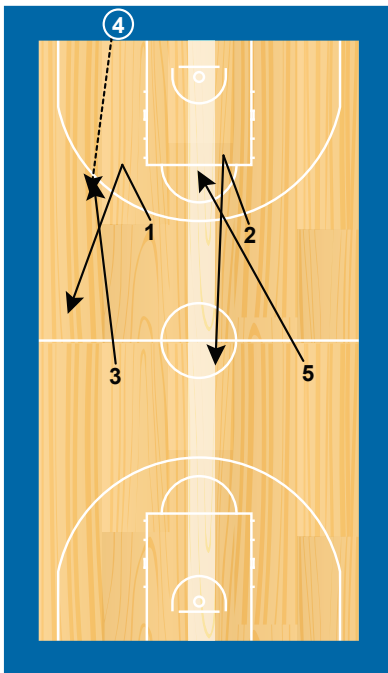
The player with the ball (1) has 3 passing options (4, 2 and 3) however it is important that those players do not stand still. They must be in a "gap" where they can receive a pass.



INBOUNDING THE BALL

By starting in a "box" formation (2 players at half way, 2 players at the 3pt line), players can quickly move into position:

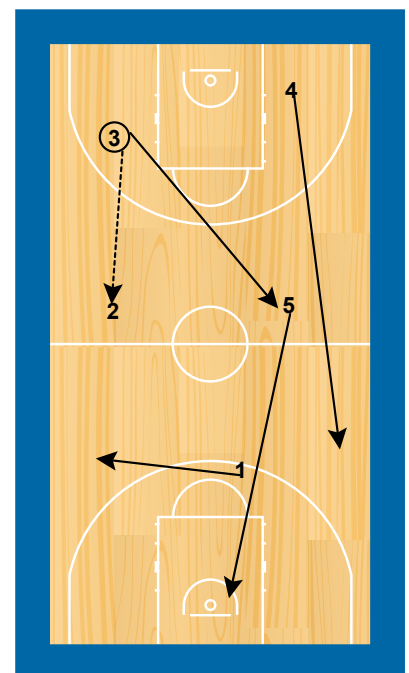
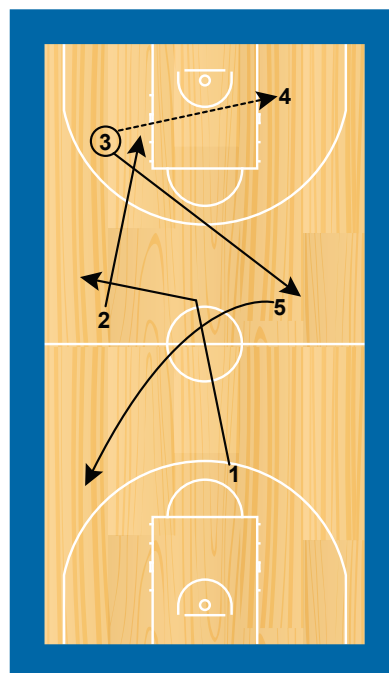
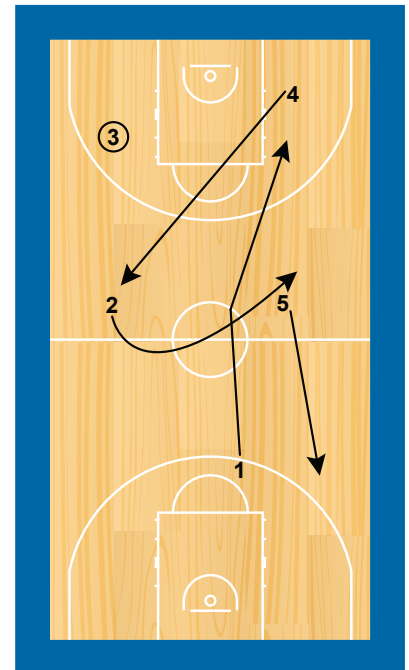
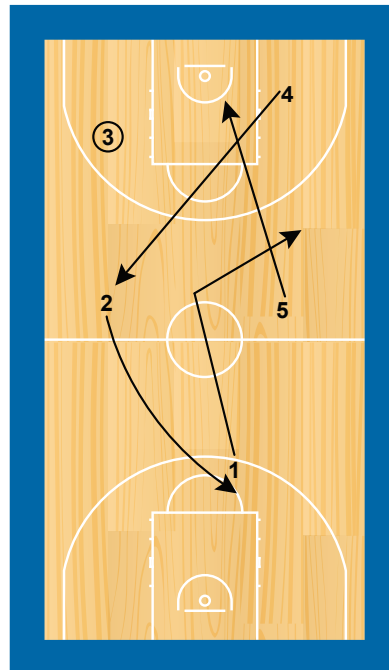
- 1 – receives the pass
- 4 moves to the "Opposite" position
- 2 moves to the "Diagonal" position
- 5 moves to the "Same Side" position
- 3 moves to "Long"

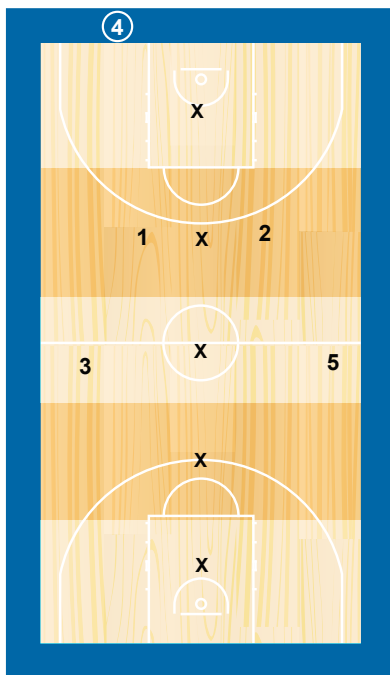


If Players 1 and 2 can't get open, Players 3 and 5 cut toward the ball, and 1 and 2 move to create space. Players 3 and 5 can also move to screen for either 1 or 2.

ROTATING CUTS

It is not necessary to stipulate specific cuts that players will make, again the emphasis is on the positions on the floor being filled. It is also preferable that cuts are aggressive, toward the ball (e.g. Players 1, 3 and 5) rather than away from the ball (Player 2). Cuts away from the ball are important though to create space for a teammate to cut into. The more players are given the opportunity to practice, the more comfortable they will become in getting to the various positions.





PRACTICING BEATING FULL COURT PRESSURE

Dividing the court into 5 areas, and placing 1 defender in each area, can provide a framework for practicing the purposeful movement needed to defeat full court defensive pressure.

Additional defenders can then be added into areas to increase the level of pressure.

2.4.3 ATTACKING FULL COURT MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

Full Court “man to man” is an aggressive defence that will quicken the tempo of the game and is most effective when defenders are able to switch and trap.

It is often most effective when it puts doubt into the minds of the offensive players and has them hesitate before acting.

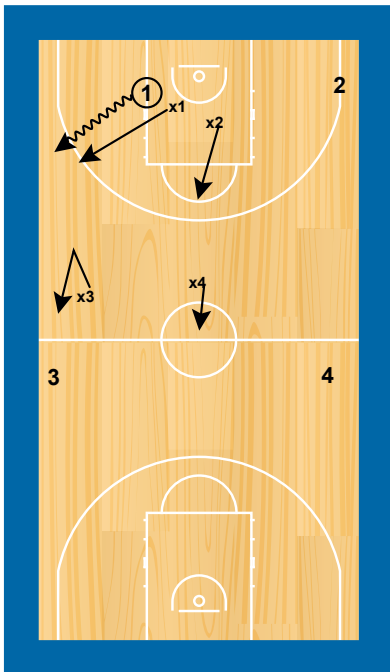
Full court defence has the added advantage that the offensive team has only 5 seconds in which to inbound the ball and only 8 seconds to progress the ball into their front court.

Some general principles that will assist an offensive team facing full court defence:

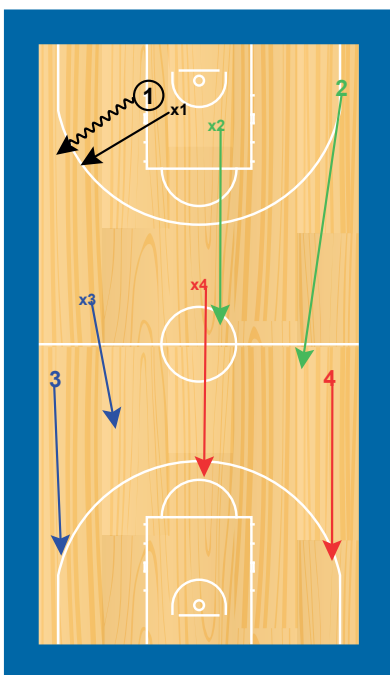
- Passing the ball is often more effective than dribbling as it covers greater distance in quicker time. It is better to throw short passes to players moving toward the ball rather than long passes (particularly with junior players that may not have sufficient strength to throw long passes).;

- Getting the ball back into play quickly when the opponent scores often means they do not have time to set their full court defence. Players should practice, grabbing the ball from the net, keeping it at shoulder height, stepping out of bounds in two steps (while looking where they may pass) and then passing as quickly as possible;
- Using a “retreat” dribble to get space from a defender will help to identify potential passes.

A full court “man to man” defence is most effective when help defenders are close to the ball.



Both x2 and x3 are in positions that could trap the dribbler. x4 is in position to help if 1 turns into the middle of the court or attempts to throw a cross court pass.



If 2, 3 and 4 all move quickly into their front court, it leaves 1 and x1 in a one on one situation. There is no defender available to trap or help.

In addition to clearing the court, teams may have a different player (e.g. 3 or 4) dribble the ball down. Whilst they may not be as proficient as 1 is at dribbling, their defenders are also likely to be less effective at pressuring the dribble than x1.

Finally, after clearing the court so that the dribbler has a 1v1 situation, a post player may move up the floor to set an on ball screen.

Although this brings another defender near the ball, it will probably be a big defender that is less proficient at defending on the ball.

FOLLOW-UP

1. How many of your opponents regularly apply full court pressure?
Do they use a zone or “man to man” alignment or a mixture of both?
2. When in a season do you introduce tactics to play against full court pressure?
Why do you do it at this time?

2.5 OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

2.5.1 REBOUNDING AND DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

Basketball is a game of alternating possession – when one team scores, the other team gets the ball. At its simplest, this means that teams will generally have the same number of possessions. Rebounding is a key to changing that equality and to getting more possessions than your opponent.

OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

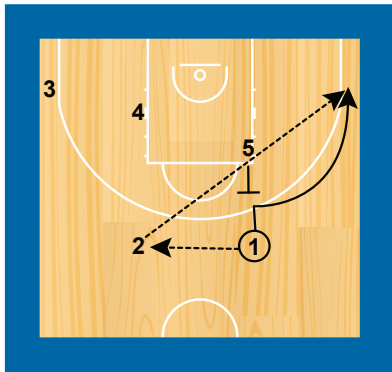
In the first place, rebounding requires the players to be in a position where they can actually compete to get the ball. This is instinctive for some players but others, particularly on offence, may not move to a position where they may get the ball. One way that coaches can emphasise this is to award points to players in training activities based upon whether they moved to a rebounding position, not just to the one player that got the rebound.

Secondly, it is important to teach players to anticipate a rebounding situation. Many young players do not get to a rebounding position because they do not anticipate when the shot is to be taken – this is particularly an issue for offensive players. It is important that young players learn to anticipate their teammates' shots and equally, they must learn that the presence of rebounders is an important aspect in determining whether or not a shot is a good option at that time.

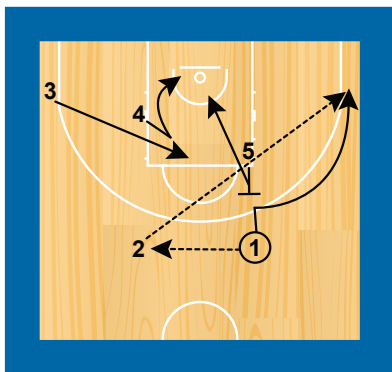
Often in training, coaches will do activities that focus on a particular aspect of the game (e.g. screening and shooting) and the activity then finishes once that is complete (e.g. the shot has been taken). However, to emphasise offensive rebounding, coaches can allow activities to continue until a basket is made or defence controls the ball.

Similarly, offensive rebounding can be added when practicing other offensive moves. The offensive move should not end with the shot but should also end with a score, with players taking offensive rebounding positions.

Coaches should prepare a strategy for both offensive and defensive rebounding.. This includes explaining to players what their responsibilities are and the "pathways" that they may use to contest the rebound. This way, players will consider rebounding as part of the offence or defence and this will also help develop their anticipation of the shot.



This is an example of a play that a coach may use to get a shot. It finishes when the shot is taken.



In this diagram, the same play is shown, however the coach has also shown offensive rebounding responsibilities. This will help to foster a rebounding "attitude" amongst the team.

LEVEL 1



TEAM

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT

3.1. TEAM RULES AND DISCIPLINE

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3.1. TEAM RULES AND DISCIPLINE

3.1.1 MAKING TEAM RULES CLEAR

Whatever rules a coach wants for their team (relating to both on and off court) must be stated clearly and then when necessary, the coach must enforce the rules.

At both practice and games, coaches have the opportunity to reinforce on court rules (how the team is to play) and these may change over the course of a season.

Off court rules (how the players interact and present themselves) are equally important although inexperienced coaches often do not regularly review them or take steps to enforce them until something major occurs.

Things to consider in relation to the team rules are:

- Have as few as possible – the coach should be able to explain why each rule is important;
- Each team should have their own rules – in determining team rules coaches should consider for each team what is necessary. This will depend upon the personalities, skills and experiences of the players, which differs with every team. Having the players involved in determining the team rules (particularly in relation to off court) is useful;
- Write the rules down – coaches often provide a “playbook” (which essentially contains the on court rules) but should equally have the off court rules written down and provided to everyone on the team. With junior players they should also be provided to the parents. Having players sign the rules and displaying the rules where players will see them (e.g. in the changing room) can be important to ensuring they are followed;
- Use the players’ language not the coaches – simply, the rules need to make sense to the players. Particularly with junior players they should be expressed in language appropriate to the age of the players which may mean using appropriate colloquialisms;
- Use positive language – wherever possible the rules should be stated as what will be done (e.g. “we accept responsibility as a team for whether we win or lose”) rather than what to avoid (e.g. “do not blame team mates when we lose”).

Finally, to ensure that the team rules are clear they must be enforced consistently by the coach. If a team rule is that “we accept responsibility as a team for whether we win or lose” and after a loss one player says to another “the referees were unfair, we would have won if John hadn’t been fouled out”, the coach must act.

In this example, the player is not taking responsibility as a team – they are both blaming the referees but also blaming the loss on John not playing. Whilst this may not require much of a penalty, the coach should at least correct the player and remind them that the team must take responsibility and that the result of the game is the aggregate of every possession. Obviously, the coach must not make comments like this either.

3.2. GAME PREPARATION

3.2.1 TEAM GOALS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS (UNDER 12)

PLAYERS AGED 12 AND UNDER

Winning should not be the fundamental objective. Instead, the players should learn to be good sports, respect the rules of the game, the referees and the opposing team, and to always try their best.

It is not that winning is unimportant, it is just that the other factors are more important. It is important for the players to strive for and experience "success", however that does not have to be winning a game and often can be successfully "transferring" skills from practice into the game.

For this reason, the coach should organise the practices and games such that all players have an equal chance to participate. They should divide playing time among all of the players who have reasonably fulfilled their commitment rather than allowing the best players to play the most and keeping some players on the bench.

Neither is it enough that all the players get onto the court. Participating in a game means that players should be able to play without restriction.

For example, some coaches tend to let their best players have the ball and shoot while two or three other children are simply "filling up" the court. Obviously, those children are not participating in the game.

Similarly, all players should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of practice. The coach must not, for example, teach post moves only to tall players.

Practice sessions for players in this age group should be focused on fundamental skills and not vary relative to upcoming opponents.

Practices should include competitive situations, as this plays an important role in keeping the players motivated and interested. However, the coach should ensure that all players experience "success" and most of all, the performance of the coach can be judged by the smiles on the players' faces and whether or not they wish to continue to play the sport.

3.2.2 TEAM GOALS FOR JUNIOR PLAYERS (UNDER 16)

PLAYERS AGED 13-14 YEARS OLD

The coach of 13/14-year-olds should also allow all the players who go to practice to play many minutes throughout the season, otherwise their motivation will decrease and it will be more likely that they quit the sport or make little effort.

With players at this age, games are an excellent test of the effectiveness of the work done during practice sessions. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider the following steps:

- before each game, coaches should establish the collective and/or individual performance goals that they consider most important for that game, taking into account what the team worked on at practice during that week or in preceding weeks;
- before the game, coaches should establish a simple procedure to evaluate whether or not those goals are achieved, and to what degree;
- during the game or afterwards, if it has been recorded on video, the coach or a capable colleague should make note of the behaviours that constitute the performance goals;
- after the game, coaches should study the notes taken and assess what has occurred with the performance goals established before the game; this assessment will provide them with the information necessary to know how the players are assimilating the work done during training.

For example, the coach is working on screens during the training sessions and wants to monitor how the players are transferring these skills into the game. In the next game, they establish setting screens as a priority performance goal, and the coach may pay particular attention to whether or not the player made the correct cut off a screen. Focusing on the “process” instead of whether or not a basket was scored will help to evaluate the effectiveness of the screen.

Basically, the interaction between practice sessions and games - using the games as test experiences, is a fundamental element for 13/14-year-old teams. The game goals established by the coach should mainly be performance goals because what they are interested in is observing the players' progress in the basketball fundamentals that make up the contents covered during practice.

3.2.3 SETTING GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR GAMES

Coaches should establish realistic goals for each game, including a realization that certain aspects will not go well and that mistakes will occur – they do at all levels. So coaches should be prepared to tolerate their players' mistakes and continue to coach the game without letting those mistakes affect them emotionally.

Coaches should regard the game as a constructive experience, whether that be:

- reinforcing positive aspects so that the players will repeat them;
- on the other hand, observing what goes wrong and what can realistically be improved, in order to work on it in later practice sessions.

Games are not the appropriate environment for correcting serious mistakes - that is what practice is for. Nor are games the time to introduce new strategies and concepts - again that is what practice is for.

The coach's focus in a game must be that the important thing is not what has already happened and cannot be changed, but what is happening right now or what could happen during the rest of the game.

For example: what is important is not that the opposing team has scored several baskets using fast-breaks, but what the team can do to stop that happening in the future. Too many coaches focus on diagnosing the problem instead of focusing on the "treatment" – what the team needs to do.

SELECTING STRATEGY

First, coaches should specify the goals and plans for the game, obviously bearing in mind their teams' characteristics and general objectives for the season.

Secondly, coaches should anticipate the most likely problems to arise during the game (for example, a mini-basketball coach could anticipate that their players will lose the ball when the opposing team pressures them).

Thirdly, coaches should decide what they would do to offset these problems. This includes specific instructions, which repeat or relate to teaching points used in practice. For example, if the coach anticipates that the team may have the ball stolen from them, they can emphasise the importance of pivoting, protecting the ball and leading to the ball.

To help offset problems the coach should also remain positive (in the previous case, for example, tell the players not to worry and encourage them even when they lose the ball).

By anticipating possible problems, the coach is preparing a simple strategy for the game:

GAME:

DATE:

GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE GAME

MOST LIKELY CHALLENGES

SOLUTIONS FOR THOSE CHALLENGES?

In presenting information to the team before the game, the coach does not have to detail everything that they have thought about or considered. For example, the coach shouldn't go into detail as to why they think the opposition may steal the ball. Instead, they can set the positive goals of what the team need to do (pivot, protect the ball, lead for the ball).

It can also be useful to set goals that divide the game into time periods, possibly even smaller than the quarters or halves that the game is played in. For example, where a coach anticipates that the opposition is a better team they may set a goal of being within 5 points every 5 minutes. This enables the coach to "reset" the player's focus each five minutes.

In a 40 minute game, if a team was outscored by their opponent by 4 points every 5 minutes, they would lose by 32 points, which players may find disheartening.

However, the likelihood is that there will be 5 minute periods where the team did better than others and setting these "mini goals" can help the team perceive their success. Providing information to the Team

Coaches must be careful with their own behaviour because the players and parents will often imitate what the coach does. If the coach is nervous about the result, the players are also likely to be nervous.

Some general principles to follow are:

- maintain a balanced attitude around the players with respect to the games. Whilst we strive to win, winning is not everything;
- it is not a good idea to talk too much about the game beforehand, nor refer to the possible score, especially using stressful comments such as, "We've got to win next Saturday";
- the coach should remind the players that the important thing is for them to enjoy themselves and do the best they can;
- the coach needs to give the players factors by which to judge their success other than the final score line. This should relate to what has been worked on at practice. This places focus on continuing to improve;
- At this time it is important for the coach to strengthen the players' perception of control. To do this, they should avoid referring to aspects that players cannot directly control (e.g. the final score) and concentrate on controllable aspects (e.g., the player's own behaviours).

Thus, the team's goals before a game should be performance goals, and the coach's instructions and comments should focus solely on the players' behaviour. Also, right before a game, the coach should keep in mind that the players tend to be nervous, and that under these conditions their attentional capacity is quite reduced.

Accordingly, the coach must avoid trying to transmit too much information or very complex information. Pre-game goals should refer to three or four key aspects of the game, drawing upon teaching points or goals used in practice sessions.

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. What goals might you set for a team that you expect to lose an upcoming match to a better opponent?
5. Would your answer to question 4 change if you thought that your team could lose by 60 points (based upon the relative skill of the teams).
6. Discuss with a coaching colleague the difference between goals that are “process orientated” and goals that are “outcome focused”. In what circumstances do you use the different types of goals?
7. What is your response to the statement “sport is a contested activity and there must always be a winner and loser. Winning is therefore the most important thing”?
8. How is “success” different to “winning”? Which do you think is most important for junior teams?

LEVEL 1



TEAM

CHAPTER 4

GAME COACHING

CHAPTER 4

GAME COACHING

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4.1. PREPARING A GAME PLAN

4.1.1 SUBSTITUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

When coaching young teams, games are the opportunity for the players to “put into practice” the team and individual skills that they have been working on in training.

SUBSTITUTIONS

With young teams, all players must be given an opportunity to play in every game and the coach should make regular substitutions.

The substitutions should also give players the opportunity to play with each of their team mates, not have a “first five” that play together and a “second five” which play when the game is either won or lost.

Instead, the coach should make regular substitutions (every few minutes) and if they have an assistant coach it is a good idea to have him/her keep track playing time to make sure everybody gets to play.

Some parents may complain to the coach that they are not winning games because they are not playing the “best” players all the time. The coach should explain (at the start of the season) that they will be making sure that all players get to play.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Particularly with young teams, games are not the time to teach new ideas and the coach’s feedback should refer to what has been done in training.

Feedback should also be given constructively, by acknowledging what the player is doing well, making a correction by instructing them on what you want them to do and then finishing with a positive comment.

This method of giving feedback is sometimes referred to as the “sandwich” method, for example:

Positive:

“You’ve done a great job of keeping vision of the player you are defending.”

Constructive Instruction:

“Remember, when the ball is passed you need to jump to the ball to make sure you stay between your player and the ball.”

Positive:

“You did this really well at practice.”

The use of “cue words” (like “jump to the ball”) can help the coach give the feedback quickly and also reinforces to the player what was done in practice.

Some coaches like to use a whiteboard to provide feedback to players. If the coach wants to do that during games (particularly with young teams) then they should also do it at practice, so that the players get used to that method of communication.

Importantly, all of the statements in this example are worded positively. The coach should not focus on what the player is doing wrong and instead must focus on instructing them on what to do (the second statement).

4.1.2 TALKING TO OFFICIALS

The coach should introduce themselves to the officials (referees and scoretable) before the game (if there is time) and should thank the officials after the game. That should be the extent of the interaction with the referees when coaching young teams.

The coach should focus on their players, not the referees! The more the coach speaks to the referee, the more players are also likely to also focus on the referees.

Often in games involving young teams, game officials will also be young and inexperienced. They will make mistakes, but the coach should be supportive of the officials.

If during a game the coach needs to speak to the referee they should do so politely and respectfully.

It is best to do so during a break in play and the coach should get the referees attention and ask them to come over.

The coach should then ask their question, which should be as specific as possible.

The coach will need to speak to the scoretable officials throughout the game and again should do so politely and respectfully.

For example, if a coach believes the score is incorrect, yelling at the scoretable during play is unlikely to resolve anything. Instead, the coach should approach the scoretable during a break in play and ask them to clarify the score. The scoretable will involve the referee if necessary.

Most importantly, whilst all officials strive to have the perfect game (with no mistakes, they might make mistakes, just as players and coaches might.

The role of the coach is not to berate the officials nor to blame the result of a game on them. The coach must focus on the performance of their team.

4.1.3 CHANGING TACTICS WITH YOUNG TEAMS (U12)

CHANGING TACTICS

Often in a game a coach will see that their opponent is playing in a specific way and that their own team will be successful if they make a change of tactics. With young teams though, the coach should be careful in making any changes.

More often with junior players the “change” of tactics is actually reinforcing or reminding players of what you want them to do.

Rather than make changes by yelling from the sideline, the coach of young players should use a timeout or a substitution to make any changes.

Where a team has practiced a number of tactics (e.g. a full court zone press and a half court man to man defence), the coach can introduce a signal (such as a number, colour, or a physical symbol such as a fist), to designate which tactic to use.

During practice, the coach should use that symbol to make the change in tactic, rather than stopping practice to make the change.

Any change in tactics must still emphasise what the team has been doing in practice and the coach should not introduce something in the game that has not been done in practice. The coach should also resist any temptation to set up a play for a particular situation in the game (e.g. last shot of the game).

4.1.4 COMMUNICATION WITH PLAYERS DURING GAMES

COMMUNICATION

During a game, the coach's behaviour can decisively influence the players' performance, either positively or negatively. How should they behave so that their players do their best and make the game a beneficial experience?

Below are some suggestions for differentiating between active periods (when the game is playing) and pauses in the game (periods when play is stopped - after a personal foul, time-outs, half time, etc.).

FEEDBACK DURING PLAY

During periods of active participation, the coach's behaviour can interfere negatively with the performance of the players.

For example, the coach who reprimands players from the sidelines or gives them instructions during active play, may make them more nervous or distract their attention from the game. Similarly, non-verbal behaviour can also profoundly affect the performance of players. In particular, players who are on the bench will be very conscious of the coach's behaviour (even if the players on court are not as aware) and this can result in players entering the game scared of making mistakes.

For this reason, it is better for the coaches to talk to the players during pauses and not during periods of active participation.

Sometimes a coach will be very animated on the sideline, almost as if they are playing the game – calling out for where players should go, or when the ball should be passed etc. This behaviour can also be counter-productive, as players learn not to react to what is happening in the game, but to react to what the coach is calling out.

In any case, if the coach feels that they should speak to the players during the periods of active participation, they should refer to what the players should do at that moment, not to aspects that have already occurred. That maybe something important later on but at the moment "what happened" is not relevant, but rather "what you will do" is key.

For example, a player makes a mistake while playing defence, allowing the player they are guarding to score. The coach gets angry and gets up from the bench to reprimand the player for what has happened, warning them to pay attention next time.

While this is happening, the team is attacking. The players have rapidly taken the ball and they are now moving forward, looking to get a good shot. Hearing the coach, the player who made the mistake gets nervous and distracted; so on receiving the ball makes a wrong decision and loses it.

What happened? Although the coach was perhaps right in speaking to the player, by doing it at the wrong time, he has had a negative effect on the player's performance in the following play.

DURING PAUSES IN PLAY

There are many pauses during a game which provide a coach with the opportunity to provide some feedback. Whether this is an individual player having a pause (e.g. being substituted off) or whether it is a break in play (e.g. timeout). Coaches may even be able to speak to a player during a break such as during free throws.

The activities of both the coach and the players during pauses are essential. If properly used, breaks in the game can be a great help for the players to recuperate physically (as far as possible) and prepare themselves to perform better during upcoming periods of play.

Coaches should always provide feedback to a player that is coming off the court. Whilst “good work” is better than nothing, it is most effective if the coach gives specific feedback. Whenever possible, positive feedback should always outweigh any correction or instruction. Many coaches provide feedback, using a “sandwich” approach (positive comment – correction – positive comment).

For example:

“I am really happy with how you are boxing out, you are doing that really well.”

(Positive)

“When your player has the ball, you need to give them a little more space so you have time to react. Remember, arm’s length.”

(Correction, using cue word – “arm’s length”)

If you position yourself at arm’s length, you will be able to stop their dribble penetration, just like we practiced last Thursday.

(Positive, building perception of being in “control”)

The last comment is a positive one because it refers back to practice – giving the player confidence that they have done this before, and that they can do it now.

In basketball, pauses can be divided into three categories: during game time when the referee stops the game e.g. (when calling a personal foul, when the ball goes out, etc.), time-outs and half time.

DURING TIME-OUTS AND OTHER BREAKS IN PLAY

The behaviour of the coach during pauses in game time is important:

- comments to the players should be very clear, specific and concise. If giving feedback to a particular player, get their attention first and then provide the feedback;
- any feedback must be to get the players to focus on key aspects of the upcoming period of play, without stopping to analyse what has already occurred in previous

plays. Before making the comment, the coach will have analysed a previous play, but their comments must be “action oriented” (“This is what we are going to do”);

- the coach should speak purposefully; if the coach is nervous or angry, they should first calm down, then speak to the players;
- pauses in play provide a good opportunity for the coach to reinforce efforts made by players on less showy tasks; for example defensive actions, helping teammates, running back, etc.;
- the coach can also use breaks to encourage the players after their errors, getting them to concentrate on tasks during the next period of active participation;

Coaches should adopt a routine for time outs, half time, and breaks between quarters. For example, during time-outs:

- teach the players to move quickly to the sidelines or the bench. This can be worked on in practice by using simulated time-outs to provide instruction (which is also good practice for the coach to keep their message short);
- allow fifteen seconds for the players to drink water, wipe off the sweat and relax a little while the coach determines what to say;
- establish that the only person to talk during the timeout is the coach; not the assistant coaches nor the players, only the coach. Otherwise, the players’ attention will wander and they will not be able to concentrate on the comments that the coach has decided to make;
- do not try to say too much, especially to younger players and do not speak too quickly;
- speak energetically but without getting wound up. Use full sentences, give clear and precise instructions; use words and phrases that are understandable to the players. Often the best words to use are the teaching points or cue words used in practice sessions;
- focus on what you want the team to do, not what they may have been doing wrong;

AT HALF TIME BREAKS BETWEEN QUARTERS

Half time is the longest pause in the game and therefore the time when the coach can intervene directly to the greatest extent.

Half time should be used for the players to rest, go to the bathroom, drink water, etc., and for the coach to talk to them about improving their performance during the second half.

When addressing the players during half time, the main objective is to help them improve their performance during the second half, leaving for a later time any comments about what happened during the first half that are not relevant to achieving this objective.

The coach should establish a workable routine for half time, to ensure they make the best use of the time. Again, this may be something practiced in training sessions.

The most important thing is for the coach to THINK before they SPEAK. The coach should also leave some time for the players to have to themselves, so even in a 10 minute long half time, the coach may choose to only speak for two or three minutes.

The coach should also refer to the pre-game goals, particularly highlighting behaviours that they want repeated.

Where correction is necessary, the focus should be on what to do, and referring to a pre-game goal can help to relay the urgency. For example,

“Our goal was to keep them to less than 10 offensive rebounds, and they have 9 already. We need to box-out. Remember, see your opponent, make contact and then look for the ball”.

POST GAME

Once the game is over, the coach should adopt a balanced attitude regardless of what has occurred. They should neither be euphoric when their team wins and/or the players have played well nor be depressed when they lose and/or play badly.

A coach working with young players should remember that games are a unique educational experience, with the most important moment coming at the end of the game. It is then that young players have to learn to tolerate the frustration of defeat or of having played badly and also to place victory and a good game in the proper perspective.

The coach must lead their team in shaking hands with opponents and officials, thanking them for their participation in the game.

The game has finished and there will be time to analyse it later. What is important initially is that the coach show support to the players. It is not necessary to organise a talk or, for example, try to convince the ones who are sad that losing is not important. It's enough that the coach be there with them and say a few encouraging words.

Straight after the game is not the moment to analyse, explain or correct anything. The players need time to let their emotions, because this too is something they can learn from basketball. Too often after a game the immediate thoughts of players, spectators and coaches look at the closing minutes of the game. A player who missed the final shot may feel like they lost the game.

However, in reality the team will have missed many shots during the game and each of them contributed to the final result.

4.1.5 COMMUNICATION WITH OFFICIALS DURING GAMES

INTERACTING WITH REFEREES

In most games there is little reason for the coach to interact with the referees.

If the coach spends all game complaining to the referees and querying calls, they should not be surprised if their players also focus on referee calls – players (and parents) will mimic the coach. In junior basketball, the coach should have very limited interaction with the referees and instead should concentrate on their own team.

In interacting with referees, coaches should:

- shake hands with the referees before and after the game;
- if it is necessary to clarify a rule interpretation or bring something to the referee's attention, ask a specific question and accept the referee's answer;
- instead of yelling at the referee during play, the coach should wait for a break in play and then politely ask the referee their question;
- coaches must accept and expect that referees will make mistakes in every game (in this regard they are just like players and coaches);
- coaches must also recognize that court positioning mechanics followed by referees are designed to give them the best possible view of the play. The position where the coach is standing is almost always different to the referee (and is not necessarily as good).

INTERACTING WITH SCORETABLE OFFICIALS

Coaches will have interaction throughout the game with scoretable officials, whether that is asking for a timeout, querying how many fouls a particular player has or seeking to clarify whether or not an error has occurred in the score or with the clock.

In many cases the scoretable officials will be volunteers, however regardless of their level of experience the coach should be courteous whenever speaking to them. In particular, although the coach may be frustrated about what is happening on court, when calling a timeout they should not yell or "bark" at the officials. Nor should the coach yell from their own bench and instead they should walk to the scoretable and request the timeout.

If the coach believes that the scoretable has made a mistake they should wait for a break in play and then ask to clarify what they believe is incorrect. The coach can also approach the referee, again during a break in play, and ask them to investigate. If necessary, the coach should call timeout (to stop play) and then speak to the officials.

Yelling at the scoretable, particularly while the game is continuing is not appropriate, and could lead to another error as the officials are distracted from what they should be doing by the coach's behaviour.

Coaches should remember the importance of them being a role model. The scoretable may make errors, just as players, coaches and referees may make errors. The coach must always remember that context and their role should remain to work with their team – to control what they can control!

FOLLOW-UP

1. Have a colleague sit on your bench during a game and record how often you:
 - a. Make a negative comment or action (such as shaking your hand);
 - b. Make a positive comment or action;
 - c. Provide constructive correction (i.e. telling an athlete what to do, not what they did wrong);
 - d. Make a comment toward officials.

Are you surprised by the number of negative (a, b or d) comments that you make?

2. Reflect upon your last five games. What goals did you set for the team? How did you track their performance in relation to these goals? Could you be more effective?
3. Discuss with a coach from a team sport played on a larger field (e.g. football) how they provide feedback to players during the game? How does it compare to what you do?
4. Have someone film your timeouts. In watching the video, observe:
 - a. If you are using a whiteboard – is it facing you or the players;
 - b. Are the athlete's concentrating on you for the whole timeout;
 - c. How many messages did you give during the timeout;
 - d. Is it clear from watching the video what you wanted to tell the players?
5. Have a coaching colleague watch one of your games and write down some key things about your team's performance (either good or bad). Immediately after the game, discuss with them what you think the team did well or need to improve. Did you identify the same things that they did?

LEVEL 1



TEAM

CHAPTER 5

**GAME REVIEW
AND ANALYSIS**

CHAPTER 5

GAME REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

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5.1. PRACTICE PREPARATION

5.1.1 INCORPORATING REVIEW OF GAMES IN PRACTICE WITH YOUNG PLAYERS (U12)

Especially with young teams that are just learning how to play basketball, the result of the game is a poor indicator of whether or not the team played “well”.

However, it is often the only way that players (and their parents) will judge the team’s “success”.

The coach should provide some review of the game which highlights where the team, and individual players, are improving and the areas for continued improvement. With players so young doing video review sessions, having weekly “one on one” meetings or undertaking statistical analysis of the game (all strategies that are used with professional teams) is unlikely to be productive. Likewise, simply saying “well done, we played well today” at the end of the game is also unlikely to be productive.

Some ways to incorporate game review with very young players are:

- Set goals at the start of the game that relate to things that have been focused on at practice and then “measure” those goals. For example, counting the number of times the team “reversed” the ball in offence. Having 2 or 3 goals for any one game is probably sufficient (although there will be many more that could be focused on);
- Introduce one or two activities at practice that specifically relate to things that happened in the game, and tell the players how they relate. For example, “last week our opponent had more than 20 offensive rebounds so we need to work on blocking out today”;
- Acknowledge good performances by the team or individual players. For example, having the players shake hands at the start of practice and congratulate each other because the team reversed the ball 20 times in the previous game. This acknowledgment should focus on “process” or effort rather than simply top scorers. If the coach is going to acknowledge individual players they should make sure that all players get recognized;
- Set goals at the start of practice, similarly to those used in games, and provide feedback at the end of practice;
- Use contested situations in practice and give them a “game situation” (e.g. we are down by 4 points with 2 minutes to go) which relates to the previous game;
- Provide a short written report (which can be written in the style of a newspaper article) after each game. Parents who may be unable to watch a game will particularly appreciate this and it allows the coach to focus on the transfer of skills from practice to training.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague how you assess whether or not your team played “well”.
2. Ask parents what feedback (if any) they are given about the performance of their child in other activities (e.g. dance, music, swimming, school). Could you incorporate any of these strategies?

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